



# THE DRUM

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### *Fighting for Safety by Kenneth Nixon*

#### **MLK: NATIONAL DAY OF HEALING FROM RACISM**

Tuesday January, 2019  
 Multiple events throughout the day from 10am-7pm  
 Organized by Wayne State University all events are free and open to the public via zoom. This is a free event open to the community. RSVP for Zoom Link Here: [events.wayne.edu](https://events.wayne.edu)  
 Follow: #HowWeHeal

#### **PROJECT REENTRY WORKSHOP- GOAL-SETTING**

Sunday January 24th  
 3pm-4:30pm via Zoom  
 Reentry Specialist Jose Burgos will lead a workshop on goal setting. Learn how to set short and long term goals, and share some goal setting techniques of your own.  
 REGISTER IN ADVANCE:  
[Sado.org/go/goals](https://sado.org/go/goals)  
 For questions call Marilena David-Martin 313-670-0309

I never could have imagined that I could suffer from a mental health condition. Then COVID 19 hit and changed my entire thought process. Sleepless nights, anxiety, paranoia, restlessness, irritation, annoyance, aggression, frustration, and a massive amount of stress. These are all things that I've experienced over the past year that are abnormal to my daily routine. For the past several months, the MDOC has been doing weekly facility wide COVID testing. We get tested on Tuesday and results start coming in on Thursday. If you test positive, staff immediately make you pack up all of your belongings and move you to another part of the facility. This sounds good and it appears that staff is trying to protect you, however, what the staff don't realize is the amount of stress and anxiety that this causes all the other inmates.

Can you imagine how you'd feel if multiple officers showed up with gowns, face masks, face shields, and gloves and told the guy that lives 3-ft away from you to pack up because he's tested positive. Can you imagine the gambit of thoughts that would run through your mind; I can. On a normal day, we have 8 guys that live in a 16-ft area. Currently, there are only 5 guys in my area. The other 3 tested positive in the past two weeks. Altogether, a total of 43 people out of 120 have tested positive since the week before Christmas. I'm so paranoid that I don't speak to people that I've spoken to every day for the past several years.

I am isolated from people that I can see but not talk to. I've changed my entire routine in an attempt to keep myself safe. I stay awake sometimes until 3,4,5 o'clock in the morning. That way I can sleep more during the day and therefore avoid having to interact with anyone. We get locked inside of our unit for weeks at a time. Meaning we do not go outside AT ALL. We are stuck in the same cycle and the only thing that ever changes is more and more people being removed. One day, 10 guys are removed. Another day, 1 guy is removed but everyone is on edge praying that its not them who has tested positive. The whole process is extremely stressful.

*Continued on next page...*

Last week, two officers tested positive after working in my housing unit. One officer found out that he was positive after working an 8 hour shift in my unit, the whole time talking and interacting with inmates. The other officer was still on his shift, in my unit, when he was notified that he'd tested positive and was told to leave the facility but by that time he was hours into his shift and the damage likely already done. I am literally at the mercy of other people's decisions. Fighting to be exonerated is one thing but fighting for my life is something that I'd never expected to have to deal with. This has certainly affected my mental health in insurmountable ways.

##

## **HEALTH- WELL-BEING. CONDITION OF THE BODY OR MIND BY BRIAN GRANDION**

Where I come from the word "Mental health" automatically brings judgment and labels. I never thought that I would be put in a situation where I would understand/have anxiety or mental health issues. Thanks to this Pandemic, Covid-19 has given me first hand experience on what it feels like to be literally boxed in. You continue to think about what could happen and actually make yourself feel sick even though you're not! You see being incarcerated already takes a toll on you mentally, emotionally, and physically. Unless you have someone that you can REALLY TRUST to be your outlet and vent to, you're lost. I'm literally trying to isolate myself from close friends to keep myself safe as well as them also. I have to take into account that this virus is killing people on a daily basis. I've had sleepless nights for no reason at all, I pray to GOD daily, not to bring me this far (26 yrs.) in prison to see daylight and possibly be taken out by something that you can't even see coming!

Covid-19 has you feeling like you're in a Heavyweight fight with the "invisible man", not knowing when he'll knock you out. It adds to your frustration level and the anxiety level is something else, along with the stress of waiting to be resentenced to be released from prison, it's more added stress to go along with not being able to talk with family or physically touch them on visits. Also, it's not like you can talk to qualified Healthcare Professionals, because the next thing you know, you'll be pumped full of medications or even placed on suicide watch, who can you TRUST? So what is a guy to do if he has no outlet to express himself to?

