

REENTRY

A COLLABORATIVE

today

**Coming Back into Freedom
Voices on Health, Housing, Work**

Special Edition
Central Connecticut State University



ISSUE No. 2
May 2020

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

As Eva, Rebecca, Makenzie and Aaron presented drafts of their stories on the Reentry Department of Corrections Project to the other students in the Writing About Health class, the Chat box on WebEx lit up. Forced to leave the classroom and shift to remote learning mid-term because of the COVID-19 epidemic, we all assumed the DOC plan would dissolve like so much else that has evaporated during the pandemic.

But a few students had managed to get interviews and they remained driven to find out more about their assigned subjects.

The DOC staff, despite unprecedented pressure at their jobs to address how to prevent the spread of corona in the state's prison population, still wanted to do this magazine and a poster project.

By early May, we had real copy, which I shared via my WebEx screen. Other students no longer involved in the project, who could have skipped the class, still showed up to provide editorial feedback and moral support to those that had continued the slog through impossible reporting conditions.

Awesome!

I never knew that!

Wow. Michael's comment about seeing children for the first time in 30 yrs...

As we continued the Chat exchanges and audio discussions, we all remarked on how much we'd learned from our four DOC reporters in just an hour.

We had no idea that a huge percentage of formerly incarcerated individuals face homelessness when they get out; how thin the support system remains for those with substance abuse problems, even though recovery is the linchpin to truly being free; or what it feels like to see children for the first time in decades.



Together, the four students produced this newsletter and a five-part travel poster exhibit for the Department of Corrections and our other partner, the Institute of Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP). We want to thank both organizations, in particular Counselor Supervisor Santiago, Medical Discharge Planner Porter, Deputy Warden Violette, and Parole Supervisor Gingras from the DOC, and Andrew Clark from IMRP. We applaud the candor of Frank Rodriguez, Henry Carter and Michael Jarrett, who agreed to share their personal histories about facing incarceration and reentry.

All involved persevered to create "Coming Back into Freedom," which in itself is a tribute to those who try to persevere as they make the daunting transition from prison to society and to some semblance of freedom in mind, body and spirit.

Project Editor

Professor Mary Collins
Writing Minors, English Department
Central Connecticut State University

Written and produced by

Central Connecticut State University
Writing About Health students,
Spring 2020
Eva Carragher
Rebecca George
Makenzie Ozycz, Senior Editor
Aaron Tiscione
Designed by Lovo Media Labs, LLC

"Reentry is about leaving and coming back into freedom."

- Henry Carter, served 29 years, 10 months



PORTRAITS
INTRODUCTION
MAKENZIE OZYCZ
—
PG. 4

PORTRAIT
"HERE I SIT ALIVE AND WELL"
FRANK RODRIGUEZ
WITH MAKENZIE OZYCZ
—
PG. 4

PORTRAIT
"WISDOM, THAT'S FREE"
HENRY CARTER WITH
MAKENZIE OZYCZ
—
PG. 5

HOUSING
TAKING ROOT IN SOCIETY
AARON TISCIONE
—
PG. 5.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE
BREAKING THE CHAIN
EVA CARRAGHER
—
PG. 6

