

SUMMER 2026 EDITION



SADO's Project Reentry has been hard at work welcoming home many new faces and has been able to expand our advocacy to new heights. Thanks to recent Supreme Court decisions, the number individuals eligible for resentencing has skyrocketed!



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FREDRICK KINDALL

Welcome Home!

Mr. Kindall made his way home September 3, 2025. Since then, he's made numerous successful strides towards building the life he dreams of. Just three days after returning home, Mr. Kindall obtained his driver's permit. By day 30, he had successfully earned his driver's license. He has since earned his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and envisions owning his own box truck company. Alongside these wins, he has reestablished relationships with important figures in his life, including with his daughter. He has become a mentor to youth and hopes to continue to expand his advocacy work. He endeavors to start a non-profit that supports vocational training, employment readiness, and education for those in his community.

In his spare time, Mr. Kindall has explored the riverwalk, gone to amusement parks and even did a tour of Detroit in a helicopter! Amidst his successes, he acknowledges that there are still obstacles to navigate. He describes being overwhelmed with the new fast paced environment at times, even having moments of freezing in public. Technology has been another learning curve for Mr. Kindall, but he takes pride in asking for help when needed.



“As a child, I was sentenced to life without parole. Simultaneously, I was introduced to two unwanted friends, the first being despair whom I immediately met, the second was death who gladly awaited me, this rubble of my life piled upon me like that which was leftover when the Hudson building was imploded.

“But God shows mercy to us all and even being suffocated by this sentence, a sliver of light penetrated the darkness, this beacon light is called hope. The more you grow in your faith, pushing away the defeated mindset that has crippled us, this beacon of light will blaze, lighting the pathway beneath your feet and instead of walking with trepidation, this fear will be replaced with confidence. Although life is uncertain, your footsteps now being sure will lead you to a victory called freedom spiritually, mentally, and physically.”

- Fredrick Kindall

JEROME WALKER

Welcome Home!

In February 2025, Jerome Walker returned home. Since then, Jerome has received his Commercial Driver's License (CDL), flew for the first time, and traveled to Disney World.

One of the first things Jerome sought to accomplish was earning his CDL. Before coming home, Jerome joked he barely knew how to drive. With his eyes set on his goal, Jerome began with the basic drivers license requirements, starting with rounds in parking lots. As Jerome's confidence grew, it was time to tackle the next hurdle: the freeway. At first, Jerome says it was nerve-racking with the freeway's high speeds and quick merge times. Despite his nervousness, Jerome was intent on earning his license. With more practice, Jerome conquered the freeway, learning to accelerate and navigate the busy roads with confidence.



After mastering the basics, Jerome earned his standard license. Now, it was time to train and learn to drive the large trucks needed for his CDL which included a new set of challenges. The tough maneuvers in the final test, which require backing a 53-foot trailer into a tight parking space, required Jerome to re-take the test five times. This did not shake his confidence, though. He spoke with his teacher for advice on strategies to complete the maneuver. After integrating that advice, Jerome was able to complete the maneuvers and earn his CDL.



Jerome says that earning his CDL is the highlight of his life and that it *"finally did something that means so much"* to him. Since earning his license, Jerome has traveled throughout the US to places such as Mississippi, Illinois, Oklahoma, Ohio, and Texas. With his CDL secured, Jerome's next goals are to build a family and buy a home. Since returning home, Jerome admits technology has been the biggest adjustment.

For those awaiting freedom, Jerome encourages *"patience and trust in God's timing."* While awaiting resentencing, Jerome discussed how he learned to balance the excitement of returning home with pouring positively into himself.

- Jerome Walker

RICHARD DYER-BEY

Welcome Home!



Richard Dyer-Bey returned home March 17, 2026. Since his return, Richard launched a business and has established himself in his community. In the future, he hopes to become a college psychology professor.