To go along with that, I witnessed an officer have a medical emergency about 2 1/2 months ago. I thought he was dead, I really believe he was! But it's amazing how GOD works. You see, his partner did Everything in his power to bring him back, but it wasn't until he called upon a "Higher Power" that life was restored into his partner's body. So with that being said, did anyone take into account how that situation affected the prisoners that witnessed it? No, for the simple fact that they don't care. To go along with that we already feel ostracized, we lack apathy, so they think!

Tell me, how do you think I feel knowing that because of this pandemic, if I was to have some type of medical emergency and needed CPR and mouth to mouth resuscitation I wouldn't be able to receive it but I literally just watched multiple officer's give it to their co-worker along with chest compressions to save his life until paramedics arrived to take him to a hospital. I should not be seen as less than because of my status. It would be nice if we were given access to a crisis management counselor to talk to so that we can process how we were impacted by that situation.

##

## VIRTUAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILY AND LOVED ONES

1. Family or loved one incarcerated
2. Looking for answers or want community support
3. Email Kate McCracken of Safe and Just Michigan at [kate@safeandjustmi.org](mailto:kate@safeandjustmi.org)
4. Ask to join the support call Friday's from 3-4:30pm



1. In need of help?
2. Wayne or Oakland County Resident
3. Visit [www.heretohelpfoundation.org](http://www.heretohelpfoundation.org)
4. Or contact Project Reentry for assistance connecting

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SUPPORT PEOPLE INCARCERATED ?

1. Volunteer with local criminal justice advocacy organizations
2. Don't ignore or minimize this issue; this is torture
3. Donate to advocacy organizations committed to changing our "justice" system
4. Involve your networks in your community
5. Read, scroll, listen, watch; educate yourself on injustice
6. Call your local politicians and representatives

## ORGANIZATIONS TO CONNECT WITH

**Michigan Liberation**  
@MichiganLiberation

**Nation Outside**  
@nationoutside

**Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration**  
@MICHCEMI

**Youth Justice Fund**  
@yjf.org

**American Friends Service Committee**  
@afscmi

**Safe and Just Michigan**  
@safe and Just Michigan

**Citizens For Prison Reform**  
@MICitizensforPrisonReform

**The Sentencing Project**  
@thesentencingproject

**Detroit Justice Center**  
@DetroitJusticeCenter

**Fresh Coast Alliance**  
@freshcoastalliance

**Michigan Center for Youth Justice**  
@miyouthjustice

**Humanity for Prisoners**  
@humanityforprisoners

**The Marshall Project**  
@TheMarshallProject.org

# SADO RECOMMENDATIONS ON MDOC AND COVID-19

1. **Vaccine access for incarcerated people:** The obstacles to social distancing and best hygiene practices together with poor health of people inside make the MDOC a uniquely dangerous setting for the spread of COVID-19. This danger has been borne out by the distressing numbers of positive COVID-19 cases and deaths. Accordingly, the American Medical Association and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine has called for vaccine prioritization for people in incarcerated settings. The National Association for Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys issued a Joint Statement calling for priority vaccine distribution for people in detention and detention staff. Some states, like Massachusetts and California, have followed this recommendation by making incarcerated people among the first to receive vaccines. In Michigan, corrections officers and other prison staff have appropriately been identified as a priority for vaccines. However, incarcerated individuals will only receive the same consideration as the rest of the general public: prioritization if they are older than 65 or have certain medical conditions and health risks. Failure to prioritize the vaccination of incarcerated people endangers not only their health and that of corrections staff, but by extension the communities around them, and the communities to and through which they are transported.
2. **Retain an independent expert to examine the MDOC response to COVID-19 and provide public recommendations.** This model operates in Connecticut, where an independent panel reviews the ongoing corrections responses to the pandemic. The MDOC's response needs scrutiny from an independent authority.
3. **Facilitate communication with loved ones during this crisis:**
  - Free and comprehensive video conferences with loved ones: The MDOC must establish a meaningful video meeting opportunity for people inside to see loved ones beyond the limited pilot project that ten months into the pandemic serves less than one-third of prisons. Illinois and Connecticut are among the states that provide free video visits each week. People should also receive free phone calls during the crisis, especially in cases where there is a COVID-19 diagnosis. A positive test means quarantine and even more limited contact with friends and family.
  - Outdoor in-person visits, as weather permits: The MDOC should follow the lead of certain states and implement an outdoor visiting system. Some facilities have existing infrastructure from years past when outdoor visits were the norm.
  - Eliminate new mail restrictions: Restricting contraband is a legitimate goal, but when incarcerated people already cannot see loved ones in person, it is inhumane to implement a new policy that prevents original copies of mail. The MDOC must rescind this policy and implement alternative measures. Based on the MDOC's own records, for a population of over 40,000 people there were 116 cases of mail contraband from April through October 2020. These numbers do not justify this policy.
4. **Implement policies to maximize releases on parole:** Michigan's "truth in sentencing" laws and complex commutation system have prohibited sensible release policies implemented in other states that balance public health with public safety. New Jersey released more than 2,000 people. Oregon and Kentucky each released people in prison. Unlike the situation in the MDOC, Michigan judges and sheriffs have had the authority to successfully reduce jail populations in response to COVID-19.

