



# OMAR & PETE



VIEWER DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Visit the Reentry Web site at: [www.reentrymediaoutreach.org](http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org).

The OMAR & PETE Discussion Guide was developed by Denise Blake and Anne Llewellyn, Outreach Extensions, in consultation with Ms. Rada Moss, Maryland Reentry Partnership and Dr. John Hickey, Tuerk House.

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[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



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**The Annie E. Casey Foundation**

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## LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER

Dear Colleagues,

I became aware of the experiences of low-income African-American men and the issues surrounding prison release while making my documentary film LEGACY. For five years, I followed a family of three generations of women as they struggled to transform their lives and heal from the loss of their murdered child. What are not included in the film are the stories of the men who, more often than not, were physically not present in the family. Within the distressed Chicago neighborhood where they lived, many men were unemployed, without high school diplomas, reared in single parent households, in trouble with the law, involved with drugs, and socially isolated. Many had been incarcerated at one time or another in their lives.

Those living far from the realities of life in America's distressed neighborhoods have few opportunities to develop an in-depth understanding of the issues and problems affecting the people who live there. In creating this project, I wanted to make a film that would explore the web of social and economic barriers that low-income African-American men face in the context of incarceration and release – factors that dramatically affect generations of low-income black men who are in trouble with the law and experiencing extremely high rates of incarceration. I also wanted to examine existing support structures, and those that are needed, to help former offenders reenter their families and neighborhoods. I set out to make a film that would present a compelling and highly personalized presentation of the issues. I hoped that it would challenge the public's perceptions, create empathy, and reveal the individual, family, and community pathways that can lead to social change.

Baltimore provided the right setting for the film. The Maryland Division of Corrections (MDOC) offered me complete support and access to its new and unprecedented prison release and reentry program, the Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (REP). This pilot program marks the first time that a state department of corrections has partnered, to this extent, with city and community agencies. Over one hundred organizations and agencies are working hand in hand with MDOC to explore models and find solutions that will help inmates transition back into their families and communities. Whereas the purpose of MDOC was once thought of as securing public safety solely through the incarceration of offenders, MDOC now believes that it must extend its reach beyond the walls of the prison. Their approach to crime control is shifting from one that is reactive to one that is holistic and preventive.

From December 2001 to January 2002, I began pre-interviewing subjects for my film. I looked for someone who is participating in the Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (REP) and who is articulate, committed to making a change, has family with whom he wants to reunite (brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, in the case of Omar), and has a long record of incarceration. I wanted to find someone whose record, taken at face value, would indicate that there isn't a hope in the world for him, but whose actions and drive to change might prove otherwise. I also needed to find someone with whom I felt a personal connection. Asking a man to allow you to film him over three years after he's just spent the last 10 years of his life under constant surveillance and exposure to guards and inmates, is asking a lot.

After pre-interviewing over 75 men, I chose Leon Mason, who prefers the name Omar. At the time, he had been drug-free for eight years and was a devout Muslim. When I met Omar I felt that personal connection, as did he. We felt relaxed with each other and we both sensed that in

addition to coming together as filmmaker and subject, there was also the possibility of friendship. Over the years a friendship did develop, adding to the intimate quality of the film.

On February 1, 2002, I began filming Omar while he was still incarcerated. MDOC allowed me full access to his life behind bars. After filming him in prison over a period of six weeks, I then filmed his release on March 15. Omar had been in and out of prison from the time he was 17, never out longer than a year. Now, at the age of 47, he was finishing a 10-year sentence for armed robbery and was participating in REP with the hope that this program would help him break his 30-year cycle of incarceration.

On the day of Omar's release, when he entered his transitional house, I met my second subject, his good friend and roommate, William "Pete" Duncan. Pete is from the same neighborhood as Omar and has a similar history of incarceration – 30 years in and out, never out longer than six months. On the night of Omar's release, Pete was in his tenth month of being released and on parole. He was also participating in REP and had set a record for the amount of time that he had been free from prison. I filmed Pete welcoming Omar to the transitional house and talking to him about what he must do in order to stay clean of drugs and free from illegal activities. For both men, drug addiction was the major reason they broke the law and spent so many years behind bars. On the day of Omar's release, I also began filming his two REP case managers, Marshall Collins (a former offender and former addict) and LaTonya Johnson.

OMAR & PETE captures events as they unfold in cinema verité style; the stories of Omar and Pete are told through events and behavior. Only people who are organic to the story and environment are part of the film. All of the intricacies that comprise the fabric of their lives and experiences are captured and expressed in a way that will engage audiences and humanize the men and their stories.

The three years I spent filming OMAR & PETE were some of the most difficult and rewarding of my career. As a filmmaker, it was sometimes very difficult to interpret some of Omar's and Pete's personal and emotional barriers. In order to tell their stories, I had to understand their sense of time and space. For men who've spent so much of their lives in prison, time and space on the outside is very precious; it's also something they want to control completely. As a result, it was sometimes difficult to schedule shoots and stay in close communication with both men. At times they would disappear; at other times they'd be inflexible with their schedules. I had to be very careful and respectful of their emotional and psychological boundaries.

It also took time for me to sensitize myself to what they considered private matters. In the beginning, I often felt as though I were walking on eggshells. But, over time, I developed a better understanding of how they experience the world, and I was able to adjust both my way of thinking and my filming process. I found it difficult to watch Omar succeed and then fail numerous times. He's a very intelligent man and an effective communicator. I found it painful to see his tremendous potential unrealized, especially when so many people were trying to help him. I felt both frustrated and angry to see him deceive others as well as himself.

Facing these challenges is also what was so rewarding about making this film. I was forced to see the world through the eyes of two men who've been addicted and incarcerated for most of their lives. I learned so much from them. I learned about the important role that having humility plays in helping a person overcome addiction; the effect that being institutionalized has on a person's psyche; the fears that arise from having freedom and responsibility; and the pressures that black men face in their own families and communities. In numerous men, I saw the miracle of lives transformed in a way I never thought possible. Most importantly, I witnessed a

brotherhood of love that I had never seen so close-up. I was inspired by the caring and concern between case managers and their clients, and among men living together in a transitional house after having spent so many years behind bars.

In the end, I believe the stories of Omar and Pete deepen our understanding of reentry issues, and the complex experiences that former offenders face when returning to their families and communities. I hope the film will help viewers feel compassion for these men, and understand more clearly the policies and support structures that former offenders need in order to begin new and self-sustaining lives.

- Sincerely,  
Tod Lending  
Nomadic Pictures

# INTRODUCTION

## The Film



Omar and Pete are determined to change their lives. Both had been in and out of prison for over thirty years — never out longer than six months. This intimate and penetrating film follows these two long-time friends for several years after what they hope will be their final prison release. In that time, their lives take divergent paths as one wrestles with addiction and fear while the other finds success and freedom through helping others.

Omar was just weeks away from the end of a ten-year prison sentence for armed robbery when Oscar-nominated filmmaker Tod Lending began filming him. At the time, Omar had been drug-free for eight years. He was a devout Muslim (even learning Arabic in prison), and was participating in a new prison release program designed to help long-term recidivists stay out of prison for good.

Upon release, the Maryland Reentry Partnership supported Omar with case managers and advocates and access to transitional housing, healthcare, employment assistance, and educational opportunities. Like nine out of 10 men incarcerated in Baltimore, Omar's past crimes were closely tied to his drug addiction. Through the reentry program, access to substance abuse treatment was available as well. If there was ever a time to break the cycle, this was it.

In 2001, 9,448 men and women were released from Maryland state prisons. The composition of this release cohort reflects the composition of the Maryland prison population. The majority were male (91 percent) and black (76 percent). Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of these released prisoners were between the ages of 20 and 40 at the time of their release, with the average age at release being 34 years old.

