



# BLACK TABLE TALK



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## Chairman's Thoughts

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*In light of bill 2023-061, Safer Stronger Amendment Act of 2023, we would like to reiterate the importance of the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016.*

*Introduced first in 2016, The Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act, known as IRAA, allows for incarcerated residents who committed serious crimes before their 18th birthday to petition the court to reevaluate their sentencing following at least 15 years of completion of the original sentence. Rather than taking a harsher punitive stance, the act allows for proper consideration of the individual's personal history. By allowing this, factors such as environment, personal growth, rehabilitation progress, and much more is taken into account when evaluating whether or not to change the original sentence. Since the original bill's passing, numerous additions have expanded who qualifies for review, as seen with both the Second look Amendment Act of 2019 and the Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Act of 2020.*

*IRAA has gone above and beyond in showing the importance of judicial review and consideration of all personal circumstances in sentencing. An adolescent does not have proper decision-making skills in comparison to an adult, are extremely susceptible to fail to recognize all of the risks associated with crime, and to give into peer pressure and negative influence of others. Children who grow up surrounded by poverty, inequality, unstable families, drug usage, and so much more become psychologically traumatized in many cases from this exposure. These negative factors discussed that can influence criminal activity often impact children and adolescents far more seriously than a fully developed adult, thus it is unfair in many situations that mature adults who have taken strides to improve themselves are still serving time for a crime committed decades ago. IRAA has dozens of success stories, individuals are truly given a second chance at life again because of it.*

*Mayor Muriel Bowser's Safer Stronger Amendment Act of 2023 contains many instances of approaches that pose risks of harming our communities, especially in the case of juvenile justice. A major component of the Safer Stronger Amendment is the emphasis on increased penalties for violent crimes that victimize or target vulnerable residents with physical or mental impairments as well as expanded*

*protections for transit and for-hire vehicle employees, transit passengers, and people at rec centers.*

*Crimes largely committed by juveniles in DC are crucial for us to stop nonetheless but are indicative of a much larger issue that is being ignored. We must invest in our communities more. Further creating punitive sentencing measures without any sort of increased community efforts and involvement will continue the detrimental cycle of over sentencing, and in this case, it is our youth that may suffer the most. DC is ridden with social inequality, gentrification, and poverty in so many areas- committing to fixing these issues will also largely decrease the city's crime rates.*

*Each day we continue to focus more and more on increasing penalties and deterrence-based practices despite the ever so obvious cries of help from dozens of communities here. We cannot allow our residents to keep suffering from these factors that we, as a city, are well aware of.*

*We already see far too much opposition to resentencing appeals, and even though The Safer Stronger Amendment claims to honor increasing discretion in these instances, it is not enough. The U.S. The Attorney's office challenges individuals despite the protection provided by IRAA, and with increasing punitive measures will come more and more legal challenges that will deny individuals the chance of renewal at life. IRAA grants will likely decrease as a result, and the mayor will be granted further discretion over sentencing guidelines. This bill additionally further raises privacy concerns relative to GPS and camera use, thus violating constituents' rights with these new policies.*

*Because incarceration changes one's life in so many ways through limiting employment, housing, and stability, we strongly support resentencing acts. The Safer Stronger Amendment Act poses too large of a risk to strip dozens of individuals of the chance of early release and will complicate existing acts that favor judicial sentencing review for juvenile offenders. We hope the harm associated with the Safer Stronger Amendment Act continues to be brought to attention in light of this bill's current legislative review.*

## *Black Table Talk Spotlight*

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Julia Leland, a Freshman at American University, completed her internship at The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens from January-April 2023.

Mr. Travis Register, Housing Coordinator with The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens, interviewed Ms. Julia Leland on her experience with the Reentry Community and The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens.

Travis: Hello Everybody, Good Afternoon. I'd like to welcome you to The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens.

I am your host, Mr. Travis Register, and I have a very special guest with us this afternoon. Please state your name.

Julia: Hi, Julia ... and I'm an intern here at The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens.

Travis: How you doing today, Julia?

Julia: Good, pretty good, how are you?

Travis: I'm doing well. How's work going?

Julia: Good! Yeah, we got some good stuff done today.

Travis: Okay.

Julia: Got the social media set up.

Travis: Good, good

Travis: So, you said you were an intern here?

Julia: yeah.

Travis: So, where are you coming from?

Julia: I'm originally from Ann Harbor, Massachusetts, which is 20 miles north of Boston. But I moved to D.C. for school. I go to American University, and I'm a freshman there.