Nevertheless, there are immediate actions that can still be taken to maximize paroles during the pandemic without compromising public safety.

- Expand the parole board: In 2009, to safely lower the prison population and save money, Governor Granholm expanded the parole board to fifteen people, allowing a record 13,300 paroles and 160 sentence commutations. Especially during the pandemic, the parole board should have fifteen instead of ten members.
- Adjust parole board decisions for the pandemic: In 2020, parole denials only increased, in spite of the public health crisis and the acute danger to people in prison. In November 2020, just as COVID numbers surged for the prison population, the parole board issued 295 denials, compared to 189 denials in November 2019. From March to May 2020, 25% of high probability paroles and 27% of medium probability of paroles were deferred by the board. Parole board policy and practice must adjust for the pandemic.
- Allow for parole with community programming: Parole deferrals primarily occur due to backlogs in required programming and evaluations. This issue is particularly pronounced when quarantine and other procedures result in cancelled or otherwise limited programming within the MDOC. The parole board can immediately increase parole by requiring programming in the community upon parole rather than prior to parole. This policy would also make the MDOC safer by limiting movement and group gatherings that programming requires.
- Increase the pace of parole for those serving parolable life sentences: At least 500 people are eligible for parole because they have served the fifteen year minimum required with a parolable life sentence. MDOC has scheduled 72 public hearings in 2020, not nearly enough.
- Restore good time and disciplinary credits to all eligible individuals in prison, unless doing so would present an objectively credible threat to public safety. Persons sentenced prior to Michigan's "truth in sentencing" reforms are eligible for both "regular" and "special" disciplinary credits off their minimum sentences. Regular disciplinary credits (RDCs) are five days per month automatically earned in any month where the incarcerated person has not been found guilty of a major or Class I misconduct. Special disciplinary credits (SDCs) are two days per month awarded at the warden's discretion. The current Director's Office Memorandum addressing MDOC's COVID-19 operations gives wardens discretion to reevaluate and restore previously denied SDCs. SADO recommends that the language be strengthened to require that wardens restore all possible disciplinary credits, absent a credible showing that to do so would be a threat to public safety.
- Increase commutations and release on medically frail parole: To our knowledge, there have only been four commutations and no medically frail parole grants in 2020, during the first pandemic in a century. Governor Granholm commuted one hundred sentences from 2008 to 2009, and Governor Snyder issued 61 pardons or commutations in his final year in office.

These four steps are specific, modest, and easy to implement. Their adoption will go a long way to reversing an inadequate response to the crisis that impacts some of our most vulnerable citizens and the communities around them.

