

VOICE

Issue 14 / 2021

REENTRY PROFILE



Kenneth got out July 17, 2020. If he had to describe himself in one word, that word would be persistent.

“When I get a goal in mind, or when I have something in mind, that’s what I put all my energy and focus into. I’ve basically been like that my whole life. Once something is in my mind, like, that’s what it has to take to get there. That’s what I’m gonna do. With all the trials and tribulations of it—it’s just a stepping stone to the end result, good or bad.

“Getting back on my feet is not only just getting a job or getting something monetarily, it’s leaving prison with the gate money that I had and turning it into something, and turning my life around. I knew what I was doing was a destructive path. I was in there with people that have life sentences, that have been in there longer than I’ve been alive. One thing I realized is everything has changed. So for me to do this, is just self destruction, and there’s no point to it anymore.

“Getting back on my feet was leaving prison having an established goal. When I went to prison, I broke the relationship with my wife, with my family. I didn’t just hurt myself, I hurt them. And for me, family is a big thing. Having a plan before I came out helped, but also going to a transitional home. Taking a job that I did not want—knowing that’s what I needed to do. Staying busy and staying accountable to people. And really just focusing on the relationships in my life.

“They allowed me to be where I am, because now I have people in my corner. I have people that see that I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. They’re proud of me for it. For once in my life I’m actually having people telling me that they’re proud of me, not just looking the other way, like, ‘Here’s this mess-up.’

“My changes happened at a couple points. One happened before I was in prison. Some stuff happened in the neighborhood. I didn’t agree with what was going on. So, my decisions

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The Reentry Success Center is open 7 days a week!
Monday – Friday: 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Sunday: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm, by phone only
Call (800) 816-4453 to get started

REENTRY PROFILE



Christine walks fast, talks fast, yet also practices something that many people would find challenging: trusting their intuition.

“I got a DUI on September 3, 2020. And I’ve been trying to get a handle on the drinking for a few years now. I’m just really grateful to have all this help and support from the Reentry Success Center.

“I was kind of going through it when I had COVID, when COVID hit. I’ve been in grocery for 30 years, and we were using carts that weren’t clean. I was often, like, go, go, go. I was shopping with two carts at a time, sometimes three. It was challenging and fun. But I was really exposed.

“My parents are both 80. They also didn’t give us gloves. I was washing my hands so much that rashes broke out all the way up to my elbows. And then it got to be really stressful.

“I just wear a mask and not do the COVID thing right now. I resigned from that job to protect my parents. I feel grateful that I have gotten so much

help from Brittany [at the Center]. The Reentry Success Center gave me a laptop. I’ve got all kinds of counseling and the class support.

“I don’t have any money coming in. I’m not getting unemployment or anything right now. I’m just getting—hopefully—a little bit of disability.

“I’m happy, I guess, and pretty joyous. And grateful. I’m grateful for so many reasons. I list them all every day. They’re just part of my journaling. I’m grateful

that I’m safe, and grateful that I didn’t hurt anyone in the car accident that left my car totaled. I’m grateful to have all this help and support. I’m grateful for the connections.

“I’m grateful to the state for this outpatient program. I’m so happy to have my health, and I can somewhere so

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

*I’m grateful to have
all this help and support.
I’m grateful for the
connection.*

EDITORS’ NOTES

Dear readers,
If there’s one word you’ll encounter often in this issue, it is grateful. Whether it’s in the story of a father who is grateful to have another chance to get things right with his wife and family, or the story of a daughter who is grateful to still be alive and live positively, or the story of a community partner that is grateful to be able to strengthen the local community, gratitude is here for you.

At the same time, we also know that being grateful can be challenging. If certain conditions aren’t in place, being able to notice gratitude might seem all but impossible. But it’s not. Like a park that has become overgrown and filled with trash and leaves, sometimes all it takes is simple awareness that things need tending and then to start sweeping. After a while, a path could appear, perhaps a new opportunity, and before long what’s impossible becomes possible.