Travis: AU!

Julia: yup.

(They both laugh).

Travis: Okay. And you're a freshman?



Julia: yeah

Travis: How many years are you on?

Julia: I'll be there for four years.

Travis: Okay. You're majoring in what?

Julia: Political science, um, but I might also be studying justice and law. So doing that combination.

Travis: Okay, that works. That brings us to our next question then. What made you intern here?

Julia: Yeah, so I've always been very passionate about criminal legal system reform. In my sophomore year, for an assignment, I had to read a book and write a report on it. And I chose the book Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson.

Travis: mhm

Julia: And that book completely shifted exactly what I wanted to do because previously I was interested in being a prosecutor.

Travis: hm!

Julia: and I viewed the criminal legal system as a system that was intended to put away people that do harm and protect society. But after reading that book, I really realized a lot of the flaws, and it shifted my mindset completely and I realized that I wanted to work on a completely different side of the criminal legal system and try to make a change and make it a little more equitable. Um, so it started off with an interest specifically in the death penalty. I'm very against the death penalty, even more so after reading that book, but it kind of just went further and further from that, that I realized, wow, like a lot of different parts of the system are messed up. It's not exclusively the death penalty, just, the entire carceral system itself. So, I definitely wanted to work somewhere, or intern somewhere related to that, and I found out about The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens from my professor, um, who teaches an intro to law class.

Travis: I'm glad that you're passionate about change because it's always good to read or even watch movies something like Just Mercy, and for it to hit home to just one, it's done its job.

Julia: yeah, yeah.

Travis: So, for you, to change your old skin for what you're going to school for, uh, not wanting to be a prosecutor, you know, they're the bad guys anyway.

Julia: yeah, my whole mindset completely shifted. I learned a lot since then, and you know, um, I also read "A Prison Obsolete" by Angela Davis, and "We Do This Till They Free Us" by Mariama

Kaaba. Reading from Black revolutionary authors changed my whole mindset on the carceral system. But it definitely started with Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson.

Travis: Have you watched the movie yet?

Julia: I haven't watched the movie!

Travis: You got to see the movie.

Julia: I know I got to see the movie, but the book did such a great job. I always hate to watch movies after the books because I'm usually disappointed. But I'll watch it.

Travis: You're right because, you know, the books always have more detail...

Julia: yeah.

Travis: ... than the movies.

Julia: It's just that first-person account of someone working it like, it just, telling their own story, versus the remake... I don't know if it can top the book, but I'll definitely check it out.

Travis: Wait a minute now, I don't think it'll top the book, but you know, at least you got the picture, at least you got the point...

Julia: yeah, yeah.

Travis: ... Mission accomplished on that. Which brings me to our next question. What do you look to take from here? Since you're interning here at The National Reentry Network.

Julia: Well – everything that I knew about the criminal legal system was from books, was from professors that read books, was from a very academic, hypothetical, separated sense. Coming here was really just, the biggest takeaway was really learning from people who actually experience the system, with first-person accounts who can tell, who can explain what it's really like. Like speaking to the clients, and the class, speaking to my coworkers telling their stories, the true takeaway that I'm getting from here is just human connection and human experience and hearing from them. Because we can debate back and forth in federal, global, and state governments about what we think criminal legal system policy should look like, but we cannot forget that these policies are actually impacting people and it's so important to learn directly from them what their experiences were, and how they won't make, or want the system to look like.

Travis: Mhm. I liked it when you said that, what you read on the pages is so much different, once you came here and started interacting with returning citizens and seeing first-hand what they're actually going through, as well as myself, I think it's needed.

Julia: Absolutely

Travis: I think more of the youth that is going through law school, or looking to work in the system, I think they should sit down with a returning citizen and get the ins and outs...

Julia: yeah absolutely.

Travis: ... along with the material that's in the books.

Julia: Absolutely. I think it's so important that people going into the legal field understand: One, what demographics are being disproportionately impacted by it and Two, what, communicating with people in prison or going through the justice system, or legal system, and then three, after people are released. Because I think you need a full perspective of what the system does to people and how the system impacts people. Only getting one side of the story or only speaking to people in prison, or only speaking to people before, you're missing a big part of the picture.

Travis: The future. The future! You see that world? That's the future right there!

(Julia laughs)

Travis: Love it! I love it I love it.

Julia: Thank you.

Travis: What do you plan on doing after you graduate?

