



Library podcast

The impact of incarceration - Part II: Root causes, challenges to reentry work, the impact of mentorship and the way forward

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[00:00:36] Welcome thanks to our three guests for joining us today. While we'll introduce in just a moment my name Spencer I work at the Seattle Public Library. This podcast is a part of a yearlong project that a team at the Seattle Public Library has undertaken focused on court involved and formerly incarcerated patrons. The major project the team embarked on this year was listening to different people and organizations sharing about their experience and work in that field as well as some of the challenges facing people when they are involved in the court system or released from prison and along the way we also heard a lot about the struggles families and communities face as their loved ones are incarcerated as well. We talked to over 20 organizations and wanted to deepen the conversations between some of our participants and podcasts to share what these very important stories and issues with a larger audience. Today we'll be featuring a conversation between Willard Jefferson Franklin Smith and Keith Whiteman. First I'd like to introduce our speakers Willard C. Jefferson Junior has a prominent community activists youth advocate crime interventionist and anti-racist strategist working in Seattle and South King County. His professional work as a coordinator and youth case manager for the positive outcomes program GOP provides services for youth who are justice involved or at risk of justice involvement.

[00:02:07] Mr. Jefferson also helps to provide enriching and culturally informative relevant workshops all in the interests of disrupting and dismantling the school to prison pipeline. Well I grew up in Seattle's Central District where as a child he felt the harsh realities of a city's racial divide. Growing up in Seattle's inner city just six weeks after turning 13 Willard became one of the youngest juveniles in the state of Washington to be tried as an adult where he served a little over 20 years in adult prisons across the state of Washington. In spite of a rough start Willard made the most of his circumstances and earned a high school diploma and associates of arts degree while incarcerated. Since his release he graduated from Bellevue College with a three point nine GPA. Willard is enrolled at the Evergreen State College Tacoma and plans to

get his Ph.D. in communications. Willard founded the grassroots organization United better thinking which focuses on challenging current practices in the educational and justice systems. Willard plans to continue his passion for youth advocacy and restorative justice work surrounding communities of color. He lives in Renton Washington with his wife and children. Thanks for being here. Thank you. Thank you. FRANKLIN Smith is a community leader who has served his community for 10 years in the realm of community resources at Freedom Project a housing program manager at Ra's community services as a homeless support program coordinator at Unity and faith ministries.

[00:03:48] He was also the co-founder of sober solutions Transitional Housing Services LLC. Franklin is currently a Community Resource Program Manager transition specialist working as a team member of the Department of Correction division of reentry on the reentry transition team. In this position Franklin serves as a community resource point of contact. Supporting a cross agency's reentry preparation and planning prior to release prior to his employment with the DFC Franklin individually built a network of direct essential needs services providers to assist with servicing the needs of individuals transitioning from homelessness prison jail and treatment programs. Franklin's passion has been in aiding the marginal and underserved members of our community with a specific focus on the homeless and reentry populations. Franklin has assisted in developing community based outreach activities peer based mentoring and housing programs and has co-authored a 16 hour peer to peer transition curriculum that was formerly offered at Reynolds work release for a period of three years. Lastly Franklin developed a supportive transitional reentry pathways plan that was presented at the Second Chance reentry Grant steering committee team meeting and is grounded in partnering partnering and relationship building with the receiving communities Continuum of Care Systems which creates a direct handoff for individuals being released from jail and prison to community based service providers prior to release.

[00:05:35] Welcome Franklin. Thank you. And finally I'd like to introduce Keith Whiteman. Keith was incarcerated at 18 and served 15 years in prison. You mean he met Arie Kahn of the post prison education project in 2008 and was introduced to the idea of getting an education. Keith received his a degree at Washington State Penitentiary through Walla Walla Community College. Once released in 2015 he received his certificate in social service mental health at Pierce College. Keith then worked with the post prison education project in multiple roles from 2015 through 2017. Recently due to travel and school restraints he has had to step down in his role and student app and applicant services. Keith is currently completing his senior year at The Evergreen State College in Olympia and enrolled in the year wrong year long program gateways for incarcerated youth which enters the juvenile facility to become code learners to mentor teach and learn with a young man. Their current text includes the school to prison pipeline and understanding mass incarceration. Thanks for being here today with us Keith. Thank you. Thank you all for being here today. One question to get you guys started can you share. What led you to this work and what you see as the greatest challenges for court involved and formerly incarcerated people.

