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IN MEMORIAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY KENNETH P. THOMPSON
(1966-2016)

Kings County Re-Entry Task Force
Bi-Monthly Meeting of February 1, 2017 – Minutes

Meeting Date:	Wednesday, February 1, 2017	
Meeting Time:	12:40 pm – 1:58 pm	
Meeting Location:	Office of the Kings County District Attorney 350 Jay Street, 19 th Floor – Bob Kaye Room, Brooklyn, NY 11201	
Attendees: <small>(From Attendance Sheet signatures)</small>	<p>BEDFORD-STUYVESANT RESTORATION: G. Mason BLACK VETERANS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: D. Robinson BRIDGING ACCESS TO CARE: D. Osman THE BURNING HOUSE PROJECT, INC.: M. Blackman</p> <p>CENTER FOR APPELLATE LITIGATION: S. Karlin CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES: J. Bicknell, L. Chrysiliou CHRIST FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: M. Harris-Small CHOSEN VESSELS PRISON MINISTRY: M. Johnson CHURCH OF GETHSEMANE / PROJECT CONNECT: J. Ehlke, Rev. D. Lacey COMMUNITY SERVICE SOCIETY: J. Whiting CORE SERVICES GROUP, INC: D. Allen, L. Bruno (Brooklyn Halfway House) COUNSELING SERVICES – EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK (CSEDNY): D. Tolbert D.R.E.A.M.S. YOUTHBUILD: M. Monge</p> <p>EASTER SEALS/FEDCAP: G. Russell, S. Scriven EMPLOYMENT WORKS/FEDCAP: J. Uliano EPRA, INC.: H. Tinker FAMILIES, FATHERS AND CHILDREN, INC: E. Edelman FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS: E. Rogers FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF CROWN HEIGHTS: Rev. D. Odom FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - BROOKLYN: Rev. A. Thorne THE FORTUNE SOCIETY: S. Rivera, A. Travers FRIENDS OF ISLAND ACADEMY: E. Rosario</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">KINGS COUNTY RE-ENTRY TASK FORCE</p> <p>KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE Christopher Owens, Co-Chair Designate Director, The Re-Entry Bureau Norma Fernandes, Case Manager Andrea Johnson, Case Manager</p> <p>NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (DOCCS) Audrey Thompson, Co-Chair Designate Re-Entry Operations Manager</p> <p>NYS DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES Margaret Chretien</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY</p> <p><u>The Re-Entry Bureau</u> Anne Broomfield, ADA for Re-Entry Compliance</p> <p><u>ComALERT</u> Maria Abadia, Program Administrator Kelly Burns, Case Manager</p> <p><u>Office of Public Engagement</u> Justine Tomon, Executive Assistant</p>

<p> THE HOPE PROGRAM: T. Hertzberg HOUSING WORKS: S. Hamilton, R. Skinner, B. Smith-Rice REV. J. JONES D. McINTOSH MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE OASIS BEACON: W. Boone C. MOORE </p> <p> NYC CENTER FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: P. Krasney NYC DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION: E. Testwuide NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE: J. Phillips NYC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: D. Slaughter, W. Whitaker </p> <p> NYS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS & COMMUNITY SUPERVISION: D. Barometre (Queensboro Correctional Facility) NYS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – ACCES-VR: K. Charles, W. Hersh </p> <p> THE OSBORNE ASSOCIATION: D. George PRISON WRITES: J. Hall J. RALLO QUEENS COUNTY RE-ENTRY TASK FORCE: H. Lila VILLAGE LIFE FOUNDATION: Rev. A. Sandusky </p>	
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ITEM #	ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND ACTION ITEMS
1	Call to Order	The meeting was called to order by Mr. Christopher R. Owens, KCRTF Co-Chair designate, at 12:40 pm.
2	Opening Remarks	<p>Mr. Owens wished those in attendance a Happy New Year and Happy Lunar New Year. He introduced himself, described the structure and role of The Re-Entry Bureau at the District Attorney’s Office and acknowledged the absence of Dr. Vanda Seward, the KCRTF Coordinator, due to illness.</p> <p>Mr. Owens apologized for the late publication of the Minutes and pledged that “we will do better” in the future. Later on, Mr. Owens requested that attendees review the Minutes from the December 7, 2016 KCRTF Bi-Monthly Meeting and contact the Task Force if there were any comments or concerns that required corrections.</p> <p>He also stated that there may be some errors, particularly with regard to the attendance, due to individuals who either never signed the attendance sheet or who signed in a less legible manner.</p> <p>Mr. Owens stated that “things are changing and evolving” at the District Attorney’s office for various reasons. “There are new opportunities to do things differently.” He spoke about the new Re-Entry Database – the “RED” – and how implementation is moving forward. “We can do that much more that much more quickly ... and that’s our goal – to do a little bit better every day so that we’re always making progress in this struggle.”</p> <p>KCRTF Co-Chair Audrey Thompson was introduced.</p> <p>Co-Chair, Ms. Audrey Thompson, welcomed those in attendance, thanked everyone for their continued commitment to working with our returning citizens, and stated that there will be some greater challenges in 2017, particularly in the areas of health care and housing. She is confident that the fight will continue for those in need and forge ahead with re-entry initiatives. She stated: “So let us move forward with hope and empathy, and not easily let others undo all the good that was done. At the end of the day, re-entry is about public safety, but it is equally important that we see the world through the eyes of our returning citizens, as we are all human first.”</p> <p>Ms. Thompson stated that DOCCS is working great partners, and named a few of them, in areas that include housing, employment and health, in a big way. She stated that Mr. Nigel Smith is the new Brooklyn Regional Director for DOCCS (the successor of former RD Mary Smith) but could not be present at this meeting.</p>

