



TCRC

The Center for Returning Citizens

2017 POLICY AGENDA

The mission of The Center for Returning Citizens is to assist Returning Citizens in the transition from incarceration to society

Introduction

The city of Philadelphia has formally declared, by executive order, that Returning Citizens is the correct political term to use when referring to formerly incarcerated individuals. This political status designation must now be followed with political status protections.

It is the mission of The Center for Returning Citizens to raise formerly incarcerated citizens from a disadvantaged and exploited class into a valued network of self-determined men and women. Our foremost goal is to rebuild, replenish, and transform the lives and communities decimated by the system of mass incarceration and social injustice.

The success of this mission relies heavily on a true commitment from the community, city and state governments. In this way, new models of cooperation bolstered by this commitment will redirect restorative resources to people and areas most affected by incarceration.

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2017 INTERIM POLICY AGENDA PRIORITIES

TCRC supports local initiatives:

The Germantown Avenue Revitalization Project (The Village) is a \$120 million commercial corridor project inspired by Returning Citizens to raise the quality of life in areas impacted by the system of mass incarceration in tangible, everyday ways. The project includes:

- Farmers Market (Cooperative Business)
- Vocational Training Center (Training facilities in conjunction with Philadelphia Unions to create living wage employment for Returning Citizens, at-risk youth and minority community members.
- Seven story Hotel, with rooftop restaurant and niteclub (two story underground parking garage)
- Community Health & Wellness Center
- Retail storefronts, mixed use office space and condominiums
- Low income housing & senior housing
- Charter School for Children with Incarcerated Parents, At-Risk & Adjudicated Youth
- Transitional Housing within designated neighborhoods
- Real Estate Housing acquisition to offset gentrification

Land acquisition/Aquaponic farming project/ Quaker City Harvest headquartered in Philadelphia and in partnership with TCRC, has received a financing commitment of \$51 million from a private investment group to create a network of nonprofit, independently governed, hydroponic/aquaculture/fertilizer production facilities in the Philadelphia area. Said facilities will provide training and jobs for over 100 Returning Citizens.

No Cash Bail

Every day in Philadelphia thousands of men and women languish in jail, yet to be convicted of a crime. Some have been locked up for a few days. Others for weeks or months, or longer. They remain behind bars to await trial – jeopardizing employment and housing, for some – because they can't afford bail. "With a cash bail system, rich people go home and poor people don't," says J. Jondhi Harrell, executive director of The

Center for Returning Citizens and a member of City Council's Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. Across the country, cash bail as an institution is being re-evaluated in a drive for pretrial justice. Many cities are asking if it's cost-effective — or, in some cases, even unconstitutional — to lock up individuals for weeks and months as they await trial. In conjunction with the 215NoCashBail Coalition, Redeemed, TCRC and Temple University law professors and students, the cash bail issue is being researched, examined and debated. The agenda is to end the cash bail system in Philadelphia and have defendants in Community-based Day Reporting Centers rebuilding their lives in pre-entry, reducing the size of the population of the Philadelphia County Prison system and successfully transitioning back into society.

Education

TCRC is working on a proposal with Harcum College to open a special class for returning citizens, and at risk community members who want to go to school, either for the first time or returning to undergrad work. The Associate degrees will be in Human Services and Business Administration. The classes will be held at The School Board Building at Broad & Spring Garden Street and will commence in August. Preparatory classes will be held over the summer starting in June. All organizations wishing to enroll persons or individuals wishing to enroll, please contact TCRC.