Education is important to Richard, earning his Bachelor's degree and currently learning to read and write hieroglyphics. Richard shares that his ultimate goal is to *"give back to humanity,"* which is inspired by his enjoyment of *"seeing other people live their best lives"*. Richard continuously fulfills his goal by participating in his community's voter registration drive, working with youth on entrepreneurship, and is seeking avenues to build a community food pantry over time.

Beyond education and his community involvement, Richard shared that he is simply enjoying the little things since coming home. He noted how he now cherishes the rain, recalling how thunderstorms led to lockdown in his previous life. Being home, Richard enjoys the rain freely. He shared a story of walking to the drugstore in the rain, simply because he had the freedom to do so.

Richard acknowledges that a strong support system is crucial for returning citizens. Richard's devoted sister has been an invaluable supporter since his return. Her impact is shown through her assistance with Richard's cleaning business, and her planning for a surprise birthday party for Richard--the first birthday celebration in over four decades.

In his short time home, Richard has remained committed to giving back to his community, growing his business, using his experiences to positively impact those around him, and enjoying the little things, highlighting *"the little things mean the greatest things in life"*. For those still awaiting freedom, he encourages people to *"be intentional with your mindset and who you surround yourself with."*

- Richard Dyer-Bey

Welcome Home!

New Chapters: Highlighting Long-Awaited Homecomings

ANTHONY HICKS:

Since his homecoming on April 21, 2026, Anthony Hicks has been enrolled at his local community college where he is studying African American history and American government. He expresses a strong desire to continue to learn. Anthony encourages those preparing to come home to *“be patient, depend on yourself, and work on the computer!”*



DAPHIUS “DUCK” BARRON:

Since returning home, Daphius “Duck” Barron has been actively involved in his community. He frequently attends meetings with the organization, Enter-Great 313, and has spoken to City Council discussing post-traumatic stress disorder for returning citizens. Duck’s words of advice: *“Love who loves you.”*



OPELTON KELLY:

Since reentering the community on May 8, 2026, Opelton Kelly has been learning to drive, working towards earning his paralegal certificate, and has been enjoying well-deserved home-cooked meals (especially spaghetti). He expresses his love for the simple things, including basic household chores like washing dishes. In the future, Opelton looks forward to becoming a motivational speaker for youth, publishing his book *Diamond in the Rough*, and developing his own clothing line. Opelton encourages those reading to *“believe in God, have faith, and always have an open heart and an open mind.”*



New Chapters: Highlighting Long-Awaited Homecomings

VICTOR WATERFORD:

Victor Waterford returned home on March 24, 2026. Since coming home, Victor has enjoyed spending time with family, sharing the joy of getting to know his siblings as adults. Victor aims to earn his Bachelor's degree in Social Work and mentor the youth. He is gainfully employed and just purchased his first vehicle!



David Chapple, home after 47 years



Duval Newsome, home after 49 years



Delbert Bullard, home after 47 years



Carle Vaughn, home after 51 years

PEOPLE V EADS

PEOPLE V LANGSTON



WHAT IS PEOPLE V EADS?

In *People v Eads*, the Michigan Supreme Court held that James Eads's sentence of 50 to 75 years in prison violates the Michigan Constitution. Mr. Eads was 16 years old at the time of his offense. The Court said his sentence was cruel or unusual where he was under 21 at the time of the offense, his sentence is longer than the sentences many others received for the more serious offense of first-degree murder, and there is a good possibility that, given his current sentence, Mr. Eads will not live long enough to be eligible for parole. The Court applied its holding those who were under the age of 21 at the time of the offense, and specified that the *Eads* rule applies retroactively.

- *Maya Menlo, Assistant Youth Appellate Defender*

WHAT IS PEOPLE V LANGSTON?

On July 28, 2026, the Michigan Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Langston*, holding that life-without-parole sentences may be cruel or unusual under the state Constitution under certain circumstances. To be cruel or unusual punishment, (1) your jury must not have been instructed on malice consistent with *People v Aaron* and (2) if the jury was not instructed consistent with *Aaron*, the prosecutor can show beyond a reasonable doubt that you would have been convicted had the jury been properly instructed.