[00:07:12] I would like to always always in allowing a wise counsel to speak on behalf of our community first and foremost before you be given information to be able to speak before. So I would like to allow Mr. Franklin Smith to open up a conversation and then from there we can open up and give the listening viewer or our audience a lot more details on where Mr. Smith thank you will.

[00:07:43] And thank you for inviting me and having me a part of this distinguished panel of individuals here. One of the things that wasn't said in the introduction was the fact that I too am formerly incarcerated and have spent almost 20 years of my life going in and out of Department of Corrections.

[00:08:04] What led me down this path was not only the lack of services that were being provided to individuals who were incarcerated but it was more so what are the solutions. What is some of the problems and coming from a time period when I did time where the system pretty much looked at the lock them up doorway to keep a not really investing in an individual release that's bringing a lot of money on incarcerating underserved and marginalized populations from inside the institution trying to put together programs that better educated individuals about who they were focusing on why and what was the reason why we were here.

[00:08:54] For myself I was really under the misunderstanding that a lot of the reasons while I was incarcerated was based on drug addiction and never really focused on what was prior to the addiction. And it wasn't until I started going to school right. Two were awarded my degrees inside and was given an opportunity to study field psychology sociology and just kind of look at the mass incarceration from a perspective. But I think for me probably one of the biggest stand the biggest points in my own transformation was when I started studying my own history and as they say a man who knows where he come from can determine where he's going.

[00:09:32] If you don't know where you come from you know stand for nothing and you will we will fall for anything. And at that time period that was me. But now I mean in looking at the work that I have done.

[00:09:43] The pathway that I have created not only from homelessness but through drug addiction on into transitioning and navigating individuals towards quality living. What that is because it's different for everybody. It is probably one of the most rewarding experiences I have had and it pretty much answers the question to the dilemma of services or connecting individuals to services that we're actually here. I am one of the biggest problems that we have as a populist individuals incarcerated is we lack the information a to basically design orderly transition we know what we want we know what we would like to do but we don't have a connection to the community to allow us to move down that direction unless of course you have a strong enough support system out here that's feeding you information on the inside. For the majority of people like myself there was no support system. So when I came out back in 2000 it was forty dollars a bus ticket. Good luck. We'll keep the light on for you. Because the cycle of recidivism lives and it lives in the underserved individuals inside and out. A It lives in

the mindset of individuals who believe that because they serve time society will cast them out instead of understanding that you can reinvent yourself inside the institution. You can come to understand some of the dilemmas and challenges that you have from inside the institution addressing those issues and come back out in society ready to execute the plan that you developed. So for me I do the work that I do and I'm fortunate. I'm extremely humble because when I go back to look at the challenges that I had inside an institution they were all geared towards not only assisting other people in reentry but myself assisting myself and reentry. And from that standpoint I met a lot of excellent individuals I've met these beautiful Brothers right here who share this work. We've all worked together navigating individuals from inside the institution out placing them in housing getting them jobs making sure that what got a person incarcerated in the first place is being identified and addressed prior to release.

[00:12:21] And if we don't have enough time making sure that we have a professional services and a community rate to accept Well I guess I can say Well what brought me to this work is an intense amount of pain.

[00:12:40] Honestly like you said from from the age 18 I've done 15 years but it wasn't in one sentence. It was in six different prison sentences. You know it's almost when I analyze it I feel like as as a as a nation we've kind of criminalized poverty in essence right. And in a lot of other things for that matter. So as I was going in and out and now struggling with my addictions struggling with poverty is just I started noticing on my last prison sentence that I was growing right and I was seeing individuals you know that were on their first and second sentences that were at the same spot where I was at. And you know there's a 12 step program that says you know you keep what you have by giving it away. And I thought to myself This is what I want to do this is how I'm going to keep myself on the right pathway and that's why working with other people to try to break the cycle. And it's been working for me. You know I've been I've been out of prison since since already in post prison was at the gate. And in 2015 September 2015 it's been twenty five months and I've gotten my certificate in social work and I'm working with a great bunch of kids up and up and Greenhill and in the juvenile facility. And I'm engaged. I mean my life is just a blessing today.