Pat

Pat Mims
Reentry Success Center

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

KENNETH, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
were put into question. But I was already in. Eventually, my wife found out some things, and she left. I don't blame her, because I put her in a bad predicament. A couple months later, now I'm in jail.

"So I go through that whole process in jail. And I remember sitting up in reception, and I was reading a book, and for a second I just kind of put it down. So some stuff happened in reception, and it was, like, 'What...what am I doing?' I'm in a tiny cell, in San Quentin reception, sharing it with another man that I don't even know.

"Everything's just coming to me at one point, like, 'I've already been down this road before. What's really important in my life? This is obviously going nowhere. The fun in that life has been had.' Up until that point, I never realized that there was more misery.

"In the beginning, it's all interesting. It's all fun. It's all fun and games until the real consequences start happening. And the older you get, the more serious the consequences are.

"I was still suffering from certain from certain thoughts, like, 'Okay, I'm gonna do this, but I'm not I'm not gonna check in. I'm not gonna go to SMY.' Then I got to the point where I said, 'Look, I'm gonna do what I have to do to get out safely and in good graces. And then when I get out, I'm done. It's time to focus on me, because I've done enough destruction.

"I've done enough this and that, to where it doesn't make sense anymore.' I started making a plan. I actually still have it. It's a little tablet, like a writing tablet, that I had, and I put down what I wanted to accomplish.

"It comes down to this: They got to decide what they want, what their life has been, what it can be, and what they really want to do. The best way to put it is: You can't force sobriety on somebody. Somebody who gets sober does it because that's what they want to do.

"So, they got to look at it and be, like, 'Okay, this is where my life has gone.' 'This is where I want my life to be.' 'What do I need to do to get there?' Because what I've been doing in the past, obviously, is not working. It's coming up with a game plan and being honest with yourself.

"A lot of people, when they get into the lifestyle that I was in, they get this Tony Montana aspect to them. They think they're gonna be this and that. It's not a practical thought. It's not a rational thought. At the same time, at the end of the day, you're just trying to impress another man.

"My best advice is: You got to really look at yourself. It's sad, but I have friends in prison that know this is what they're going to do for the rest

of their life. I know that this is what they're gonna do for the rest of their life. Respect. That's you, but that's not everybody.

"So it really comes down to the individual. What do they want? Are they tired of being sick and tired? Are they tired of being put in handcuffs? Are they tired of everything that comes with it? Self-analysis is basically the key to it. It's hard to be honest with yourself.

Justice-impacted individuals 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 Reentry Network.

What type of support do you need? (Fill in)



What's your goal in receiving this support?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Supporting Organization (Service Provider):

Point of Contact (Full Name):

Best Way to Reach: Phone Email

Next Steps:

.....
.....
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"It took many years for me to be honest with myself. It took me a long time to realize. For a long time, it was, 'F— the police.' They locked me up. They did this. But that's not the case. I put myself in that predicament. I put myself in a situation for me to get arrested. I violated the law. So now I

gotta sit down and pay the price.

"It also comes down to maturity, I guess. It's what's inside. It has nothing to do with the number. Yeah. Well, and then and also, you know, something you said again, I say it really takes self actualization and and that's hard work. That's really hard work.

"My wife taught me to love myself and never give up, because there is a future. One thing I love about her—at the end of the day, even if I'm having a hard day—she'll remind me of what I'm working for. And she makes me want to do better. Just putting one foot in front of the other, knowing which direction you're going, is where I'm at right now.

"My plan I put into goals that I wanted to accomplish. And then I put them into the timeframe that I wanted to accomplish them. So, for example, one of them was to get a job. And then I had on another page what I wanted to accomplish in a day when I got out, what I wanted to accomplish in a month when I got out, what I wanted to accomplish in six months.

"I messed up a lot of family aspects when I went inside. Monetarily, I was I was broken. One of the goals was to be financially stable. But one of the biggest goals was to be happy. I knew that I was going to be going through a lot of changes—that things were not going to be easy.

"Luckily, I had my wife to support me. But I had to mend a lot of fences. I had to do this. So I came out and got right to work on the plan. I'm getting there. I have a sense of freedom that I've never had before.

