

CHAPTER 1 THE INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

Part I: General Reflections

EverLasting Life Foundation CDC (ELLF-CDC) is a non-profit organization designed to help the needy, regardless of race, religion, creed, color, gender or political affiliation. Another Chance Mentor Project (AChAMP) is the major program within ELL-CDC, providing mentoring to ex-offenders and counseling services to men and women re-entering society from incarceration. Previously incarcerated people sometimes need another chance to move forward in life and then another and another chance. We must give them the opportunity to decide when to join society and righteousness. ELLF-CDC and EverLasting Life Foundation Ministry collaborates with other organization to distribute turkeys, food, winter coats, clothing, toys, children blankets and hygiene products to the needy. AChAMP is officed at the Passaic County One-Stop Career Center, Workforce Development Board in Paterson, New Jersey.

There was not a serious Re-Entry programs in Paterson. In 2010, the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Chaplaincy Mentor Network Program, trained Deacon Kevin M. Henry, Rev. Doris Carter and later Overseer William O. Henry to become volunteer mentors with state clearance and access to prison facilities and half-way houses. From 2011 to the present we have had up to 15 mentors assisting the organization in our efforts to help those men and women returning to the community of Paterson, Passaic County and Bergen County.

The mentor membership has decreased since then Governor Christie dismissed Chaplaincy Network Mentors. However, the number of released inmates still remains high. AChAMP has continued to grow spiritually, since that time. In 2011 EverLasting Life Foundation Ministry (ELLFM) was having church services at the Paterson YWCA, I decided to cancel services indefinitely since the strain of church, Bergen Community College, AChAMP and a

four-year old was overwhelming. It was at this time that I knew that God wanted me assisting those re-entering society. Three months after leaving the YWCA, it closed.

Having in-kind office space at the Workforce Development Board has assisted the organization tremendously. The Workforce Development Board provides the funding for vocational training such as commercial driver license (CDL) driver license, welding, carpentry, electrical and any vocational fields whose classes are six months or less,¹ and the field is needed according to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce (NJDOL) statistics.² AChAMP uses the services at the One-Stop to assist in employment with the NJDOL in hiring our mentees through different incentives to employers. The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation assists people with disabilities with assessments which can lead to housing, training, counseling, financial planning and other services according to the need of the individual.³

AChAMP also provides re-development sessions at the Islamic Mosque, Masjid Salahuddin in Paterson, New Jersey, for our mentees, Passaic County Probation Services, Community Service (PCPSCS)⁴ individuals and other men that are interested in learning of developing social skills, recidivism, cognitive & behavioral issues, substance abuse, stress and coping skills, branches of government, etc. Re-development classes for the past year are held once monthly, less than 60 minutes with discussions. If the organization was still having re-development classes, we would have had discussions on COVID 19 and George Floyd. Sometimes you have to give men an opportunity to vent their frustrations with America, life, the

¹ Passaic County Workforce Development Board. Passaic County. <http://wdbpc.org>

² Department of Labor. State of New Jersey. https://www.nj.gov/labor/lwdhome/press/2019/20190809_backwagesconstruction.shtml

³ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Jobseekers with disabilities. https://nj.gov/careerconnections/plan/foryou/disable/vocational_rehabilitation_services.shtml

⁴ Passaic County Probation Services, Community Service Program.

church, and other topics. This re-development session is not a Bible-based lecture, but biblical principles are used during the presentation.

Part II: The Prodigal Son

I, William O. Henry, was released from prison in 2006 to a halfway house in Newark, New Jersey. I considered that past three-years my wilderness journey, seminary and then practice. I became employed at Jay's Car Wash in Paterson as a book-keeper while still in the half-way house. My pastor at that time was Bishop Joseph T. Robinson Sr. and co-owner of Jay's Car Wash. Bishop Robinson has been with me through my many trials and tribulations, (court trials and self-inflicted tribulations). I consider Bishop Robinson a great leader not because he didn't give up on me, but because he was serious in his counseling and prophecy. His prophecy eventually came true! I was ordained an Elder in 2006 while still in the half-way house. Bishop Robinson could see the change that would be everlasting.

