2021 / Issue 12

REENTRY PROFILE



Ginae is many things: a mother, a small business owner, an entrepreneur, and someone who laughs so easily: "I have an

8-year-old daughter. Her name is Justice. I do hair. I'm a cosmetologist. I own a hair salon in Vallejo. It's been about six months. It's going pretty well due to COVID. Besides that, I've always been working—since I was 18. I don't remember not having one.

"I got into the reentry program due to a DUI case. It's still ongoing right now. So I was looking for some resources, to start getting help before the case is filed. It's not filed yet. I don't have any court dates or anything like that, but I'm waiting on it. I know it's coming. So I'm trying to get myself on the right track before they feel like I don't think anything is important or I'm not taking it seriously. I would hate for my child to grow up without me at this age. She's old enough to understand now, so I'm doing the best I can to stay out of custody.

"I ran into the Reentry Success Center, and I gave them a call. I've been meeting with Jasmine, doing the Zoom groups, and women groups, and stuff with her. She recommended the Bright Heart Health Center. They do outpatient programs. I'm now enrolled. She helped me find AA meetings.

"The Reentry Success Center was so helpful. I was telling her just recently, 'You don't even know how much you helped me.' I haven't actually met her in person, but all the resources she gave is really helping me right now. My case is looking really good. And I'm still working. She even helped me with housing and finding the job that I have now. I'm definitely not where I started.

"[Jasmine] is my reentry coach. I like being able to speak to her without being judged. I can say I have five or six DUIs now. [The Reentry Success Center] is not a judgy place. That's what I like. Some places, you're not allowed to get personal. I like that they let you be personal, but that's another thing I changed. I feel that, speaking with [Jasmine], I don't have to lie or hold anything back. They let you sit there and cry or whatever, if you need to. I lost someone real close to me before I got the DUI, which is a reason why I started drinking [again] and getting in more trouble. But [Jasmine] found me a therapist.

"I'm very motivated. I believe one side knows when something needs to be done or I want to do something. I'll put 110% into it—until it's great. [Motivation] is something that I need. Some things don't motivate me, but I can make a way out of nothing.

"This last situation that I'm going through right now, I've been kind of, like, 'Oh my god.' I'm through with it. I'm through with the alcohol, all the partying, and the trouble, and the police. I'm just tired of it. [Jasmine] gave me motivation to be, like, 'Okay, then do it. Don't keep saying it, do it.' I'm at the point now where I'm, like, 'Okay, let's go.' CONTINUES ON PAGE 2



DID YOU KNOW



COVID-19's Negative Impacts

Since our first report on COVID-19 last Winter-Spring 2020, the world's leading public health organizations have learned a lot more about how easily this illness passes from person to person. The World Health Organization (WHO) now advises everyone to avoid what it calls the 3Cs: spaces that are closed, crowded, and involve close contact.

Unfortunately, what the WHO describes is essentially the typical jail and prison. Men and women in custody are being infected by COVID-19 at higher rates. What's worse: fewer resources are available, and reliable information on COVID-19's negative impacts is more difficult to find. Below is a running list of negative impacts that we are following, as well as suggested remedies.

LONG COVID AND NEW VARIANTS

Long COVID is also known as long-haul COVID and chronic COVID syndrome (CCS). What the scientific community across the world knows is that about 10 percent of people who get infected with COVID-19 con- CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

EDITORS' NOTES

Dear readers,

This newspaper that you have in your hands requires a team effort. Many people play a role. We know, through our lived experience, that we are in this together.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to reshape our world and affect all people. This issue aspires to keep you updated on what our members are going through and what strategies they are using in order to stay focused and alive. We share messages of hope and of victory. We also share messages of warning, especially regarding this virus, which continues to evolve and wreak havoc for folks both inside and outside.

Additionally, we want to take this time to remind you that you are not alone. You're always welcome to write to us prior to your release. You're always welcome to contact us when you're seeking community. We are here for you.

Pat Mims Reentry Success Center 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.



Proposition 17 Allows Parolees to Vote

Voting with a criminal record is complicated. Almost every state has a different set to follow. In Maine and Vermont, people in custody can vote. Seventeen states, however, prohibit those in custody from voting. Nineteen states allow people convicted of felonies, but who are on parole, to vote. Then there are the seven states, including Iowa, Kentucky, and Virginia, which prohibit people with certain felonies from ever regaining the right to vote.

Where does California stand?

