

FAITH

Video

Jeremy Travis
Senior Fellow, Urban Institute

Audio

“The language of faith is a very important contribution to the policy discussion of prisoner reentry because it starts with different assumptions. Not that people are lost forever, but once lost can be found. Having that starting point holds out the hope of successful reintegration, even in the face of a reality of unsuccessful return to the community.”

Charles See, Executive Director
Community Re-Entry

“The word penitentiary is taken from the word penitence. It was the church that started the whole penitentiary system. What we’ve been attempting to do is to be true to what that first mission was, which was to be with people while they recommitted themselves to redirecting their life and helping them gain the support of the community to do that.”

Rev. Michael Pflieger
St. Sabinas Catholic Church

“I don’t believe any of us, any individual in life, can become a whole person without God in their life. I believe that, I preach that, I teach that, I’m sold out on that. So I believe we need to give them the whole picture. We have to give them all the necessary academic tools, give to them the necessary work tools, the necessary decision-making tools in life. We also need to give them the one who can hold them when everybody else fails them. If we don’t give them a faith and don’t give them something they can grab onto that’s bigger than them and bigger than the problem, sooner or later they’re going to run into that thing that’s bigger than them.”

EPISCOPAL SOCIAL SERVICES

New York, NY

B-roll of David Hernandez
Walking up street and then
Giving tour of his apt.

V.O.#1

David Hernandez spent 14 years in prison. Since his release, he’s gotten a Bachelors degree from the State University of New York and is currently attending NYU to obtain his Masters in Public Administration. He gave us a tour of his new apartment, which though small, is a big difference from the cell he lived in for 14 years.

David Hernandez, Former Client of
Episcopal Social Services

“To me, this means a lot that I can go to my refrigerator and open it and eat whenever I want at any given time and just stock it. That’s a good thing.”

More B-roll of tour

V.O.#2

David said it was really scary when he came out a little over two years ago, but because of Episcopal Social Services and a program he participated in while in prison called the Network Program, his transition was a lot smoother.

Father Stephen Chinlund, Executive Director
Episcopal Social Services

“Well, I started at the reentry end in east Harlem and we were just dealing with guys coming out of prison and women, and then decided that that wasn’t enough. We had to be in prison. So for 40 years I have been in prison and in transition programs. We have created a program inside prison, using certain forms of meeting, which are repeated on the outside.”

B-roll

V/O.#3

Episcopal Social Services is a nonprofit, nondenominational social service agency begun by the Episcopal Mission Society. They received permission to reintroduce the Network Program, patterned after the original program operated by the New York State Department of Corrections, in which inmates participate in daily group meetings. It is operated in nine facilities.

David Hernandez

“Before I got to where I was, I was involved with ESS and other stuff because, in prison, they also have the Network program. This is a behavior modification thing that Father Stephen Chinlund had initiated. It was fascinating because it teaches men and women how to adopt a different way of living. Some people don’t really understand that, at a certain point, you have to change.”

Charlene Griffin
Episcopal Social Services College Initiative

“My name is Charlene Griffin. I work for Episcopal Social Services in a program called the College Initiative. It helps anybody who wants to go back into college to get there.”

Charlene Griffin

“We snatch them up as soon as they come home. We go to Queensboro. We make sure they know about us. As soon as they get out here, we introduce them, usually, to the CUNY system and just try to get their admissions process rolling. Once they’re in, we try to provide tutoring and whatever kind of academic support to make sure they stay there.”

B-roll of group

V.O.#4

In addition to helping David continue his education, ESS also helped him by continuing the Network Program support groups in the community, which are operated at six different locations.

David Hernandez

“We are human. So we have to make a transition mentally as well and we need to be able to deal with that. One of the things that was provided to me through ESS was that, ‘it’s okay, you can talk to us. You can talk to me. What’s bothering you? If I can’t do anything about it, here, call this person. You know, speak to this person.’ That’s very, very big, and that’s what I got there.”

Father Chinlund

“They feel unwelcome everywhere. The old gang doesn’t want them because they’re square. The new gang is not wanting them because they have a record. They need friends.”

Network Program Group Session

Yellowday
Network Program Group
Leader

“What we do in check-in is we briefly state why you’re here. Or what is it that you hope to gain by being here? You can answer one of those questions or both of them.”

Angel, Program participant

“I enjoy coming here because it gives me an opportunity to vent and speak about good or bad and to get feedback.”

Mark, Program participant

“I tried everything else and I’m going to give this a shot. I’m looking forward to getting support, some guidance, and to stay drug free and out of prison.”