Julia: Yeah, I'd say right after graduation, um, there's one organization I'm very interested in – the DC public defender service. I'd love to be an investigative specialist for them, so basically support prosecutors, or sorry, not prosecutors, support public defenders in reviewing body cams, other surveillance, interviewing witnesses, as well as, specifically, particularly character witnesses. Trying to help prosecutors come up with mitigating factors that they can present to try to help their client either, um after their convicted particularly, help their client get a lower sentence, um because I'm not planning on going right into law school, I'm not sure if I want to go to law school yet, but I think that would be something I'd be really interested in right after, um graduation, Supporting public defenders in that. And then maybe at some point becoming a public defender, but we'll see. We'll see, I have a couple of years left to figure that out.

Travis: I tell you what, I can give you a couple names, uh because I'm sitting right here in front of you because of PDS. Public defender services.

Julia: oh really?

Travis: yeah, uh, they were very instrumental.

Julia: They're very instrumental, they're such an important organization, very cool. I just spoke with an investigative specialist from there, I had to interview her for a class, and really get her perspective on what it was like working there, and she just let me know it's hard work, its stressful...



Travis: It is.

Julia: ... you have a lot of clients at once because they're so underfunded, they don't have the resources they need or deserve, but it's very important work.

Travis: very important.

Julia: yeah.

Travis: I would definitely support you. Yeah, I'd probably be your number-one fan.

Julia: (laughs) I'd appreciate it!

Travis: Yeah, once we're done, I'll make sure you get a couple of names...

Julia: Okay, that'd be awesome!

Travis: ...PDS, they're very compassionate, very driven. And these days and times, to have people that care, for men and women, who will be coming home, has a positive impact. Money isn't the motivation for PDS, freeing men and women is what they strive for. They are going to get paid regardless.

Julia: They would not be there if it wasn't for the money, they don't get paid nearly enough for the effort and the hours, and the blood, sweat, and tears that they put in after that, they're there because they're so passionate about helping people, and about showing compassion to a group of people that are not shown compassion enough.

Travis: mhm. Shout out to Olivia Gee, Shout out Katherine Janes, a couple of my lawyers, down there in PDS. I've experienced their work personally.

Julia: yeah.

Travis: So, to you taking that avenue, kudos and congrats and I hope you know throughout the years things can change, just stay on the path.

Julia: yeah, all right, thank you!

Travis: It was a pleasure interviewing you.

Julia: thank you, it was good talking to you.

Travis: you're only going to be with us until April 27<sup>th</sup>.

Julia: yeah, done at the end of the month, unfortunately.

Travis: yeah, it's the sad thing about being an intern. We're getting used to having you around here. You have a beautiful spirit, and you add to the vibe.

Julia: thank you, but you know I'm going home for the summer, in the fall I'm going to find another place to keep doing what I'm doing because I'm so passionate about fighting for this

issue. So, it's definitely not going to, I might be done with the national reentry network for returning citizens right now, but I'm going to be continuing this for sure. I learned a lot here. I learned something new every day, I'm going to learn for the next month, and then I'm going to go somewhere else and learn more.

Travis: right. The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Julia: yeah.

Travis: Well Julia, we thank you. Continue the good work. Don't allow your work to sour you, remain strong remain sweet.

Julia: Alright, thank you so much.

Travis: The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens is signing off, you have a good day.

# *Prison to Promise*

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Greetings,

My name is Travis Register. I am the Housing Coordinator for the NRNRC. I am a returning citizen as well. I was recently released from prison after 27 years, on February 14, 2023. I returned home on the DC law, the Second Look Amendment Act of 2019, now known as the “Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Act” in 2020. It’s an expansion of the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act (IRAA). I was convicted of second-degree murder at the age of 23, I’m now 50. Prison woke me up as soon as I was in the bullpen of DC Jail. I knew I had to switch it up. The way that I thought, the way I understood, and the way that I behaved, had to change, and it needed to change starting in that DC Jail bullpen. My sole motivation was to one day make it home to my six-month-old daughter. I felt like I needed to put God first

to make all this happen. Prison was foreign to me, so I had to learn everything because it was a new culture, step by step and blink by blink. I started to learn quickly that I had to be positive in a negative environment. It was hard in the beginning but worth a chance at freedom. Being very attentive will cause you to become very wise.



This advocacy message is titled “Prison to Promise”. We will be focusing on the transition of that. Prison and promise are two very common words that affect us in life-altering fashions. What do these two words mean? Prison: a facility in which men and women are confined against their will for crimes committed. Promise: a declaration, or assurance that one will do a particular thing or that particular thing will happen. The preparation for the promise begins while we are in prison. Freedom doesn’t come easy, especially when you are around a rack of men who act like they don’t want freedom. Meaning they are locked into the mentality of bid mode, doing time, becoming the environment. When I was striving to change there was always a clash between the old me and the new me. Someone was going to win, and I wanted it to be the new me. It was such a fight to be positive in a negative environment.