TCRC supports political education on Incarcerated Nation issues:

- **Uniform standards** of medical care, medication for life threatening illnesses, enhancing End of Life Care for the aged and dying in prison, better living conditions, clean water and quality food for incarcerated persons in Pennsylvania Department of Corrections institutions.
- **Provide individualized re-sentencing review** for every person serving juvenile life without parole, acknowledging that the SB850 sentencing guidelines do not apply retroactively to people being re-sentenced under Montgomery v Louisiana and agree to time served for people who have served over 20 years with good records. Philadelphia Juvenile Life Re-sentencing should be in line with sentences being handed down in other PA counties.
- **Parole for Lifers.** TCRC seeks to support building effective community relationships and fostering dialogue with state and national legislators. The crafting of issues concerning life sentencing initiatives must take into account the socio-economic obstacles associated with the eventual release of these individuals while respecting victims' rights, public safety, the reduction of correctional facility staff and the reemployment opportunities for DOC staff.
- **Extended Family Visits & Family Re-unification for prisoners** (Weekend Family visits & Conjugal Rights) TCRC in partnership with The Coalition Against Mass Incarceration and The Pennsylvania Council of Churches believes that the best way to rectify a system designed to detach human beings from their families is to set in motion holistic programs to promote family, marriage and secure relationships. We believe accommodations for physical intimacy and the cementing of parental rights designed to strengthen bonds of family is crucial to effective rehabilitation and reintegration into family life. Married couples and children would be eligible for these visits.
- **Goodtime**, The Commutation Act of 1901, May 11, P.L. 166 was the statute that provided the

eligibility criteria, diminution schedule, and application procedures for prisoners to access good-time in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. TCRC seeks to engage in discourse that calls to reinstate Goodtime in Pennsylvania, as a means to encourage continued education and rehabilitation.

- **A national drive to rewrite the 13th Amendment**, By definition, the 13th Amendment created a legal system of slavery in U.S. prisons. Slavery goes far beyond the removal of freedom; it denies the humanity of the enslaved. The 13th Amendment calls into question the basic equality and dignity of millions of Americans who live under the U.S. system of Mass Incarceration. TCRC is committed to working with the Society of Friends and a coalition of faith based groups to create a national dialog about amending the 13th Amendment. Here, in the home of nearly a quarter of the world's prisoners, every American should be asked a fundamental question; Do you support the system of slave labor in US prison facilities sanctioned by the US constitution and the 13th Amendment? Will you join a movement to vote to amend the constitution?

TCRC supports:

- **Advocacy, Media, Marketing & Branding** It is the goal of TCRC to revamp its multi-media marketing, platforms, branding and events in order to tell the stories necessary to inspire support for the programs, advocacy, concepts and philosophy of TCRC. In 2017 Anthony Dickerson and J Jondhi Harrell will debut a weekly radio show on WJYN 98.5 fm and online podcast for "TCRC Live from the Streetz". Major figures in the world of advocacy for social justice and the struggle against mass incarceration will be a part of this program and campaign.
- **Fundraising** It is the goal of TCRC to implement a sustainable campaign that welcomes public donation drives, fee for service contracts, private and public grants, faith based investments and entrepreneurship opportunities to drive our policy agenda, general marketing and promotion activities.
- **Coalition building for grant applications (city, state, federal & private) Social Impact Bonds (Pay-for-Success Loans) Fees for Service Contracts** As participants in the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition and the (Returning Citizen led) Transitional Services Coalition, we seek collaborative partners to elevate the work of TCRC. Recidivism, unemployment, homelessness and growing wealth disparities have placed enormous fiscal stressors on Returning Citizens and communities destroyed by the system of mass incarceration. Structural change is imperative and crucial to our mission. We see a new socio-political & economic infrastructure as vital to avoiding the redundancy of funding concepts that do not work. So often service providers do not target to the expressed needs of the program participant population. Best practices are those shown to work at an efficient and productive level. TCRC seeks commitments from city and state government, mainstream organizations, and community stakeholders to collaborate in obtaining grant funding, fee for service contracts, and social impact bonds to foster the revitalization of impacted communities with a focused listening to the participants' needs.
- **Establishing a value network** TCRC contends that the only way society can effectively gauge if a prisoner has made a personal transition from crime to a productive life is through key activities. This involves examining an individual's processes, relationships, character development, and personal investment in positive growth. A major rationale for prison expansion and construction is the deliberate undervaluing of vulnerable populations. Because of this, TCRC is committed to establishing a value network that begins with individuals currently behind bars. This network will

positively reflect the validity of individual transformation, transition, value to society and desire to rebuild. We believe strongly that laws change for those who organize, erect infrastructure, and invest in themselves.