"I don't have something looming over my back that I'm worried about. I have a job. I have a good relationship. I have a hobby that I really enjoy. I'm finding positive ways to entertain myself now. So my life has gotten a lot more interesting. Things that I never thought I would be doing, I've done.

"Two big things in the future: one of them is to have a career. Tesla has been great to me. I've been working hard. The reason I say that is because it gets me to the point to where, without a career or without legal money, I can't do the things that I want to do.

"It's not just about the career, it's taking care of my family. It's being able to afford vacations. Little things, you know? Luckily, my schedule is workable. I work 12-hour shifts. I have three days off right now. And I'll have two days off next week.

"One of the next goals, and it might be through Tesla, but I do want to go back to go back to school. Another one of my goals, when I got out, was to get my high school diploma. And I got that. Now, I want to go to community college and take that next step."

CHRISTINE, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
nice and be around my parents for a little while, you know? And just the time that I get to spend with them. I'm so grateful to have my parents still here. And that they didn't get COVID, and that they're okay. And my family's okay.

"What's been the most helpful to me is a combination of everything. I'm fortunate there are meetings across the street from my house. And riding my bike, and hiking, and meditation. Music. Getting my health back. Drinking too much was like the opposite spectrum of Christine, because I love to go, go, go.

"I think that's the biggest reason why I drank is because it just helped me stop and not do anything. It was the exact opposite of what I want to do, what I want to get done.

"The advice I would give someone who's about to reenter society is to stick with the program. It's every day. Go your meetings. Journal. And reach out. There's all kinds of help and support out there, you know. Stick with it, and don't give up. For example, when I crashed my bike recently, I was told just to Netflix for two days, and that's not what I wanted to do.

"I knew that I needed to be my own physical therapist, and I got up and I started walking 6-7 miles every day. I just make sure I'm doing something to make me feel good. That's exercise and getting outside, being in nature. That's number one for me. That generates happiness and good energy for the rest of the day.

"Because I move fast, talk fast, I need more chill. I would even like walk through the house fast

and the door would actually accidentally slam. My dad would be, like, 'Come on.' Now, I'm really careful. I realize I am like this huge ball of energy.

"I think everybody knows, deep inside, what makes them happy. Just stay in tune with it, and don't let that go. For me, it's exercise, hiking, biking, basketball. Do what makes you happy and healthy. And take care of yourself. Love yourself. That's number one. If you don't love yourself, you can't love others right. When I was just drinking, I wasn't able to love anybody, or be a friend, or be a daughter, or be present. Take care of yourself. Love yourself and the rest flows."

Christine looks forward to moving to Oregon, to work on a farm. She invited her interviewer to skip for a few minutes, and swing on the swings, like kids do. "It's so, so healing."

Richmond Main Street Initiative: Building Support and Community

The City of Pride and Purpose, Richmond was incorporated on August 7, 1905 and is the largest city in West Contra Costa County. Richmond Main Street Initiative, or simply Richmond Main Street, is a community-based organization dedicated to revitalizing historic Downtown Richmond. It envisions the area as a pedestrian-friendly urban village, offering products, services, arts, and entertainment that reflect the community's rich and diverse heritage.

Since 2017, Richmond Main Street has had its sights on the Reentry Success Center as a community partner. It helps that the Reentry Success Center is on Macdonald Avenue, Richmond's main street. We sat with Alicia Gallo, interim executive director of Richmond Main Street, to discuss everything from how the organization got its start to where she sees the partnership with the Reentry Success Center going.

How did Richmond Main Street get its start?

I'd like to start a little bit further back with the history of the downtown commercial area, which really starts in the early 1900s. A couple of commercial centers popping up around the time were Point Richmond and then also Macdonald Avenue. There were businesses, points of recreation, and entertainment venues along Macdonald Avenue during that period. With World War II and the Kaiser shipyard at the Richmond port, we saw the influx and development of Macdonald Avenue from Fourth Street up towards 26th Street start to take off.