The first few weeks were crazy! In the midnight hour, I would hear all types of wild noises. From cellmates fighting, men getting raped, yelling out in anguish, loud storytelling, and crying for medical attention because they were in pain. I could feel the tension in the air and then watch it manifest by seeing men fight, stabbed, or both. This was a common occurrence to the point I grew accustomed to it. If there wasn’t a fight or stabbing, I would see men getting pressed out for commissary, shoes, or drugs. The rule was, you see, and you don’t see; meaning you mind your business! I would have bad dreams about what I saw or heard that night. Sometimes just hearing the violence was worse than seeing it at times. Some people equate it to hell on earth and I understand why it’s said. The filthiness, funk, dim lighting, and lack of concern for sanitation were hell! I was shocked at the amount of drugs that were in the jail. Drugs that I had never seen before let alone seeing people high from it. There was so much

going on all the time. My head would be on a swivel watching all the activity taking place. There was so much to endure while in this new environment like striving to change, thinking about family, going back and forth to court, and maintaining my sanity. This was almost an unbearable burden to bear at 23.

I suffered early and hard while in DC Jail, not at the hands of other DC Jail residents but with the issue of health and the medical staff. I suffered from a digestive disease called Crohn's and it's incurable. I no longer suffer from this disease. I came into the system sick and there was medication that I needed daily to stay healthy. My health declined when medical decided that I didn't need my medication anymore. Medical immediately took me off my daily medication called prednisone. Prednisone is not a medication you can just stop taking, it must be tapered down in dosage. To be suddenly taken off this medication causes bad side effects and can pull you into the grave slowly and painfully. I suffered for eight months with no medication, and I could barely eat or drink because of the pain. I was naturally a small guy, so losing thirty pounds at my size had me looking like death! How did I survive? God and the will to live and be free. I didn't want to die in jail. There were times when I couldn't walk upright because of the pain. The brothers would carry me to the end of the tier where we had praise and worship. During this time, I also found out there was a contract on my life, someone was paid to kill me. Well as we can see that didn't happen! I stayed at the jail for a year and right before sentencing, I was transferred to Lorton, DC's state facilities. I was housed in Occoquan where everyone had life on the back and violent crimes. While in the Quack, as we called it, things really were really turned up. Everything was at 10!

This is where we will pause in this segment of Prison to Promise. Next issue we will continue to share my experience in the Quack. Until next time, stay focused and stay free!





## Staff Introduction

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My name is Charlotte Fajardo, and I am the Administrative Assistant with The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens. I graduated from the University of Florida with a B.A. in Criminology in 2022 and returned home to D.C. with the goal of working toward criminal legal system reform. I am interested in this line of work because I want to be a part of the solution: assisting returning citizens in succeeding upon reentry and ending the cycle of involvement in the criminal legal system. I have heard countless evidence detailing why our punitive legal system is failing justice-involved individuals and want to be a part of community efforts that move away from punishment and toward rehabilitation.

Denise Crews recently joined The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens as the Workforce Development Coordinator. A seasoned 15 -year professional with workforce development, education and training and facilitation experience in higher education, local government, and nonprofits. I welcome the opportunity to continue sharing, advocating and assisting returning citizens with the tools to earn life sustainable wages in USDOL identified growth industries. Ms. Crews earned degrees from Hampton University and the University of Cincinnati.





Hi, I am Tamia Fuller, an upcoming graduate at Fresno State University in Fresno, California. I am getting a degree in Political Science with a minor in Sociology and have an immense passion for helping reshape and inspire a new generation of leaders to take part in their communities to help fight injustice and for equality. I have done various administrative and grassroots roles for various non-profits and government agencies.

I look forward to working with NRNRC to help people mistreated by the criminal justice system and its stigmas, as my father was also affected by the social stigmas of having a criminal background making the cause of the NRNRC close to my heart.



My name is Maryn Larsen, I am a rising junior at The George Washington University. I am currently studying Criminal Justice and Political Science. I am very passionate about fixing our criminal justice system, and love learning about reform and abolition. I am especially interested in the overlap between criminal law and public policy in the context of reform. I am very excited to work with this great team and organization!