- *Jessica Zimbelman, Deputy Director*

WHAT IS NEXT?

If you believe that you may be affected by these rulings, watch for further information from SADO about possible next steps.

INFORMATION FROM THE CRIMINAL DEFENSE RESOURCE CENTER (CDRC)

Youth Sentencing Information *Poole, Czarnecki, Taylor, Stovall, Eads*

What were the holdings of *Poole, Czarnecki, and Taylor*?

Mandatory life without parole sentences (LWOP) of people 18, 19, and 20 years old who were convicted of first-degree murder are unconstitutional, cruel or unusual punishment. These new rules apply retroactively. People who were: (1) 18-20 at the time of their offense; (2) were convicted of first-degree murder; and (3) were sentenced to life without parole are entitled to a resentencing hearing.

How long will the resentencing process take?

MCL 769.25a lays out the procedure for resentencing:

1. If a prosecutor wants to seek LWOP, the prosecutor must file a motion asking for LWOP and stating reasons for their request.
2. If a prosecutor files a motion asking for LWOP, the process of preparing for a *Miller* hearing will begin. Individuals should discuss this process with their attorneys. This will take a substantial amount of time.
3. If no motion is filed, the person is entitled to resentencing to a term of years that can be anywhere from 25 to 40 years for the minimum and 60 years for the maximum, though prosecutors may push for higher maximums. This type of resentencing can also be a long process based on a person's individual circumstances, county of conviction, time incarcerated, etc.

Are LWOP sentences still possible for people 20 years old or under?

Yes. If the prosecutor asks for LWOP, see above, the trial court will weigh several factors such as: the person's family and home environment, the person's age and the attributes of youth, the circumstances of the crime, the person's sophistication in interacting with the criminal legal system, and the person's potential for rehabilitation. In Michigan, there is a presumption that an LWOP sentence is disproportionate (unconstitutional) and it is the prosecutor's burden to overcome that presumption and prove that an LWOP sentence is constitutionally valid.

When will I get a lawyer?

Every person who was 18 years old at the time of the offense and is entitled to resentencing under *Poole* should have an attorney. If you do not have an attorney, please write to our Deputy Director of the Public Defender Division:

**Jessica Zimbelman, Deputy Director
State Appellate Defender Office
3031 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 450
Detroit, MI 48202**

INFORMATION FROM THE CDRC

Youth Sentencing Information, Cont'd.

SADO is coordinating counsel for people who were 19 or 20 years old and who are entitled to resentencing under *Czarnecki/Taylor*. About 250 people still need lawyers for their resentencing hearings. SADO is working to find lawyers for everyone. We are giving priority to people who have been in prison the longest. Those who have served less time may need to wait longer for a lawyer. Sometimes people who have served less time may get a lawyer first. This can happen for reasons we cannot control. Even so, we are committed to finding a qualified lawyer for everyone as soon as possible. For people SADO cannot represent because of conflicts, we are working with MAACS, local public defender offices, and pro bono lawyers at private law firms to find lawyers. We want to be very clear: waiting for an appointed lawyer may take a long time. We will do everything we can to help find a lawyer for you as fast as possible. If you would like to hire a lawyer, you can feel free to do so. If you do, please let us know. We understand that waiting can be very stressful. You may want to call SADO, but we are not always able to answer calls. We cannot answer legal questions if we are not your lawyers. We will do our best to communicate to you as soon as we have any updates.

What was the holding of *Stovall*?