**A Portrait of Prison Reentry in Maryland**, Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, 2003.

On the day of his release, Omar reconnects with Pete, a long-time friend, at the transitional house to which he's assigned. Both men had grown up in the same blighted Baltimore neighborhood and struggled with addiction. Pete had been out of prison for ten months and was doing well. Through the Maryland Reentry Partnership, he was managing the transitional house and had a job counseling others at a mental health clinic. When Omar arrives, the two rekindle their friendship, become roommates, and support each other through the transition back into society.

Omar does well for the first few months. He holds a full-time job, attends mosque, and remains drug-free. The early success though, is short-lived. Shunning others' help and wanting to prove himself, he starts a car wash business and sells clothes on the street. Within months, both businesses fail. Omar falls into debt, retreats from his case managers, and has a drug relapse – the first of several to come.

Omar's friend, Pete, reveals the harsh truths and complexities of Omar's battle with addiction and freedom, as only a former addict and former prisoner can. It's a battle he knows well. As he observes it in Omar, he struggles with the desire to support his friend and the need to preserve his own fragile hold on success.

The film, OMAR & PETE, provides a rare glimpse into an intense and very personal web of support. Case managers, many of them former addicts and former prisoners themselves, dedicate themselves to the mission of redemption – empowering one man at a time. They want to help each take hold of his opportunity, resurrect misused talents, and build a satisfying, productive life in society.

This honest and unflinching portrait shows how challenging life on the outside can be for men who've lived much of their lives behind bars. It is a story about what can happen when support is offered – and accepted. And it reveals that no matter how much support is given, pride, pain, and fear are the demons that every man must face in himself.

### **Epilogue (at the end of the film)**

**Pete** was promoted from a drug counselor to Residential Supervisor. He continues to live drug free and helps others to do the same.

**Omar:** Three months after filming ended, Omar relapsed and was arrested for armed robbery and first degree assault.

### **Additional Individuals in OMAR & PETE**

LaTonya Scott-Johnson, Maryland Reentry Partnership, Case Manager  
Marshall Cullens, Maryland Reentry Partnership, Advocate  
Nevelle L. Thompson, Maryland Reentry Partnership, Case Manager  
Andre G. Fisher, Maryland Reentry Partnership, Case Manager  
David Williams, Maryland Reentry Partnership, Advocate  
Kimberly Lewis, Maryland Division of Parole & Probation Officer  
Edward Woods, Parole Commissioner  
Sharon, Omar's sister

## How Can You Use OMAR & PETE?

OMAR & PETE addresses such diverse topics as family connections, housing concerns, employment challenges, and substance abuse counseling. It introduces the myriad agencies from which reentering offenders must seek help upon their release from prison. These topics and resources can set the tone for a variety of local activities using the film to stimulate local discussion, decision making, and solution-based action around reentry. You may want to convene events like these:

- Conduct a screening and discussion at a local transition house whose residents include individuals who were formerly incarcerated and/or are in recovery.
- Conduct a screening and discussion as part of substance abuse treatment programs or meetings related to recovery, especially engaging former offenders.
- Present a workshop for organizations planning to begin or enhance housing ministries or programs to assist men and women reentering their communities.
- Organize a program in a jail or prison that includes a screening and discussion. Your program could focus on some of the topics listed above or on preparing men and women for a productive life upon release.
- Lead a screening/discussion or workshop for organizations and coalitions planning to begin or enhance community programs/services for formerly incarcerated adults and their families. OMAR & PETE could be used to generate program ideas or as the basis for a needs assessment.
- You may want to engage a local facilitator or assemble a panel of local experts to debate the merits of reentry programs vs. the rehabilitative nature of incarceration.
- Screen and discuss OMAR & PETE in the context of a mentoring program to assist men and women who are returning to their communities following incarceration. Use the complete film or the outreach clip reel.

Prior to hosting a screening/event, watch the film so you feel knowledgeable about the content and prepared for the responses of your audience. Review the discussion questions provided and decide which ones are most relevant to your audience. Feel free to create your own questions if you want your audience to discuss a particular incident or topic in the film.

Resources for your local event should include this discussion guide for OMAR & PETE, which can be downloaded from the Reentry Web site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/r.htm>) and reproduced as necessary. You may also order *Outside the Walls: A National Snapshot of Community-Based Prisoner Reentry Programs*. This free production, available in VHS or DVD formats, profiles reentry programs around the country in six easy-to-navigate modules: education and employment; health; housing; family; public safety; and faith. The 200-page companion resource guide to the video offers briefing papers on the six issues and profiles almost 100 reentry programs. The guide is available in its entirety on the Web site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/resourceguide.htm>) and on the DVD.

Potential partners in your local efforts should represent a variety of stakeholders who all deal, in some way, with reentry issues. They may include:

- Men, women, and youth who were formerly incarcerated
- Families of former prisoners
- Clergy and laypersons from churches, synagogues, and mosques
- Substance abuse prevention and recovery programs
- Housing and transitional housing programs
- Criminal justice professionals, including corrections officers, probation and parole staff, law enforcement personnel, attorneys, and judges
- Reentry experts, social service workers, educators, and grassroots organizers
- Colleges, universities, and community colleges, especially in conjunction with departments of sociology, law, criminal justice / law enforcement, and social work / counseling

## In His Own Words – William “Pete” Duncan



I was born in Baltimore on October 4, 1952. My birth mother died giving birth to my brother when I was 18 months. My father remarried when I was five or six and my stepmother became the only mother I knew. I had four siblings from my dad's first marriage. My stepmother also had two

sons from a previous marriage. My father and stepmother had three children from this new marriage, so I was brought up in a home with ten children.

We were a disciplined family. I had chores to do -- taking out trash and cleaning up. My father believed in the Golden Rule. I had to go to school or find a job.

When I was 10 or 11, I no longer wanted to live by my father's rules. I became "Pete" -- I cursed, was disrespectful to people, took advantage of schoolmates. I was Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

I was arrested for the first time at age 10. I broke into a neighbor's house to steal a switchblade I saw a friend playing with. After that, I became a ward of the state. I was subsequently arrested on and off throughout my teens on charges of truancy, assault, and battery.

In my youth, I admired an old hustler and junkie named George Watson. Everyone knew him and he was very popular in West Baltimore on Poplar Grove Street. I used to sit and watch him. I was impressed by the fact that everyone knew him and sometimes feared him.

On my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday I was introduced to heroin. It was out of curiosity, not peer pressure, and I fell in love with it. I devoted 31 years of my life to getting the drug.

I first met Omar in 1970 at age 17. We were playing on a football team in prison. We both had big families. We would swap stories. Both of us had been arrested for armed robberies. I exaggerated some; he exaggerated some - typical

prison stuff. From there we became real close. We were both real young, both strong-willed. We depended on each other to survive.

At that point, neither of us felt we had a future. We were both doing long stretches. Omar had 10 years and I was doing 14 years. We were both using in prison and had no desire to stop. Our relationship continued both in and out of prison for the next 34 years.

### **How long before your release from prison did you prepare for your reentry?**

Two weeks before my last arrest, I was in bad shape. I had oozing, infected leg abscesses from using for so long. Children of friends of mine were threatening me. I had gone from being a king to nothing.

Once I was arrested, in the Maryland Prison System, I had nothing and no one. I was twice as old as most of the other inmates. We had nothing in common. I was left with a lot of time to think.

During this time, I grasped a tight hold of my religion again. I began to correspond with brothers on the outside. I became a Sunni Muslim about 20 years ago in prison, at first because everyone else was doing it. It eventually became my lifeline and helped open other doors for me.

### **Before this preparation, had you thought about what reentering your community might be like?**

I truly believe that the God that I serve has a hold on me. Shortly before my last release on May 5, 2001, I was a trustee at a roofing company for three or four months and got checked in for being 12 minutes late. I was sent to the Maryland Transitional Center and went before a disciplinary team. After being there for three weeks, in November 2000, I was introduced to the Maryland Reentry Partnership.