## Ready4Work: Program Overview



The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens  
1200 U ST NW, WASHINGTON DC 20009

# READY4WORK

Monday- Friday  
10AM- 2PM  
10.50/HR TRAINING WAGE

DRUG TESTING  
PROFESSIONAL DRESS  
MENTORING (1 YEAR)

Breaking the Cycle  
Job Coach & Job Placement Assistance  
Financial Responsibility  
Conflict Resolution / The Build Up

**CONTACT US**  
(202) 584-1000  
jharris@thereentrynetwork.org

The flyer features a large white arrow pointing right, containing a photo of a person in a suit. The background is green and white with a circular logo at the bottom right.

The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens is in its 28th Cohort for the Ready4Work (R4W) Program.

The schedule has been extended from three (3) days a week to five (5): Monday - Friday from 10am – 2pm. The Cohort meets in person Mondays- Fridays at our headquarters at 1200 U Street NW.

The NRRNC has several vital consultants: Caroline Cragin from Community Mediation D.C. who instructs participants in conflict resolution, a very necessary skill Returning Citizens need to be able to adapt to some of the challenges in today's workforce; Thandor Miller from JD Ellis & Associates LLC, a dynamic motivational speaker who builds participants up to be the best version of themselves possible; Mia McFarland of New Hope Credit Solutions who offers financial literacy, something that is sorely needed

amongst the Returning Citizen community; Joel Caston, Ward 7 Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC), provides our participants with the necessary tools to investing. With the tutelage of Mr. Caston, participants are able to identify their investment identity, cultivate their money, and understanding the different functions of the BSOFF (bonds, stocks, options, futures, and FOREX) assets; Erika Berg who specializes in Visual Storytelling workshops in which participants get to tell their personal stories through paintings.

The Ready4Work Job Readiness Cohorts offer clients a different perspective of how they view employment. The comprehensive learning environment provides pertinent information to clients from a holistic approach. The training dives into a deeper way of thinking, such as emotional intelligence, appropriate workplace behavior, cognitive behavior modification techniques, time-management, self-awareness, trauma informed care, conflict resolution/mediation, communication styles, hard and soft skills, self-advocacy, thinking traps, self-regulation, work-values, leadership abilities, identification of strengths, and weaknesses, etc. One goal is to look internally to find out why we make certain decisions that lead to termination of employment, or not getting hired for permanent employment.





# Set Up For Failure

***Recidivism- the tendency of a convicted criminal to re-offend.***



\*Recidivism is highest among those under 18 who are African American and are higher levels of recidivism compared to whites. The rates were highest in the first year with one in four released returning citizens rearrested in the first six months and two in five within the first year after their release.

Prison is not to rehabilitate anyone, meaning to restore someone to health or normal life by training and therapy, in

this case after imprisonment. It is designed to keep us handicapped, held down, or very difficult to succeed. Throughout the years, the prison system has purposely taken money out of educational and vocational programming, making sure we are returning home from prison in the state we were in before incarceration. \*Over \$182 billion per year is spent on incarcerating men and women. \*That's \$36,299.25 per person a year and \$99.45 per day! Why not fund our education, and vocations, and get rid of poverty? \*The US is the biggest jailer on the planet with less than 5% of the world's population and nearly 25% of its prisoners with another seven million Americans on probation or parole.

In several institutions, the GED program is the only program, and it's run by residents of that institution. A lot of times it's just a place to hang out and gossip. There seems to be no urgency or sincerity in the education department. Teachers are hired to assist residents in getting their GED, but the tutors, which are residents, are the individuals you see in the front of the classroom. During and after COVID this handicapping only got worse. In the housing units, residents were sitting around all day waiting for the "correctional" officers to tell them what to do. The majority of the residents in these institutions are not thinking for themselves, they are conditioned to be ordered what to do, which means there is a severe case of institutionalization. We, in these institutions, have to do better and make it a priority in doing so. What is it going to take for us to achieve what's for us? Success is achieved not given. This is evident in how the government is treating us all over the country while incarcerated. The government has been setting us up for failure for a very long time and winning in doing so. It's time to pull off the upset and become successful upon our reentry. It's time to win!