Life with the possibility of parole (“parolable life”) is unconstitutional, cruel or unusual punishment for people aged 17 and under who were convicted of second-degree murder. People who were: (1) 17 and under at the time of their offense; (2) were convicted of second-degree murder; and (3) were sentenced to parolable life are entitled to a resentencing hearing. Many lawyers are arguing that *Stovall* should apply to people under age 21 who are serving parolable life for any offense. This should be correct, based on the holdings of *Stovall*, *Parks*, *Poole*, *Czarnecki*, and *Taylor*. However, there is no published Court of Appeals opinion or Michigan Supreme Court Opinion that says this, and so prosecutors and judges may not agree with this argument. We continue to litigate this issue.

What was the holding of *Eads*?

See page 7.

Is every person who was under 20 years old at the time automatically entitled to resentencing for any offense?

No. We are aware of false messaging going around that everyone 20 and under, regardless of the offense or sentence, is entitled to resentencing. This is not true.

What should I do while I wait for a lawyer or wait for my resentencing?

- Take care of yourself as best as possible.
- Remain safe, misconduct free, and involve yourself in any programming or projects you can.
- Do not file any pro per pleadings.
- Do not discuss your case with anyone other than your lawyer.
- Do not write to the judge or the prosecutor.
- Ask your lawyer to explain anything you do not understand or need clarification on.
- If you do not yet have a lawyer, please be patient as SADO coordinates the appointment of counsel.

FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY, AND REENTRY

BY LORENZO HARRELL, REENTRY SPECIALIST



My name is Lorenzo Harrell. In 1993, I was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole at 17 years old. In 2012, *Miller v Alabama* ruled that mandatory life without parole was unconstitutional. In 2016, *Montgomery v Louisiana* ruled that *Miller* was retroactive. I was resentenced to a term of 25 to 60 years in prison.

February 12, 2026, marked my seven-year freedom-versary. Seven years of learning, rebuilding, and redefining what freedom truly means. Today, I am a Reentry Specialist with

SADO, where I work closely with individuals impacted by the landmark juvenile lifer decisions in *People v Poole*, *People v Czarnecki*, and *People v Taylor*. Many of the people I represent are waiting to be resentenced or waiting for attorneys to be assigned so that the resentencing process will begin.

Every day (and night), I receive calls from those in prison affected by the *Poole/Czarnecki/Taylor* decisions and from their families. They want to know why it's taking so long. They want clarity. They want hope. I understand their frustration because eight years ago, I desperately sought that same hope. I remember the anxiety of waiting. Now that these sentences have been deemed unconstitutional by the state, our new potential clients are serving what is, in effect, an unconstitutional sentence while they wait for relief. In many ways, this is the hope they have been praying for their entire incarceration.

Once being in that position myself, I draw from my experiences, then and now, and if I could speak to myself eight years ago, I would say: Don't worry about what you can't control. Anxiety will come regardless but find ways to counter it. Work out. Go for a walk. Participate in recreation. Do something, anything, that frees your mind, even temporarily.

I would tell myself to visualize the life I want beyond prison and study every detail of it. Practice interviewing for a job. Prepare yourself for the inevitable question: Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Craft your answer with honesty and confidence. If you want to own a home, study what it entails. Learn about financing a home. Read self-help books on the subject. Seek out knowledge from those who have purchased a home. There are a lot of dynamics, nuances, and details to whatever you envision, and as the old saying goes, the devil is in the details. Everybody wants out of prison, but you must understand your life is bigger than simply getting out of prison. There is an entire world beyond those gates.

FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY, AND REENTRY, CONT'D.

BY LORENZO HARRELL, REENTRY SPECIALIST

I would also tell myself something harder: Freedom is where responsibility begins. Life outside is not easy. I couldn't mentally prepare for legal employment and housing discrimination because I didn't know what I didn't know. I had to face those hurdles in real time. The reality is that convicted felons are often denied opportunities, and much of it is lawful. Reentry requires resilience, strategy, and emotional discipline. I would tell myself to sharpen my skills in these areas.

Most importantly, I would remind myself to be patient—even though asking a person in prison to be patient can feel like asking a gazelle to relax while in the tiger's mouth. But we cannot control the legal process. It moves at its own pace. You can only control your preparation.