**Contact: Jonathan Sacks, SADO Director, 313-402-5382 or visit [SADO.org](http://SADO.org) for more recommendations, as well as legal and reentry resources.**

# **MASTERS ESSAY: A SERIES** *Submission By Timothy Greer*

## **CHAPTER 1 NEEDS AND BARRIERS-HOUSING**

Regardless of an individual's status as an ex-prisoner, housing is one of life's most basic necessities. Whether the individual is living in his or her own abode, in transitional housing, homeless shelter, public housing, mental institution, or simply living with friends or relatives, housing is needed upon release from prison. In fact, more often than not, housing placement is a condition of the ex-prisoner's parole. In their "First Friday Webinar" teleconference, The Michigan Poverty Law Program (MPLP) (2008) indicated that, "[i]ncreasingly, clients are having housing problems related to criminal records" (p. 31). However, housing is a concern that must be addressed immediately upon an individual's release from prison. For the most part, all other concerns related to prisoner reentry will take a back seat to this very basic need. Furthermore, as noted by Travis (2005), housing is "the lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together" (p. 219). Concurring, as well as looking at housing as it relates to recidivism, the Fortune Society and John Jay College of Criminal Justice (n.d., b), in its case study on prisoner reentry and homelessness, state that "homelessness, especially in the first 90 days, post release, significantly increases the high risk of reoffending" (p. 3) So, where do most ex-prisoners reside immediately upon their release from prison? They more than often first reside with family members (usually their mothers) or friends who choose to welcome them into their homes. This, too, can be problematic, especially if the ex-prisoner's parole conditions prohibit him or her from associating with individuals who may have criminal records.

As well, living in the homes of family and/or friends' homes may or may not be a viable option because these dwellings may or may not be stable, financially or otherwise, there may have been past incidents of household discord and/or violence, and the like. Additionally, a recently released ex-offender may be precluded by law from receiving shelter loved ones who live in public housing. Thus, in all, if family and/or friends' dwellings are not an option for the ex-prisoner, he or she may be forced to reside in a transitional housing environment, homeless shelter, or simply join the ranks of America's homeless population, which after one year was estimated to be "10 to 25 percent of released prisoners" (Travis, 2005, p. 240). Ex-prisoners will also find that there is limited housing in America, be it private or public housing. In her comprehensive book on prisoner reentry, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*, Petersilia (2003) indicates that the private housing market represents approximately 97 percent of the housing stock (p. 121). However, if housing is located by the ex-prisoner, it is usually beyond his or her reach financially. That is to say, it is unlikely that they will be able to afford the first month's rent and the security deposit, which could be double the amount of the monthly rent. This is especially true if the ex-prisoner has not secured employment.

Ted Phillips, UCHC's executive director, in addressing the challenges faced by ex-prisoners seeking housing in the private market, states: Ex-prisoners often lack funds for a security deposit and first month's rent to be able to move directly into market rate housing.

Even when these costs might be covered or they have the funds to pay them[,] they often lack a steady income to enable them to convince a landlord that they can pay the monthly rent once they are in the housing. Once they are in, they are often facing an eviction within a few months when they fall behind in rent. Because of their lack of income[,] they are also more likely to find substandard housing. with landlords who do not have a lot of tenants who will rent that housing (T. Phillips, personal communication, August 28, 2013).Furthermore, many property owners and/or managers now conduct both credit and criminal background checks. As for the latter, it is safe to say that after a conviction has been found – particularly one that has resulted in imprisonment – the potential landlord will often opt not to offer tenancy to the ex-prisoner. Additionally, Travis (2005) indicated that “[a] survey of property managers and owners found that 67 percent inquired about criminal history on rental applications. Forty-three percent said they would reject an applicant with a criminal conviction” (p. 223, italics added).

Finally, there may also be community opposition to ex-prisoners relocating to the neighborhood, particularly to group home settings.As for public housing, Travis (2002) noted that in the late 1990s, Congress created a “web of collateral sanctions that transformed a conviction for certain state crimes into ineligibility for federal benefits” (p. 23). These laws left many ex-prisoners, especially who have been convicted of drug and/or violent and/or sex-related offenses, ineligible to apply for public housing residency. According to Petersilia (2003), these laws have authorized public housing agencies, or PHAs, and providers of Section 8 vouchers and other federally assisted housing to providing housing to ban• individuals who have been evicted from public, federally assisted, or Section 8 housing because of drug-related criminal activity [ineligible for public and federally assisted housing for 3 years]• any household with a member who is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex-offender registration program• any household with a member who is currently abusing alcohol or is illegally using drugs ... (p. 122).