*\*Note Wikipedia.org Recidivism-Wikipedia*

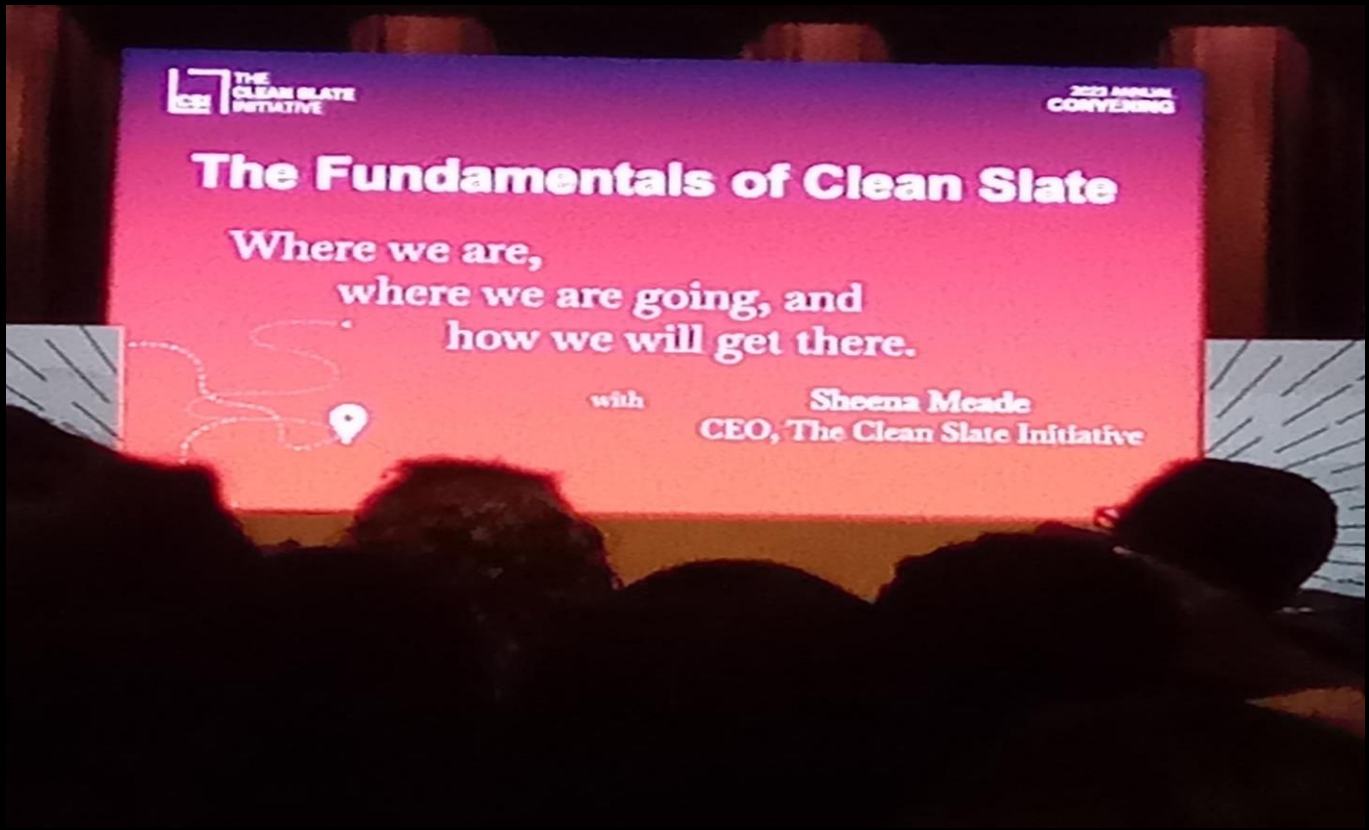
*\*Note PBS News Hour April 7, 2021*

*\*Note <http://www.federalregister.gov> Annual Determination of Average Cost of Incarceration April 30, 2018*

*\*www.linkedin.com Mass Incarceration Problem? By Sarah K. Westall August 23, 2016*

