



# The Deuce Club

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2010

## Mission Statement New York State Division of Parole

“To promote public safety by preparing inmates for release and supervising parolees to the successful completion of their sentence.”

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## The Parole Game at Collins Correctional Facility — A Complaint

Normally, when one attends a parole hearing there are two or three parole commissioners, and in some cases four, and a stenographer. These people are listed on the record for being present at the hearing. The only person that is there and not recorded on the record is the facility parole supervision.

At Collins this is what actually transpires. There are two, three or four parole commissioners, the stenographer, the parole supervisor and four additional parole officers. The officers and the supervisor are all women and not shown present on the record, that is, the official transcripts of the hearing.

These five parole officers not appearing on the record all position themselves directly behind the inmate in the hearing room. When the commissioners begin to talk with the inmate, their attention is diverted by the sounds, sign language and face-making of these five parole officers. On more than one occasion, inmates have turned around and witnessed this behavior. During one inmate’s hearing, as he was talking to a commissioner, the parole supervisor began to argue with the inmate about what he was explaining.

These parole officers do not see and meet with inmates to discuss programs or other means

that will help the inmates transition back into society. The New York State Parole handbook clearly states that facility parole officers should meet with inmates every quarter. This is never done. The only time one sees a facility parole officer is thirty days before one appears before the parole board.

The hearings by these parole officials seem like a ritual. On a table in the hearing room there is the following spread: pies, cakes, donuts, salad bowls, sodas. Right next to the inmate. Why? To celebrate their decisions?

Another game at Collins is that parole board panels are holding hearings without the sentencing

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## Limited Credit Time Allowance

On April 3, 2009, a new law was passed called the 6-month Limited Credit

Time Allowance (LCTA) that would give 6 months time off to violent offenders that meet the qualifying criteria. Although the

law was effective immediately, it took time to promulgate the rules and regs on it and it largely went into effect November 10, 2009. Eligible offenders are just about all violent offenders except those convicted of

Murder 1, Conspiracy 1, Attempted Murder 1 and certain sex offenses.

The way it works, naturally, is complicated. There is qualifying criteria, disqualifying criteria,

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## Report from the President

As we usher in not only a new year but also a new decade. I look back on all that we have accomplished and smile. When CPR was founded in 1999 the rate of release for people convicted of A-1 felonies was at an all-time low. In other words if you were convicted of a violent felony, a snowball had a better chance of survival in hell than you had of being released at the board. Many of the individuals whose repeated parole denial were the motivation for CPR have seen their dreams of freedom come true, while sadly others remain trapped in the belly of the beast. We have done some good work but much remains to be done. ***Will you partner with us to make fair parole practices a reality for all?***

Over the past decade we have seen parole move from the issue that no one wanted to talk about to its current place as the issue on the minds of everyone in the criminal justice arenas.

As family members and advocates for fair parole practices, we have an obligation to move this issue forward in a way that will insure progress and sustain real change. Now is not the time to rest on the fact that some people are getting out. I know that when my husband was still locked down the rate of release

could have jumped to 50%, but as long as he was still there I would have to press on. I think one of the things we need to remember is that the goal is fair parole practices and not just parole for some.

We have learned a lot over the past decade, not only about parole, but also about family and reentry. In 2009 alone, we have started support groups in Buffalo, NY, and developed a plan for the same in Long Island City, to be launched in mid-January. The primary focus of the Buffalo group (held on Mondays) is to work with woman dealing with either issues of their own incarceration and reintegration, or reuniting of husbands and fathers within the home and the special challenges they face. Family has to be the focus of this coming year.

If we gain our individual freedom and loose our children/family then what have we really won? A special situation exists for families facing reentry, and until we provide them with the tools to succeed, we will win small battles and lose the war. Two thousand and nine has been a banner year for the struggles faced by families of those in prison. During the year we featured several

*"I think one of the things we need to remember is that the goal is fair parole practices and not just parole for some."*

articles about the state of the family that I hope gave our readers reason to pause and reflect, taking stock of their own family situations. If as men and women we can't stay together lets make sure that we give our children what they long for, "A family." We don't have to live together to parent together.

CPR could not function as it does without the dedication of its core staff. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank each of them Eric, for the masterful job he does with our newsletter and the patience he shows me when I miss deadline (I promise to do better in 2010); Claudette, for her tireless

commitment to the mission of CPR from abroad; Leah, for her voice of reason when sometimes all we can see is the vision;

Mark, for his never

say never attitude and his dedication to the cause; and James, you are our rising star, the first member of the leadership development program to come home and enter the internship phase. We are proud of and grateful to you for all that you have done and can't wait to see where the new year takes you.

