

# VOICE

2020 / Issue 11

REENTRY PROFILE



Tony served time in prison, was released early, and is currently navigating the road to reentry:

"I recently got out of prison after spending 41 months in there from being convicted of assaulting a peace officer with a deadly weapon. And [I] was given a 14-year sentence for the assault and the gun enhancement.

"The gun enhancement was tossed out, so I was able to get out other than doing the full sentence. While I was in, I fought my case. Prior to that, I was a budding contractor. I was getting apartment contracts where I would do drywall, landscape, painting, electrical, roofing—whatever they needed. I'd get that contract and basically get first dibs on the job.

"I recently finished my master's [degree] in Christian Studies, with the emphasis on Pastoral Care. And, just prior to being shot by the police, I had just got accepted into the doctoral program with Grand Canyon University online, to become a Christian school administrator. [Getting locked up] stopped everything.

"I've been married for 25 years. I fathered seven kids, and I lost three to strange and unusual deaths. It's been a challenge these past few years, due to this incident with the police officer. I hate to keep harping on it, but it's such a big deal in my life right now.

"I believe I am physically incapable to do what I was doing before. And I have actually given some thought to some things: to do whatever else I can do to create an income.

"Right now, I'm just hanging out at my mom's house and seeing where this case is going to go, as far as appeal. And I really would like to have this felony removed off of my record, 'cause it just doesn't make sense.

"My doctor connected me to the REMEDY [support group] on Thursday evenings. And there, I met Arlinda Simmons Love, who suggested that I try to get into the Alpha Program. So I did. It was such a close call. I was told that it was filled up and I was like, 'No way!' But somebody made a way for me. I mean, to the very last minute, like three minutes before [the start of the program], I was able to log in on Zoom and get in the group.

"[Alpha] has been really great. I really, really do enjoy it. It kinda reminds me of when I was in the VA and in substance abuse recovery programs. We kinda got into cognitive distortion and everything. That was such a long time ago, but it's great to get a reminder. Thinking for a change: I'm actually exercising that right now in my comings and goings, and dealing with people. And it's wonderful. It's empowering. One of the things I'm considering, after graduation, is to maybe become involved and be a coach, or something. Because I think I have some things to contribute.

"I just can't take 'no' for an answer, if there's any way around it. My grandfather probably did that to me. He took me when I was like eight years old. He started me to working, and he gave me work ethics. He imparted **CONTINUES ON PAGE 2**



DID YOU KNOW



Updates on COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to impact everyone across the world, but especially men and women confined in close quarters, such as jails and prisons. Remember you can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking these three simple precautions:

*Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.*

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water. Why? Washing your hands with soap and water kills viruses that may be on your hands.

Maintain a distance of 3 ft. to 6 ft. from anyone who is coughing or sneezing. Why? When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray droplets from their nose or mouth, which may contain the virus. If you are too close, you are more likely to breathe in the droplets. **CONTINUES ON PAGE 3**

EDITORS' NOTES

Dear readers,

This summer is unprecedented. Lots of changes are happening both inside and outside of jails and prisons. Some changes are long overdue, and they are being voiced and demanded by more people more loudly, across all states and nations. Changes to health care, quality education, permanent housing, and stable employment. Changes to the way people are treated and treat one another. COVID-19 is reshaping our world. It's showing that we need to act collectively, in unity and in solidarity. It really is all of us or none.

In your hands are stories about determination and getting back on one's feet; tips on how to navigate jail for inmates and caregivers; new information on the COVID-19 pandemic; and what a reimagined reentry looks like. Taken together, we hope that they encourage you to think about what's possible in your future.

Pat

Pat Mims  
Reentry Success Center

Patrice

Patrice Guillory  
The Reentry Network

P.S. Not on our mailing list? Write us, and let us know where to send our newsletters to you.