Abdul, Program participant

“I’m really in need of support groups because, in my situation, I have two strikes. One is I’m an offender, an ex-offender. I’m also a Muslim and there’s a lot of anti-Muslim rhetoric going around in the country even though I served my country. For eight years I was in the Marine Corps. Born and raised here. A lot of people don’t look at who I am. They see what I am. They look at the outward appearance. So support groups like this sometimes, they

give me the opportunity to air what I'm feeling and have someone listen."

Robert, Program participant "I get a lot out of it, you know what I'm saying? I'm basically a negative person by nature. Coming to group like this, people make you aware of certain things that you don't see. You know, they bring it up. It's been working for me."

Father Chinlund "I really believe in groups. I believe that's the way God works. He sure does. I mean, I guess He works a little bit through me, but I've heard good sermons and I'm moved by great preaching. But I think the thing that happens when people really are together – it's just a whole other wonderful mysterious beautiful thing. Jesus said I was in prison and you visited me. He didn't say I was in prison and you came and gave me a whole long rap and a road map and a lot of do's and don'ts. He just said you visited me. I think that's wonderful to have that be it. That you're just there."

WOMAN AT THE WELL HOUSE MINISTRIES
San Antonio, TX

Video

Audio

Priscilla Murguira, Director
Woman at the Well House Ministries

"I love to show off our kitchen because it's very representative of who we are. When we first moved into this house four years ago, it needed a lot of repair. So a group from the Methodist Church came and bought our cabinets and installed them. An Episcopal Church bought our stove, and a group of Catholic nuns bought us a microwave."

B-roll of tour

V.O.#1

Priscilla Murguira is the director of Woman at the Well House Ministries, a Methodist and Episcopalian operated faith-based residential community for formerly incarcerated women.

Priscilla Murguira

"Everything you see in the household, every piece of furniture, equipment, clothing, food, has been donated through the community. We're not affiliated with the government, so we're funded 90 percent from donations from individuals who send anywhere from a couple of dollars to a couple of hundred."

B-roll

V.O.#2

This house was donated to Woman at the Well House Ministries by a retired couple four years ago, but it was founded seven years ago by a group of women and a Methodist Minister.

Priscilla Murguira

“She had Bible study in the county jail. She saw that as soon as the women were being released, they would automatically come back in the system because most of them had burned bridges; families and friends didn’t want them back. They would eventually go back to the environment that got them into trouble.

While they’re with us here at the Well House, they either have to be working, going to school, or in training. So they all have a different schedule. They take turns cooking meals. That’s one of the life skills we implement. We get a lot of donations on food items. The way we supplement our pantry is, some of the women are eligible for food stamps. The ones that are, it’s part of the house rules that they have to donate 90 percent of their food stamps back to the ministry in order for us to supplement our pantry.

Once they start working, they’re expected to tithe ten percent of their income back to the ministry. They have to open a personal savings account where they put ten percent of their income. Once they leave us, they have that nest egg to fall back on.”

B-roll

V.O.#3

Although they have plans to expand, the house is small -- about ten women live here. Since 1996, over 250 women have been ministered to and provided with counseling, clothing, food, mentoring, life skills training, and support until they are able to get back on their feet.

Pat, Resident

“It’s like a sanctuary, it’s like a haven, you know? We all feel that when we leave and go out and have a stressful day, we always know we can come back here where it’s all right. We can see the house from the corner; it’s okay. So it’s great.”

Shelly, Resident

“It’s meant my sanity -- a lot of ups and downs emotionally. The support group and just everything about this place, you don’t have to worry about nothing, except getting yourself well.”

Carla Pineda, Program Director
Woman at the Well House Ministries

“I really function as the in-house counselor. When the women get here, I work with them in terms of their intake, getting to see what their care plan needs to be, helping them get hooked up with the resources in the community that they’re going to need, whether that’s the health system, if they need to get their ID, or their social security card. We help them find those places to go.”

Julie, Former Resident

“Oh, it changed my whole life around. I’m no longer homeless. I have my own place now. I’m working. I got a job while I was here. It was a spiritual awakening for me. It also helped me understand more about myself as far as my mental illness and stuff, because I’m diagnosed bi-polar. It gave me the time to work on that and learn how to balance my own moods and how to understand myself. The spirituality in this house has just been amazing.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

The Well House has made connections with a number of churches in the community where the women meet and greet and choose a church home for themselves, one of the requirements for living there.

Priscilla Murguira

“One of the things that I’ve discovered in this job is that the faith-based component is very important. I’ve discovered that we’re not bringing God into her life. She already has that faith in her, because that is what kept her going when she was incarcerated. Our focus is to nurture that journey and provide the physical needs, How do you minister to someone who is homeless, hungry, sick? You can’t. You’ve got to provide those things. Then, the spiritual part comes in. That is the growth that is needed. That’s what binds her, herself.”