Until this year, California was one of three states that required both completion of the sentence

and completion of parole before one could regain the right to vote. The passage of Proposition 17 last November effectively removes the second requirement. Now, men and women on parole can vote.

How important is a vote? In the recent presidential race, record numbers of voters sent in their ballots or completed them in person at polling sites all across the nation. Organizations such as Black Voters Matter and the Poor People's Campaign focused their energies on lifting up populations that historically have been excluded or suppressed from voting: poor working-class Black, Latino, Asian, and white communities. Members of those communities, many of whom exercised their right to vote for the first time,

helped elect a new president (Joe R. Biden) and new leadership.

In Georgia, newly elected Senator Raphael Warnock grew up in public housing as one of 12 children. In a radio interview last year, Warnock said, "My mother is 82 years old. As a Black teenager growing up in the 1950s, she went to Center High School, but she spent her summers picking somebody else's tobacco and somebody else's cotton. And the other day, she got to help pick her youngest son to be the next United States senator from the great state of Georgia."

Proposition 17 in California, led by Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), passed by 58.5 percent (yes) to 41.5 percent (no). Mc-Carty also served as the lead author.

REENTRY PROFILE



Lashele, a recent Alpha program graduate, has three children: 11-year-old twins and a 14-yearold son with special needs. "I manage a lot," she said. "He's sight impaired. He has 'vision impair-

"We'd been homeless for four and a half years. We were blessed to get a place right before Christmas. I've just been getting acclimated to being in my own space and just doing what I do: cooking, cleaning, yelling at the kids.

"If I didn't have them, I don't know where I would be. I get up because of them. I opened my eyes because of them. I opened my eyes because of my family. And if I didn't have this, I don't know where I would be, to be quite frank.

"My mother is from Washington. She's a traveler. I was born in Orlando, FL. We moved [to Richmond] when I was two. Then I left and went back to Florida when I was 13. I've been [back in Richmond] for 20-something years now. Florida is my home base. That's where all my family is.

"If I could describe myself in one word, I would say that I am easy-going. I would—no, no, no. That's not true. I've never really thought about myself in one word. I am...a mother. My kids are my everything. I wouldn't have a life if I don't have them.

"I've been in prison. I've been in jail. I've done it all. I never got a handle on my situation. I was locked up [many] times, so I never quite got it. I never understood the consequences of doing things the right way. I never got that. I have the skills, the motivation. There were staff members that came in and talked and had all the outlets. I chose not to take them.

"The last time I got locked up, I was stealing out of a store. I had my son with me, and, like I said, he's special needs. They were gonna call [Child Protective Services] on me to come and get my son. That put me in a whole other timeframe. It straightened me up—a little bit. Just so they wouldn't take my son. 'Get your act together or this is what we're gonna do.' I couldn't afford that, because of his condition. So, I found a job, found a young man that was decent. I'm still with him today, but that didn't matter, you know? I still did what I wanted to do.

"I went to jail six years ago. I had some counterfeit \$50 deals. I hadn't learned my lesson. By that time, I had the twins. It's been a life experience just knowing that everything can be taken away from you at the drop of a dime for a penny or whatever you want to call it. When it was just me, I didn't care. But being that I have my kids, it's a little different—a lot different.

"I was on the verge of losing my kids to my husband, on the verge of losing my marriage. It's been a lot for me to get to where I'm at, to understand stability and understand their feelings. And when I mess up, they lose out, so it's not just about me. I was being selfish to them. I wasn't thinking about my family. I was just thinking about me. I was the reason why we were homeless. I wasn't paying the bills. I was just entertaining friends and, if they needed it, then I got it. It's cost me my rent money, my grocery money.

"That was the type of situation that I put my family in. That's the type of person that I thought

I wanted to be. But then, when I got into that situation, nobody was there to have my back. When I was sleeping in my car, there was nobody there for me. I put myself in that situation.

"The last motel that I was in was not the last. The last several motels that I was in, it just became overwhelming. 'You got kids.' I'm thinking, in my mind, 'You don't want your kids growing up thinking that this type of stuff is okay. You want them to understand stability, responsibility, and those types of things.' And it just wasn't okay for me. Once I got to Vallejo and we started staying in the Carquinez Inn, it was just like, 'I will call my [case] worker in Contra Costa County.' They were helping me with the housing voucher for the hotel. I'd been in several different motels with my

"I went through wanting a divorce and [my family] trying to take my kids from me. It just wasn't working for me. They were staying at my sister's house, but they just weren't being treated fairly. So I had to figure out something. So they came and stayed with me at the [Bay Area Rescue Mission].