It was the best thing that could ever have happened. For 22 weeks, five days a week, I went to classes for six hours a day, with supplemental readings on weekends. We had

drug education, life skills training, talked with recovering addicts with a great deal of clean time. I actually knew two of them from my drug days. I just knew that this was my start. I stuck with it and I enjoyed it. I met a lot of people.

I stopped doing drugs at age 45, cold turkey. The Maryland Reentry Partnership was the first drug treatment program I ever attended. You have to have the desire to change. I had lost my father in July 1998. Nine days later, my brother deliberately overdosed and died, but I was determined to make it.

The Maryland Reentry Partnership wouldn't have helped earlier because I had no intention of stopping. I once told my mother, "I'm going to keep shooting [drugs] until they throw dirt in my face."

My heart had changed.

**What did you feel immediately upon your release?**

I graduated from the program and all these plans had been made for me. LaTonya Johnson was my case manager. We talked and for once I was looking forward to doing something different because I was different.

I was scared because I was 48 years old. I'd never worked a real job. I didn't know anything about responsibility. I'd never had to take care of me. I had a lot of racing thoughts, but not enough to go back [to prison].

LaTonya asked me what I needed. "What can I do for you?" she asked.

I answered, "Everything."

I knew nothing. I was mentally age 14. I had stopped growing the day I started using drugs. Internally, I knew nothing of the ingredients for becoming a man. I didn't even have a social security card.

Fear set in when I left. I got real scared. Thinking about it, talking about it, is nothing like doing it.

I was taken to a transitional house where I shared a room with one guy. Ultimately, I lived there for 2-½ years. I had everything I needed.

The day after I arrived, there was a mandatory house meeting. The house manager asked me about the kind of work I wanted to do. The very next day, I was hired at the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives. I worked there for over two years as a residential counselor for the mentally challenged.

Later, me and a girlfriend moved into our own place. Now I'm working two jobs. At Baltimore Behavioral Health, I'm an orientation counselor for patients with the dual diagnoses of mental illness and drug addiction. At Mountain Manor Treatment Center, I work as a monitor.

Four years later, every day is still a challenge. It's very dangerous for a recovering addict or an ex-offender to feel that he or she is in control. I live just for the day.

Faith and routine are important. I thank God for releasing me from the hell I created for myself. Without my faith and the Maryland Reentry Partnership, I'd either be in prison again, using drugs in the street, or dead. It's not an "I" thing. This is a group effort. You've gotta have some kind of support – someone who's done this thing before to show you the way.

**What advice would you give to others who have recently been released from prison?**

You've got to have a desire to be different and have to have something to believe in. I regularly visit my family in Connecticut. We worked on our relationships and rebuilt a bridge. We each pushed from both ends and met in the middle.

*William "Pete" Duncan would like to dedicate this interview to his sister, Rebecca, his NA Sponsor Maxie, to Sheila, and to Faye, with a special dedication to LaTonya Johnson.*

## Discussion Questions for OMAR & PETE

### General Discussion Questions

Consider the following questions and choose the ones that may be most relevant to your screening/discussion group.

*I fear not being able  
to adapt to the  
society out there;  
not being able to  
fulfill all the goals  
I've set for myself.*

- Omar

- Before viewing the film, talk about your perceptions of what happens to men after they leave prison and attempt to become contributing members to their communities. Are you sympathetic to their plight? Where do your ideas come from? What kinds of images/stories do media usually present? Do you think this information is accurate?
- After viewing the film, talk about whether or not any of your ideas about men leaving prison have been challenged. What caused you to reconsider? What aspects of their reentry did you find most surprising? Whose story – that of Omar or Pete – did you find most sympathetic or compelling? Why?

Both Omar and Pete admit to encountering myriad challenges on the outside. Both were hindered in moving successfully in society because of their long periods of incarceration.

- Why do you think Pete was successful in rebuilding his life, but Omar ended up behind bars once again?
- How do you think your life would be different if most of your adulthood had been spent behind bars? What do you think you would need to successfully reenter your community and reunite with your family?

Select/discuss the following quotes from OMAR & PETE:

- Nevelle [to three prisoners preparing for release]: “Historically, once your time is over, it’s not good-bye, but ‘see you later.’”
- Sharon [to Omar]: “It’s the beginning of a family that should have and still can be.”
- Pete: “Prison’s a life style. Some of us shed it quicker than others. Some of us never do. Some of us use it as a reminder.”
- Kimberly Lewis [to Omar]: “If you’re willing to risk your freedom and you’re willing to risk your life, that’s your choice.”
- Omar [to students at Baltimore School for At-Risk Youth] “First of all, I want to apologize for abandoning you all. I’m a part of your black community and your development.”
- Pete [talking about using illegal drugs]: “Getting high wasn’t my problem. It was my way of thinking that got me in trouble. My behavior. My thinking. My attitude towards things.”
- Pete: “One of the worst things you have to do when you come back is, you have to face the guilt, the shame. And a lot of people don’t come back.”
- LaTonya [to Omar]: “You have to trust someone. Trust yourself.”
- Nevelle: “Character is when you can do the right thing when nobody’s watching.”
- Pete: “I think one of the worst prisons any man or any woman can be confined in, is the prison that he creates for himself.”

## Reentry Challenges: Education & Employment

*Outside the Walls*: *A National Snapshot of Community-Based Prisoner Reentry Programs* reports that studies show that released prisoners have a lowered prospect for secure employment and decent wages throughout their lifetimes (Bernstein and Houston 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Job training, prison industries, and placement programs show promise in connecting former prisoners to work, thereby reducing their likelihood of further offending. Yet, today, fewer inmates are receiving in-prison vocational training than in the past and fewer still have access to transitional programs that help connect them to jobs in the community after release.

*I started working  
two days after I got  
out. It's been the  
best 10 months of  
my life.*

- Pete

*Questions about the film:*

- Five weeks after leaving prison, Omar was working full time at a clothing store and part-time at a car wash. A few months later, he opens his own car wash and street vending business. In your opinion, did taking on so much responsibility help or hinder Omar's attempt at successful reentry? Why do you feel this way?
- Neither Omar nor Pete graduated from traditional high school. Do you believe that more education might have changed their potential for opportunities after leaving prison? How do you think formal education is helpful to formerly incarcerated men and women?
- When the case managers and Omar met with parole officer Kimberly Lewis, LaTonya stated: "My goals for Omar are to stay drug free, to find employment, and his goal is also to attend college. Those are the three goals he told me he wanted." What do you think about these goals? Were they realistic for Omar? What happened in his pursuit of these goals?
- Omar said that when his businesses folded, "My mind, my old behavior started talking to me. 'Go call your nephew up. Go get that 38. You know how to do that, boy.'" Why do you think the failure of his businesses was a turning point for Omar? What could he have done to get back on track?
- Omar's sister Sharon is a success story. He described her in the following way. "She did one year in prison. She's a recovering addict with eight years clean. Sharon now owns her own business." What lessons might Omar have learned from his sister? How might she have been a role model for him? Do you think Omar attempted to learn from her? Why or why not?
- Omar complained to Nevelle that his "skills are limited." What skills did you observe in Omar during his time in prison that could have been used in an employment setting in the community? How do you think Omar's feeling of "not being able to move in the world the way I thought I should" might have interfered with his finding successful employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, L., and E. Houston. 2000. *Crime and Work: What We Can Learn from the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

*Your community or organization:*

- What affect does a former prisoner's lack of employment have on his/her family and community? What does this mean for the stability of families and communities?
- Does your organization provide job training or microenterprise training for formerly incarcerated persons? Is this a gap you can fill or are there adequate employment services in your community?
- What are your thoughts on providing educational opportunities (i.e., GED classes, college degree program) in prison settings?

*Opportunities for intervention:*

- Develop a local resource guide of continuing education programs that formerly incarcerated persons can access.
- Establish computer training classes in your community group or faith-based organization.
- Partner with your local library to conduct literacy classes.
- Host "soft skills" courses including business etiquette, appropriate work attire, interpersonal relationships, and goal-setting.
- Help formerly incarcerated persons establish Individual Development Accounts for homeownership, furthering education, or establishing small businesses by matching them with United Way agencies, financial institutions, and faith-based groups participating in the initiative.