Carla Pineda

“You can talk about all the behavior changes that you need to make, and you can talk about all the facts and all that kind of stuff that’s important. That’s a piece of it. But, the spiritual piece of it, that says ‘I am a child of God, who’s loved and I am good in and of itself, totally independent of anything that I have done’ is the piece that you have to help these women believe.”

B-roll

V.O.#5

Woman at the Well House was inspired by scripture in the Bible, when Jesus met a woman at the well who was an outcast.

Priscilla

“She discovers in talking to our Lord that she is worthwhile. She is a person. Whatever took place in that conversation, she became a different person. This is what we try to do. As Christians we are responsible to help others and this particular population is in dire need. We need to step out of our safety, out of our box, and take a chance. I am speaking as a group, as a church. It’s needed.”

State Senator Donald Redfern
Vice-Chair, Judiciary Committee (R,IA)

“When you first get out there, you haven’t been working; you don’t have any money; you have some debts; you have some people out there still bitter about a number of things. You need help and support. So much of that is voluntary. I think one of the things we look at is leveraging our dollars and investment here, get so many extra people involved that are willing to volunteer their time. The churches and other community and civic groups are willing to work with them. We have to build on that.”

ISLAMIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES **Detroit, MI**

Video

B-roll of Imam Sharif Muhammad and
his wife Judy

Audio

V.O.#1

Imam Sharif Muhammad started Islamic Health & Human Services with his wife Judy in 1986 to assist people, particularly of the Muslim faith, who were coming out of prison. Having spent 15 years of his life in the system, he knew first hand the obstacles people formerly incarcerated have to overcome. After four years of persistence, he was permitted to go back into the institutions as a Chaplain.

Imam Sharif Muhammad, Founder
Islamic Health & Human Services

“What I do when we go into the prison is identify people who are getting ready to come home. Once they get ready to come home, we give them a number to call. They make that initial contact when they come home. We set them up with an individual who has successfully completed their parole, has gainful employment, and is functioning in the Muslim community. So we match them up with somebody to mentor them.”

Assayyid Ufenu (Umar)

Islamic Health & Human Services Mentor

“Usually, when they first come home from the institution, they definitely have to report in to their probation officer. I find out the time slots, when they have to do that. I’ll pick them up and take them there if I have the time or I will give them the money to get a bus or catch a cab. That’s something that’s very important, that they make those meetings with their parole officers.”

Imam Sharif

“A lot of times we have to pick them up and pray with them in the Mosque to get them into the habit of actually praying and being around Muslims. Often, we have to take time out of our schedules to go and spend extra time with them. We know, we’ve been tracking, the first six months are the most critical period for an offender to come out of the system and to re-offend.

B-roll

V.O.#2

Assayyyid Ufenu or Umar, became involved with Islamic Health & Human Services after he came home from an eight-year prison term.

Assayyid Ufenu “Umar”

“I had Sharif and his wife Judy Muhammad, who really took me under their wings and kept me close. They helped me get back in school. They helped me get into this field, which is substance abuse counseling, something I really love, especially working with the kids. They network with me. They keep me on track. I talk to them just about every day, and that keeps me focused.”

Dr. Judy Muhammad, Islamic Health & Human Services

“I don’t know a religion that says it’s okay to break the law, certainly not ours. I know not Christianity. If people follow their religions specifically, they’re not going to re-offend. That’s what we find, too, with the Muslims that come out. If we mentor them into a Muslim community, where that religiosity that they have gotten in prison is nurtured, and it grows on the outside, then they don’t re-offend because it’s not possible to be a good Muslim and be an offender. It’s just not. Just like it’s not possible to be a good Christian and be an offender.”

Imam Sharif Muhammad

“I feel an obligation. I feel an obligation because when I left, I told them that I would come back -- I would come back and I would help them. I feel it is an obligation on me to reach back and help one.”

B-roll

V.O.#3

That philosophy is passed on to everyone who comes through Islamic Health & Human Services. Just as Sharif mentored Umar, Umar has been working closely with Abdul whom he met in prison.

Alamin Sddik Kulukhyrin, "Abdul", Mentee

"I met brother Umar when I was incarcerated. I came in contact with him with the Muslim community where I was located. I saw in him something that was very unique, very sincere, very truthful, and very honest. I took to him. From watching his example, I wanted to find out what changed him. One thing led to another, and I became Muslim."

Assayyid Ufenu (Umar)

"Usually, it takes somebody who's actually been there to know that you can reform in the institution, whether it be the institution that reforms you, or you go through some sort of spiritual base reformation there. Islam, for a lot of individuals that go to the institutions, is that thing that reforms them or gives them some sort of idea that they want to change."

B-roll

V.O.#4

We asked Imam Muhammad about funding sources for the program.

Imam

"We pay for it out of our individual pockets. We have no grants; we have no funding from the government. We work two jobs, my wife, myself, and brother Umar."