In 2007 I was made National Overseer of the Assembly Holy House of Prayer. In 2006 Bishop Robinson's brother (James) a Bishop, prophesized that Bishop Robinson would start two more churches, and become an Apostle and the brother would become National Overseer of the three churches. In 2007, Bishop Robinson Started a church in Penns Grove, NJ and Durham, NC. Bishop Robinson was ordained an Apostle and the brother (James) withdrew and was never made Overseer. I was, out of jail less than a year and I was considered worthy to fill Bishop James 'spot. That delivered a great feeling of encouragement.

I published a Christian Newsletter from 2008 to 2010 which was for the brothers I left in prison. It was a great learning experience and sharing the word was what lead me to college, to share in a bigger and greater way. I was installed as Pastor of EverLasting Life Foundation Ministry on Aug. 23, 2008

I enrolled at Bergen Community College, Paramus N.J., for the Winter Semester of 2010, studying Paralegal A.A.S. Degree. This degree was to help me understand the legal system with business classes that I could write grants, proposals and other legal business matters for churches, non-profit and for-profits.

After receiving the learning bug, I enrolled at Ramapo College of New Jersey after graduating from Bergen CC to obtain a bachelor's degree in Social Science's with a minor in Substance Abuse Counseling. Also, from Ramapo College of New Jersey, a Master's Degree in Social Work in 2017. The Master's in Social Work was a new program there and I was blessed to be in the first graduating class. Those five years at Ramapo seriously changed my life. The skill level of the college, the professionalism, the learning experience was great and I tried to absorb it all.

My theological commitments have always been toward God learning of HIM, HE has taught me to recognize HIM, which has led me more towards HIM, with this never-ending cycle. There are times when I absorbed every Word of God, with love and faith. Now I have a deeper love for HIM that I share even within my culture. How my mother would cook and shout I'm walking with the King. I did not understand that as a child but today I do and can understand why I am still in the race to assist in this great soul saving journey. I whisper of God's love to the lost, of the grace given freely. I have accepted this love and grace (reconciliation) and work to plant seeds of life every day to share this love and grace. As we speak of culture, we need to spread our family culture with our children, it is this sharing that will grow them. It is our testimonies that will reflect God's love and grace to our children that they might believe. This black man's culture is not on Facebook or Instagram, it is within us and it must be shared.

We work with our mentees trying our hardest to get them employment, housing and fill their immediate and later long-term needs. They, the powers that be, saw us at Dunkin Donuts our office at that time and knew we were doing the work. The Passaic County Workforce Development Board gift of in-kind space moved the organization forward by putting us within the county and state social services. While attending college through-out this time, it refined our goals and objectives in the re-entry field and mentoring.

Part III: The Need for Mentoring

The resources used are the mentor's personal strengths to assist those people returning home and back into our communities. There are no grants for mentoring. There are grants for life skills, G.E.D. training & testing, vocational careers, behavioral counseling, and even resource centers. However, it is my opinion that mentoring is the most important thing in assisting men and women returning home. The government Second Chance Act also holds this belief.⁵ The mentor is invested in seeing to the well-being of the mentee. The best mentors can relate to the mentee, whether they have served time in prison or a close family member has or some other investment for the mentee. For the mentee to have a religious belief is a plus for the mentor.

AChAMP now has five mentors at this time in 2020. The mentors have an invested interest in the program of those individuals formerly incarcerated. As AChAMP moves forward with lecturing at New Jersey Re-Entry Corporation weekly, AChAMP visits half-way houses in Newark & Paterson, New Jersey, participates in seminars, workshops, conferences lecturing on the re-entry process. It is the holistic approach to re-entry that works, the mentor must meet the mentee in their need, with words of encouragement, release preparation, family planning, a plan for release and assistance in life once released. (wHo 8-2020 nyts)

⁵ The Nation Reentry Resource Center. Second Chance Act Grant Program.
<https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/projects/second-chance-act/>