# Navigate County Jail for People in Custody and Their Caregivers

Jails are complicated places, and they are run differently in each county. While local authorities are required by law to have an orientation program and to have it be accessible to anyone who requests it, the reality is that often it's not. ProPublica, a public interest news organization, offers five tips to help navigate them.

**1 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**  
**People in Custody:** Since each county runs its jails differently, you'll need to find out your local jail's rules first. If you have access to a computer, the county's standards, policies, and procedures should be on the website of the county sheriff's office.

**Caregivers:** Family members can request a copy of the information that people in custody are supposed to receive by calling or emailing the county sheriff's office. If the county replies that the handbook is not online, they should ask for an email address to request it through the California Public Records Act.

California has specific rights for life inside jails, like health care, mental health, nutrition, mail, and discipline. These rights are covered by Title 15. Issues related to jail buildings are covered by Title 24, the state building code.

On the national level, it's important to remember that you have rights protected by the U.S. Constitution and the Americans with Disabilities Act. New cases are decided every year that set examples of the ways that people in custody can use these laws.

Many of these rules are confusing. Many of the laws are unclear. There are groups and lawyers around the state that can help you figure out your rights. It will require some research to find the people that do this work in your county. Groups that can help you get started include the Prison Law Office, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, and ACLU California.

**2 KEEP RECORDS OF WHAT CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AND OTHER JAIL STAFF SAY OR DO TO YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE.**

**People in Custody:** To keep track, you can file grievances and tell a loved one what's happening over a phone call. Tell your caregivers to record or take notes with whatever they have available.

Stay in touch with people on the outside. If something goes wrong, try to tell someone on

the outside about it. Send them any proof you can use as a backup.

Tell the truth about your medical condition during your initial booking process with jail medical staff.

**Caregivers:** Reach out to jail staff if your loved one needs help with mental health or medical-related issues. He or she may not be able to advocate for themselves. Always contact jail staff if your loved one wants to talk about mental health or medical-related issues.

Get access to your loved one's medical records. You will need to submit a HIPAA release form to the jail to get permission to look at a loved one's records. Your loved one will need to sign it, too. An attorney can help with that. Call your local jail to get a copy of this form. You might be asked to send in a form with a copy of your ID and proof of address.

Provide your loved one's medical history to the jails. Caregivers should send information about a loved one's current medications and medical and psychiatric history directly to the jail. If your county doesn't have a form to complete this step, you can find direct phone numbers for medical and mental health care on the county sheriff's website.

**3 IF YOU ASK FOR HELP FOR YOURSELF OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW AND DON'T GET A RESPONSE, KEEP ASKING RESPECTFULLY.**

Being persistent can help you get wins on the inside and the outside.

**People in Custody:** If you need help, ask for it often. Always bring up mental health and medical issues, but avoid abusing the grievance process. If the grievance process isn't getting you anywhere, you can tell your attorney. Also, talk with service providers whom you trust and seek their advice.

**Caregivers:** If your loved one on the inside needs help, don't be afraid to ask for "reasonable accommodations" or changes to your loved one's housing. Do your research to figure out whom you need to speak with to make your time on the phone more efficient. Call the jail with questions, and follow up in writing over email if it's a serious matter. Be respectfully assertive with your request.

**4 KEEP YOUR MIND OCCUPIED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.**

Jails across the country use this punishment. If you find yourself in this situation, there are steps you can take to make the time less painful.

## TONY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

all of this wisdom to me. I really got to hang out with him for a while. He was a real determined kind of person, too. So I guess I emulated him. I'm determined, just like when I started my business; I was determined to make that thing work. It took 24 years before I started getting the kinds of bids that I felt were worthy of the effort, but they started coming. They started coming, man. Same thing with getting my degree and going back to school.

"I worked full time, and took care of my wife, and tried to run the business, and worked online with my computer everywhere I went. That's determination right there. I'd be dead tired, but I'd still muster up a couple of hours to do my homework or whatever opportunity I could find [time] to squeeze that in. I did pretty good, too. I

got a 3.8 [Grade Point Average].