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## The Parole Game

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minutes of the inmates. Inmates are denied parole, held two, four, six, eight and even ten years longer, while parole commissioners never review the sentencing minutes as they are required to do by law.

Inmates and their families are enraged that NYS Parole is not living up to its mission.

If parole commissioners do not do their jobs according to the law, then Governor Paterson should clean house, fire them.

An individual who serves his or her court-imposed minimum period of imprisonment should be granted parole without question if he or she has taken and completed rehabilitational programs.



## Realities of Reentry — Who's going to Break the Cycle?

HAPPY NEW YEAR—2010 is your time to win! Many may say what do they have to be “happy” about this new year? After all, as far as circumstances go, not much has actually changed from last year, right. Well, no doubt you should be happy for another year of health and life because we certainly lost some titans in 2009. But more importantly, this New Year marks the chance for you to get ever so closer to the eventuality of your release.

Take a second and look at these statistics before considering my inquiry: approximately 97% of the men and women who go to prison will one day, God willing, walk out of there. More than 98% of those released will by choice or parole mandate return to the same community that they came from. Probably, more than half of those will have found themselves back in prison at some (new crime or parole “technical” violation) point within three years of their release. These are the numbers that have been consistent over the past couple of decades, and with little change in sight, they may remain the same for years to come—thus, the “cycle.”

*“I will personally admit that the transition from incarceration to reentry can be fraught with problems of adjustment and cohabitation no matter the familial dynamics.”*

This insidious cycle has wrought more problems for our communities than just about any other single factor. Mainly, because wrapped up in those numbers are the thousands of children who suffer from their incarcerated parent(s) absence. Since children don't ask to come

here this is a concern that we must begin to focus on in order to break the cycle of arrest and recidivism that invariably leads to generational patterns that continually robs our communities of the most precious of resources — **the family.**

Susan exclaims in her article that “what good is it to gain your freedom if you lose your family in the end” or something to that effect. She is alluding to the very real dilemma that plagues the incarcerated when they return to society; who in the process of making that transition either gets locked up again, or loses the family that had been such an integral part of their life. I will personally admit that the transition from incarceration to reentry can be fraught with problems

of adjustment and cohabitation no matter the familial dynamics. And this is coming from someone who thank God was blessed to have been preparing for release for a number of years and who had a network of family, friends and supporters ready to assist with the transition.

Conversely, I witness daily the hundreds of re-entrants who have none of the assistance or preparation in place to make for a smooth transition. You add to that the family and community issues attendant to release and one can readily see why there is so much failure. Still, I submit to you that we have become our worst enemy, in that we don't focus on strengthening, maintaining and enhancing the relationships that should mean the most. Paramount among that grouping has to be the family, but more importantly, the children and young adults that constitute that unit. These are the lives we hold hostage with our inability to be responsible enough to carry out our parental obligations regardless of our relationship with the other parent.

Our children may never do as we say or tell them to do, but they will most assuredly do what they see us do. They will emulate us even if it is the worst part of us. Thus, we

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## CUNY Reentry Task Force

The College Initiative, the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College/CUNY, College and Community Fellowship and the CUNY Black Male Initiative invite all interested administrators and faculty members throughout the City University of New York system to attend the first organizational meeting of the CUNY Reentry Task

Force which is dedicated to building a wider constituency throughout the University and beyond for CUNY-affiliated higher education reentry programs and youth development programs serving court-involved youth.

Recognizing CUNY's role as the nation's largest public university,

and its support for programs that have assisted formerly incarcerated individuals in making the transition to higher education, the CUNY Reentry Task Force will focus on marshaling additional support for higher education reentry programs based at CUNY or affiliated with the University that: (1) encourage the nearly

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# Limited Credit Time Allowance

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and then a procedure to follow. This article will attempt to outline each.

Qualifying criteria is an indeterminate or determinate sentence for all the violent offenses of Penal Law 70.02 and 125, and all A1 violent felonies except the ones mentioned above, and also program requirements that consist of one of the following: completing two years of college, a masters degree, a Department of Labor certificate, or participation as either an inmate program associate or inmate hospice aid for a period no less than two years.

Disqualifying criteria is having filed a lawsuit that was found to be frivolous, or having committed a serious disciplinary infraction or maintained an overall negative institutional record. The latter of course is not exactly defined.

The procedure is that Central Office will generate a list of eligible inmates 13 months before your earliest release date, or conditional release (CR) date. That 13 months consists of the LCTA date, which is the six months you would get off from your earliest release date or CR date, and 7 months advance of that which is when you are allowed to apply for LCTA. So a list is generated only for those who would have an LCTA date 7 months from the current month. If your out date is more than 13 months away, you won't be on the current month's eligibility list and will have to wait until your month to be on the list and to apply.

