



# Reimagining Prison

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Wednesday, October 10th, 2018

John Jay College of  
Criminal Justice  
Gerald W. Lynch Theater

Cheshire Correctional  
Institution



#ReimaginePrison

Gerald W. Lynch Theater Wi-fi user name: GWLT Password: Lynch123



**Thank you from Vera Institute of Justice, staff and residents of the T.R.U.E unit at Cheshire Correctional Institution in Connecticut, and John Jay College of Criminal Justice for joining us to Reimagine Prison in the United States.**

**This event, the culmination of our Reimagining Prison Project, will simulcast from both John Jay College in New York City and Cheshire Correctional Institution in Connecticut. It**

**coincides with the release of our Reimagining Prison report, which makes the case for a human-dignity centered approach to incarceration—and how this can work in practice.**

**We thank the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust for its generous support of our Reimagining Prison project and report.**

**We thank The Ford Foundation for their support of this event.**

**And we thank the many individuals who have contributed to the Reimagining Prison Project, who are recognized on pages 118-121 of the report.**

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Read our report at [www.vera.org/reimagining-prison-print-report](http://www.vera.org/reimagining-prison-print-report)

Tweet your thoughts using the **#ReimaginePrison** hashtag



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## **Agenda**

**11:15 – 12:00 Registration.** Please be seated by 12 as we will start promptly

### **12:00 Live from John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

#### **Welcome and opening remarks**

Fred Patrick, director, Center on Sentencing and Corrections, Vera Institute of Justice

Karol Mason, president, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

#### **Why and how we are reimagining prison**

Moderator: Karol Mason, president, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Nick Turner, president, Vera Institute of Justice

The Honorable Dannel P. Malloy, governor of Connecticut

Stanley Richards, senior vice president, The Fortune Society

### **12:40 Live from Cheshire Correctional Institution**

#### **Welcome**

Scott Semple, commissioner, Connecticut Department of Correction

#### **T.R.U.E transformation**

Moderator: Carrie Johnson, national justice correspondent, NPR

Chris Belcher, T.R.U.E resident and mentee

Scott Erfe, warden, Cheshire Correctional Institution

Jennifer Peterson, principal and counselor supervisor, Connecticut DOC

Ryan Shanahan, research director, Center on Youth Justice, Vera Institute of Justice

Jermaine Young, T.R.U.E resident and mentor

#### **The physical meets the philosophical**

Michael Murphy, executive director, MASS Design Group

### **1:50-2:30 Location: John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

#### **Prison reimagined – Scaling the idea**

Moderator: Candice Jones, president and CEO, Public Welfare Foundation

Alex Frank, project director, Center on Youth Justice, Vera Institute of Justice

DeAnna Hoskins, president and CEO, JustLeadership USA

Andy Potter, executive director, Michigan Corrections Organization

Rick Raemisch, executive director, Colorado Department of Corrections

## **2:30 Live from Cheshire Correctional Institution**

### **The future**

Moderator: Baz Dreisinger, founding academic director of John Jay's  
Prison-to-College Pipeline

Robert Bullock, T.R.U.E mentee and student

Abbas Mohamad, T.R.U.E mentee and student

Rashaad Porter, project coordinator, Center on Youth Justice, Vera  
Institute of Justice

Devon Simmons, John Jay student

## **3:00 Receptions - Cheshire Correctional and John Jay**

Coffee, sweets, and snacks

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Panels and presentations will be held both at the John Jay College of Criminal  
Justice in New York City and at the Cheshire Correctional Institution in Cheshire,  
Connecticut.

## Participants *(in order of appearance)*



Fred Patrick, Director  
Vera Institute of Justice  
Center on Sentencing and  
Corrections

Fred Patrick joined Vera in July 2012 as the project director of the Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education Project. In 2015, he was named director of the Center on Sentencing and Corrections. He came to Vera from a career in public service in New York City where he served as deputy commissioner for planning and programs at the NYC Department of Correction, commissioner of the NYC Juvenile Justice Department, and NYPD deputy commissioner for community affairs. Most recently, Fred served in executive positions at the Fortune Society, a reentry services organization, and NADAP, an agency providing workforce development and behavioral health services. He also served as a faculty member at John Jay College of Criminal Justice for several years. Fred has a Master's degree in public affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School and a BS in political science from Tuskegee University.