## **Reentry Challenges: Housing**

According to *Outside the Walls*, "One of the first things a person returning from prison must do is find a place a live. For a number of reasons, finding stable housing can be difficult. First, returning prisoners rarely have the financial resources or personal references necessary to compete for and secure housing in the private housing market. Additionally, federal laws bar many convicted felons from public housing and federally assisted housing programs. And, for some, returning to the homes of their families is not an option.

Through the Maryland Reentry Partnership, both Pete and Omar were able to secure safe, affordable housing at the transition house. Subsequently, Pete has been able to find several apartments in Baltimore through the referrals of friends.

The private housing market represents 97 percent of the total housing stock in the United States (Bradley et al., 2001). However, the private housing market is not an option for many released prisoners. Assuming the individual cannot stay with family or friends, the barriers to accessing housing in the private market in the days immediately following release can be substantial.

- *Outside the Walls*. Housing Briefing Paper, 2003.

*Questions about the film:*

- When Omar arrived at the transition house, Pete told him, “In this house, do what you’re supposed to do. If you don’t, you gotta go. I would prefer seeing you leave rather than leave you here and have to put out the whole house because of something you did.”  
Why would Pete have to “put out the whole house”? Do you agree with him? Why or why not? Did Pete’s advice help to establish boundaries in the relationship between the two men? What were they?

*Your community and/or organization:*

In many cities, people with felony records are barred from living in public housing facilities. Others can’t afford market-rate housing or lack references to clear background checks.

- Does your community have a supply of safe, affordable housing that formerly incarcerated persons can gain access to?
- Does your organization provide housing or access to affordable housing to help returning prisoners find stability? What could you do to aid formerly incarcerated persons with housing needs?
- Are there other community resources that provide this service?
- What advantages do you think transitional homes offer to returning prisoners?

*Opportunities for intervention:*

- Assist formerly incarcerated persons with completing rental applications.
- Create a database of public and low-income housing offering space to returning prisoners.
- Access the national database of halfway and transitional housing in your area.
- Provide housing counseling and economic literacy classes for formerly incarcerated persons wishing to purchase a home.

**Reentry Challenges: Health**

Substance abuse is the most common health issue among the prison population (*Outside the Walls*). Not only do a significant number of released prisoners have addiction problems, but the use of alcohol and other drugs is closely linked to the commission of crime.

*Questions about the film:*

- Nevelle tells Omar that his “disease of addiction and recovery process is more important to me than anything right now. Until you can get comfortable with you living without using, all of those dreams and ideas you have are remote.”  
Do you agree with what Nevelle said? Do you think Omar understands or agrees with what Nevelle is saying to him? Omar said he was “tired of programs.” What needs to happen next for Omar?

- In the film, Nevelle also says: “In recovery circles, they say the difference between people who do and do not recover is 18 inches – the distance between your head and your heart.”  
Do you agree with this statement? What does it mean? How does it help to explain what may have happened to Omar when he relapsed?
- Pete talked about the goals that Omar pursued. “He was dead set on becoming his own boss. Rich overnight. Successful. The best recovering addict. Not in recovery. You set yourself up for failure.”  
How realistic were these goals for Omar after ten years in prison? How does being in recovery change what might be possible in other circumstances? Do you think Omar set himself up for failure? Why or why not?

*You enjoy your life; you live it. But you've got to always keep up front, "I'm a recovering addict" and that monster could wake up at any time.*

**- Pete**

- Andre talked to Omar following his “graduation” from Tuerk House: “As addicts or irresponsible people, we have a tendency not to finish. We can start a lot of stuff, but we don't ever finish. But in the recovery process, it teaches you how to get through to the other side. To do that, you have to complete some stuff.”  
In observing Omar in the film, in what ways was he responsible? How was he irresponsible? What “stuff” was he unable to complete that might have contributed to his ongoing addiction? What advice do you have for Omar?
- Discuss the following: Omar: [during a group meeting at a treatment facility]: “I learned a valuable lesson. If you get the desire to use, you've gotta let somebody know.”
- At the end of the film, Pete speaks at a dinner in honor of former prisoners who have stayed out of prison for at least two years. He says: “Today, I'm clean. Today, I'm employed. Today, I'm loved. Today, I'm respected. And, most of all, today, I love myself.”  
Pete is healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually. What did you learn about Pete's journey to achieve those goals that could help other former prisoners who are attempting to rebuild their lives?

*Your community or organization:*

- What types of drug and alcohol counseling services are available through parole offices or referral agencies in your community? Is this sufficient to help individuals remain drug free?
- How can your organization help former prisoners remain drug-free?
- Are you aware of other health challenges affecting the incarcerated and recently released populations? In your community, what health service organizations are available to assist formerly incarcerated persons?

*Opportunities for intervention:*

- Develop a resource library of health services in your community.

- Partner with health-care organizations to host a health fair with free screenings for diabetes, cholesterol, weight management, and HIV.
- Create healthy lifestyle ministries within your congregation and reach out to returning individuals.
- Connect with dentists willing to offer free or low-cost dental check-ups.
- Survey mental health sites to access publications on emotional and psychological wellness.

### Reentry Challenges: Family Issues

Omar and Pete both came from large families, but the post-release reconnection process can be difficult. Several studies have shown that continued contact with family members during and following incarceration can reduce recidivism and foster reintegration into the community, which has broad benefits for all involved (Hairston 2002)<sup>2</sup>. (*Outside the Walls*)

**I regularly visit my family in Connecticut. We worked on our relationships and rebuilt a bridge. We each pushed from both ends and met in the middle.**

**- Pete**

*Questions about the film:*

- In the film, what familial relationships did you observe for either Omar or Pete? What do you think the impacts of these relationships could be?
- Thinking about Pete’s comment in the text box at the left, how could the strategy to push from both ends and meet in the middle work for other families seeking to reconnect?
- Pete was concerned that Omar had unrealistic expectations for his family. He said: “He wanted to be the go-to family member. Here’s a man who was in prison ten years, with no real contact with his family. And he expected in six months that he was going to be Uncle Omar or big brother Omar and everything was going to be rosy. He didn’t have enough time to be out yet to even know himself.”

How important is it to know yourself before you can form strong relationships with others? What affect might Omar’s unrealistic expectations about his family have had on his ability to form bonds with them? How might it have hurt his chances for reentering his community?

<sup>2</sup> Hairston, C. F. 2002. “Prisoners and Families: Parenting Issues During Incarceration” Paper prepared for the *From Prison to Home: The Effect of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities* national policy conference convened by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Urban Institute, Washington, DC, January 30–31.

- Omar told Nevelle “[After I was released] I found myself disconnected from my family all over again. In prison I could escape it and I had an excuse. When I couldn’t escape it and I didn’t have an excuse, that became a [problem] for me.”  
Why was it harder for Omar to be disconnected from his family once he left prison? What could Omar have done, or what types of support, might have helped Omar to reconnect with his family?
- Discuss the following: Omar [talking about his family while growing up]: “Once you leave the house, you’re in another world. You’re in the streets.”

*Your community or organization:*

- Do you think formerly incarcerated persons can benefit from reconnecting with families? How?
- In your community, can you identify any family strengthening organizations, programs or ministries?

*Opportunities for intervention:*

- Create a safe space in your organization or house of worship for families to gather to watch movies, play games, discuss current events, or simply talk.
- For families with histories of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, or other violent circumstances, create a resource guide of local counseling services, social service agencies, or intervention ministries that can be used by formerly incarcerated persons and their families.