That list will go from Central Office to the facility Deputy Superintendent of Programs (DSP) who will give it to the Law Library officer. (Don't ask why it's not going to Guidance. No one knows.) You

must check with the Law Library officer to see if you are on the list and he will give you the LCTA application. Again, the lists are generated monthly. You won't be on the list earlier than your month (think 13 months before your earliest release date or CR date), and you may not be able to apply if you're a month late.

You get your LCTA application, fill it out and give it to your counselor. Your counselor determines your disciplinary adjustment, whatever that means, but at a minimum it means you cannot have a loss of good time in the last five years, which is the only clear disciplinary disqualification the rules and regs cite, and maybe, if we're lucky, that's all it is. From the counselor it goes to the LCTA .

Committee which seems to be the same group as the Time Allowance Committee, which will make a recommendation to the DSP and Superintendent either yes or no to grant the six months off. If the facility approves, it still goes to Central Office to approve or deny.

No one of course knows what a serious disciplinary record means. Rumor has it that a Tier III received within three years of the LCTA application is one thing that it means, but a definition is not publicly available, and as we all know, the definition is always fluid and changing.

Central Office Programs also issued a memo detailing the programmatic requirements and some seem inconsistent with the law, in that they are more stringent than what the law requires. The Central Office Programs memo requires the college credits to have been obtained at a minimum of 6 credits per semester in a two-year period, and people who do college by correspon-

dence often take one class at a time, which is 3 or 4 credits because whoever is paying for the correspondence college likely can't afford two classes at a time. The memo also stipulates that the Masters have come from Sing Sing's Theological Seminary program (offered by New York Theological Seminary) as opposed to anywhere else, as if getting a masters in prison isn't a significant programmatic accomplishment in and of itself, regardless of which institution awarded the masters degree. It also adds to the list of qualifications two years in the Puppy Behind Bars program.

If your LCTA date is still years out, consider getting yourself in one of the above programs, or if they are not available at your facility, consider enrolling in a Dept of Labor certificate program while you can so that you can qualify for the 6 month LCTA time off when your eligibility date does finally arrive.



## “Recidivism”

If “recidivism” is defined as one or more arrests for new crimes over a period of time, then we can say, using Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data, that the three-year recidivism rate for individuals leaving state prisons is over two-thirds (67%).

According to BJS, 30% of all arrests over the entire three-year period occur within the first six months.

*Jeremy Travis, before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, March 12, 2009.*



## Letter to the Editor — Opportunities: Imagination Transcends Roadblocks

At the time of the Attica uprising [in September 1971] there were no college programs in New York State prisons; however, there was a Think Tank composed of a group of intelligent men imprisoned at Green Haven.

Shortly after the Attica uprising, this group of men met with Rev. Ed Muller, the Protestant Chaplain at Green Haven. At a meeting with this group, Rev. Muller put a problem grid -- a list of problems or roadblocks: the system, state, nation, and the world -- on a chalkboard. Next, Rev. Muller spoke about "imaginal education" (imagination coupled with action). One of the roadblocks in Green Haven the men identified was a lack of educational opportunities

With imaginal education, the men started to picture a college program at Green Haven. They began to plan how they were going to get from point A (no college programs at Green Haven) to point B (college level instruction in Green Haven). They considered the financial cost

and the personal sacrifice that would be involved.

Rev. Muller contacted Marist College to see if it would come in to Green Haven and offer college level courses if he could secure the funding. Riverside Church agreed to finance the college program. Through imagination these pioneers transformed their roadblock and created an opportunity.

Many men in Green Haven were skeptical and wouldn't sign up for the college program when it was announced because they didn't believe it would happen. They had no imagination (vision). But it did happen; it was successful beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Four years later, the men in the Think Tank had bachelors' degrees,

but even more importantly, they had developed a hunger to learn. Then next "problem" the men tackled was the lack of a graduate degree being offered in the prison. So they imagined a plan to get a master's degree program into the prison. Rev. Muller called Dr. Bill Weber, then the president of New York Theological Seminary (NYTS), and the end result was that in the spring of 1983, many of

the men from Green Haven's Think Tank (now called Exodus) graduated from NYTS at Sing Sing prison with a master's degree.