[00:14:34] And and I truly believe that it's all because of the work that I'm doing alongside these gentlemen.

[00:14:43] You know yeah I can I can pretty much echo some of the same sentiments that's already been stated.

[00:14:53] I'm reminded of this quote My proverb When I listen to the response that was provided from Mr. Franklin Smith and then also Mr. Keith White Man I don't have the verbiage verbatim but it's it's something along the lines that who can repair a spider's spider web is only the spider himself. So when we do this work the people who are the credible messengers are the individuals who have some aspect of parallel existence. So to them to a certain lifestyle. And when you look at the best practices in formulating I will say like a cure vaccination to a

disease you have to look at and analyze the disease itself and this is then from that you look at the properties of the disease and then you extract you know different properties and come up with the cure to that disease and then once you come up with the cure to the disease you reinserted back into the body with the intention to make a hole again. And this is no different than myself. Mr. Franklin Mr. Whiteman coming from a disease are hardest ease of mindset a disease condition being extracted as some kind of way not to advocate or say that prison was the caveat or the platform that created an opportunity for change because it was not. But the reality is there's just a certain thing that was innate inside of all of us that exists in every human being given an opportunity to do something better because that's what we really want. Nobody wants to be addicted to drugs. Nobody wants to be incarcerated. Nobody wants to be pretty much clinging on to life in a state of a set of existence and so when you get an opportunity to kind of you know come on get your head above water you're going to take advantage of it in a way that's real.

[00:16:58] And so we were extracted and now understanding that I'm a part of that cure.

[00:17:05] It's a part of my life mission that comeback can be reinserted back into the community that a one in one sense of a set and I was harmful towards and destructive towards and volatile towards.

[00:17:16] Now I'm not cured. No difference than Harriet Tubman was very successful and free and a lot of slaves. The biggest reason that she was so successful because she was once a slave herself she understood she could relate.

[00:17:34] You know Malcolm X won his side and had a different type of education occur while he was on the inside and he came home and he was very effective in transforming the lives of drug addicts pimps prostitutes hustlers street mongers of all different kinds and all different types. He was so effective because he came from that particular population. So this is a part of my lifeline. This is a part of my mission. I am not spider who can only who could repair the spider web. I cannot expect someone else who doesn't have that similar similar or who've been similarly situated to do this work an effective role an effective manner to some people who have a good heart and good intentions who might graduate from the University of Washington graduate from Evergreen State graduate from prestigious colleges around his world. The only thing they may bring is that good heart and wonderful intentions and those and those degrees attached to them. But that's not enough that's not enough. If there was enough Benghazi would have happened a long time ago for me.

[00:18:38] Mr. Whiteman and Mr. Franklin and all the other people who are became victims to mass incarceration we would never been here. The reason why I say that because most of us came in contact with individuals who have a variety of different greens who specified and sort of was certified in certain aspects rather we was in school. We came across teachers whether when we did get in trouble got apprehended for some of us to started young in the juvenile system like myself we came across probation counselors we came across officer we came

across people who actually had careers professions and degrees and it wasn't good enough then.

[00:19:13] So this is our life mission and it's what brings me to this to the table is to make sure that the mistakes some of the the nuances that I fill up underneath leave the atrocities that I've been exposed to that I can kind of close those those gaps that are in the support system for underserved population and marginalized populations don't exist any longer.

[00:19:40] And if I may if I may jump me. Don't do it. There was a saying that that I grew up on and it was actually a part of a book called The Miseducation of the Negro by Dr. Carter G.

[00:19:52] Woodson. Yes. And it was basically information is not education information becomes education when an individual is motivated to apply the word if he's not motivated about what he's learning then all it is is conversation. And one of the big one of the dilemmas that individuals when we start to look at recidivism and why is it that individual didn't learn his lesson the first time out was the fact that a matter in the Willard was kind of touched on it is the fact that we have a lot of individuals that were touching people but there was no connection between that individual who was supplying the information and where the person who was being touched come from.