		She also stated that DCJS, who, while working behind the scenes, has been extremely helpful in guiding DOCCS and its practices.
3	Introductions	<p>Those in attendance introduced themselves, their organizations (if applicable), and their interest in the KCRTF. Participants spoke in greater detail regarding the work of their organizations and/or their concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Families, Fathers, Children: March 11th event is an art show by children of incarcerated parents at St. Augustine’s Church, 12 noon -3:00 pm, 116 Sixth Avenue, 11217. A book for children of incarcerated parents has been published by two Sing Sing inmates. • 2/2/217 - Next meeting of the Rephidim Initiative is at 6:30 pm on Thursday, February 2nd, at The First Baptist Church of Crown Heights, 450 Eastern Parkway at Rogers Avenue. • The new Coordinator of the new Queens County Re-entry Task Force, Hubert Lila, was introduced. • 2/16/17 – Next intake for Brooklyn Community Service Society intake session for those in need of legal assistance regarding employment and employment issues. • Fortune Society and Housing Works are each doing Health Homes work. <p>There were a number of individuals attending a KCRTF meeting for the first time. One attendee stated that she was present to collect information in anticipation of the return of her fiancée from incarceration, which will hopefully take place this year.</p> <p>Mr. Owens reminded attendees that information for circulation (events, jobs, needs, etc.) can be sent to reentry@brooklynda.org for distribution to the KCRTF email list. He also stated that the presence of multiple providers with “overlapping” services is important and good for all, as well as the specialties, given the large number of people in need. He announced the commencement of a support group for “long timers” – individuals incarcerated for 20 years or more – starting this evening of February 1st.</p>
4	Coordinator’s Report	<p>Mr. Owens presented the Coordinator’s Report.</p> <p>Mr. Owens stated that the pace of new intakes was increasing as the process is becoming more streamlined. He reminded the attendees that the DA’s office has three re-entry programs working in the same space, each of which has a slightly different mission.</p>
5	Fiscal Report	Not Applicable.
6	Reports / Concerns	There were no reports or concerns raised.
7	Guest Presentations	<p>Mr. Owens introduced Rev. Diane Lacey.</p> <p>CHURCH OF GETHSEMANE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev. Diane Lacey, Pastor http://www.rechargegame.com/about-the-company/leslie-r-robinson/ <p>Church of Gethsemane (“COG”) was founded in 1984 and established in 1986 by Rev. Connie Bough, a chaplain in the women’s program at Rikers Island. Women returning home to churches were experiencing rejection once it was known that they had been incarcerated. Rev. Bough convinced the Presbytery to establish the COG as a “full-fledged” church to ensure that all congregants would be fully eligible within the church and able to rise into leadership.</p> <p>COG reaches into prisons across NYS through a regular newsletter. Rev. Okorie was incarcerated for 18 months and then came to the church and now, 20 years later, is the Associate Pastor. Project Connect is a program that was set up to create the link between the congregation and prisoners – some 200 at this point in time. There is also regular direct contact with the prison population by the church.</p> <p>The initial challenge of the COG was how it would support itself financially. Many of the large</p>

“steeple” churches in Manhattan have become supporters of COG, along with small grants, and along with the First Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn – whose new pastor, Adrienne Thorne, is present.