### **Reentry Challenges: Public Safety**

A significant increase in U.S. imprisonment rates has occurred over the past generation. More than a million people are now in state and federal prisons across the country – a fourfold increase since 1973. Between 1925 and 1973, the per capita rate of imprisonment in America remained stable at about 110 per 100,000. Starting in 1973, however, the U.S. imprisonment rate began a steady upward climb through the 1990s (Blumstein and Beck 1999). Today, about 476 individuals are incarcerated for every 100,000 residents (Beck 2000a). A direct relationship exists between incarceration rates and reentry—the more people we send to prison, the more will eventually return from prison. (*Outside the Walls*)

*Questions about the film:*

Omar and Pete both had periods of extremely long incarcerations followed by brief periods of release for more than 30 years.

- What effect do you think this pattern of extended imprisonment and brief release had upon their returns to society?
- Were they equipped to deal with the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Discuss ways in which the world has changed over the last 30 years and the challenges someone removed from society might face upon return.

- Having been returned to prison for placing himself in danger and others at risk because he used an illegal substance (cocaine), Omar sits in his jail cell and asserts that, “I’m not a recidivist.” He complains about being there “unjustly and unfairly because somebody in the division of parole and probation felt we should take him off the streets.”  
Do you sympathize with Omar in any way? Why or why not? Why is drug use a public safety issue for the community?

*Your community or organization:*

The criminal justice system and accompanying sentencing laws were designed with the safety of the greater public in mind.

*Most of my life I've  
been destructive to  
myself and  
destructive to my  
community.*

**- Omar**

- What are your thoughts on the current state of the criminal justice system? Has it met its goal of providing public safety?
- Do you believe that incarceration has the intended goal of rehabilitating those who have broken laws? Why or why not?
- How can people who break laws be rehabilitated to successfully reenter society?
- What can community stakeholders (community groups, residents, families, faith-based organizations, law enforcement and corrections professionals) do to aid in the process of ensuring public safety?

*Opportunities for intervention:*

- Consider alternatives to incarceration that might benefit your community. How might drug treatment facilities assist first-time substance abuse offenders as well as help to uphold public safety in the short term and in the long term?

## **Reentry and Faith**

There is significant anecdotal and growing empirical evidence that prisoners who are connected to a faith tradition and opportunity for worship ultimately attain more successful reentry on the outside. In OMAR & PETE, we learn that both men converted to Islam while in prison.



*Questions about the film:*

- In the film, we see Omar praying both in prison and after his release. What are your thoughts about the role of religion and spirituality in his life? What kind of anchor does it provide to aid his reentry?
- Pete is also a practicing Muslim. What is the role of religion and spirituality in his life? (Consider both the film and the interview with Pete in this guide.)
- Omar says that it “took me a lot of years of struggle to actually become a practicing Muslim.” What struggles might he have had? Does struggling help to strengthen faith?

*Your community or organization:*

- Does your church, temple, or mosque, minister to men and women in prison? Does your ministry extend to those who are released?
- In what ways do connections to faith and spirituality aid returning men and women?
- What roles can congregations play in helping former prisoners achieve successful reentry to their families and community?
- Does your faith tradition have a theological mandate for helping those who are/were incarcerated and those who’ve been released? How does that manifest in your community of faith?
- Besides the worship experience and readings of sacred texts, does your church have ministries to support those returning home?
- Many believe that faith-based organizations are singularly equipped to provide social services to underserved populations. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Faith institutions and other community groups have historically played a critical role in providing support for both incarcerated and released prisoner populations. Thousands of faith-based and community organizations currently provide emergency and long-term shelter, job training, substance abuse treatment, and mentoring for released prisoners and their families. All of these services can ease the reintegration of the former prisoner. Faith-based institutions typically have strong neighborhood ties, putting them in a good position to help returning prisoners and their families in a way that is grounded both in the individual and in the community.

- *Outside the Walls. Faith Briefing Paper, 2003.*

*Opportunities for ministry:*

- Develop a mentoring program for one-on-one support to returning men and women.
- Create a children’s ministry for those with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents.
- Establish a housing ministry to assist formerly incarcerated persons with identifying and applying for safe, affordable housing; develop a resource database of transitional housing sites in your community.
- Host a job fair with other faith-based groups, along with local business owners willing to hire men and women who were formerly incarcerated.

- Train other clergy and lay leaders about reentry issues; use Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign documentaries to share the good news on successful reentry programs and ministries.

## Partnering Organization for Faith-Based Mentoring

The Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign has formed a partnership with the National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ) of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice. The NAFJ promotes the inclusion of faith in addressing consequences and resolutions of crime, with an emphasis on its impact on African Americans and other people of color. Its parent, the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, is a multiethnic, nonpartisan, nonprofit association of criminal justice professionals and community leaders dedicated to improving the administration of justice. National Alliance of Faith and Justice's faith-based National Black Church Taskforce Initiative on Crime and Criminal Justice was developed for nationwide replication and demonstration.

In collaboration with the NAFJ and The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Reentry Campaign produced an outreach video called *To Serve This Present Age: Reentering Through Faith*. Released in July 2005, this instructional DVD/video capitalizes on the black church's growing commitment to play an active role in addressing the significant impact of crime and imprisonment on families and communities. Designed for clergy and lay people, this vital resource provides an introduction to and orientation on reentry issues facing formerly incarcerated men and women. Workshops on volunteerism and mentorship conducted by NAFJ utilize *To Serve This Present Age* as well as excerpts from OMAR & PETE. To obtain free copies of *To Serve This Present Age*, please contact Denise Blake, Reentry project director: [Denise@reentrymediaoutreach.org](mailto:Denise@reentrymediaoutreach.org). For more information on NAFJ's training opportunities, visit its Web site at: [www.nafj-nabcj.org](http://www.nafj-nabcj.org).

### What is the role of a mentor?

In the film, Pete describes his role as a counselor and mentor to others:

"Today what I do is that I, as a powerful example, share my hopes, my strengths, and my experience with other people who are coming out of prison, so that they can look forward to something other than a homeboy hitting them off with a package on a corner because there's no future." At another point in the film, Pete talked about how he and Omar share their days. "So a lot of times, Omar runs into things [in dealing with his family] and he needs to come and vent with me. Say what he's going to do and wait and see what kind of response I give."

- Discuss other characteristics and/or actions of mentors that you observed in the film, or that you have experienced in being a mentor or mentee.

### Special considerations for mentoring

Mentoring men and women seeking to return to their families and communities following incarceration requires special considerations. Consider the following, which have been identified by the NAFJ in the OMAR & PETE clip reel:

- The first encounter with your mentee should be prior to his or her release from prison. You must help to prepare them for the sights, sounds, and challenges they will encounter immediately upon release.
- As a mentor, listening requires patience, empathy, asking questions, and exercising restraints even under compelling and dismal circumstances.

- Many troubled youth may not thrive in a traditional classroom atmosphere, but might benefit from the experience of a mentor who himself or herself has made poor choices.
- Former offenders may be the best mentors.

Discuss other special considerations that mentors who wish to assist reentering former offenders may encounter or may need to be prepared to handle? Under what situations, if any, might you need to end your mentoring relationship?

*You may find yourself questioning the actions of your mentee.*

The filmmaker asked Pete, who was the resident manager of the transition house: “Why didn’t you confront Omar?”

Pete replied: “It’s hard. I’m new at this. I may slip back into who I was, which is [that] he’s my friend. Whatever he does is all right ... which is not all right.” Pete added: “I have to evaluate my definition of friendship. A friend doesn’t let you kill yourself.”

- Do you think Pete should have confronted Omar? Why or why not?
- What role, if any, should friendship play in a mentoring relationship?
- How might you have counseled Omar?
- What would you do if you suspected that your mentee was using drugs, knowing the consequences of reporting him/her? Do you think this is something for which you may have to be prepared as a mentor?
- What actions will you take to find support and counsel for yourself as you seek to mentor others?

*Your mentee will need to change*

Nevelle: “Transition with change is a choice.” Pete: “When you’re dealing with change, you’ve got to be open to where your help comes from. Your help may come from anybody and any place at any time. You’ve got to be equipped to recognize what’s healthy help and what’s harmful.”