"At one point in life, I wasn't doing well. I encountered programs and they've pointed me in a certain direction. I'd like to create that direction for somebody else. Just having direction, not just nonchalantly going through life, but actually having direction and a goal. It's first like getting a job, then getting a place to stay, then getting a car, then getting in a relationship, then becoming a responsible citizen, again, and parent. I'll do whatever it takes to pursue those goals. I was inspired, and the avenue for me wasn't easy. You got to want it.

"Get support. Get a plan. And try to stick to it as close as possible. If you have to get a planner, or whatever, keep it in front of you at all times.

"Whenever you can, be kind."

**People in Custody:** Try to stay engaged. Draw, write—anything to stay positive. Also, keep up a routine. Tasks like exercising or keeping your cell clean can give a sense of control while in solitary.

**Caregivers:** If your loved one on the inside needs help, keep in touch. If possible, put some money in your loved one's account to help them get the tools to make their time inside easier. Send letters and stay connected.

**5 IF YOU WANT TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION, PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A LONG ROAD.**

**People in Custody:** Grievances can be important. Filing a grievance—which is a complaint you fill out while in jail—can be a frustrating process. And, unfortunately, it may not resolve your issue. But attorneys may use the grievances you file to show that the complaint route was exhausted.

Find a lawyer, if you can. If cost is an issue, see if you can find someone to represent you free-of-charge and for the public good. This is known as pro bono.

**Caregivers:** Be ready for the process. You may decide to take legal action because your loved one feels like he or she is not being heard, or that they are getting the runaround. The process can be long and invasive. You need to prepare to answer questions about medical records, work history, and finances. Ask yourself if you're mentally and emotionally prepared for this, and think about what they want out of a lawsuit.

## REENTRY Q&A

Angelo Perez works at an oil change shop. He had been living in a shelter, but now has housing. He likes music, and has a 7-year-old son. "I just recently got him back. I got him back October last year, and have had him since. I've been doing really good."

**How does it feel to be a dad?**

"It's good. It was kind of a shock, at first, because I didn't plan to get him back that soon, but I kind of had to. But everything's working out perfect now. [My son] likes to draw and stuff. He likes to read."

**If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would that word be?**

"Grateful. Because I've come a long way from where I used to be, to where I am today."

**What has been the most helpful part of your reentry?**

"The rehab I went to. I went to Salvation Army, graduated there, and got out. Then I met up with my probation officer. He asked if I wanted a re-entry guidance counselor. I said, sure. He's been excellent. He's helped me a lot. He's constantly checking on me, asking if I'm good. He brings gift cards and stuff like that, to assist my needs. I get a follow-up at least once a week—if not, once every other week."

**What advice would you offer a loved one who's about to be released?**

"I would say that, if you're close to getting out and you're scared that you're going to go back to that lifestyle, look to get assistance from places like HealthRight 360 and other reentry programs that are available in offering services. You don't have to go back to the lifestyle you used to live."

**Any additional thoughts?**

"That's pretty much it."

## Reimagining What Reentry Could Look Like

Men and women awaiting their release often plan their future by considering the following questions: Where can I get a job? How can I find housing? And, how can I get food on the table? There’s no doubt these questions are important: they are tied to staying alive.

But what about: Am I emotionally stable? Do I have the emotional stability that I need to come back into my family and community? Do I have the emotional stability to achieve my life goals? Answering these questions is more difficult, because fewer people ask them. It’s also easier to answer what it takes to stay alive than to think about and act towards thriving in society.

Everyone is born into a unique set of circumstances and learns different sets of skills throughout their life. Anger, for example, is a universal human emotion: everyone experiences it. But how one handles anger requires remembering that choices are available, understanding those choices, and deciding on the choice that has a greater likelihood of leading to positive outcomes.

When you feel angry, what do you do? Is your response healthy? How do you know?