## Karol V. Mason, President

### John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Over the course of her long career, John Jay College President Karol V. Mason has been a legal pioneer and an exceptional voice for equality, fairness, and criminal justice reform. She was a leader in the Obama Administration on juvenile justice issues, bail reform and re-entry for individuals leaving prison, and in her distinguished career at Alston & Bird LLP, she was the first African American woman elected as chair of the management committee at any major national firm. As United States Assistant Attorney General and head of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, Mason oversaw an annual budget of \$4 billion to support an array of state and local criminal justice agencies, juvenile justice programs, and services for crime victims, and oversaw the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, among a wide range of other efforts. She led the Department of Justice's work to address the issue of community trust in the justice system through a variety of programs including the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, a partnership with John Jay College and other academic institutions across the country designed to address lack of trust in the criminal justice system.



## Nicholas Turner, President Vera Institute of Justice

Nicholas Turner joined the Vera Institute of Justice as its fifth president in 2013. Under his leadership, Vera has identified core priorities of ending the misuse of jails, transforming conditions of confinement, and ensuring that justice systems more effectively serve America's diverse communities. Recent major initiatives at Vera include leading a delegation of policymakers on a tour of German prisons to learn from a system rooted in human dignity, working with corrections officials to shrink the number of people held in solitary confinement, and defining the role local jails play in mass incarceration through a first-in-kind data tool and related publications.

Mr. Turner is the author of several op-eds, including "Finding A Home After Prison" in the *New York Times*; "What We Learned from German Prisons" with Jeremy Travis, president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in the *New York Times*; and "The Steep Cost of America's High Incarceration Rate" with Robert Rubin, co-chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former U.S. Treasury secretary, in the *Wall Street Journal*. Mr. Turner came to Vera from the Rockefeller Foundation, where he was a managing director. He previously served as vice president and chief program officer at Vera. He is a member of the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform and the Advisory Board to New York City's Children's Cabinet, and has served on the boards of National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Living Cities, and the Center for Working Families. He received his BA and JD from Yale.



Stanley Richards,  
Executive Vice President  
Fortune Society

Stanley Richards is the executive vice president of The Fortune Society, a service and advocacy non-profit organization based in New York City whose mission is to support successful reentry from prison and promote alternatives to incarceration. Stanley is a formerly incarcerated man of color with decades of experience in the criminal justice field. Stanley was recognized by the Obama Administration as a Champion of Change for his commitment to helping individuals impacted by the justice system, and also became the first formerly incarcerated person to be appointed by the New York City Council speaker to the NYC Board of Correction. He also serves on a number of other committees and boards, including the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, and the Working Group on Design, a subcommittee of the Implementation Task Force formed by Mayor De Blasio.



## Scott Semple, Commissioner Connecticut Department of Correction

Commissioner Scott Semple joined the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) in 1988 as a front line correction officer at a high security institution. During his tenure with DOC, he has served as a training officer; correctional captain; agency spokesperson; and major, serving in the capacity of legislative liaison. As major, he was assigned to an institution where he was integral to the completion of an ongoing transition to establish the agency's first consolidated environment for incarcerated men with significant mental health needs. During this assignment, he was promoted to deputy warden, and later to warden. Due to his ongoing track record of professional achievements, he was appointed deputy commissioner of operations and rehabilitative services in 2013 and less than a year later, chosen to serve as the interim commissioner. In March 2015, the Senate resolution unanimously passed consent on his appointment as DOC commissioner.

In April 2015, he dedicated the state's first reintegration center, designed to prepare incarcerated individuals for reintegration upon release and reduce recidivism. A visit to prisons in Germany with Connecticut's Governor Dannel Malloy provided insight into a model of supervision whose focus is rehabilitative as opposed to punitive. This newly acquired first-hand perspective helped Commissioner Semple to develop his vision for Connecticut's system. The agency has since opened up an additional three Reintegration Centers, designed to address the specific needs of veterans, treatment of individuals serving DUI sentences, and the female population. These centers are viewed nationally as a best practices model for corrections. In the Fall of 2016 Commissioner Semple was named as the president of the Northeast Association of Correctional Administrators.



Carrie Johnson,  
National Justice Correspondent  
NPR

Carrie Johnson is national justice correspondent for NPR. She covers a wide variety of stories about justice issues, law enforcement, and legal affairs for NPR's flagship programs Morning Edition and All Things Considered, as well as the Newscasts and NPR.org.

Prior to coming to NPR in 2010, Johnson worked at the *Washington Post* for 10 years, where she closely observed the FBI, the Justice Department, and criminal trials of the former leaders of Enron, Health-South, and Tyco. Earlier in her career, she wrote about courts for the weekly publication *Legal Times*.