- Why is transition with change a choice?
- Discuss potential sources of help available to your mentee.
- What can you do to help your mentee evaluate what’s healthy help and what’s harmful?
- Pete described the profound changes he had made in establishing his new life. What lessons from his experience might help you in supporting change in your mentee?

## **Mentoring Case Study**

The NAFJ advises that “at some point, it’s important to recognize when the mentee must face the need for adjustments.”

View the scene in prison, after Omar was reincarcerated, in which he is having a meeting with two of his case managers, LaTonya and Marshall. Omar feels unjustly returned to prison. He is reading sections from the revocation of his parole. LaTonya did not get caught up in the language of the document. She dealt directly with responsibility and behavior.

*LaTonya:* I see you picking words apart in that warrant, like you’re a lawyer or something, and trying to find a reason why. To me, as far as I’m concerned, I’m sorry that you’re here, but you’re here because you put yourself back in here.”

She goes on to say: “You never once came to us and said, ‘Look, I feel like I’m [breaking]’ or ‘I’m slipping. I need some help.’ That was the purpose of your being in our program – so you

could access all of the things you needed to keep you out on the street. You have to want more for yourself.”

*Omar:* “I didn’t think I’d ever use drugs again. Never in my life. But I did. That was a slip for me – a slip that has cost me my freedom. It’s all about Omar being able to reach out to people correctly, and saying I need some help. I have to throw my pride away. I have to move up to the next level. The next level is being able to go out there and stay out there.”

- What do you think about how LaTonya handled this situation? Do you think she got to the heart of the problem? Why or why not?
- What additional effective strategies did LaTonya use in talking to Omar?
- What did you think of Omar’s response? Does he acknowledge any responsibility? Does he seem to be prepared to change his behavior?

During a meeting of Omar’s case managers, they reflected on how Omar manipulates people and situations.

*Nevelle:* “I think this guy is truly motivated. But he doesn’t know that he doesn’t know what it takes to move forward. And his pride and his image won’t allow him to admit that he doesn’t know. That’s what keeps him stuck.”

- Do you agree with Nevelle’s evaluation of Omar? Why or why not?
- Do you think Omar is stuck? Why or why not?
- If it should happen, how will you know when your mentee is stuck?
- What could you do to help your mentee find his or her way forward?

### **Additional Discussion**

Describe a situation you might encounter as a mentor for someone who was formerly incarcerated. What could you say to help your mentee focus on the real problem? How could you reinforce individual responsibility? What follow up could you provide to support your mentee’s planned change in behavior?

## Partner Organizations Profiled in OMAR & PETE

Two organizations, the Maryland Reentry Partnership and Tuerk House, were featured prominently in OMAR & PETE as part of Omar's reentry process.

### THE ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION'S MARYLAND REENTRY PARTNERSHIP

Overcoming the struggle over poverty starts with a decent home in a safe, thriving community and is strengthened by access to steady employment, a good education, and quality child care. For over two decades, The Enterprise Foundation has been working in neglected communities nationwide to provide those opportunities that all Americans deserve. So far, they've improved the lives of close to half a million people.

In Maryland, there are over 13,000 releases annually from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. Of these, an estimated 68 percent (8,840) will return to the Baltimore area, and 60 percent of those return to five zip codes in Baltimore City. These inmates released from prison are often ill-prepared to return to the community; nor do they have adequate access

The link between substance abuse and criminal activity is well documented. In a 1997 national survey, more than half of state prisoners reported that they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time they committed the offense that led to their imprisonment.

In another recent national study, 74 percent of state prisoners who expected to be released within the next 12 months reported a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. Substance abuse problems that are not treated both during incarceration and after release from prison can pose a severe impediment to successful reintegration.

Not only do they increase the chance of re-offending, they may also hinder the returning prisoner's ability to complete job requirements and reestablish relations with family.

**A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Maryland**, Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, 2003.

to resources necessary to assist in their transition. Life skills training, employment readiness training and job opportunities, affordable housing, substance abuse treatment, physical and mental health care, and social service resources are essential elements for an individual's successful reentry into the community.

In 1998, the Maryland Division of Correction conducted a survey of a little over 100 inmates within 90 days of release, in which the inmates identified employment, education, and housing as their top three concerns. The released offender has regular contact with numerous public and private service systems, but most providers neither communicate nor collaborate with each other.

The Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (REP) began more than three years ago out of an intense concern by state and local agencies, along with community groups, that not enough was being done to prepare offenders to return home as contributing members of their communities. REP is a partnership among the Enterprise Foundation, Maryland Division of Correction, the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation, the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Baltimore City Health Department, several community-based organizations, and a network of service providers to provide a seamless and successful transition from prison to community, through a community-based case management model.

REP targets male offenders returning to the 21213, 21215, 21216, 21217, 21218 zip codes. These zip codes include the following communities: Druid Heights, Garrison, Greater East Baltimore, Harlem Park, Park Heights, Sandtown Winchester, and Upton.

This comprehensive model is designed to support the following goals:

- To enhance public safety by reducing recidivism among the formerly incarcerated population;
- To build individual capacity of those who were formerly incarcerated to be productive members of the family and community;
- To link program participants to transitional housing, substance abuse treatment, physical and mental health care, employment and job training, educational programs, and supportive services such as life skills classes, parenting, and batterers' intervention;
- To increase the community and correctional capacity to address reentering persons' needs and identify community resources to match the assessed needs; and,
- To reduce intergenerational offending through family reunification.

REP takes an aggressive, grassroots approach to making communities safer by providing support to a fraction of the community that has long been ignored, and assisting them to move into positive, stable life styles, which will enable them to provide for themselves, their families, and ultimately, their communities. Simultaneously, this partnership, through its unique model, creates a comprehensive system that is accessible by formerly incarcerated persons, community-based organizations, service providers, and law enforcement agencies through which all former inmates reentering Baltimore City communities can benefit.

Since implementation in 2001, as of November 2004, REP has provided services to over 300 transitioning men, all of whom have been convicted of offenses ranging from murder to chronic drug-related crimes. The program's retention rate ranges from 50 to 70 percent. Of the actively participating individuals:

- 91 percent are under the supervision of the Division of Parole & Probation;
- 32 percent live in transitional housing facilities;
- 94 percent have received physical exams within 72 hours of release;
- 27 percent have received mental health screenings;
- 58 percent are enrolled in a substance abuse treatment program;
- 59 percent are employed;
- 46 percent are enrolled in a job training program;
- 11 percent are enrolled in an educational program; and
- 57 percent are engaged in other programs such as life skills classes.

### **What We Know About Our Clients...**

- Younger clients become harder to serve because of their immaturity, first-time offenses, and inability to understand the consequences of their behavior. More intensive case management is needed for the younger clients. Older clients tend to be more receptive to support due to their chronic recidivism and willingness to change the outcome of their lives.
- Those under community supervision via Parole and Probation tend to follow their case plans more effectively than those who are not under community supervision.

- The number of those that have recidivated over a three-year period is 16 to 19 percent of our client base; 11 to 14 percent represents those who have technically violated Parole and Probation conditions. This number contrasts with the 51.9 percent of the DOC recidivism rate over three years.
- We know that nearly 60 percent of clients are employed in areas such as construction trades, financial services, warehouse work, assembly/factory work, food service and hospitality industries, and customer service. Many of these jobs have benefits and earn an average of \$8.00 per hour.
- We know that 25 percent of those who have received transitional housing return to their own permanent housing or to their families.
- After receiving substance abuse treatment, 30 percent of our clients have maintained employment and self-sufficiency as well as maintained their recovery through community resources and connections. We expect to increase recovery numbers through our new partnerships with Tuerk House and Guadenzia long-term treatment programs.
- After receiving physical exams to detect health issues, 15 percent of our clients receive on-going treatment and medication for hypertension, diabetes, hepatitis, and HIV/AIDS.
- Nearly one-third of our clients who attend the bi-monthly support group meetings gain access to employment opportunities, life skills, and support, which enables them to stay engaged in a functional and supportive way.
- Twelve former REP clients have volunteered to serve as graduate mentors to newly released former offenders.
- In addition to those who have received their GEDs, five clients are pursuing college degrees.