Dr. Bernice King, daughter of famed civil rights leader Mr. Luther King Jr., shared her journey with anger this way: “I fought that demon a long time.”

“Change never comes through violence. It is not a solution,” she said, of her discovery. “Violence, in fact, creates more problems. Nonviolent way is the way because the means and the ends have to be consistent.”

The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader known for his teachings on nonviolence, once was said to have met a palm reader. The palm reader asked the Dalai Lama if he could read the Dalai Lama’s hands. The Dalai Lama consented.

*Everyone learns different sets of skills throughout their life.*

When the palm reader saw the lines on the spiritual leader’s hands, he gasped and looked confused. He said, “Your holiness, the lines on your hand are telling me that you are a very angry man.”

The Dalai Lama smiled, looked at his own hand, and met the palm reader’s eyes. “Dear follower, that is true. I am angry,” the Dalai Lama said. “But I choose not to let my anger overwhelm, control, and define me.”

Grace Lee Boggs, a movement builder and

social activist, learned that “being a victim of oppression in the United States is not enough to make you revolutionary, just as dropping out of your mother’s womb is not enough to make you human.”

“People who are full of hate and anger against their oppressors or who only see us versus them can make a rebellion but not a revolution,” Boggs said, of her discovery. “The oppressed internalize the values of the oppressor. Therefore, any group that achieves power, no matter how oppressed, is not going to act differently from their oppressors as long as they have not confronted the values that they have internalized and consciously adopted different values.”

When you feel angry, what do you do? Is your response healthy? How do you know?

What are some of the emotional skills that you rely on—that ground you—in order to stay emotionally stable? What are some of the challenges that you’re facing in the practice to be more emotionally skillful? In our upcoming issues, we will continue to explore emotions and the skills and tools needed to thrive upon reentry.

*We want to hear from you. Please write to us and we will do our best to share your story. (You are permitted to send up to two (2) letters per week, of any length and in any language. On the envelope, be sure to include your first and last name, and your booking number.)*

### COVID-19, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer viruses to the eyes, nose, and mouth. From there, the viruses can enter the body and cause the infection.

Make sure that you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. If tissue is available, use that and throw it in the trash immediately afterwards. Seek medical attention and a CDC-approved test if you experience cough, fever, and difficulty breathing.

*In-custody and reentry services have been impacted by this outbreak. Men and women awaiting release and in need of supportive services, please send an inmate request through the Adult School to Game Plan for Success. They will connect you to the Reentry Success Center or The Reentry Network.*


### Is it a Cold, Flu, or Coronavirus?

SYMPTOMS		COLD	FLU	CORONAVIRUS
	Fever	Rare	Yes, often high	Yes
	Cough	Mild to moderate	Yes	Yes, typically dry
	Shortness of breath	Rare	Yes	Yes
	Fatigue, weakness	Mild	Yes	Yes
	Headache	Rare	Yes	Sometimes
	Muscle aches	Slight	Yes, often	Yes
	Sneezing	Common	Sometimes	No
	Sore throat	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Stuffy or runny nose	Common	Sometimes	Rare
	New loss of taste and smell	Common	Rare	Yes
	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea	No	Sometimes in children, Rare in adults	Yes




EVENTS

TUESDAYS (ONGOING)

**Forward Thinking Men's Group**   
5:30-7:30pm, open to men for decompression and sharing of challenges, barriers, achievements, and everyday events, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 838 3610 6614, Passcode: 537151)


WEDNESDAYS (ONGOING)

**Restorative Practices: Arts Class**   
5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 853 0178 5241, Passcode: 144468)






THURSDAYS (ONGOING)

**Restorative Circles**   
5:30-7:30pm, open to community, members, and drop-ins, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 813 1747 0885, Passcode: 370520)

FRIDAYS (ONGOING)