SMART RECOVERY PROGRAM
FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS
EVA CARRAGHER
—
PG. 6

SENIORS
FROM PRISON
TO NURSING HOME
REBECCA GEORGE
—
PG. 7

SOURCES
—
PG. 11



ABOUT REENTRY TODAY

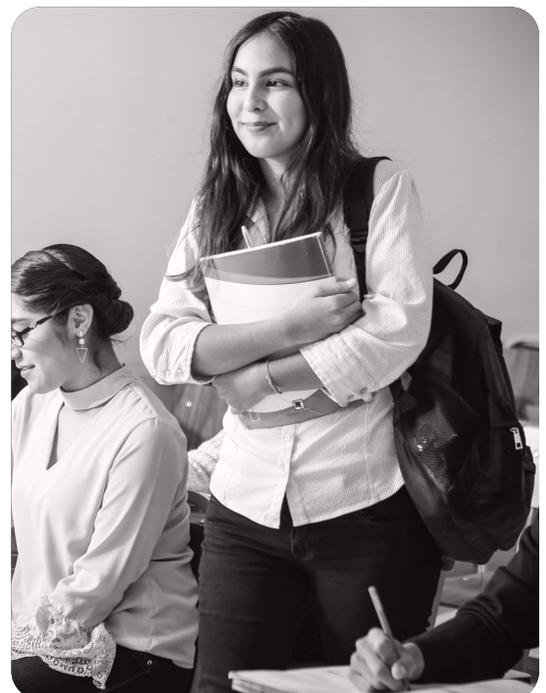
A COLLABORATIVE

Welcome to the second issue of Reentry Today, a joint publication of the CT Department of Correction and the CT Reentry Collaborative. Designed to bridge the gap between what's happening to support reentry both inside and outside of the state's correctional institutions, the newsletter provides featured articles, interviews, updates, visual media, informative graphics, general information and more. Reentry Today will be published in print four times a year and will also be available online at www.ctreentry.org.



OUR PARTNERS

Written and produced by Central Connecticut State University Writing About Health students, Spring 2020, in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Corrections and Institute for Regional and Municipal Policy. Funded by a grant from the CCSU Faculty Senate Community Engagement Committee.



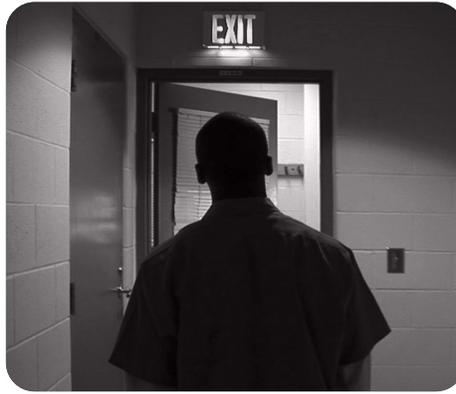
PORTRAITS INTRODUCTION

“WHO WOULD YOU WANT
AS YOUR NEIGHBOR?”

—
Makenzie Ozycz

The current incarceration rate in Connecticut lands at about 468 per every 100,000 people. This statistic is very easy to find; a couple different phrases in a Google search and it pops up like a neon sign off the highway. But when you type in “reentry,” you’ll find a mix of convoluted sources that simply don’t give you the numbers you’re asking for. Simply put, the success stories do not hold the same interest. Shows like *Cops*, *America’s Most Wanted*, *Live PD*, and *Under Arrest* focus on what drives American interest: criminals and the crimes they commit, but why isn’t that interest also shifted in the opposite fashion?

I wrack my brain and still can’t name one show that highlights prisoners reentering society.



Offender Reentry/Transition, as defined by the NIC (National Institute of Corrections), refers to the process of criminal offenders going from prison back into society. The latest statistic, brought up by the NIC, which focuses on a national scale, reports that according to the U.S. Department of Justice in 2015, 641,100 incarcerated individuals were released back into the community from both state and federal prisons. These individuals are then passed on to either the address of a person who has been pre-approved by a parole board, or a halfway house.

But as the voices in *Coming Back into Freedom* make clear, reentry doesn’t

necessarily mean freedom. Once released back into the community a parolee has a laundry list of things to complete in order to ensure their new-found “freedom,” things including:

1. Find a job
2. Find housing
3. Meet with a parole officer
4. Pass drug tests on a weekly basis

And most importantly, do everything they can to avoid old behaviors that could result in them being one of the three-quarters of formerly incarcerated people who get re-arrested within five years of getting out. Without proper guidance, or support, that list seems daunting to someone reentering a world that may look very different from the one they left, and with housing being the greatest challenge, some people may not even have a roof over their heads while they are left to figure out what comes next.