*Imagination + vision + hard work = transforming a roadblock into an opportunity.*

**Don Mason**



*"With imaginal education, the men started to picture a college program at Green Haven. They began to plan how they were going to get from point A to point B."*

## Ten Things You Can Do to Reduce Incarceration

1. Do your jury duty.
2. Pay a kid to graduate.
3. Come out of the closet about your drug use.
4. Hire a formerly incarcerated person.
5. Vote for politicians who are smart on crime.
6. Just say no to the police. (When cops request your consent to pat you down, peek inside your backpack or purse or search your car, you have the right to decline. When they have a warrant or other legal cause to search, like at an airport, they don't have to ask. Go to ACLU "Know Your Rights" or the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement to learn your rights if stopped by the police.)
7. Don't be a professional snitch.
8. Talk up the trades.
9. Let accused people discover the evidence against them.
10. Listen to hip-hop. (No other aspect of pop culture has considered as carefully, and as personally, the costs and benefits of the American punishment regime. Members of the hip-

hop nation often come from the most dangerous communities and have a vested interest in safety. They help us understand that treating people who have messed up with love and dignity is, for law-abiding citizens, an act of self-interest and community safety. Visit AllHipHop.com to Hip Hop Caucus to learn the political side of hip-hop.)

For the full article, see the November 16, 2009 issue of *The Nation*.

*Conceived by Walter Mosley with research by Rae Gomes.*



## CPR will focus on people without CR dates

Last year we celebrated our 10-year anniversary. As we began preparing for the next 10 years, we thought about what we could do to motivate our base to become more involved. When we think about that first meeting that occurred on November 8, 1999, we realize that so many people showed up because people in prison were motivated to send their family members because so many of them were being denied parole. Although we have seen many people with 70 and 80 DINs released in the past ten years, there are still too many people in prison that have been denied parole over and over again for no good reason other than the nature of the crime. So this year, we dedicate our service to people serving time for violent felony offenses with no conditional release (CR) date. We are committed to reaching out to provide special services to prepare people in prison and their families for the parole board so that they may be granted parole release. We have enlisted the assistance

of the 13 people in our Prison Leadership Training Program to help us identify those persons. If you have been denied parole two or more times and are serving time for a violent felony offense with no CR date, please write to us. The only price you have to pay for our assistance is to become a member of CPR. Membership dues for people in prison are still \$2.00 per year, and for a family membership, dues are \$10.00, which includes the family member and person in prison.

We can be reached by telephone at 718-786-4174, and by email at parolecpr@yahoo.com. Last year, we were given office space in the Fortune Society offices in Long Island City. Our website is www.parolecpr.org, and in keeping up with the times, we also have a Facebook page. Simply search for coalition for parole restoration and you can become a fan on our Facebook page.



## Report from the President

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Last but not least, I would like to thank each member behind the walls who work to get the word out about CPR and what we are doing. To the brothers and sisters who come home and take their rightful place as husband, wives, mothers and fathers, confronting the responsibility of life one day at a time. We salute you and want you to know you are not alone.

We are going to win in 2010, freeing our loved ones and saving our families, one at a time.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Susan Wright



## Drop the Rock Advocacy Day — 03/16/2010

Mark your calendars for Drop the Rock Advocacy Day which will be held on Tuesday, March 16, 2010.

On this day hundreds of New Yorkers will unite in Albany to call for criminal justice reforms including prison closures, full repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, and reinvestment in our

communities.

If your organization is interested in participating in Advocacy Day, please contact Caitlin Dunklee at 212-254-5700 or cdunklee@correctionalassociation.org.

We will open registration for Advocacy Day 2010 shortly. Bus

## Editorial: Advocacy

While CPR has critiqued the Drop the Rock movement because of its use of people convicted of violent crimes to make a point about the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws, i.e., making such statements as “people convicted of nonviolent drug crimes do more time than people convicted of murder,” CPR still nonetheless gives Drop the Rock much respect for its unrelenting advocacy for something so fundamentally wrong in our criminal justice system.

We would caution advocates for criminal justice reform to be very careful in how they frame their arguments, because they might have unintended consequences for others in prison. Looking at people convicted of sex offenses is a case on point. So many people in the criminal justice arena advocating for fairness distance themselves from them. However, they often are the test subjects for reactionary criminal justice policies that will practically be applied across the board, whether we are talking about civil confinement, taking of good-time for not participating in mandatory programming, providing DNA samples or work release.

As CPR and other advocates embark on their advocacy missions this year, be mindful of not simply advocating for what is on your agenda, but how it might impact others in the criminal justice system.



transportation will be available from locations throughout NYC. Albany, here we come!

Caitlin Dunklee



# CUNY Reentry Task Force

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6,000 individuals with GEDs or high school diplomas released from New York State facilities each year (and the much higher number of individuals released from local facilities) to explore post-secondary opportunities and (2) provide support for currently enrolled CUNY students who have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system.