In order to address the so-called “criminal element,” the drug dealers and others engaged in criminal activity, in his 1996 State of the Union address, President Bill Clinton urged the local PHAs (Public Housing Authority), which had wide discretion in determining who would and who would not be allowed public housing tenancy, to adopt the “One strike and you’re out” policy, which gave the PHA's financial incentives to screen out those individuals who were allegedly engaged in criminal activity.

This led to fewer individuals – and their families – residing in public housing (Travis, 2005, p. 232). Though the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule faced several court challenges, e.g. in *Department of Housing and Urban Development v. Rucker et al.* (2002), the United States Supreme Court decided that PHA's could evict lease-holding tenants for the drug-related criminal activity of their household members and/or guests whether the lease-holding tenant was aware of the activity or not. According to Hornstein (2011-2012), "The Court rejected arguments by the tenants that Congress never intended to authorize the eviction of innocent tenants and held that those who had not committed any criminal act and had not engaged in any drug-related activity was not a violation of due process" (p. 6). In addressing the public housing issue as it relates to prisoner reentry, Ted Phillips, a long-standing advocate of the homeless, offers these insights: The housing that many ex-prisoners could afford is Section 8 or public housing, both of which base rent and utility costs on a percent of the tenant's adjustable income (30%).

The biggest problem that ex-prisoners have that most of this type bars persons with a criminal history. Some sites may limit that criminal history to drug-related or violent crimes but[,] as general rule[,] the nicest subsidized housing usually has the most restrictive rules and the most problem housing has the fewest. Sites that have a history of criminal activity ... will be the easiest for an ex-prisoner to find housing[,] and they will be likely to be the worst long-term benefit [to] the ex-prisoner (T. Phillips, personal communication, August 28, 2013). Thus, policies like these can adversely impact, again, on one of life's most basic necessities: shelter.

Families can be ripped apart because of the past and/or present criminal activity or family members or guests while they are tenants in public housing. The lease-holders may be forced to choose between keeping the family together in these dwellings, surrendering their housing subsidy, or forcing the offender(s) and/or ex-prisoner(s) to vacate the premises. If the latter of these three options is chosen, where does that leave the ex-prisoner? More than likely, as noted earlier, if the ex-prisoner has no other family or friends to rely on to secure housing, he or she may be forced to find transitional housing or a homeless shelter – both options that have very limited bed space – or be forced into homelessness.

Do you have a message you'd like to send to the community? We would love to share it! Please send any written pieces, artwork or images to [reentry@sado.org](mailto:reentry@sado.org) to be featured in an upcoming Drum!

**\*Stay tuned for more of Timothy Greer's enlightening essay on prison reentry and criminal justice reform. If you would like the full essay mailed or emailed, please reach out to SADO Reentry by emailing [reentry@sado.org](mailto:reentry@sado.org).**



# CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT

## DONNIE DAVIS

**Came Home:** October 2020

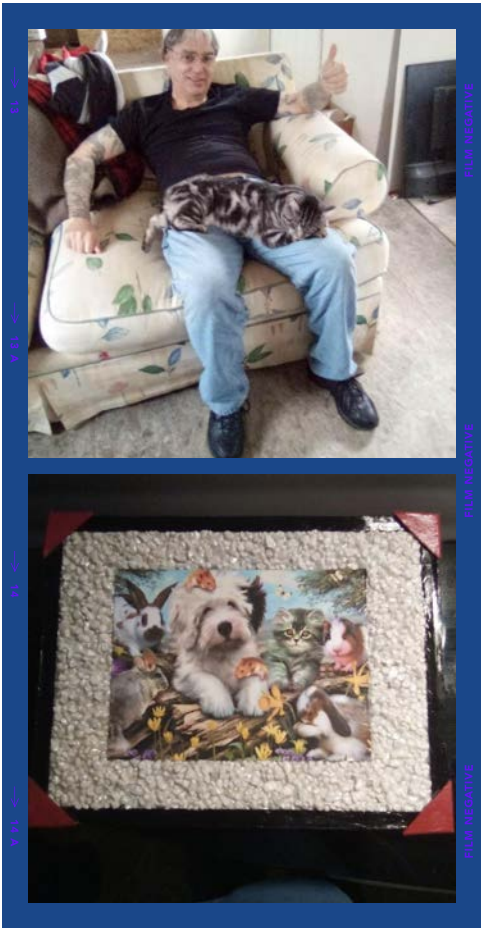
**Hometown:** Centreville, MI

**Hobbies and Interests:** Making jewelry boxes and walking

**Successes After Incarceration:** Moving in with a good friend and purchasing my first car.

**Struggles After Incarceration:** Getting used to all the people out here. Going into stores has been hard.

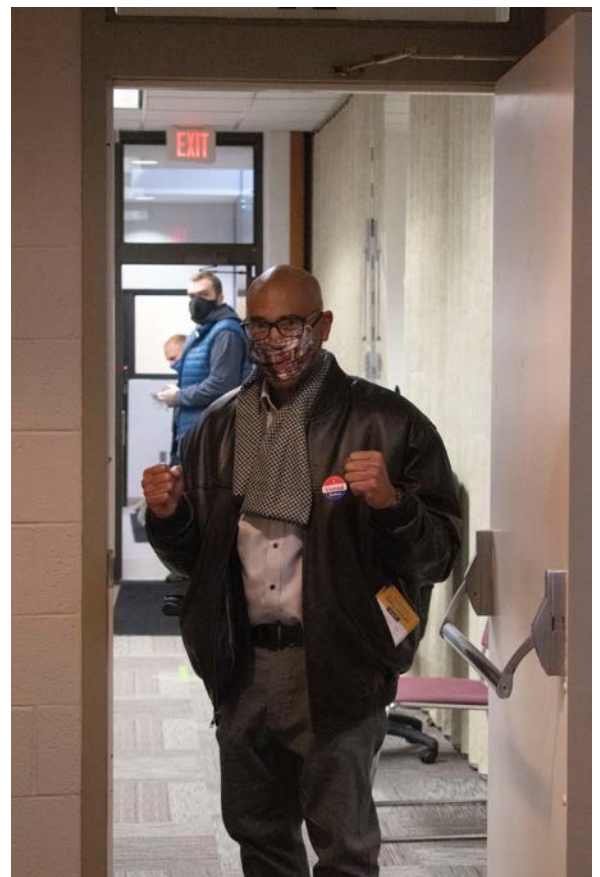
**Message to the Community:** If I can do it, you can do it. I thought I was going to die in prison and now look at me, I am happy.



## THANK YOU FOR CREATING CHANGE!



6 days out of prison after 27 years and Chris Tobar made sure his vote counted!



First time voter: Myron Woods walked to the polls despite having a ride so he could feel what his ancestors have fought for.

# WHERE IS MY STIMULUS CHECK?

**IRS HELP LINES: 1-800-829-1040, 1-800-829-3676**

\*The wait on hold is very long and you may need to call multiple times to get through.

**CHECK STATUS ONLINE: WWW.IRS.GOV/CORONAVIRUS/GET-MY-PAYMENT**

\*This should show status of first and second stimulus checks

**U OF M TAX PAYER CLINIC: 734-936-3535**

**ACCOUNTING AID SOCIETY: 313-531-1829**

**TAX RELATED IDENTITY THEFT: 1-800-908-4490**

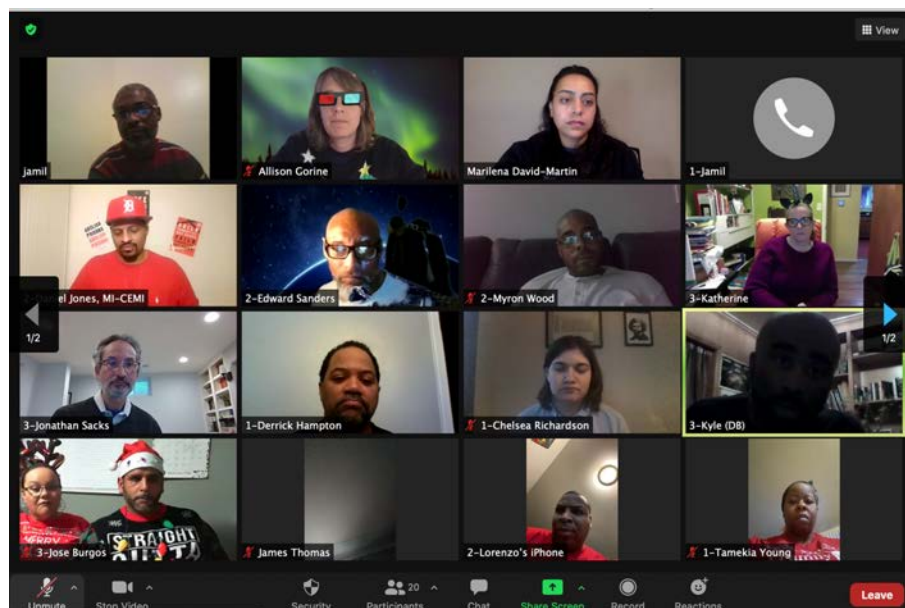
\*If your Social Security number is compromised and you know or suspect you are a victim of tax-related identity theft.

