



“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”

Restorative and Rehabilitative Justice: The Role of Former Offenders

Having recognized the devastating effects their behavior has had on the life of the African American Community, persons incarcerated and formerly incarcerated in the justice system can provide invaluable service to the prevention of violence within our communities. One important role of these individuals would be to encourage youth on the outside not to enter into prison as a rite of passage, or view it as requirement (or definition) of manhood in the African American community and American society. Other roles include the following:

- **Continue** to meet among themselves to discuss and take actions through the networks they have established to reduce violence in the African American Community. Such identified actions could be shared with other community-based organizations, agencies, and religious groups attempting to impact violence.
- **Be** prepared to transition into educational, training and/or work programs prior to and/or upon release. Be open to participate in evaluations of program effectiveness to ensure that such programs meet the needs of affected individuals.
- **Detoxify** from drugs and alcohol and participate in treatment programs prior to and upon release.
- **Submit** voluntarily to both pre and post counseling and health testing, including health related issues such as sexually transmitted diseases, and assist in the elimination of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the African American Community.
- **Participate** in individual and community healing activities that address body, mind and spirit.
- **Encourage** family members to participate in neurological testing of children and youth, so that developmental and educational needs can be addressed appropriately for quality interventions, if needed.
- **Discourage** children and youth from falling prey to the influences and pressures of illegal activity. Such activities can lead to the death of the body, the mind and the spirit. Encourage oneself and others to engage in activities that will help fulfill the potential of the entire community.
- **Take** part in civic activities and leadership opportunities. Those who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated have, in many cases, demonstrated leadership and entrepreneurial skills. These same skills now can be redirected for positive outcomes.
- **Register** to vote to build the political power of the African American community to ensure strides in education, health and economic development and overall community survival. The prohibition for registering to vote is only for people currently serving time for felonies.

To further explain, a convicted felon may register to vote after being released from prison. Secondly, people presently serving time for a misdemeanor have the right to register and vote by absentee ballot.

- **Apply** to have offenses expunged as soon as possible after incarceration to be able to attend college and increase ones accessibility to the job market.
- **Engage** in cultural, recreational, intellectual, and social activities to build body, mind and spirit in order to deal with the impact that violence has on their lives and the lives of others. Such engagements would lessen and/or prevent future violence.
- **Relate** to women and children with respect and participate in male/female relationship-building workshops and activities.
- **Nurture** and financially support one's children and family.
- **Participate** in mentoring programs.