For more information, please contact Rada Moss, Program Director with the Enterprise Foundation, at (410) 261-2657.

## **TUERK HOUSE**

Tuerk House, Inc. is a nonprofit substance abuse treatment program that was established in Baltimore, Maryland in 1970. Its mission is to empower suffering addicts and alcoholics regardless of their financial means, to live in abstinence-based recovery; and thus to achieve and to share maximum physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health.

Tuerk House, Inc. provides treatment within a continuum of four programs:

**Tuerk House, a residential (28 day) program**

For many people in Baltimore, Tuerk House is not the brick building at 730 Ashburton Street. Tuerk House is the 28-day inpatient substance abuse treatment program that takes place in that building every day of the year.

Accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, this residential treatment program is cognitively based and derives from the Tuerk House philosophy that "you feel the way you feel because you think the way you think." For clients, the program is essentially an educational experience, based on 20 lectures developed by Joseph C. Verrett, Ph.D., a former executive director. Residents are encouraged to change how they think and to take responsibility for their recovery. They are also taught the AA/NA program and the biological basis of the twin diseases of alcoholism and addiction.

Each day starts at 8:30 a.m. with a "Verrett Lecture" that serves as the treatment focus for that day. The remainder of the day is devoted to lectures, small group therapy, individual treatment, and AA/NA meetings. The treatment day finally concludes at 9:30 p.m. Residents then have a snack, medications, and prepare for bed.

There is always a waiting list for a bed at Tuerk House. Its outpatient clinic has long supported clients waiting to come into the Tuerk House inpatient program. These clients receive supportive group counseling for 75 minutes each group day, at 9:00 a.m. for males and 12:30 p.m. for females. The wait for a Tuerk House bed is usually longer for men than women. Men may wait up to four weeks while females may wait up to two weeks.

**Nilsson House, a Halfway House for Women**

Tuerk House Inc. offers treatment for women at Nilsson House, an 11-bed halfway house for women. Most residents are graduates of the Tuerk House inpatient program. Treatment at the halfway houses includes group and individual counseling at least once a week. The halfway house treatment reinforces and expands upon the lessons learned at Tuerk House. Residents are expected to stay between six months and one year.

The halfway house programs employ the same basic approach to treatment that is practiced in the Outpatient Program. A certificate of completion is granted for each phase completed. The focus is upon the resident gaining the skills to live drug free in the community. To accomplish this, residents are expected to attend school and/or be employed while living at the halfway house. To accomplish the educational and vocational objectives, the halfway house counselors rely heavily on community resources such as Vocational Rehabilitation, the Learning Bank, and the Cathedral House Reentry Program. Upon completing the halfway house program, clients frequently move to transitional housing, which has allowed several Nilsson House clients to reunite with their children.

**Weisman-Kaplan House, a Halfway House for Men**

Tuerk House Inc. offers treatment for men at the Weisman-Kaplan House, a 17-bed facility for men. Most residents are also graduates of the Tuerk House. A number of the men have moved to Oxford Houses, a frequent stepping stone to more independent living by the men graduating from the Weisman-Kaplan House.

### **Tuerk House Outpatient Clinic (THOC)**

The Tuerk House Outpatient Clinic (THOC) offers intensive and standard outpatient treatment. Outpatient treatment is typically an immediate follow-up to inpatient treatment. The majority of outpatients graduated from the Tuerk House inpatient program.

Both standard treatment and intensive treatment follow a two-phase model. Each phase is designed to last at least three months. In Phase 1, clients attend group-counseling sessions three times per week for three months. In Phase 2, attendance moves to once a week for three months. In addition, outpatients are required to attend 48 12-step meetings over the six-month period of their treatment. These meetings occur at various community facilities. In an effort to motivate clients to stay in treatment, a certificate of completion is awarded at the close of the program. A graduation ceremony, held twice a year, celebrates the completion of the outpatient program.

Each of these four programs is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). An independent, nonprofit organization, JCAHO is the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care.

To address the chronic, relapsing nature of alcoholism and addiction, Tuerk House, Inc. also provides support that is not time limited, but rather is available on an open-ended basis to those who have graduated from inpatient and outpatient programs. **Peer Support** is a self-help relapse prevention strategy that involves recovering men and women in treating the alcohol and drug culture. Participants are never discharged from Peer Support.

Tuerk House, Inc. recognizes that those in recovery face numerous challenges. It provides "wraparound" services including job counseling and placement and parenting classes. Close ties are also maintained with other outpatient clinics and halfway houses throughout Baltimore City and County.

Tuerk House, Inc. is one of Baltimore City's key providers of residential and outpatient treatment for those suffering from alcoholism and drug abuse, regardless of their ability to pay. For more information, please contact Dr. John E. Hickey, Director, Tuerk House, 410.947.1125.

## About the Production

### Tod Lending, Producer/Director

Mr. Lending is an Academy Award® nominated and national Emmy winning producer/director/writer whose work has aired nationally on ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, HBO; has been screened and awarded at national and international festivals; and has been televised internationally in Europe and Asia. He is the president and founder of Nomadic Pictures, a film and television production company based in Chicago.



Mr. Lending's feature length documentary, *Legacy*, which he produced, directed and wrote, was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2000. The film aired on Cinemax/HBO in the summer of 2000, was a critical success at the Sundance Film Festival 2000, and received a prime-time national PBS release in the fall of 2002. The film was awarded the Reel Screen Innovation in Documentary Award, was

nominated for two IDA awards and is now screening and garnering recognition and awards at national and international film festivals. *Legacy* is about the Collins family who for four generations were trapped in urban poverty, depending upon welfare, and living in one of the oldest and most dangerous public housing projects in America – Chicago's Henry Horner Homes. *Legacy* tells the inspiring story of how members of one family, filmed over a five year period, recovered from the loss of their child, broke free of welfare, overcame addiction, and escaped the specter of violence in their community. In addition to the national HBO broadcast, educational and international distribution, *Legacy* affected communities on a grassroots level through a groundbreaking four-year outreach project.

Mr. Lending also series produced, directed, wrote and produced the international award winning series *No Time to be a Child*, a \$1.4 million three-part documentary series that aired nationally on PBS and was a co-production with Detroit Public Television. The documentaries are about children overcoming the effects and consequences of violence in war-zone communities, their homes, and in situations of poverty. In addition to Lending's national Emmy for the ABC Afterschool Special *Shades of a Single Protein*, documentaries in the *No Time to be a Child* series (*Growin' Up Not A Child*, *Breaking Ties*, and *Time to Speak*) have garnered Lending numerous awards including a national Emmy nomination for Outstanding Documentary and two Casey Medals for Meritorious Journalism, New York Festival World Medals, Cine Eagles, among others. In addition to its national and international television release, programs in the series have been widely distributed educationally to high schools, universities, community groups, and professional organizations throughout the country.

Recently, Mr. Lending was a University of Maryland Journalism Fellow in Child and Family Policy. His work has garnered major grants from the Ford Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, Houlby Foundation, U.S. Office of Education, Chicago Community Trust, and the Continental Bank Foundation.

**Slawomir Grünberg, Cinematographer**

Slawomir Grünberg is an Emmy Award-winning documentary producer, director, cameraman, and editor, born in Lublin, Poland. He is a graduate of the Polish Film School in Lodz, where he studied cinematography and directing. He emigrated from Poland to the U.S. in 1981, and has since directed and produced over 40 television documentaries.