Another layer to this story includes prisoners who are falsely accused of crimes. The Innocence Project, which was founded in 1992 by Peter Neufeld

CONTINUED ON PG. 7

PORTRAITS

“HERE I SIT, ALIVE AND WELL”

Frank Rodriguez with Makenzie Ozycz

I was released from incarceration only six days after my twentieth birthday.

As of today, I’ve been reentered into society for eleven years, and free of all state supervision for over eight.

For me, what reentry meant specifically, was supervised freedom, which I guess is not really freedom at all. At first, I felt like a caged animal being given a taste of fresh air, but once I was able to breathe, I just wanted to run. Luckily, for me, I was fortunate enough to have a family and great friends who kept me sane and on the straight and narrow.

It’s not all easy though, just getting a checking account was difficult. And I



FRANK RODRIGUEZ SHOWING HIS TATTOO TO THE KIDS

know there are certain jobs I can never have. I think the scariest part of having a blemish on your record is considering your future.

I’m attempting a bachelor’s degree right now, but I’ll never be anything

more than an Amazon Warehouse assistant supervisor. I have a car, but I don’t know what happens every time an officer runs my plate and sees that the car belongs to a former felon with drug charges. I think a lot of that is partly my paranoia; I think it’s the fear of not actually being accepted back into society despite doing your time.

It’s also about not having a say in the

**“That lost 18-year-old isn’t
who I am anymore.”**

political process. Recently I donated about \$600 to the Bernie Sanders campaign knowing I would never be able to actually vote for him in an election. So, I guess it’s the fear of certain things following you around like some ugly shadow that bothers me most.

CONTINUED ON PG. 10

PORTRAITS

“WISDOM, THAT’S FREE”

Henry Carter with Makenzie Ozyc

I have always been a person that can adjust and overcome.

When I went to prison, I wasn’t prepared for it. I adjusted. I acclimated. I survived prison. Coming out now, you know, I feel that the adjustment is nothing compared to going in.

To me, reentry means the process of mentally and physically readjusting myself back into what I now know as society. It’s about leaving and coming back into freedom. And for that, a lot has to be done so that a person is prepared to successfully reintegrate themselves.

I was incarcerated for almost 30 years. 29 years and 10 months to be exact.

I had never been on the Internet.

I had never Googled anything, never used a cellphone.

When I had a question, I used to have to go to a dictionary for reference; now, when I have a question, even my family is like, “Google it!” It’s mindboggling to me.

But some things Google can’t give me the answers for.

Reentry embodies and encompasses a lot. The first time I was allowed to go out into my city, I got lost four or five times. Getting lost as a grown ass man? It did something to me. It also means finding work.

Where am I going to work?

How am I going to work?

How am I going to make money?

It’s the most important thing, getting a job. I feel like one of the attachments of being in a halfway house should be that they have jobs that are commonly available. You can’t reach a lot of resources until up to 8 days after you’ve been in the halfway house.

You have to wait, wait to get clothes, wait, wait, what am I waiting for?



I’ve been having trouble simply finding information, like can I use my pell grant? There are programs there to help us, but it’s not enough. But I have to figure it out. Me going back is not an option, as part of reentry I watch every step that I take.

29 years and 10 months.

I do definitely feel like I’ve been left behind. I don’t know if I’ll ever be able

CONTINUED ON PG. 8

HOUSING

TAKING ROOT IN SOCIETY

Aaron Tiscione

Parole and probation. People often think of these terms when considering the “end of sentence” process for former offenders but 40 percent of those facing reentry get released at the end of their sentence with no supervision at all. According to Andrew Clark, director of the nonprofit Institute of Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP), which tracks a range of issues related to incarceration, some of the former offenders simply can’t get a sponsor. In other situations, offenders may choose to spend their entire sentence in prison or are not given the choice if they have violated parole in the past, or convicted of a particular crime.

The transition for any individual from the heavily structured environment of prison to living as an independent adult who must find housing, food, work and community,



DIRECTOR OF IMRP, ANDREW CLARK

remains fraught with challenges, but for those released with no supervision, the experience looks and feels like shooting through a basketball rim with no net.