Unfortunately, post-World War II, there was a national movement towards suburbanization. It was a campaign against urban cores, and it was rooted in racism, so by the end of the 1990s, the downtown area had gained the reputation of not being a safe place to go. Richmond Main Street Initiative was formed in early 2000, officially incorporated in 2001, and became an accredited Main Street organization in 2002. Ever since that time, we've been very in tune with the community, building relationships and seeking ways to work together to bring back the downtown in a way that is for and by those who live and work in the commercial district.

When did your partnership with the Reentry Success Center begin?

I remember attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony. We were so excited, because at that time the block had been 100 percent vacant. The Reentry Success Center was a pioneer, so deeply rooted in community and also invested in a historic building. We introduced ourselves and included them in all of our communications and community outreach efforts.

When Pat Mims became the director, I reached out to welcome him to the downtown district. Almost immediately he asked about the park across the street. I gave him the history of that space. I gave him the rundown of how we use it to host various events and how our neighborhood ambassadors help maintain the space. And that, you know, we're able to do the best that we can and also always looking for partners in the work. 'I think we might be interested in that.' He was very up-front with me, which I really appreciated. He was, like, 'I'm gonna need a minute to get myself oriented here, figure out some ways to be able to then partner with you.' Early 2020 was when we were finally ready to go.

What did you set out to achieve together with the park?

Our goal to be able to take care of the space in the way that it really needs to be taken care of. It's a small space, but there's a lot of greenery, which is fantastic. It also requires ongoing, continual maintenance, which we are unable to provide and which the City of Richmond is unable to provide. We were looking for a partnership that would be able to provide that kind of ongoing care. Pat saw everything and was, like, 'This is fantastic. This outdoor space is exactly what our members talked about and creates space for the social activities that they like to do.' Everything now is in tip-top shape. It's both inviting and truly serving residents and community members.

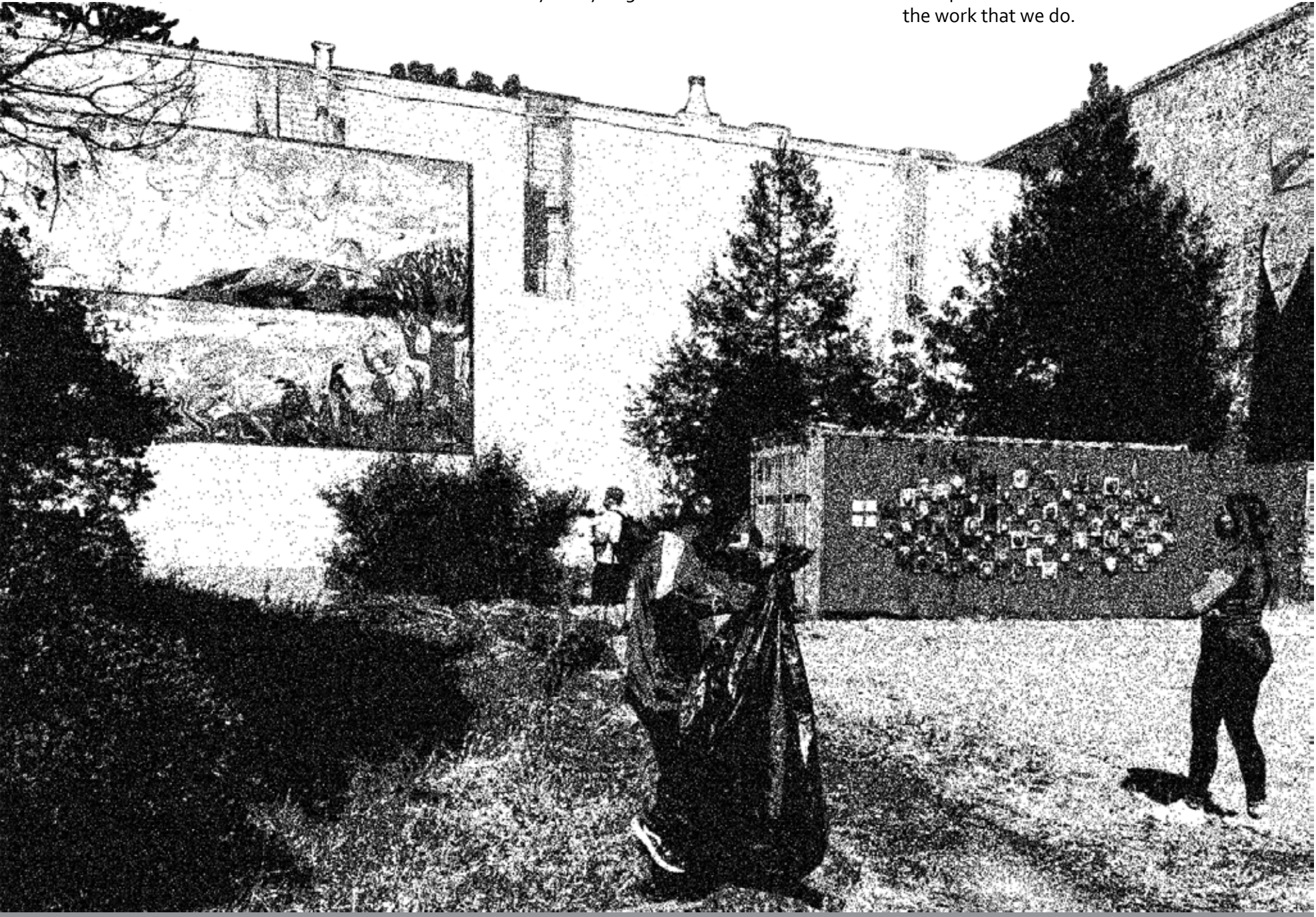
How does the partnership support justice-impacted members of the community?