THANK  
YOU



Detroit Community Wealth Fund for facilitating Project Reentry's November 2020 workshop! Interesting in starting a business cooperative? Want free consultation and mentorship services to help get started? Contact Detroit Community Wealth Foundation! [www.detroitcommunitywealth.org/](http://www.detroitcommunitywealth.org/)

**GOOD-BYE 2020!**



Thanks to everyone who attended Project Reentry's End of Year Celebration!

# EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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## CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Hiring immediately, felony friendly no matter the convictions, parole eligibility flexible. Transportation to work site from central location.

**Contact** SADO Reentry or email Ashely Blake at [ablake@ceoworks.org](mailto:ablake@ceoworks.org)

7310 Woodward Ave #701b  
Detroit, MI 48202

## MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF DETROIT

Hiring immediately for multiple paid apprenticeship programs designed to lead employees to high paying, sustainable careers.

**Contact** SADO Reentry to connect or call Chief Talent Officer Melody Magee at 313-779-1666 or 313-341-7661 Ext. 203

14801 West 8 Mile Rd.  
Detroit, MI 48235

## MANPOWER MENTORING

Hiring Assembly Line workers immediately!

5575 Conner St #201  
Detroit, MI 48213

To Apply contact: 313-247-5002 or apply via Facebook

## GOOD WILL FLIP THE SCRIPT

Flip the Script partners with many organizations throughout the community. Together they developed this mentoring and job training program. Flip the Script offers services to help men and women find work. Many of these men are referred to Goodwill from the Michigan Department of Corrections.

**Contact:** Michael Bradshaw, Flip the Script Program Administrator 313-557-4823

## AMAZON WAREHOUSE

Immediate openings available now. Start as soon as 7 days. No resume or previous work experience required.

Job opportunities vary by location. Hourly pay rate: \$15.00/hr min pay rate – \$18.85/hr max pay rate. visit link below to apply and filter job search by location.

<https://search.amazondelivers.jobs/job/romulus/warehouse-team-member/3413/17649392>

## MINUTE MEN

Provides short-term, long-term and permanent light industrial staffing services for Dearborn and Metro-Detroit.

13240 Michigan Avenue Dearborn, MI 48126

**Contact:** 313-849-3555  
[dearborn@minutemeninc.com](mailto:dearborn@minutemeninc.com)

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**FOR ASSISTANCE APPLYING TO JOBS OR TO BE CONNECTED TO EVENTS AND RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA, PLEASE REACH OUT TO PROJECT REENTRY.**

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# PROJECT REENTRY JANUARY 24, 2021 VIRTUAL WORKSHOP



PROJECT REENTRY WORKSHOP

## GOAL-SETTING

Sun 1/24 @3pm – 4:30pm via Zoom



Goal-setting is powerful because it provides focus. It shapes our dreams. It gives us the ability to hone in on the exact actions we need to perform to achieve everything we desire.  
-Jim Rohn-



Members of the reentry community, please join us online as we enter the New Year sharpening our goal-setting tools. Reentry Specialist Jose Burgos will be conducting a goal-setting workshop to lead a discussion on how to properly set both short and long term goals and develop the tools necessary for achieving those goals. Be prepared to not only learn a few things, but to also share in some goal setting techniques of your own.

Register in advance at [www.sado.org/go/goals](http://www.sado.org/go/goals)



Questions? Contact Marilena David-Martin  
[mdavid@sado.org](mailto:mdavid@sado.org) | 313-670-0309

To see past versions of The Drum, visit [www.sado.org/go/drum](http://www.sado.org/go/drum)  
Follow SADO on Facebook and Twitter! @sadamich | @sadoreentry

Have questions or something to contribute?  
**Email [reentry@sado.org](mailto:reentry@sado.org)**