No sound, nothing to aim for, and often a feeling you’re not sure if you’ve even “made” a shot or just hit air.

“They’ve been incarcerated so long, they don’t even know where to start,” Clark, who has worked on these issues for decades in Connecticut, says while reflecting on this unique subgroup.

“They don’t have a job when they are leaving, and sometimes don’t have the necessary things in place to secure housing. It’s not something the state pays for or secures.”

Of course, the state does provide halfway houses for many of the 60 percent on probation or parole, but to stay in the system the residents must find work. If they don’t, they can find themselves with minimum personal possessions and little support. Halfway houses in Hartford do drop off individuals at a DOC reentry welcome center, but that program is not sustained statewide.

Parole Manager of the DOC Mental Health Unit, Gringas, suggests that the state consider allowing “benefits to be turned on a month or so prior to them being released from the halfway house to allow them to

CONTINUED ON PG. 9

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ADDICTION, PRISON, REENTRY
BREAKING THE CHAIN

—
Eva Carragher

On average, nine out of 10 newly incarcerated people in Connecticut have a substance abuse history, which can include anything from drug use to alcoholism. The Department of Correction faces major challenges setting up programs to address the needs of each incoming group, but, actually, it can be even more difficult to assist those leaving prison. For those facing reentry, the sudden transition back into society without the supportive infrastructure prison offers can prove daunting.

DOC's Deputy Warden of Addiction Services Violette explains that they have crafted a multi-tiered system for substance abusers on probation, parole or simply released without restrictions (See Aaron Tiscione's "Taking Root in Society" for more about the different levels of support.) A person leaving prison

often has no guaranteed housing, food, the community they built inside, or the professional staff on-hand. Add to the list a need to volunteer for and sustain ongoing substance abuse counseling and self-care, and, as Violette says, "The hard reality of trauma, lifestyle, and peer pressure," can make sustaining any gains made in prison especially challenging.

The tiered system aspires to re-create a chance to sustain healthy patterns of behavior and counseling initiated within the framework of the prison. Some sign-up for one of two weekly out-patient programs, while others join a four-month residential program, yet, per Violette, the most successful option is a six-month residential program in a modified therapeutic community setting. Obviously, as the most sustained and time-intensive program, it's also the most costly, but according to Violette, it boasts a 60 percent success rate, an exceptional statistic that outstrips even national community-based programs for all citizens struggling with substance abuse. The key: "It mirrors the sustained support from within the prison system," Violette says.



DEPUTY WARDEN OF ADDICTION VIOLETTE

As Frank Rodriguez makes clear in his essay with CCSU author Makenzie Ozycz, "Here I Sit Alive and Well," wrestling with his drug addiction was crucial to his successful reentry.

"I really hated facing my drinking and

CONTINUED ON PG. 9

SMART RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR YOUNGER OFFENDERS

The SMART Recovery Program serves young adults 18-to-25-years old in multiple locations around the state and encourages family involvement that inspires cohesiveness and avoids enabling behavior or divisiveness. Its foundation is based on a voluntary group-driven peer support mode that measures success by how often participants return. While the court system requires involvement in drug or alcohol rehabilitative programs for original offenses, once a person enters the prison system it becomes voluntary. Upon reentry into the community it remains optional.

Nationwide, approximately 20 million Americans ages 12 and older battle substance abuse, with about two-thirds struggling with alcohol, another third



with drugs, and, of course, some with both. Studies show that children raised by a substance abuser are four times as likely to also go down that toxic road. Reentry programs often must navigate returning a young individual to a "home" environment that simply exacerbates rather than ameliorates the substance abuse cycle

"A person in recovery will struggle with triggers when around friends and family that use," says Violette, the Department of Corrections Deputy Warden of Addiction Services. "They can attempt to avoid triggers by attending outside treatment and engaging in SMART Recovery in their community."

PORTRAITS INTRODUCTION

“WHO WOULD YOU WANT
AS YOUR NEIGHBOR?”