Her work has been honored with awards from the Robert F. Kenney Center for Justice and Human Rights, the National Juvenile Defender Center, the Society for Professional Journalists, and the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. She has been a finalist for the Loeb award for financial journalism and for the Pulitzer Prize in breaking news for team coverage of the massacre at Fort Hood, Texas. Johnson is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Benedictine University in Illinois.



## Scott Erfe , Warden Cheshire Correctional Institution

Scott Erfe is the warden of the Cheshire Correctional Institution, a level four maximum security institution housing sentenced adult men. With 30 years of correctional experience, he began his career as a front line correctional officer at the age of 19, and worked his way through the custody ranks of lieutenant, captain, major, and deputy warden. In his current role as warden of the Cheshire Correctional Institution, he oversees approximately 600 custody and support staff, as well as just shy of 1400 incarcerated individuals on a compound spread over 225 acres of land.

Scott has received many certifications within the agency, becoming a certified instructor in the majority of topics the agency teaches his staff. He is also called upon to teach newly promoted supervisors a leadership course. Because of his strong instructional background, and knowledge of tactics, Scott spearheaded the implementation of instruction given for wardens, deputy wardens, and supervisors for the operation of a command center, an area at each facility that is responsible for handling a disturbance or large scale incident. Scott and his staff of the Cheshire Correctional Institution created a training command center, and offer a command center training to agency staff to prepare them on how to run a command center during an emergency.

His ability to think in the grey, along with his custody experience, allowed him to make many changes to the facilities he was moved to.



## Jennifer Peterson, Principal and Counselor Supervisor State of Connecticut

Jen began her career with the department in March 2006 at the York Correctional Facility, the only female facility in Connecticut, in the Unified School District #1, as a correctional transition instructor. In May 2007 Jen was promoted to correctional counselor at York Correctional where she worked with young adults, facility intakes, and in the Addiction Services Tier IV Therapeutic Community. In 2011, Jen transferred to Cheshire Correctional Institution, an all-male sentenced, level 4 maximum security prison as a correctional counselor where she worked with a mix of individuals in general population, work release, and protective custody. In 2012 Jen was promoted to counselor supervisor where she was the unit manager of general population and specialized housing units. In 2017, Jen was appointed as the unit manager of the 18-25 year old young adult unit, a new initiative from the department focusing on the developmental process of individuals in this specific age range and preparing them for reintegration back into society. Jen received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Eastern Connecticut State University.

## Christopher Belcher, T.R.U.E Mentee

My name is Christopher Belcher. I am 25 years old and from Bridgeport, CT. I have been incarcerated since October 2015 and am serving an 8-year sentence. I was one of the first 14 mentees to enter the T.R.U.E. program. I am currently a student of Wesleyan's CPE program and I am expected to receive an Associate's degree in Spring 2019. My aspirations are to become an entrepreneur running a commercial cleaning business and I plan on obtaining a position to make changes in the correctional system as an active advocate of justice reform. I hope the principles we exhibit in the T.R.U.E. unit will become pervasive in the prisons and the current philosophy of prison will become obsolete therefore allowing individuals the opportunity to flourish.

## Jermaine Young, T.R.U.E Mentor

My name is Jermaine Young. I was born August 26, 1974 in New Haven, CT and am currently serving a 50-year sentence in Cheshire. I have a 25-year-old son who also resides in New Haven, CT. I was one of the original mentors chosen to be in the T.R.U.E. Unit. It has been a life changing experience in so many ways. For most of my time in prison, I was trying to figure out how to make a negative experience into something positive. Mentoring gave me the opportunity to do that. In prison, you can lose the feeling of what it is like to be treated as a human being. This unit is all about getting a hold of that feeling again. I hope that mentors, mentees, and the staff, by theorizing and practicing new ways of participation in the T.R.U.E. Unit, will play a part in what the Department of Corrections will look like in the future.



Ryan Shanahan, Research Director  
Vera Institute of Justice  
Center on Youth Justice

Ryan Shanahan started at Vera in the Family Justice Program working with corrections departments, juvenile justice agencies, and faith- and community-based organizations to support them in adopting family-focused and strength-based approaches to their work. Ryan joined the Center on Youth Justice in 2014 bringing with her a focus on collaborative research to ensure the people most affected by justice research have a voice in the process. Ryan's research interests are at the intersection of the justice system and social identity—specifically race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Her areas of expertise are conducting research in prisons, on family engagement, with LGBTQ youth, and with youth involved in street prostitution. Ryan holds a BA from the University of Connecticut and an MA and PhD in women's studies from the University of Maryland.



## Michael Murphy, Principal and Executive Director MASS Design Group

Michael Murphy is the founding principal and executive director of MASS Design Group, an architecture and design collaborative that leverages buildings, as well as the design and construction process, to become catalysts for economic growth, social change, and justice.