[00:20:40] To them it was a job. And I'm sure one of the things that you can hear now just in this opening conversation is passion people who have passion to want to go back into an environment that the majority people try to get the hell out of that to say then look here you can succeed. This is not your lot in life. Change is there.

[00:21:06] And I must say I anything that I speak on in regards department correction is not in the by department fresh and they have their own PR people they speak put himself in a very good PR people to do things that they do. But for myself in my own experience not only as a person who rules the system but now somebody who's employed by that system to go back in and try to identify assist individuals in identifying what got him incarcerated in the first place because if we can't get to the root of the problem then we're just putting a Band-Aid on a problem and we we have we've had conversation here to talk about substance abuse what we know sometimes abuse is a problem but it's not a core problem it's a secondary problem. We have to go in there to come to understand what a core problem is. I know a lot of times that goes back to shout that it hurts my heart when I hear Willie talking about his experience and being the first juvenile 13 years old incarcerated in Washington state.

[00:22:12] It's like what are we doing.

[00:22:14] And is the money in incarcerating individuals that good that we're taking our children and putting them in or was that a mistake of the criminal justice system who just kind of see what these people over here on this side because of whatever reason color or whatever isn't worth the time to see what's going on in their life. What symptom down this path a and the one

thing that I looked at when I first was incarcerated was a simple fact that for me when I went in half my community was already there maybe say 1 in 3 will succeed. They don't tell you what happened to the other two. One probably did or one's incarcerated or they're both were incarcerated in my case I had three partners plus dead I was incarcerated the other was I count I had two I got two brothers which makes three more. Now both of them passed away but at that time one was dead one was successful and I was on the ledge because I was the youngest a.

[00:23:20] And it comes down to the simple point of understanding that I think was the answer to any problem is probably the reverse of the problem and it is coming to understand it you don't have to live a life on the ledge. Well we have to do it bring you the proper information and motivate you to want to do something with your life. When I looked at the institutions and started to go to school and came to understand really what the value of institutions was believe it or not they'd be a certain value. And the value was it took an individual out of distraction which is society and gave an opportunity to get the information. But at the same time here we have to make sure that that person understands what it is he's learning and be able to apply that to his own life and his own survival. When I was released in two thousand forty dollars gave money associate's degree in business I associate degree in accounting but also I had a background in property def

[00:24:24] Check writing drug dealing. I was gonna hire me to manage the money. So was a degree any good.

[00:24:35] Well not necessarily but didn't. Like me.

[00:24:40] I also was a construction labor so I couldn't get jobs over here I couldn't get jobs over here but I can always go back which means all the information that I learned over eight and a half years of incarceration and to be shelved and the information that I had prior to it which was applied knowledge is what I had to use in order to survive. Well if I'm tapping into that new information would also my tapping into the drug addiction everything else that goes to a part of that previous understanding because desk be familiar part of my life that I already knew how to use

[00:25:22] And it wasn't too long. Actually it was 24 months before I found myself downtown Seattle homeless living in the jungle for six years.

[00:25:36] But when once again information becomes education when you're motivated to apply to words you know one thing about Seattle is the fact that we have a lot of support services and as the system was changing as time was changing there were also organizations that was out there trying to help people people helping people. A which to me is a beautiful thing. At that time I don't really understand it but today it's a beautiful thing because it happened to be an individual at the same at the St. Francis House who is a case manager that

I met that looked at me and said You don't belong here. What are you doing on the times that would violate and get put into jail it was a gentleman Mr. Gerald Bradford

[00:26:29] That would come in from SBI and he what are you doing. You don't belong here but nobody is saying where you belong.

[00:26:39] They just said you don't belong here. And for me still dealing in my mess and dealing with my addiction it didn't compute. And then one day I sat down and I start hearing voices you don't belong here.

[00:26:54] So where do I belong. What do I need to do.

[00:27:00] Coming to understand that the only thing that was holding me down was me.