—
CONT.

and Barry Scheck, aims to exonerate wrongly convicted persons through DNA testing. They label these “miscarriages of justice” at the unreal estimate of about one percent of the U.S. prison population; this equals to currently around 23,000 people serving time for a crime they never committed. While 1 percent seems like the loneliest number, even one individual serving a

sentence they don’t deserve is a terrible injustice, and that number equals to about 0.00005% out of the current 2.3 million people who make up the U.S. prison population.

As Henry Carter makes clear in his reflections on reentry after three decades in prison, no matter who is facing reentry, no matter their race, gender, age, or religion, “someone who has done an extended period of time incarcerated still has humanity in them.” They are still citizens of this country, trying every day to do, and be, better than the day before. They often face trials, troubles, and stigmatizations that work against them while they try to do that.

These portraits are not just about the data, the statistics, or the numbers, though they are important on paper. These portraits are not just about the man bagging your groceries, who served 12 years for marijuana possession, or the women serving you your coffee, who was wrongly convicted and lost 20 years of her life for it.

These portraits are about your need as a citizen of Connecticut, for the 468 per 100,000 people in our prison system, to educate yourself about the tremendous challenges reentry poses for all, and the communal net our society must create in order to support these individuals taking their first step out into freedom.

SENIORS FROM PRISON TO NURSING HOME

—
Rebecca George

60 West is the only nursing home in Connecticut that specializes in accepting formerly incarcerated older adults. According to a Health Services Unit Discharge Planner at the Department of Corrections, Porter, who specializes in connecting elderly prisoners to vital resources during their reentry into society, many nursing homes have the attitude, “We don’t take people like that.”

Michael Jarrett explains he faced that sort of negative stigma and pressure in general when he first left prison after serving 35 years on a murder charge.

“I was not offered food stamps, was not offered medical insurance, and had no place to live.”

Out on commissioner’s parole for good behavior, Jarrett wasn’t sure where he could turn.

“The Commissioner knew I wasn’t just going to murder anyone. Not all murderers are serial killers. Murders are crimes of passion.”

The fact that those 65 and older have the lowest recidivism rate also worked in Jarrett’s favor.

When 60 West accepted him, he found the structure and overall support system an ideal bridge between living in prison and transitioning to society.

“At 60 West the food is heavenly, the bed is heavenly. The bed in prison was

like sleeping on a 1-inch plank wrapped in cloth. There were women! And they started talking to me all the time. I get to see kids now! It was so long since I’d seen a kid.”

Every inmate that leaves prison faces unique mental, physical and financial challenges, but studies show that many seniors have the added obstacle of having aged on a physiological level 10 to 15 years more than their free counterparts in society. That can translate into needing the support of a life-care facility or nursing home at a much earlier age, but, as Porter pointed out, the stigma of incarceration can be a formidable obstacle to good placement.

“Placement options can be limited because it depends on what a person was incarcerated for. No families are going to want to hear that ‘my roommate was once upon a time incarcerated for murder.’”

Michael credits a good social worker, Mimi, involved in DOC reentry programs, with making his move to 60 West possible.

“She worked hard for me because of my great record and because she knows I help people.”

Of course, in spring 2020, more than 40 percent of all Covid-19 deaths in Connecticut were in nursing homes and life-care facilities, but Michael remained



60 WEST, RETIREMENT HOME

CONTINUED ON PG. 8

SENIORS FROM PRISON TO NURSING HOME

—
CONT.

positive about his living situation.

"They're doing everything they can to take care of us. You should see it, People are walking around in hazmat suits. Masks, cover-alls. You ever seen that movie ET?" He giggled. "It looks like that scene where ET is sick and the government is trying to experiment on him. They are doing everything they can to keep us safe."

60 West is now rated one of the best nursing homes in the nation, though its opening was originally rejected by the town on the basis that it would be accepting formally incarcerated individuals. Michael raves about the quality of programs provided by 60 West to help him get back out into society.

Going from jail to the nursing home was like "going from purgatory to heaven."