"I connected with Ana [at the Reentry Success Center] when I was in the mission. She was my coach. I stayed in contact with her and she stayed in contact with me throughout the COVID [pandemic]. I went through [the Alpha program before], but didn't complete it because there was a lot on my plate. I picked it up [a second time] when I was in the motel. Again, Ana stayed in contact. I stayed in contact with her, and here I am. Wow.

"I don't believe in the perfect aspect of anything because if we were perfect, we wouldn't make the mistakes that we make. So, I don't teach my kids that they have to strive to be perfect. You strive to do your best. If you fall off the horse, dust yourself off and get back up there. I was selfish. What I got out of it is a better understanding of their feelings, my feelings, my emotions, what sets me off. I'm trying to be a lot more humble."

GINAE, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"I'm proud to be my own self. The first two, three, four times, I was, like, 'Okay, I'm not in trouble. I'm not in jail still.' But now, I'm looking at a felony. Now it's, like, 'Oh shit.' Apparently I have six DUIs right now—the other five were already prosecuted and I got an ankle monitor. Now that I'm really looking at some real serious trouble, I don't want to keep going through this."

Her advice to loved ones who are about to reenter society: "Don't be a product of your surroundings. Being around certain things will pull you into it. You got to think above it and want better for yourself. That's what I would tell my younger self.

"I'm thinking of the mistakes I've made. I know better now. I wish I knew, like I had someone before this to tell me. But I don't: it's just me and my daughter. Moving around with friends who don't have kids and stuff like that, I wish I could've sat and thought and, like, 'I can't do this, because if this happens to me, who's going to get hurt?' I never thought like that. Now I do.

"Anything you want to do and you put your mind to, it's possible. The thought that I would own a business, especially with [COVID] going on, is something I really wanted and I worked hard to get it. Last year, I never would have thought, like, 'Oh, that's going to be mine.' It's easier to give up than to try, but it pays off once you put an effort into what you want. You gotta want it."



The Role of Faith in Reentry

In our previous issue, we began to reimagine what reentry could look like. We focused on emotional stability as an important tool towards reentering successfully and accomplishing one's goals. It's one thing to collect inspirational quotes by famous people and role models. It's another thing to put them to good use—to actually put those quotes into practice. That's the challenging part, because being emotionally stable is a daily practice.

Dr. Bernice King, the Dalai Lama, and Grace Lee Boggs practiced for a very long time before they mastered their emotional responses to anger. Each one of them relied on their faith to get them through their challenges.

Faith, as it's mentioned here, often gets mixed up with religion. Many people assume the two words mean the same thing. They don't. The first definition of "faith" in most dictionaries is "fidelity to one's promises." In other words, faith is directly tied to commitment—what one commits to oneself and to others.

"Faith" in the dictionary means "fidelity to one's promises."

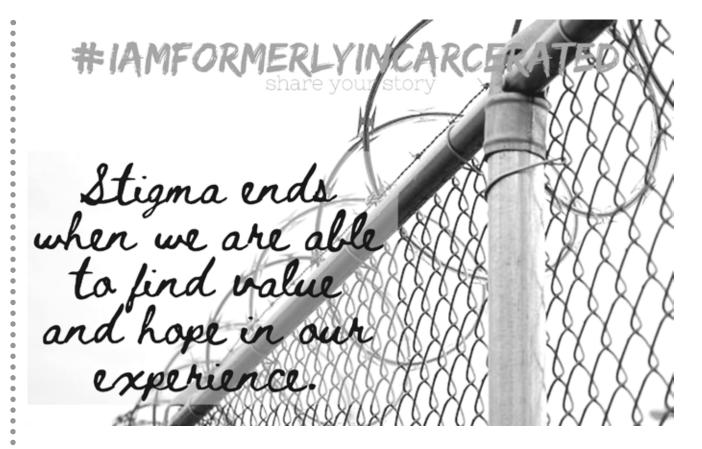
How many times have you promised to do one thing and then done the complete opposite? That would be an example of when faith is lacking. How many times have you committed to improving yourself and done all the steps necessary towards accomplishing your goal? That would be an example of when faith is present.

The second definition of "faith" connects to religious teachings. Some people simply prefer to rely on a higher power—or powers—to provide guidance and support. That's okay, too. What's important to understand and remember is that faith is an extremely powerful mindset. Without faith, success becomes more difficult to achieve. Why? Faith in practice is directly opposite the feeling of closing down, shutting off, and giving up. Faith has a way of opening the heart and mind to what's truly possible.