[00:27:06] What I need to do is pick myself up clean myself up. Stop looking for people to give me things and see what I can do to help myself and help other people.

[00:27:16] Once again people helping people in that open the door of opportunity that sent me back to see the counselor up there St. Francis thousand debrief now retired call him my mentor my coach and it tapped into one thing that if you have the right support system around you have a better chance of success coming out of any. Because not only did I have to re-enter knowing that I reenter from the institution but now I had to reenter homelessness. I had to start all over again.

[00:27:53] That whole reentry process was a continuation a lot for me it was that defining moment. Is it okay. I see the answer and it's not here on your bridge. And that's the first sign when I started my venture down into supportive housing and went home supported housing because a lot of Transition Houses are drug dens whether you'll manage that that time where you'll manage it were a mixture of people with mental health issues and people coming out of prison where one was selling the medication to the other one was taking advantage of the other one. And for me going into that type of setting it was like I'm just going to use this for a place to live while I do this with my heart and my position wouldn't allow it. It couldn't wouldn't allow scene manipulation of other people because I'd been there before I knew it had a role when I actually started to insert myself in my opinion and my resources that I was gaining into that house and turn it from being a house off the hook to the house on the move where people were engaged now and doing positive activities and people engaged and going to school people engaged and going to the mental health not for the medication but for the simple fact of trying to find out what was your problem.

[00:29:21] Well when I'm also here from you is that I can hear some of the components of having some innate qualities of being able to you know fight through certain aspects and I could definitely relate to that. And everybody doesn't who go to prison doesn't go as light like myself went in at 13 6 weeks after the 13 ton of 13 I didn't have you know any type of applied

skills I didn't I didn't even know how to drive a car manager you know home a bank account or any of those aspects so it was a lot more you know abysmal for me you know in that regard. But I'm also in hearing that the environment has to be set up in a way that gives a person an opportunity to develop themselves and develop their skills because you referred to a coach you referred to once you got resources he was able to insert that and change the environment around you in a transitional housing and stuff like that. The work that we do today is also you know doing that work in changing environment in the social patterns and things that are nature and we know that policy practice and how things play out that also contribute to the environment. You know if a person has to check the box to say that they are have a felony conviction and therefore you and one thing we know as far as individuals who have felony convictions we are though all we're the last people in the state of America and in a country of American and United States of America who can be legally discriminated against without last population you know so if you have a crime you know a conviction especially if there is a specific crimes as you stated you know that it holds you withholds you from being able to have access you know to be auto to have upward mobility and to provide an opportunity for your or your family.

[00:31:10] And these are one of the things that I would like to. I want to change in terms of being able to have people's felony convictions no matter what they may be after a US a certain reprieve or extended period of time have a remove from them because it doesn't make any sense for you Mr. Franklin has been out for 10 plus so years doing his work doing that. The egregious work why you should still have a stain on your record when you have proven this research we know a lot of people like to go off a resurgent golf a day that there's research that shows that a person who has done time.

[00:31:45] If they when they get out for seven point five years seven and a half years they are just as likely to commit a crime as you know Joe Citizen the average Joe citizen who is not that likely to commit a crime. So therefore Doug that should be taken into some type of consideration in terms of RE Yeah you know that that's like you know to be reinserted yeah to be reinserted back into society in a way that is that is you know comprehensible.

[00:32:11] You know that that builds them and allows them to be part of you knows interwoven into the social fabric of society because I shouldn't have to be held to a mistake that was that had taken place when I was 13 for the rest of my life.

[00:32:27] Nobody should you know we should be given an opportunity the only thing that can't change is the stripes on as he brought us are the spots on a leopard but a human being can change their mind therefore change their condition and we're all living proof of that. So we need to have an opportunity an environment whereas I don't have to just be a labor worker. I don't I'm just saying we don't probably always have to just do re-entry work maybe I want to do you know I want to be you know an astronaut or whatever the case may be you know. But the way to practice is I set up in terms of federal rules and regulations a policy that might be very I'm I can probably be the next person to cure cancer but because things are set up it is gonna

be a lot more harder for somebody who has a certain background to get to those particular fields.