## Clean Slate Initiative

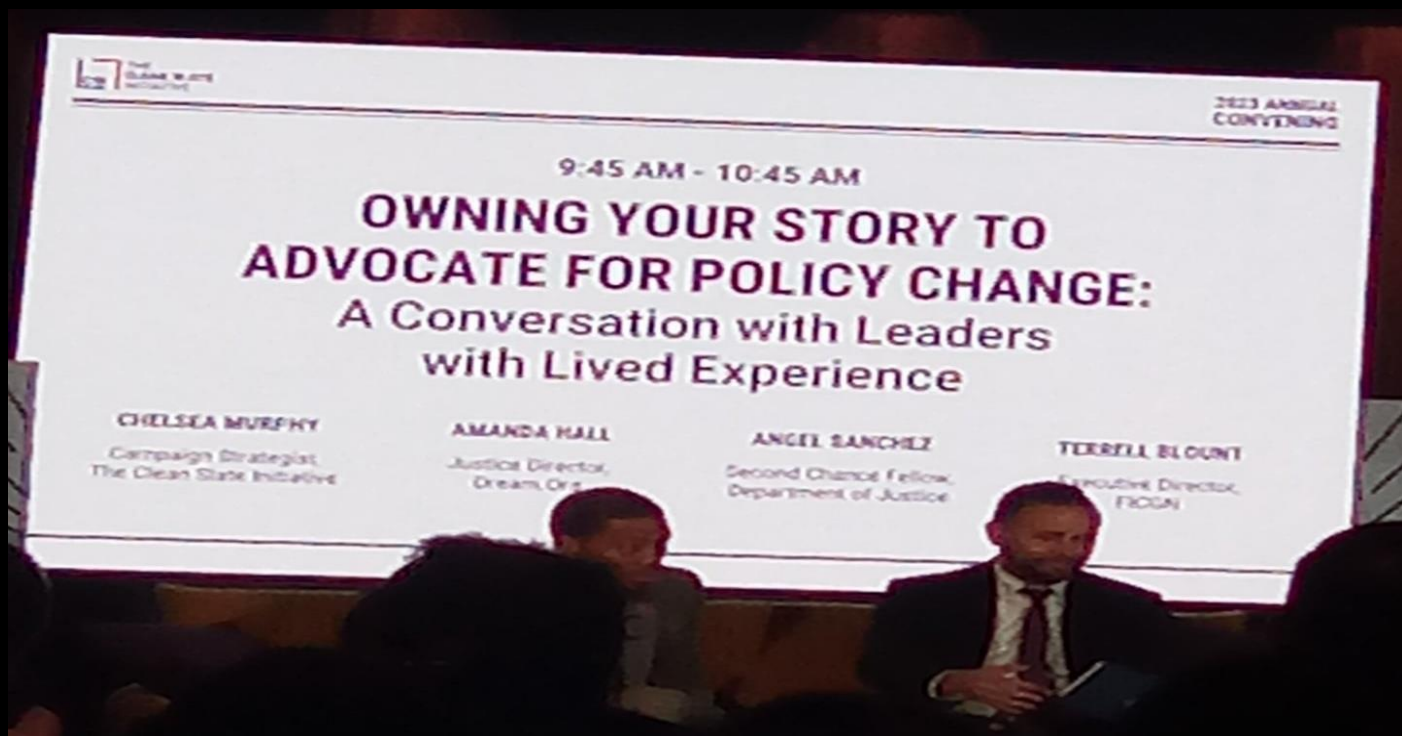
The Clean Slate Initiative works to expand and automate the sealing of arrest and conviction records after people have completed their sentence and remained crime-free for a period of time - believing everyone should have a shot at redemption.



I had the privilege of going to the second annual Clean Slate Initiative held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. It was an experience that I will never forget, and it was also inspiring. One of the most powerful and inspiring segments of the Clean Slate Initiative was on the first day of the convening. There was a panel of two men and two women who were returning citizens and they set the initiative a blaze! Their presentation was unrestricted, unscripted, straight forward, with no filters. The title of their breakout session was "Owning your story to advocate for policy change". It was a conversation with question and answer, with returning citizens who now powerful leaders are. They spoke about their backgrounds of incarceration, the programs they implemented, and the advocacy work they do. They also expressed how important data is, "it's just as important as telling your story", Terrel Blount stated. The more data or facts you have, the more powerful your story is. Without the facts or education, the nay sayers can poke holes in our stories. It was also said that, as we share our story, we have to be comfortable in doing so. It has to be on our terms as well. We have to be careful not to retraumatize ourselves in telling our story. With us telling our story we change the narrative.

This is one of the main reasons why I share my story of incarceration in the "Black Table Talk's", Prison to Promise. It's not enough to just inspire, inspiration is just an agent to change. In other words, inspiration fuels the action for change.

Angel Sanchez, who was one of the returning citizens on the panel, has reinstated Pell grants for the residents in prison where he's from. He said, "people in prison are college material including those with indefinite sentences".