PORTRAITS "WISDOM, THAT'S FREE"

—
CONT.

to catch up no matter how much I accomplish. I feel that a lot of people don't understand me, or my situation, even the ones who have done as much time as I have. I've felt there's some things I can't make up for. And I feel like I'm being left behind even now.

And society is looking at us differently, they will continue to no matter what, no matter what the law says about me. We're misunderstood as returning citizens.

Before my sentence I was not a believer too much into the depth of PTSD, but I have been finding that my problems are surfacing now. One of my main issues is anger. Anger is what fueled me to keep going on the inside, what allowed me to not give up, it was the petroleum. Now that I'm out, I'm aware when I'm angry. I know what ticks me off. When I run into someone who has a very beautiful personality, someone really happy or optimistic, it fascinates me. I want to know what gives them that energy. It's infectious to me.

There are times right now when I don't sleep for up to two days at a time, the post-traumatic stress is the irritability from that. Even when I'm out there just walking around I get spooked easily, a lot of people are watching my back.

I have anxiety attacks now.

I have to be hyper vigilant. PTSD is definitely real.

Misrepresentation is a big issue for me. I love to joke, I love to have fun, and people think I'm an asshole.

I think that people need to realize that someone that has done an extended period of incarceration still has humanity in them. The proverbial idea that people don't change? That's absolutely incorrect. When you go into prison an angry person,

and you find a certain peace, and now you're more into introspection? Those people aren't faking it.

Incarcerated individuals, we're people just like everyone else. People always judge books by their covers, it's just that our covers have a conviction on it. When you treat convicts with respect though, they respond with respect. Don't just frown on them. If you turn someone down all the time you're just pushing them into a corner, and at what point do they stop trying?

I have hope that someday I will shake the stigma surrounding being a formerly incarcerated individual. But I receive so much resistance. It's hard to continue on with that hope, with that faith, in the face of that resistance. I'm persistent, but I get discouraged pretty easily. I am pretty strongminded, but like I said it's hard, and lately I've been identifying the cracks and the crevices.

"I had never been on the Internet. I had never Googled anything, never used a cellphone."

I remember when I got out, all I wanted was some BBQ ribs. My craving for them was so strong after so many years. I remember I got them, I ate the ribs, and I felt depressed. I was like, "is this it?"

But I think it's just that I'm finding what is and isn't important. BBQ ribs aren't that important.

To me one of my greatest achievements would be to become successful, and show that I can overcome it. To show that no matter what I've done, I still have a heart. I give back, I do what I can, I speak to kids, to colleges, if someone asks, I'll do it in a heartbeat.

If I can impart some wisdom on you, that's free.

HOUSING

TAKING ROOT IN SOCIETY

—
CONT.

have money saved up to leave.”

And it’s no coincidence that a parole supervisor is discussing housing and financial resources, because without these mainstays, it’s almost impossible for an individual facing reentry to secure any footing. Clark insists that actually “housing is the number one issue people face when re-entering society.”

Yet for 40 percent of those leaving prison, there’s not even the option of a halfway house.

Clark mentioned the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, a nonpartisan, non-profit group, which attempts to make the transition safer and more reliable for former offenders. Unfortunately, certain societal issues, such as stigma from housing authorities or potential employers, can make the process more difficult. According to its website, “Of the 11 million people detained or incarcerated in jails every year nationally, as many as 15 percent report having been homeless. Roughly 48,000 people entering shelters

every year are coming nearly directly from prisons or jails.” This statistic depicts a vicious cycle of homelessness resulting in criminal punishment and criminal punishment leading to further homelessness.

These numbers help elucidate that without a proper home at the root of one’s life, being able to hold a job or maintain any sense of social stability becomes much more difficult.

“Of the 11 million people detained or incarcerated in jails every year nationally, as many as 15 percent report having been homeless.”

— CT Coalition to End Homelessness

A 2017 study found that 27 percent of former offenders in the United States suffered from unemployment, compared to the national average of 4.1 percent in the same year. Last year, Connecticut became a pilot state for the “Million Jobs” campaign by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in an attempt to get major businesses to



hire former inmates and train them in skills that lead to more permanent jobs.