Take, for example, the goal of staying connected to family while locked up. How would you achieve that? List all the possibilities, including asking family members to write a number of times a month, committing yourself to writing to loved ones at least once a week, and connecting loved ones to supporting organizations to strengthen your resolve as well as theirs. Like everyone, you will have good days and you will have bad days. On those bad days, doubt will almost certainly try to sink you, but that's when you can counter doubt with faith. It's during such times when faith has the ability to remind you that you have the power to get back on track—to stay connected.

What are your thoughts on faith? When has faith failed you? When has faith helped you rise

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.)



Stigma (noun): stig·ma; plural stigmas or stigmata

According to Encyclopedia.com, stigma is a Greek word that in its origins referred to a kind of tattoo mark that was cut or burned into the skin of criminals, slaves, or traitors in order to visibly identify them as blemished or morally polluted persons.

Society still places stigma on individuals, and the worst part is that they don't have to physically mark our bodies because sometimes we do it to ourselves. Sometimes the shame from the things that we have done goes deep and the only way to begin to heal from this is to realize that our bad decisions do not have to become our identity. Society may call us names and impose labels on us but we can flip the script and show that there is HOPE, that incarceration was not the end of our journey but an opportunity to learn and grow.

#IAMFORMERLYINCARCERATED

To submit a story that can inspire others to change or to connect, please write to:

HOPE STORIES 5119 Lone Tree Way Antioch, CA 94531

COVID-19, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

tinue to experience symptoms long after the 2-3 weeks when the illness should have completed its course. Long COVID symptoms include loss of taste and smell, extreme tiredness, muscle weakness, memory lapses, and mood changes, including depression. The causes of this chronic response by some people are not yet known and possible remedies are still being collected.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants emerge and persist. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic."

The most effective ways to minimize infection continue to be (1) washing your hands regularly with soap and water, (2) maintaining a distance of 3 ft. to 6 ft. from anyone who is coughing or sneezing, and (3) avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Outside jails and prisons, the most important tool to avoid infection is to cover your nose and mouth with layers of cloth—but not so much that you have trouble breathing. This face covering should be worn whenever outside and in public, and also when interacting with people outside of your household.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL IMPACTS

Even before COVID-19, justice-impacted individuals experienced greater mental and physical issues. This pandemic has only those issues more

challenging to treat, but in some ways it has made them easier to notice. Now, it's more common for people to share feelings of isolation and worry. It's also more common to share personal concerns related to sudden and long-term aches and pains. It's likely the person doing the listening has experienced the same mental and physical issues. The remedies remain the same as they were before COVID, except now it's even more important to take notice when things just don't feel right and to rely on trusted friends to stay mentally and physically positive.

FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

COVID-19 has also exposed inequalities related to income and connections to communities. The saying, "Money doesn't buy happiness," could be true, but having money to buy groceries and pay rent and bills doesn't hurt either. Right now, a lot of families are hurting financially. This is especially true for Black and brown families that historically have been left out of qualifying for the safety nets which insure or protect housing, education, and banking. It's challenging to feel peace-of-mind. While there's no easy remedy for such impacts, the Reentry Success Center and The Reentry Network are available to meet with justice-impacted individuals and their families to explore what supports are available.

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.

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

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:

Game Change for Success (GPS) program



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

Excerpt from "The Hill We Climb," by Amanda Gorman. She delivered this poem during a live broadcast of the 46th presidential inauguration on January 20, 2021.

We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be:

A country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free.

We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation

because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation.

Our blunders become their burdens.

But one thing is certain:

If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change, our children's birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.

With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.

We will rise from the golden hills of the west.

We will rise from the wind-swept north-east where our forefathers first realized revolution.

We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.

We will rise from the sun-baked south.

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.

In every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country, our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge, battered and beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.

The new dawn blooms as we free it.

For there is always light,

if only we're brave enough to see it.

If only we're brave enough to be it.

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.

CURRENT ISSUE

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ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS ISSUE

Contra Costa Reentry VOICE is published quarterly by the following organizations:



Reentry Success Center 912 Macdonald Avenue Richmond, CA 94801 reentrysuccess.org



Reentry Network at HealthRight 360 5119 Lone Tree Way Antioch, CA 94531 healthRIGHT36o.org



Contra Costa County 30 Muir Road Martinez, CA 94553 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



Family



Financial

Employment



Education



Legal



Health