What Pat shared with me was that Reentry Success Center members were looking for opportunities to give back to the community. They were asking about that park. That's a very similar perspective and approach that Richmond Main Street has in terms of the work that we do being community-based.

Once the monthly caretaking is really established, there could be opportunities for us to be able to expand the reach of the monthly program into other green spaces throughout the district. That's something we've talked about a bit and might be on the horizon.


This is all very exciting. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

We're so grateful and appreciative to have the Reentry Success Center in our downtown, both for the services that they provide to justice-impacted individuals and their families as well as for being a champion of the downtown and the work that we do.




EVENTS


MONDAYS (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)


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)

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

"Praise Song for the Day," by poet Elizabeth Alexander, delivered during the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama.

Each day we go about our business,
walking past each other, catching each other's
eyes or not, about to speak or speaking.

All about us is noise. All about us is
noise and bramble, thorn and din, each
one of our ancestors on our tongues.

Someone is stitching up a hem, darning
a hole in a uniform, patching a tire,
repairing the things in need of repair.

Someone is trying to make music somewhere,
with a pair of wooden spoons on an oil drum,
with cello, boom box, harmonica, voice.

A woman and her son wait for the bus.
A farmer considers the changing sky.
A teacher says, Take out your pencils. Begin.

We encounter each other in words, words
spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed,
words to consider, reconsider.

We cross dirt roads and highways that mark
the will of some one and then others, who said
I need to see what's on the other side.

I know there's something better down the road.

We need to find a place where we are safe.
We walk into that which we cannot yet see.

Say it plain: that many have died for this day.
Sing the names of the dead who brought us
here,
who laid the train tracks, raised the bridges,

picked the cotton and the lettuce, built
brick by brick the glittering edifices
they would then keep clean and work inside of.

Praise song for struggle, praise song for the day.
Praise song for every hand-lettered sign,
the figuring-it-out at kitchen tables.

Some live by love thy neighbor as thyself,
others by first do no harm or take no more
than you need. What if the mightiest word is
love?

Love beyond marital, filial, national,
love that casts a widening pool of light,
love with no need to pre-empt grievance.

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
any thing can be made, any sentence begun.
On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,
praise song for walking forward in that light.

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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ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

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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