With similar intent, nursing home 60 West of Rocky Hill, the only facility in the state specialized for former offenders, is aiming to provide housing for seniors facing reentry (See “SENIORS: From Prison to Nursing Home” by Rebecca George). Solutions to these problems lie in specialized programs like these that aim to provide stability through the intersection of employment and housing. This structured communication, when paired with programs by the DOC, nonprofit organizations, and governmental social services, will be the best approach in ensuring former offenders have a fair chance as people to start a new life for themselves once they have served their time.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ADDICTION, PRISON, REENTRY BREAKING THE CHAIN

—
CONT.

drug addiction because it was so embarrassing to me,” but he had to do precisely that to secure any semblance of true freedom and escape the stigma of “reentry” by securing a job and attending college.

“Teaching new skills, offering goal directed changes in lifestyle and support,” DOC’s Violette claims, remain the most cost-effective—and humane—way to achieve successful reentry and cut back on the recidivism rate, which studies show can be as high as 80 percent within a five-year period.

Often, the greatest goal might be to simply “instill hope,” she says.

One tier at a time.



PORTRAITS

"HERE I SIT, ALIVE AND WELL"

—
CONT.

This overall "sense of reentry" did end, for me, though. Funnily enough it actually ended when I started taking classes at MCC (Manchester Community College). While I was in school, I discovered a passion for travel, and once my supervisory conditions ended, stuff like drug testing and probation officer meetings, I left for Africa. Overseas I felt a different sense of freedom, because of that a lot of my bad habits started to come crawling back.

I decided to write about it.

Some of the writing was definitely sensationalized. In all honesty, I really hated facing my drinking and drug addiction because it was so embarrassing to me.

Even though my bad habits didn't end completely, I still feel that emotionally and environmentally I reached a different place with reentering society. But, personally, I think I'll always be a little bit scared of making another mistake that will land me back in Hartford County, so I don't know, it's complicated.

I was incarcerated for one year.

Eleven months and seventeen days to be exact.

I suppose in that time period I missed on little things, like playing music with my band, or when one of my close



FRANK RODRIGUEZ

friends moved away, but nothing major. In those days I was younger, I felt that nothing really mattered, I guess that's why I don't feel like I truly missed out on anything.

One thing that changed while I was incarcerated was that I wasn't really ever close with my family, but when I went away my father ended up being the only member of my family to come visit me, every single month. He never really asked me about the "why" of anything, and I think sometimes he visited because he felt duty bound, but in the end it made us a lot closer.

When I got out, I was able to register my address with him, and I was finally able to get away from certain bad influences.

I've always had certain issues with depression and anxiety. I don't feel unique, and it's something that I've been dealing with all my life, long before incarceration. While incarcerated, I was treated really well by corrections staff in Hartford County, sure everyone was stern, but if you gave them respect, they gave it back to you. I never got into any fights, not even verbally, I followed all the rules. I suppose that maybe now that might have been out of fear, or anxiety.

Don't get me wrong, to this day I still hate any authority that thinks it has any rights over my existence, but I was hurting people, and I was killing myself with drugs and alcohol. I think I needed to be incarcerated, if only to stop the pain I was causing my friends, my brothers, and myself.

I was arrested six times in high school, eventually I was even expelled. I had a reputation that gave me "credit" amongst my peers for that. Only now, as a 31-year old man, do I see how inherently valueless it all was. My adult arrest record was for:

- Possession of a controlled substance
- Resisting and assault on a police officer
- Breach of peace
- Possession of stolen property

I suddenly felt far less "badass." I was just a junkie trying to get high. Now I had charges, which included felonies, and nowhere to go. I felt awful. I still don't know why I didn't kill myself back then. But, here I sit, alive and well.

Today, I am a relatively successful adult. I work full time, I have an apartment, a car, and can generally pay most of my bills. I feel far less ashamed. And now I feel good talking about it because I know that that lost 18-year old isn't who I am anymore. It's a long way from where I once was. I can say that I have been very lucky, and now I know that 31-year old Frank Rodriguez is not 18-year old Frank Rodriguez.



MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SOURCES

Introduction: Portraits Makenzie Ozycz

(Offender Reentry defined by National Institute of Corrections) <https://nicic.gov/offender-reentry-transition>

(Stats on release) US Department of Justice, 2015 report cited in nicic.gov (incarceration rate in CT) <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/CT.html>

(Innocence Project) <https://www.innocenceproject.org/how-many-innocent-people-are-in-prison>

Portrait: Frank Rodriguez With Makenzie Ozycz

Phone and email interviews, April/May 2020

Portrait: Henry Carter

Phone and email interviews, March/April 2020

Housing Taking Root in Society Aaron Tiscione

(Connecticut became a pilot state for the “Million Jobs” campaign by NAACP) Backus, Lisa. CT to Help 10,000 Felons Get a Job in 3 Years. Middletown Press, 11 July 2019, www.middletownpress.com/middletown/article/10-000-CT-felons-could-get-a-job-in-next-3-years-14088688.php.

(some of the former offenders simply can’t get a sponsor) Clark, Andrew, Director of IMRP, Phone Interview on 04/24/2020

(They’ve been incarcerated so long, they don’t even know where to start.) Ibid

(halfway houses and employment) Ibid

(15 percent homeless.) Criminal Justice Involvement and Homelessness. Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, cceh.org/criminal-justice-involvement-and-homelessness/

(National unemployment average of 4.1% in the 2017) M. Dunn and A. Blank. “Job market continued to improve in 2017 as the unemployment rate declined to a 17-year low,” Monthly Labor Review, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2018. doi: 10.21916/mlr.2018.11.

(Recommend turn on benefits prior to release) Gringas, Parole Manager of the DOC Mental Health Unit, Email Correspondence between 04/07/2020 and 04/22/2020

(27% of former offenders unemployed) S. Shannon, C. Uggen, J. Schnittker, M. Thompson, S. Wakefield, and M. Massoglia. 2017. The Growth, Scope, and Spatial Distribution of People With Felony Records in the United States, 1948-2010. Demography.

Substance Abuse Eva Carragher

DOC Deputy Warden of Addiction Services, Violette, phone and email interviews April 2020

(statistic that DOC Tier-4 rate outstrips even national community-based programs for all citizens struggling with substance abuse) <https://teenchallengeusa.org/about/success-stories>

(achieve successful re-entry and cut back on the recidivism rate, which studies show can be as high as 80 percent within a five-year period) <https://portal.ct.gov/DOC/Common-Elements/Common-Elements/Recidivism>

SMART Recovery Program

(Studies show that children raised by a substance abuser are four times as likely to also go down that toxic road) <https://www.bhpalmbeach.com/recovery-articles/impact-substance-abuse-and-addiction-families/> and citation from National Survey on Drug Use & Health, National Institutes of Health

(Nearly 20 million Americans battle substance abuse; also breakdown of percentages)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64123/>

(Continuity of care is crucial to success) Violette, DOC

Seniors Rebecca George

DOC Health Services Unit Discharge Planner Porter, interviews phone and email, April 2020

Interview, phone, Michael Jarrett, resident 60 West, April 2020

(older adults lowest recidivism rate) Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, Justice Policy Journal, Rakes et. al. 2018; http://www.cjcr.org/uploads/cjcr/documents/recidivism_among_older_adults_correlates_of_prison_reentry.pdf

(growing older physiologically behind bars) <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/08/24/do-you-age-faster-in-prison> and National Center for Biotechnical Information, NIH

“Nursing Home Deaths Soar in CT,” by Zach Murdock and Dave Altimari, Hartford Courant, April 30, 2020

“Rocky Hill’s 60 West Nursing Home Names One of Best in US News and World Report,” Kathleen McWilliams, Hartford Courant, November 19, 2018

“Rocky Hill Returns to Fight 60 West,” Kathleen McWilliams, Hartford Courant, August 10, 2017