I would continue to try to remind myself daily that I've captured lightning in a bottle—to be among those affected by these new laws. There are many deserving individuals who missed this opportunity by a day, a month, or a few years. I would never take that fortune for granted.

My seven-year freedom-versary was spent putting a *Czarnecki* client who had served 58 years in prison on a bus back home to Pittsburgh after walking him out of prison the day before. Later that night I had dinner with a *Poole* client who was celebrating his one-year freedom-versary on the same day. Reentry is not just about coming home. It is about rebuilding, restoring, and reclaiming your purpose.

Seven years later, I understand that freedom is not the finish line, it is the starting point.



Project Reentry's Numbers

Since December 2025, the incredible work of SADO's Juvenile Lifer Unit with the help of Project Reentry has led to more than 50 juvenile lifer homecomings and more than 20 clients discharged!

WHAT STABILITY LOOKS LIKE IN REENTRY

BY MARCUS WILLIAMS, REENTRY SPECIALIST



When people talk about reentry, the word “stability” comes up constantly. Stable housing. Stable employment. Stable routines. Stable compliance. On paper, it sounds simple enough. In reality, stability is rarely something a person suddenly reaches. More often, it is something built slowly, under pressure, and in conditions that are anything but stable.

In my work in the reentry space alongside colleagues at the State Appellate Defender Office, I support individuals preparing to return home from incarceration and adjust to life in the community. I have not been incarcerated myself, and I do not claim that experience. What this work has given me, though, is a close view of how stability actually forms in real time and how different it often looks from the way it is described in policy discussions or case plans.

One of the biggest misconceptions about reentry is the idea that stability means having everything figured out at once. In practice, early stability is usually much smaller and less visible than that. It can look like waking up consistently after years of institutional routine, making it to appointments on time, completing paperwork correctly, or showing up to work even when the job is exhausting or far from ideal.

These things may seem minor from the outside, but they are often the structure everything else depends on. For many people returning home, one of the hardest adjustments is the sudden loss of external structure. Inside a facility, nearly every part of the day is dictated by routine. Outside, that routine disappears and is replaced by constant decision-making: how to manage transportation, balance work and supervision requirements, handle family responsibilities, and respond to stress without the systems that once controlled daily life. Even small decisions can become mentally exhausting when they never stop.

There is also a financial and emotional reality to reentry that cannot be ignored. Many individuals return home with limited resources and immediate obligations, and even when employment is secured quickly, there is often a gap between income and the actual cost of rebuilding a life. Transportation, housing, clothing, phone access, fines, fees, and everyday expenses create pressure almost immediately. At the same time, people may appear to be doing everything “right” externally while still carrying significant internal strain: anxiety about making mistakes, pressure to satisfy supervision requirements, complicated family dynamics, and the feeling of being behind everyone else in life. Those pressures do not disappear simply because someone found a job or secured housing. In many cases, they intensify during the transition home.

WHAT STABILITY LOOKS LIKE IN REENTRY, CONT'D.

BY MARCUS WILLIAMS, REENTRY SPECIALIST

That is why stability in reentry is better understood as a process rather than a status. It is built through repetition more than perfection: showing up consistently, following through, staying employed, attending appointments, and avoiding situations that create unnecessary risk. Over time, those repeated actions begin to create structure that is no longer externally imposed but internally maintained. What often gets overlooked is how fragile early stability can be. A missed ride to work, a housing issue, an unexpected expense, or family conflict can disrupt progress quickly during the early stages of transition. Problems that might be manageable later can carry enormous consequences in the beginning, which is one reason support systems matter so much. Stability is rarely built in isolation.

What becomes clear through continued work in this field is that reentry rarely moves in straight lines. Stability is not a finish line people cross once and permanently maintain. It is something built, adjusted, lost, rebuilt, and strengthened over time. That fluctuation is not necessarily failure. It is often part of the process itself. Long-term change is usually not created through dramatic moments, but through small, consistent actions repeated over time. This work may not always look remarkable from the outside, but those routines and decisions are often what make lasting stability possible.