Amanda Hall, another one of the panelists said, "effective, educate leaders build other leaders". It's the responsibility of a leader to teach. Terrel Blount said he is helping incarcerated men in New Jersey make their talents a reality by educating them. All four people on the panel were not only returning citizens, but they also all had educational degrees in law. As returning citizens, becoming educated is vital because that's what makes our story powerful unto change. A boxer knows the name of his opponent he's set to fight. Months before the fight he is studying his opponent's strengths and weakness, coming up with a strategic plan. He trains physically and mentally for that specific fight. Our opponent doesn't like us, our opponent doesn't want us in the free world, our opponent doesn't want to see us win. If we as returning citizens, fight for the Clean Slate, educate and train properly as advocates, we will win by knock out or by decision at the end of the fight. Let's stay in the fight, be patient, and follow through with our strategy one punch at a time one round at a time!

~ Travis Register



## Monthly Community Focus Group



This month our Founder and CEO, Mr. Courtney Stewart opened the group with his motivational testimony of how he was at the bottom struggling in life to now being very successful. Mr. Stewart himself is a returning citizen from way back in 1985. He's been homeless, hungry, and even strung out on drugs for a brief moment but wanted better for his first child. In order to want better for his child, he had to be better. So, he went to rehab and never looked back. Mr. Stewart said, "If we can do what's needed to get out of prison, how come we can't do what's needed to stay out?" We have to understand that life is hard, but we can persevere if we are willing to work and fight hard for what we want. Nothing is going to come easy, especially for us returning citizens. Although there may be helping hands, there are no handouts! There is no one in this world, especially black and brown brothers and sisters who have ever had any level of success taking the easy and lazy route.

The class proceeded with a few examples of progress from returning citizens and participants in the NRRNC. These returning citizens took full advantage of what the program had to offer, and they are capitalizing on it. The NRRNC is here to help propel us to success after coming home, do you want to succeed? As minorities, we say we do but our actions say differently. We are the only ones who can live our lives, so why would we not take it seriously? We continued on by talking about the Ready4Work program. The program is called Ready4Work, why are we coming to Ready4Work, and we don't want to work? Let's get serious about freedom!

Take your life seriously by seriously doing what's needed for your life!

# Community Bulletin Board

**THE NATIONAL REENTRY NETWORK  
FOR RETURNING CITIZENS**

**INSPIRE & EMPOWER  
PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING DRIVE**



We encourage all that can donate professional clothing to our organization, so that our clients can be prepared for their next steps!



**We are accepting clothing donations today!**

**Drop off Location:**  
**1200 U ST NW, Washington DC 20009**





**THE NATIONAL REENTRY NETWORK  
FOR RETURNING CITIZENS  
1200 U ST NW, WASHINGTON DC 20009**

**DO YOU NEED A PEER NAVIGATOR?**

**PEER NAVIGATORS :**

- Helps manage time, prioritize work, set goals, develop transition plans, and gain better understanding of your work
- Provides support
- Makes no false promises
- Works together to solve problems and learn about issues
- Asks questions on behalf of peers
- Life Coach You Can Trust
- Knows how to build rapport
- Has a desire to help

**Contact:**  
**Jharris@thereentrynetwork.org**  
**(202) 584-1000**



**Are you a new Returning Citizen released from incarceration?**  
**How has the first 72 hours of your release been?**  
**Do you need assistance?**

**CALL**

**THE NATIONAL REENTRY NETWORK  
FOR RETURNING CITIZENS**

**HELPLINE**

**1-844-916-2577**

The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens HELPLINE, 1 844-916-2577, is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service for returning citizens re-entering the community in need of reentry services.

We can provide assistance for emergency issues that may arise.

**AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY**  
[www.thenationalreentrynetwork.org](http://www.thenationalreentrynetwork.org)

**The National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens**

*"Spiritual formations, social transformations the prodigal sons and daughters return home."*

**Community Focus Group**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to build a strong, national network comprised of individuals returning from incarceration who support each other's successful reintegration. We use a client-centered approach to identify basic needs and to create a continuum of care that can address barriers to reentry, promote restorative practices, and reduce recidivism.

**VISION STATEMENT**

Our vision is to reinvest in safe and healthy communities, create more living wage jobs, permanent housing and economic self-sufficiency for returning citizens.

*"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."*  
*Martin Luther King Jr.*

**JOIN OUR MOVEMENT**

**When:** July 26, 2023  
**Where:** 1200 U ST NW  
Washington DC 20009  
**Time:** 6 pm - 8 pm

**Become a member today!**

**Join Us!**

**Contact Us:**  
1200 U ST NW, Washington DC 20009  
Office: 202-584-1000  
Fax: 202-584-1002  
WEBSITE: [www.thenationalreentrynetwork.org](http://www.thenationalreentrynetwork.org)  
EMAIL: [info@thenationalreentrynetwork.org](mailto:info@thenationalreentrynetwork.org)