MASS's work has been recognized globally, and published widely. Most recently, MASS has been recognized as recipients of the 2018-19 J. Irwin and Xenia S. Miller Prize, the 2018 American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Architecture, and the 2017 Cooper Hewitt National Design Award for Architecture. Their projects have appeared in over 400 publications, including *Architectural Record*, *The Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, CNN, and *The New York Times*. Michael's 2016 TED Talk has reached over a million views. He is an adjunct associate professor at the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, has taught at the Wentworth Institute of Technology, the Boston Architectural College, and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In 2018, he was a Santa Fe Art Institute Equal Justice Resident. Michael is from Poughkeepsie, NY and holds a Masters in Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



## Candice Jones, President Public Welfare Foundation

Candice Jones is the president and CEO of the Public Welfare Foundation in Washington, DC. Previously, she served as senior advisor at Chicago CRED, an organization that focuses on gun violence in Chicago. In that role, she worked on securing greater investments for violence intervention programs as an alternative to the criminal justice system.

Prior to her work with Chicago CRED, she served as director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, a cabinet-level state agency where she supervised operations, programming, budget matters, and communications. During her tenure, she pushed significant reforms that reduced the number of youth in state custody. She also served as a White House Fellow, managing a portfolio within the U.S. Department of Education that included developing education strategies for correctional institutions and shepherding a plan to reinstate federal Pell grants for youth and adults in custody. Earlier in her career, Candice served as a program officer with the MacArthur Foundation, where she managed a grant portfolio focused on decreasing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system and on improving the quality of defense for indigent youth. She currently serves on the board of Cabrini Green Legal Aid, a Chicago-based civil legal service organization. Candice received her J.D. from New York University School of Law and her B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.



**Rick Raemisch,**  
**Executive Director**  
**Colorado Department of Corrections**

Rick Raemisch has served as the executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections since 2013. Raemisch has previously served as secretary for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections; as a five-term sheriff in Dane County WI; district attorney in Dane County; and assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin. He holds a Bachelor's degree in political science/public administration and a Juris Doctorate Cum Laude degree from the University of Wisconsin. Raemisch served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations assisting in re-writing standards on the treatment of prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules. Raemisch was awarded the 2016 Sam Cochran Award by the National Alliance on Mental Illness for his work to reform the use of solitary confinement in Colorado prisons and the nationally distinguished Tom Clements Award by the Association of State Correctional Administrators in 2017, which is awarded annually to a member who displays innovation and achievement as a leader in the corrections field.



## Andy Potter, Executive Director Michigan Corrections Organization

Andy Potter is a 30-year veteran of the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) and the executive director of the Michigan Corrections Organization (MCO), a public-sector union located throughout the State of Michigan.

Andy joined the corrections department in 1989 and worked at the Oaks Correctional Facility and the Handlon Michigan Training Unit, where he held several elected chapter positions. He was elected to the MCO State Executive Board in 2004 and became state vice president in 2005. Over his career, he has held gubernatorial appointments on several task forces including an appointment to the Michigan Corrections Officers Training Council from 2004 to 2013.

Since 2015, he has served as MCO's executive director and led the restructuring of MCO's staff and operations. During his time as executive director, he has spearheaded several new initiatives to revolutionize member engagement within the union and also holds the title of president of the SEIU Michigan State Council.

In addition, he is the founder of One Voice, a national campaign that brings corrections officers together with criminal justice reform leaders and other stakeholders to experiment with ways of building bridges and unearthing common ground issues in order to better inform the policies, approach, and narrative of criminal justice reform.



## Deanna Hoskins, President JustLeadership USA (JLUSA)

Dedicated to cutting the U.S. correctional population in #halfby2030, JLUSA empowers people most affected by incarceration to drive policy reform. A nationally recognized leader and dynamic public speaker, Ms. Hoskins has been committed to the movement for justice, working alongside people impacted by incarceration for nearly two decades. Ms. Hoskins believes in collective leadership, advocacy for justice reinvestment, and bold systems change. Ms. Hoskins leads with her own life experience having been directly impacted by the system of incarceration and the war on drugs and with her professional experience from the grassroots to federal government. She is inspired to make the world more just with communities across the country, and for her three children—two that have experienced the criminal justice system.



## Alex Frank, Project Director

Vera Institute of Justice

Center on Youth Justice

Alex's work at the Vera Institute of Justice is aimed at ending mass incarceration and eliminating the correctional model of youth justice, with an eye towards race equity and community partnership. At Vera, Alex is leading the Center on Youth Justice's (CYJ) work on young adult justice within the juvenile and adult justice systems on both a national and state level.