THIS ELECTION MATTERS

BY JOSE BURGOS, POLICY ADVOCATE



For those of us who care deeply about criminal justice reform in Michigan, this past legislative session was another reminder of a difficult truth: change does not happen simply because change is needed.

We can have the research, the science, the personal stories, and decades of evidence showing rehabilitation and transformation. But meaningful legislative change still requires elected officials willing to do more than talk about reform. It requires lawmakers willing to act.

That is why this year's election matters.

People currently incarcerated in Michigan cannot vote. But that does not mean you do not have a voice. You have mothers, fathers, spouses,

THIS ELECTION MATTERS (PAGE 2 OF 3)

children, siblings, friends, and supporters who can vote and they need to understand what is at stake.

Michigan's courts have made significant decisions addressing youth, extreme sentences, proportionality, and adolescent development. Cases such as *People v Eads*, *People v Langston*, and others have pushed Michigan toward a greater recognition that youth matters and that people have the capacity to change. We should applaud that progress. But the courts cannot do everything.

We need legislation ensuring that people returning home from prison leave with their vital documents and Michigan State ID. We need a Michigan Sentencing Commission where the legislative intent of directly impacted representation is genuinely honored not simply satisfied on paper. **We need Michigan to finally end the practice of sentencing children to life without parole.**

And we need our justice system to continue confronting what science tells us about adolescent and young-adult brain development. Judgment, impulse control, risk assessment, and decision-making continue developing beyond the teenage years. Our sentencing policies should recognize that science and the extraordinary capacity young people have for growth and transformation.

None of this means ignoring victims or minimizing the seriousness of crime. Accountability and humanity can exist in the same conversation. Recognizing that a person can change does not erase the harm they caused. It simply recognizes that human beings should not forever be defined by the worst decision they made especially as children and young people.

These changes require political courage.

And this is where I believe we must stop allowing criminal justice reform to be divided by political party.

Justice reform is not red. Justice reform is not blue. Humanity does not belong to Democrats or Republicans. Redemption has no political party.

We should support good policy regardless of which side of the aisle it comes from, and we should hold elected officials accountable regardless of which letter appears next to their name.

For those on the inside, this election provides an opportunity to use the voice you still have.

Talk to your family and friends. Don't tell them who they must vote for. Tell them to find out where the candidates stand.

THIS ELECTION MATTERS (PAGE 3 OF 3)

Do they support ending juvenile life without parole? Do they believe rehabilitation should matter? Do they support meaningful reentry? Do they believe people directly impacted by the justice system deserve a real seat at policymaking tables? Will they follow the science when sentencing young people?

And most importantly: What have they actually done?

Campaign promises are easy. Saying you support reform is easy. Voting for reform when it matters is different. Those of us affected by the justice system must pay attention to records, not just rhetoric.

People on the inside may not have ballots, but you have families. Those families have communities. Those communities have voices.

And those voices have votes.

Encourage your family to register. Encourage them to become informed. Encourage them to vote their conscience. And after the election, encourage them to pay attention to what the people they elected actually do.

Because elections are not just about who wins on Election Day. They determine who will be sitting in those chairs when legislation about sentencing, reentry, parole, youth justice, and second chances comes before them.

Our families have voices. Our communities have power. And when we use that power and demand accountability, change becomes possible.

Personal Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are my personal views and mine alone. They do not represent my employer, any organization with which I am affiliated, any political party, candidate, campaign, or elected official.

I write from a deeply personal perspective as someone who has lived inside the criminal justice system, experienced transformation, and spent years working alongside people and families affected by incarceration.

I do not believe any political party owns justice, compassion, accountability, redemption, or reform. I believe elected officials should be judged by their actions, their votes, and their willingness to recognize the humanity and capacity for change in others.