**Women's Group**   
5:30-7:30pm, a safe space open to women for engaging conversations related to everyday life, Reentry Success Center through the Zoom videoconferencing app, <https://rubiconprograms.zoom.us> (Meeting ID: 819 7876 0844, Passcode: 087117)

OTHER

**Transportation Services**       
8:30am-8:00pm, Monday-Friday, available for free to all justice-impacted members in Contra Costa County for medical appointments, legal appointments, COVID-19 testing, probation services, job interviews, and more; call (510) 679-2122 for more information; people who are in custody and awaiting release from county jail, please connect to this service through the Game Change for Success (GPS) program

**Mobile Resource App**       
Housing assistance, employment, education, vocational training, legal services, recovery support, and family support services made accessible directly on a smartphone, through the following QR Code:



Reentry Network App

EXPLORATIONS

*We want to promote your artwork, photography, and poetry. Please write us at one of the mailing addresses below. Be sure to include "Reentry Newsletter Explorations" in the subject line.*

POETRY

Poems by Judy ("Never Give Up") and Harold Keasan Banks & Ms. T. Anaya ("San Quentin")

NEVER GIVE UP

I NEVER GAVE UP ON ME  
WAS BLINDED BUT NOW I CAN CLEARLY SEE  
TOO MUCH WAS HARD AND A LOT WAS  
AT STAKE  
MOVED CAREFULLY CAUSE THERE WAS  
NO ROOM FOR MISTAKES  
MANY HAVE COME INTO MY LIFE FOR  
A REASON  
NOW THAT THEY'VE MOVED ON I'M IN  
MY SEASON  
BEING STILL AND BEING QUIET IS A  
LESSON I'VE LEARNED  
NO MORE ROAD BLOCKS I'M MAKING A  
RIGHT TURN  
I NEVER GAVE UP EVEN WHEN I LOST  
EVERYTHING  
THROUGH IT ALL I CAN ADJUST MY CROWN  
AND KNOW THAT I'M STILL A QUEEN

SAN QUENTIN

The voice, a sound formed in the larynx & uttered by the mouth, a spoken or written expression, right to express an opinion, & what for, just to be heard, to seem like you are doing something important, or for the purpose of achieving a goal, for the better of all the people, will you tune in even when its most direct & important to be heard is one thing but to be able to listen & fully be receptive to the message that is being presented to you that is something else, that requires patience, keen listening with clarity, to the mentality to understand what is being said, before thinking about being understood by anyone, then & only then will you know one's true interest as to whether or not that one is truly about you & willing to become interdependent with you, by first being independent, having been determined & having the will to do & be more of an individual by separating themselves from others & by making that statement & having the courage to speak when other people are stuttering or speaking up under their breath, see that is what attracts me, its magnetic, calling my name, so platonic yet factual & fruitful at the same time, my ears remain open, my heart is devoted to the truth, not my truth, so much so that even when you do not speak, & your silence roars louder than the African Pride, I remain optimistic & await to have you take your place, as that one, who is a true teammate & is the reflection of representation, then, I think you have, The Voice

GAMES

Fill in the blank squares, so each row, each column, and each block contain all digits 1 thru 9. Answers will be in the next issue.

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2		1	4	7		8		
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	6		1					
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ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

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9	7	1	6	4	5	2	8	3
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4	3	8	7	2	6	9	5	1
5	6	2	9	1	4	3	7	8
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912 Macdonald Avenue  
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[reentrysuccess.org](http://reentrysuccess.org)



Reentry Network at HealthRight 360  
5119 Lone Tree Way  
Antioch, CA 94531  
[healthRIGHT360.org](http://healthRIGHT360.org)



Contra Costa County  
30 Muir Road  
Martinez, CA 94553  
[co.contra-costa.ca.us](http://co.contra-costa.ca.us)

The following icons are included in the sections and next to specific events as a visual aid, for readers who prefer to scan our content. We hope you find them useful.



Housing



Education



Benefits



Family



Health



Legal



Financial



Employment