Assayyid Ufenu (Umar)

"We pray a lot. We pray a lot. Most of the stuff we do is out of pocket, which is a charity. A zacet, we call it in Islam. It's called zacet or sataca, which is just like an open charity. It's something that we give and we don't look for any reward back other than the blessings that we get from Allah, from God."

Imam Sharif Muhammad

"People go into prison and they come out. You don't have to go in and come out the same way. When people come out of prison, they have the opportunity to re-offend or not offend. When the community sees a person come out of prison, and they're honestly, genuinely trying to get back into mainstream society, the doors should not shut. They should open. We should be more conducive to the social, the moral, the spiritual, and the financial help of helping an individual, not abandoning that person."

AMACHI
Philadelphia, PA

Video

B-roll

Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.
Director, Amachi

B-roll

Rev. Wilson Goode

Dennis Green
Big Brothers Big Sisters

B-roll

Audio

V.O.#1

Rev. Wilson Goode, the former Mayor of Philadelphia, has been committed for the last couple of years to focusing attention on the numbers of children in this country who have incarcerated parents. In Philadelphia alone, that's 20,000 children. Research tells us that these children are five to six times more likely to spend some time incarcerated than kids without a parent in the system. The AMACHI program was designed to provide effective intervention for these children by matching them with faith-based mentors.

"Who knows what God has brought us because a person of faith has mentored a child of promise and a child of promise has achieved their full potential."

V.O.#2

The Amachi program is a partnership between secular and faith-based institutions, including 71 congregations, Public/Private Ventures, a social policy think tank; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Pennsylvania; and the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania.

"The Church is there, I believe, with a mission to reach out to those people in that community who are suffering, who have needs. They have a mandate to do something about these children and they have. They have the resources in terms of people who can do it. "

"Mentoring is a good thing because young people need help -- if they could find someone who will be an ear and not interject all of their ideas on them but help them in their decisions."

V.O.#3

Julian Wilkerson has been mentoring Jaquille and Jamir for two years, although the Amachi program only requires one hour a week for a year.

Julian Wilkerson
Amachi Mentor

“I thought at the end of the program, what I would wind up doing is passing these guys on and actually going back in the system and trying to help somebody else. What happened was, I got kind of attached to these guys. They became more than just mentees. They came to be a part of my life.”

Reba Cherry
Jaquille and Jamir’s Mother

“We’ve bonded and some people leave after a year. You know, they give their year’s time. But when you’re committed, and you love what you do then, it’s a lifetime thing.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

Mirta Angelo has been mentoring Ashley, who has become an integral part of her family, for more than a year.

Mirta Angelo, Amachi Mentor

“I hope that other people find some interest in helping people. There are so many kids that need help in the community and so many different needs. Just one little thing can make the difference, I think, in the lives of these kids.”

Ruben Ortiz, District Manager
Amachi

“When we were recruiting congregations, we wanted specifically churches that were already community-based, hopefully. We wanted to locate congregations that have people who not only came to church on Sunday mornings, but also who lived in the neighborhood that they were serving as well. That was important because we knew that we were going to find mentors that not only didn’t need a whole lot of training, but were already committed beyond their one year commitment, which was required by Amachi.”

B-roll

V.O.#5

Faith-based mentoring can help to bolster the strengths of youth. Kenny Taylor and Israel have known each other for about six years. He took Israel under his wings through his church’s victory outreach ministry. Now his church is involved in Amachi.

Kenny Taylor
Amachi Mentor

“I had the opportunity to meet his dad. You know he’s incarcerated right now. I heard him tell Israel, ‘keep up the good work,’ even though he wasn’t there. I shared with Israel that, one day, it’s going to be because of him that his father is going to get it right. He’s going to see the impact

that this way of life affected his son, that he's going to be able to administer to his dad, and his dad maybe will never have to go back to jail again."

B-roll

V.O.#6

Since the inception of the Amachi program, over 600 matches have been made, with 75 percent remaining active. Many of those matches have been active for more than 18 months. Activity reports from the mentors indicate that, on average, the matches spend more than nine hours per month together and that they have over four hours of telephone contact per month. More rigorous evaluations measuring the value of the program will be conducted within the year.

Rev. Wilson Goode

"If nothing else has happened other than the fact that people around this nation now realize there are a group of children out here who are the most at-risk children in our society, who need help, and who can be helped and potentially transformed by people of faith mentoring them. If nothing else happens, other than that, and we get people to start to pay attention, we have achieved a great service for these children who are at risk in our society."

B-roll

V.O.#7

Although the ministries and programs in this segment mirror many of the areas served by secular efforts, there is a difference in the approach from faith-based organizations. These communities of faith put more emphasis on spiritual reconciliation and redemption, something deeper than mere social services.