SCHOOL PRAYER: A COMMUNITY AT WAR premiered on PBS in the 1999 POV season, received an Emmy Award, and won many film festivals around the world. It also won The Jan Karski Competition, a competition designed to recognize and award outstanding television documentaries produced on the theme of moral courage. School Prayer was produced by Log In Productions in association with The Independent Television Service, with additional support provided by the New York State Council on the Arts and the Soros Documentary Fund.

Grünberg's most recent film FENCELINE: A COMPANY TOWN DIVIDED premiered on PBS in the POV season of 2002 and received, among others, an award at the 2002 San Francisco International Film Festival and Vermont International Film Festival. FENCELINE: A COMPANY TOWN DIVIDED also received a 2003 Environmental Media Association (EMA) Award. This award was the first ever given in the documentary feature category. The EMA Awards honor film and television productions that increase public awareness of environmental problems and inspire personal action on these problems.

A recipient of Guggenheim, New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), and Soros Justice Media Fellowships, Grünberg has received multiple grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Jan Sutcliffe, Editor****Sheldon Mirowitz, Music Composer****Production Funding**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Corporation for Public Broadcasting

The Foundation for Child Development

**Purchase Information**

OMAR & PETE can be purchased from Nomadic Pictures at [www.nomadicpix.com](http://www.nomadicpix.com).

## **Additional Resources**

### **ON THE WEB**

#### **Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs of North America, Inc.**

<http://www.ahhap.org>

Out of the grassroots movement that began with the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, the Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs of North America, Inc. (AHHAP) was formally organized in 1966. Today, AHHAP represents over 1,500 residential facilities providing long-term, cost effective recovery services to over 120,000 individuals per year. AHHAP members have successfully affected millions of lives for over 37 years, returning individuals to sober productive living within their families and communities.

#### **Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, Inc.**

<http://www.bsasinc.org>

Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems, Inc. (BSAS) is the designated substance abuse treatment and prevention authority for Baltimore City. The agency is responsible for the administration of federal, state, and local grant funds for substance abuse treatment and prevention services. BSAS administers funding, monitors treatment programs, collects client demographic and treatment data, works in collaboration with other agencies to improve services, and plans for the development of new services. BSAS does not provide treatment services directly but does provide information and referrals.

#### **Maryland Association of Alcohol and Drug Continuing Care Facilities**

<http://mdhalfwayhouses.org/index.htm>

Continuing Care Facilities are long-term structured residential treatment programs for individuals in recovery from alcoholism and drug dependency. Services are provided in a supervised home like atmosphere with the goal of promoting stabilization and reintegration into the community by addressing relapse prevention, vocational rehabilitation, emotional coping skills, and parenting skills.

#### **National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.**

<http://www.ncadd.org>

Founded in 1944 by Marty Mann, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) provides education, information, help and hope to the public. It advocates prevention, intervention and treatment through offices in New York and Washington, and a nationwide network of Affiliates.

#### **National Criminal Justice Reference Center**

<http://www.ncjrs.org>

NCJRS is a federally funded resource offering justice and substance abuse information to support research, policy, and program development worldwide. NCJRS services and resources are available to anyone interested in crime and public safety including policymakers, practitioners, researchers, educators, community leaders, and the general public.

#### **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/index.htm>

NIAAA provides leadership in the national effort to reduce alcohol-related problems by: conducting and supporting research in a wide range of scientific areas including genetics, neuroscience, epidemiology, health risks and benefits of alcohol consumption, prevention, and treatment; coordinating and collaborating with other research institutes and Federal Programs on alcohol-related issues; collaborating with international, national, state, and local institutions, organizations, agencies, and programs engaged in alcohol-related work; and translating and disseminating research findings to health care providers, researchers, policymakers, and the public.

### **National Institute on Chemical Dependency**

<http://www.ni-cor.com/aboutus.html>

The mission at NICD is to provide up to date information and direct contact assistance on: alcoholism, drug addiction, addictions, prevention, recovery, spirituality, and social issues.

### **National Institute on Drug Abuse**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>

NIDA's mission is to lead the nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction. Recent scientific advances have revolutionized our understanding of drug abuse and addiction. The majority of these advances, which have dramatic implications for how best to prevent and treat addiction, have been supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. NIDA supports over 85 percent of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. NIDA supported science addresses the most fundamental and essential questions about drug abuse, ranging from the molecule to managed care, and from DNA to community outreach research.

### **The National Low Income Housing Coalition**

<http://www.nlihc.org/index.htm>

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to ending America's affordable housing crisis, with the belief that this is achievable, that the affordable housing crisis is a problem that Americans are capable of solving. NLIHC focuses its advocacy on those with the most serious housing problems, the lowest income households.

### **National Transitional Jobs Network**

<http://www.transitionaljobs.net>

In 2000, the National Transitional Jobs Network formed to support peer networking, technical assistance, and policy advocacy. The Network, along with the Center for Law and Social Policy, convened the first national gatherings of Transitional Jobs programs and conducted the first program census. From its early base of programs providing Transitional Jobs for people receiving public assistance, the Network has grown to embrace Transitional Jobs programs for youth, immigrants, and people with criminal records. Throughout 2002 and 2003, Network members assisted with the development of policy proposals that the U.S. Senate ultimately folded into its overall welfare reauthorization plan. Support from The Annie E. Casey, Joyce, and Rockefeller Foundations have provided for staffing and meetings of the Network, for technical assistance to members and new programs, as well as for state and local policymakers.

### **U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: Reentry**

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/>

This reentry Web site is a repository for information on reentry statistics; state activities and resources; federal resources; training and technical assistance; and publications.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Maryland**

This report describes the process of prisoner reentry by examining the policy context surrounding Maryland reentry, the characteristics of Maryland's returning inmates, the geographic distribution of returning prisoners, and the social and economic climates of the communities that are home to the highest concentrations of returning prisoners. This report does not attempt to evaluate a specific reentry program, nor does it empirically assess Maryland's reentry policies and practices. Rather, the report consolidates existing data on incarceration and release trends and presents a new analysis of data on Maryland prisoners released in 2001. The data used for this report were derived from several sources, including the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy, the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, and census data compiled by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA).

<http://www.urban.org/template.cfm?Template=/TaggedContent/ViewPublication.cfm&PublicationID=8318&NavMenuID=95>

### **Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council**

The Council of State Governments established the Re-Entry Policy Council (RPC) in 2001 to assist state government officials grappling with the increasing number of people leaving prisons and jails to return to the communities they left behind. The RPC was formed with two specific goals in mind: to develop bipartisan policies and principles for elected officials and other policymakers to consider as they evaluate reentry issues in their jurisdictions; and to facilitate coordination and information-sharing among organizations implementing reentry initiatives, researching reentry trends, communicating about reentry related issues, or funding reentry projects. The RPC initiated extensive research on reentry and has completed a 600-page report designed for anyone who cares about public safety and people victimized by crime, as well as anyone responsible for workforce development, health, housing, and family and community vitality. A Report Preview has been issued, which explains what the Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council offers to different audiences, introduces some of its principal ideas, and explains how to navigate the approximately 600-page document.

[www.reentrypolicy.org](http://www.reentrypolicy.org)



**OMAR & PETE** is one of the documentaries showcased in the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign. All productions incorporate the theme of **reentry into family and community by individuals who were formerly incarcerated**. This and other programs are elements of the Making Connections Media Outreach Initiative (MCMOI), an outreach project supported by The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). Launched in February 2001, MCMOI links media broadcasters to local stakeholders as a means to promote the Foundation's mission to help build strong and connected neighborhoods for children and families. Visit the Reentry Web

site at: [www.reentrymediaoutreach.org](http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org).

MCMOI campaigns are managed by Outreach Extensions, a national consulting firm that specializes in comprehensive, high profile educational and community outreach campaigns for media projects. For more information and community-use materials for these exciting programs, please visit the MCMOI Web site at [www.mcmoi.org/](http://www.mcmoi.org/).

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**The Annie E. Casey Foundation**

For more information on the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign, please contact:

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