The CUNY Reentry Task Force will also identify organizations throughout the New York metropolitan area that serve court involved youth. Recognizing that a number of these organizations want to partner with higher education programs to expose their participants to post-secondary opportunities, the CUNY Reentry Task Force will explore strategies to increase support for such youth development programs.

Additionally, although its focus will be on building a wider constituency for higher education reentry pro-

grams and youth development programs for court involved youth, the CUNY Reentry Task Force will provide a forum for discussion on the need for more research and evaluation of reentry programs.

Finally, the CUNY Reentry Task Force will provide a forum for discussion of various prisoner rights issues, particularly the University's role in conducting research on the moral and economic value of providing educational programs, including higher education classes, and psychological/counseling services for incarcerated persons.

With all of this in mind, if you have a strong interest in building a wider constituency of support for higher education reentry programs at CUNY and youth development programs that expose court involved youth to post-secondary opportunities, please attend the first organizational meeting of the CUNY Reentry Task Force. For planning pur-

poses, by Friday, January 22, 2010, please RSVP by email to Elliott Dawes, Director, CUNY Black Male Initiative, at Elliott.Dawes@mail.cuny.edu.

**WHAT:** First Organizational Meeting CUNY Reentry Task Force  
**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 3, 2010 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm  
**WHERE:** The CUNY Graduate Center, Room 8301, 365 Fifth Avenue between 34th and 35th Streets

The first organizational meeting of the CUNY Reentry Task Force will be a closed meeting for interested CUNY students, administrators and faculty members. Future meetings may be open to interested individuals who are not affiliated with the University.



## Who's Going to Break the Cycle?

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have an obligation to make our families work on a level that teaches our children to succeed in life, our mistakes notwithstanding! You ask how we accomplish this feat? Well, first and foremost, you have got to love the other parent. Hey, y'all may no longer share intimacy or a committed relationship but you still have a responsibility as a parent to work together to provide a life for your children—biological or otherwise!

I don't mean to preach but after a year of watching families fall apart, and counseling children who "hate" their parents for leaving to go to prison and then coming home only to abandon them again, I can no

longer turn a deaf ear to this predicament. After witnessing the alarming rate of murders by young people of young people, and seeing a criminal justice system that is finally dealing with issues of re-entry, I am appalled at our collective reluctance to hold each other accountable. We are now embarking upon the next decade of the new millennium, yet we still are living pre-historically when it comes to mentoring and nurturing our children in a way that best benefits them, their future and by consequence our own futures.

*"...what good is it to gain your freedom if you lose your family in the end?"*

So, I ask again, "who's going to break the cycle?" If you are one of those who are serious about addressing this pressing issue, we at *The Deuce Club* would like to hear

from you. Just send your letter titled: ***I want to break the cycle*** and we will begin a dialogue on how you can be proactive in the life of your family now,

before the realities of re-entry strike....

**Jerome Wright**



## **CPR'S MISSION STATEMENT**

The Coalition for Parole Restoration is a broad-based grassroots organization created to inform, organize and bring to light all aspects of the prison industrial complex as it affects our communities, families, people in prison and formerly incarcerated persons.

Our mission is two-fold: (1) to assist people in prison in obtaining parole release and (2) to assist formerly incarcerated persons and their families with transition and re-entry.

## **Membership & Dues Structure**

\* FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP - \$10.00 PER YEAR (PERSON IN PRISON INCLUDED)

\* PERSON IN PRISON MEMBERSHIP - \$2.00 PER YEAR

\* BENEFACTOR MEMBERSHIP – MORE THAN \$100 PER YEAR

YEAR WILL BEGIN IN THE MONTH THAT THE MEMBERSHIP DUES IS RECEIVED AND END IN THE SAME MONTH THE FOLLOWING YEAR

(STAMPS ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTED TO PAY MEMBERSHIP DUES)

MEMBERSHIP ENTITLES YOU TO RECEIVE CPR'S NEWSLETTER, WHICH IS PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES A YEAR, AND NOTICE OF ALL CPR-SPONSORED MEETINGS, RALLIES AND EVENTS.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, POEM, ETC. TO THE NEWSLETTER, YOU SHOULD SEND IT BY EMAIL OR U.S. MAIL BEFORE THE FIRST OF THE MONTH IN WHICH THE NEWSLETTER IS BEING PRINTED. SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE 750 WORDS OR LESS AND WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO EDIT ANYTHING APPEARING IN THE NEWSLETTER. ALL WORKS MUST BE ORIGINAL. WE WILL NOT PUBLISH ANYTHING WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.

## **COALITION FOR PAROLE RESTORATION**

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