These are my convictions. These are my experiences. And this is my voice.

- Jose Burgos

HELPFUL SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

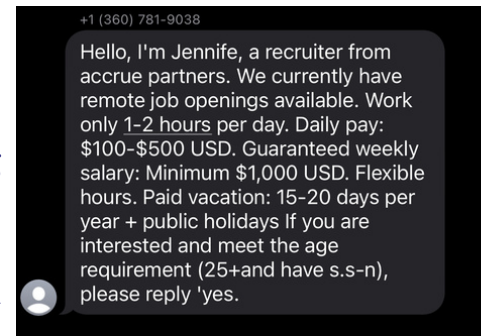


In May, 2026, Project Reentry and SADO's mitigation interns hosted a Social Media Literacy Workshop to help returning citizens navigate social media with confidence and comfort. Highlights included: creating your social media profile, identify scams, privacy, and safety.

Common Scams

1

- Fake employment offers may look like someone directly sending you a text message with an opportunity that almost sounds too good to be true. The sender will often come from a long email, put you in a group message, and promise appealing benefits (work from home benefits, high pay, etc).
- Requests for personal information or money. You may receive phone calls or messages on social media requesting your Social Security information. If any organization needs to reach you for this information, they will mail or contact you directly.



Example of job offer scam

2

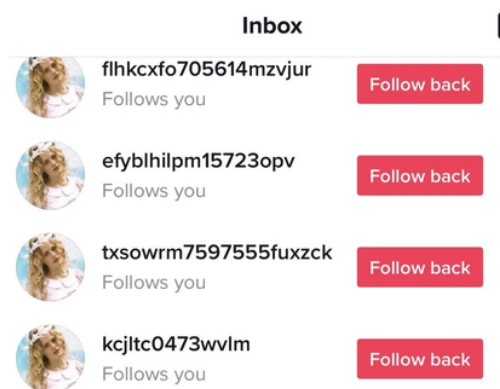
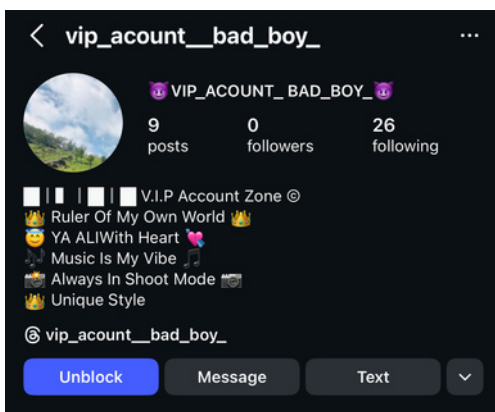
Digital Footprint

Your digital footprint is essentially the presence you leave on social media. This includes what you post and what you interact with. Before you post, follow someone, or like something, think about how it can be interpreted. Making assumptions is human and is often done unconsciously! The goal is to make sure these assumptions about our social media presence are positive.

3

Identifying Fake Profiles

Identifying fake profiles is the first step to avoiding scams, whether it be romantic or employment-based. Common features of fake profiles include: having no profile picture, unnecessarily long or confusing usernames, and following hundreds of people but have few followers themselves. **Below examples of fake profiles.**