This includes working with the Connecticut Department of Corrections on the design and implementation of a new practice model for working with young adults ages 18 to 25 who are incarcerated in CT. Alex is also working with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice on implementing a comprehensive reentry reform agenda where youth, family, and community partnership lives as a central organizing principle.

Prior to working at Vera, Alex worked at the Annie E. Casey Foundation in their Juvenile Justice Strategy Group, where she developed and managed their national strategy for partnering with young people currently and formerly involved in the juvenile justice system. Alex's work at the New York City Department of Probation, at the Suffolk County Jail in Boston, as well as her personal experience with the justice system shaped her interests in justice reform which lay at the intersection of racial justice, equity, and youth, community, and family partnership. Alex holds a Master's in social work from New York University and a Bachelor's in holistic psychology from Lesley University.



Dr. Baz Dreisinger,  
Professor of English  
John Jay College of Criminal  
Justice

Dr. Baz Dreisinger is: professor, journalist, justice worker, film and radio producer, cultural critic, and activist. As professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, she is the founder and academic director of the Prison-to-College Pipeline program, which offers college courses and reentry planning to incarcerated men throughout New York State, and broadly works to increase access to higher education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. Her book "Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World" (2016)—a first-person odyssey through prisons in nine countries, beginning in Africa and concluding in Europe—offers a poignant window into a world most never see, and offers a radical rethinking of one of America's most devastating exports and national experiments: the modern prison system. Named a Notable Book of 2016 by the *Washington Post*, it was also lauded by the *New York Times*, NPR, the *LA Times* and many more. Dr. Dreisinger was named a 2017-2018 Global Fulbright Scholar for her work promoting education and restorative justice internationally, and is working to replicate the prison-to-college model in countries ranging from Jamaica, Trinidad and the UK to South Africa and Australia. She does this in her position as the founding director of the Incarceration Nations Network (INN), a global network and think tank that supports, instigates and popularizes innovative prison reform efforts around the world.

Dr. Dreisinger earned her Ph.D. in English from Columbia University, where she specialized in African-American studies and critical race theory and was named a Whiting Fellow.



Rashaad Porter, Project Coordinator

Vera Institute of Justice

Center on Youth Justice

Rashaad joined Vera in 2017, and his work primarily focuses on community participatory action research, collaborative research, and justice system-involved youth. Rashaad is a Navy veteran whose interests include criminal justice reform, ending mass incarceration, and social psychology. Rashaad is a student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice where he studies political science.



## Devon Simmons

Devon Simmons is a Harlem native who currently resides in the Bronx. He enrolled in John Jay's Prison to College Pipeline program (P2CP) in 2012. During his freshman year at Otisville Correctional Facility his work was selected into John Jay's Finest—the yearly published book of literary works selected by faculty in the English department. Upon his release after 15 ½ years, he immediately enrolled at Hostos Community College where he graduated with honors, becoming the first graduate from the program. He's also a graduate of Columbia University's Justice-in-Education Scholars program. This spring he graduated from John Jay with his Bachelor's degree in criminal justice summa cum laude. During his undergraduate studies he has traveled abroad to South Africa, Cuba, England, and Jamaica in pursuit of building prison-to-college pipeline programs internationally. In 2017 he was the David Rockefeller Fund fellow. As a global ambassador for higher education his goal is to change the narrative of those formerly incarcerated while using education as the integral tool to help empower marginalized communities worldwide.

## Robert Bullock, T.R.U.E Mentee, Student

My name is Robert Bullock and I have been incarcerated since September 24th, 2010. Since my incarceration I have started the necessary steps to transform my life. Mainly through self-reflection and education, which I started with my reading of Malcolm X's autobiography in 2013, instilling in me the value of education. Since then, I applied and was accepted to the CPE program through Wesleyan in 2015. I am on track to receive my Associate's degree in general studies next year. With the genesis of the T.R.U.E. unit I was able to apply, as well as get accepted in the second group which arrived in the unit March 2017. Once I am released I plan on pursuing a career in finance as well as being a voice in my community against varied forms of oppression.

## Abbas Mohamad, T.R.U.E Mentee, Student

My name is Abbas Mohamad. I came to prison in 2015. On January 30, 2017, I was part of the first group of mentees in the T.R.U.E program. Then in September of 2017 I was accepted into the Wesleyan CPE college program. I am working towards my Associate's degree, and upon my release I would like to pursue a Bachelor's degree in film, as I chase my aspirations of becoming an established screenwriter and film director.



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