The COG and others are directly involved, not sitting on the side. COG writes to inmates, takes a role in the presentations to the Parole Boards, and engages in policy work. There are semi-monthly peer support groups. The beautiful newsletter is good, but most people who contact COG do so through “word of mouth”. Letter writing is critical as the COG may be the only source of letters for certain inmates. A “congregant letter” is compiled monthly – which each congregant writing a sentence or two – and sent to the inmates. Letters from the inmates are read out loud at every service to help the congregation understand what is going on.

Letters of despair are met with action, including visits to prisons. Letters of hope are greeted with joy and additional encouragement. Letters containing sermons are wonderfully intimidating. Overall, letters have been effective means of communication.

COG shares money with new arrivals, clothing, food packages and Metrocards. There is a hot meal every Sunday, supervised by the Pastor.

The COG is open to members of different faiths, as well as Christians.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Is there a pattern or profile of concerns brought to you initially by folks returning home?

Housing is a huge issue. People are dumped into shelters or ¾ houses of limited quality and are very inappropriate to live in – and regain dignity. Navigation of social service agencies is the other major issue for people coming home.

Returning citizens are kept out of housing due to their convictions. Who does the research to make sure that appropriate housing is found?

Re-entry planning for most people is “so lame.”

- NYCHA Reunification Project was mentioned by another attendee.
- Attendees who offer housing services need to contact COG and other houses of worship.
- NYC has announced that folks with rental subsidies can use subsidy (vouchers) to manage the income requirements and participate in housing lotteries.

People with LINK vouchers complain that landlords are refusing to accept them, and this needs to be investigated.

How do you come to know 200 people in prison to correspond with?

They are self-selected. They either see the newsletter, which invites them to write, or they hear through word of mouth. Food packages and Christmas cards and \$10 at holiday time for commissary money are also incentives for contact.

Mr. Owens stated that the COG is not geographically located near areas with high numbers of returning citizens, but it still enjoys strong support.

BROOKLYN HALFWAY HOUSE / CORE SERVICES GROUP, INC.

- **Ms. Lesley Bruno, Facility Director**
<http://www.brooklynmeditation.org/>

Population is federal offenders with less than one year remaining prior to release plus probationers.

The biggest issue for residents is employment because most have never had a job before. The residents are making small incomes and certainly smaller than they did illicitly. Family pressure regarding economics is very strong, due to the reduced income. Housing is also a big issue.

		<p>There are “house meetings” every Wednesday, and providers can discuss coming to present to the groups.</p> <p>QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good working relationships between non-profits and the BHH are important and have been successful. - Anyone with a federal offense is served – currently from 18 to 78 years of age. <p><i>Mr. Owens pointed out that the quality of re-entry for someone returning from a federal sentence can impact on the entire family including those involved in other crimes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are at least 10 veterans within the 153 current residents. <p>Many individuals coming home have credit issues due to abuses by other family members, etc. Assistance can be provided with establishing bank accounts and credit.</p> <p>Mr. Owens reminded attendees that The Re-entry Bureau has two small computer labs for individuals working on resumes or on job searches – eight computers – that are available to be used.</p> <p><i>Mr. Owens noted the absence of Mr. Wesley Cains, a regular attendee, and his recent departure from Brooklyn Defender Services. He was then told that Mr. Cains is now at Bronx Defender Services and he wished him well working with the Bronx County Re-entry Task Force!</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Owens noted that February 1st is Dr. Vanda Seward’s birthday. He asked the attendees to sing “Happy Birthday” to Dr. Seward ... and they obliged.</i></p>
8	New Business / Events	
9	Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 pm.

NEXT MEETING IS ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2017

2017 KCRTF meetings are proposed for 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm on these first Wednesdays

Apr 5, Jun 7, Aug 2, Oct 4, Dec 6.

Please mark your calendars. Locations may vary.

Corrections to these Minutes should be emailed no later than March 21st to OwensC1@BrooklynDA.org