NEW FACES AT SADO

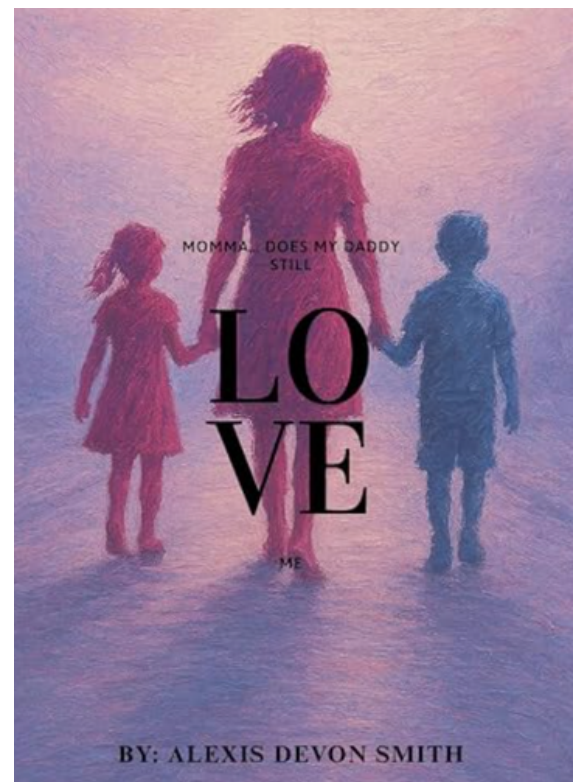


Alexis Smith joined the State Appellate Defender Office as a Reentry Specialist for Project Reentry in December of 2025, bringing a wealth of both professional and lived experience to SADO, having been sentenced to life without parole as a juvenile. He has continued to be an inspiration to many, including his recent book publication *Momma, Does My Daddy Still Love Me?*

This book is a raw, unfiltered exploration of what happens to women and children when incarceration enters their lives. Drawing from firsthand experience, Smith dismantles myths about blame, exposes the hidden impact of the justice system on families, and reframes love as strength, not weakness.

“To everyone still waiting to come home and even watching as others walk through those gates, I want you to use this time to prepare for the life you want. Not just the day that you walk out of those gates. Freedom is a new beginning. Not the finish line! To those who have recently came home, give yourself some grace. Keep learning, stay accountable, and do not be afraid to ask for help. I spent almost a quarter century in prison, and what I have learned is while your past may tell a story, it does not have to define what your future will be. Keep marching forward!!!”

- Alexis DeVon Smith



About the Authors

On behalf of Project Reentry, we wish to thank SADO's invaluable mitigation interns, Lauren and Londynn, for their hard work creating content and facilitating interviews featured in this issue of The Drum. It takes a tremendous amount of time, energy, and patience to produce meaningful articles for our newsletter, and we are grateful for their compassion and dedication in this important project.

*With gratitude,
Alexis, Anna, Lorenzo, and Marcus
Project Reentry*

Lauren is a Master of Social Work student at the University of Michigan graduating in December 2026. As a mitigation specialist intern with the State Appellate Defender Office (SADO), she explores the complex factors that influence individuals' experiences within the criminal legal system while ensuring clients stories and voices are meaningfully represented. Her work and academic interests focus on amplifying client voices, addressing systemic inequities, and advocating for the importance of holistic criminal defense.

Londynn is a Master of Social Work student at the University of Michigan, graduating in December 2026. As a mitigation specialist intern with the State Appellate Defender Office (SADO), she works to better understand the experiences and circumstances that shape clients' lives and ensure their stories are heard throughout the legal process. Her work and interests focus on supporting returning citizens as they transition home, improving care and support for women who are incarcerated, and advocating for a more holistic approach to criminal defense.

Join Project Reentry
for our



End-of-Summer Gathering

Our annual End-of-Summer Gathering is back!
Formerly incarcerated individuals, their families, and
reentry community partners are welcome.

We'll provide the burgers, dogs, and drinks.
Please bring a dish to share if you can.



Sunday, September 20, 2026
From 12:00 - 3:00 pm



Belle Isle Shelter 6 (6939 Inselruhe Ave)
Detroit, MI 48207
(see following page for map)

RSVP **required** by September 16:
www.sado.org/go/gosummer26



Map and Directions

Belle Isle Shelter 6 (address 6939 Inselruhe Ave), is just north of the Belle Isle Aquarium. Street parking is available on surrounding streets (Inselruhe Ave, Loiter Way, or Central Ave) or in the aquarium lot south of the shelter.

Email Anna (akohn@sado.org) or call (313) 420-2955 with any questions or if you need additional directions.