[00:33:10] So yeah I want to talk a little bit about what was the major catalyst to my change of heart my change of mind and that was education. What I understand now are systems right.

[00:33:31] That's you two gentlemen have probably been aware of your whole lives and the things that I you know was simply not aware of.

[00:33:40] Right. Because I'm part of this majority of country right. That I don't understand that I just think I could just go do whatever I want right. And I don't feel these systems at work and when I started to get an education when I started to learn of these cities systemic and deep rooted issues that we've had in our country since since this conversation since the very beginning right.

[00:34:09] Yeah know we've had we've had a slave economy since the slave days till today. Yes. I just moved into the prison system right.

[00:34:18] And and I'm starting to learn these things and I'm starting to see these systems in my life is changing and my heart is changing and I'm gaining empathy from my brothers and my sisters that I've done time who've dealt with generational poverty abject poverty and addictions and and all these things right where when you start to notice this when you become aware of what I become aware of what my privilege does to you and what that what what my privilege means is that somebody is being oppressed somewhere.

[00:35:00] Absolutely right. And sometimes I think that we get stuck in the problem and we forget about finding the solution.

[00:35:13] And that's where I'm at right. I mean I'm in my senior year of college and we're talking about all these things. And I'm telling my teacher OK enough with the problems. Let's talk about solutions let's let's go to Olympia and get our whole class in.

[00:35:29] You know but so education education is the catalyst right. So you can speak the same language as everybody else that they're speaking out here that knows what they're talking about. And then the second thing I wanted to talk about is opportunity right. You touched on it a little bit about what that that cat from you dub can do with all those letters after his name. But if you don't know who he's talking to when he felt the same things and he had the same struggle how how how you going to take it seriously.

[00:36:07] And that opportunity has to be there for for these ladies and gentlemen coming out of the system right. The opportunity has to be there. And there has to be trust. There has to be some form of trust and that's what happens when you when you put casts like us in positions where we can help people like this because you know what we've been from the same place

and we've felt the same things and once we've got that trust you know we're gonna get a phone call.

[00:36:36] Frank man I'm down here man.

[00:36:40] You know and I know I need I need to talk to you Marcus things Anglo. You know I've had the phone calls I've taken absolutely early in the morning. You're right. And that's.

[00:36:50] And it's a beautiful thing when there's people like us in the end and we have the opportunity because I've been on both sides of it.

[00:36:58] Yeah. You know Ari been there for me are you all right. Pick me up take me to treatment. I've been there and now I'm in that position where I can do that. Yes. You know and and it's that trust building.

[00:37:11] And it's it's one person. Sometimes all it takes is one person. You can have 10 strikes against you. You can have an abusive family. You can have you know your mom and dad are fighting all the time. You know addiction and all these things. But there is one person whether it's at school or whether it's in the home or whether it's a one person or if it's if it's somebody in a non-profit that you work with one person that cares.

[00:37:38] They didn't really have to care you know the person out walking down the road that just could have just walked by but they stopped and said Man you all right sometimes that's for me. That was what did it. It was one person that showed day care when they didn't have to of course my mom cares. You know I can't speak for everybody because everybody's talking but I'm saying I was given an opportunity to show what I could do.

[00:38:15] And I wanted it bad enough to do it. And my life is turned around today because all those you know and I'm excited I'm excited to see where this life takes me in this.

[00:38:30] With education and with empathy and with love in my heart for humanity really. I'm just waiting to see we're not going to put up or he's put you where you belong.

[00:38:43] And even when Mr. Smith and out and I won it.

[00:38:46] Mr. Smith to jump in on this. This component but at the same time I believe that we need to be on the front lines. We need to be. If you're a soldier in this particular you know battle or this particular war then you need to be the one who's who's resourced in a way that can bring about effective change. Well we need to do. And I'm just being honest is stop assigning some of that that role or that leverage and that collateral to those individuals who just graduate and just have no real connection other than the fact that they might have.

[00:39:24] I always tell people man you know be very be very conscious and on a lookout when you start to see individuals and you know what suits and ties and a from you know certain backgrounds now all of a sudden they're standing in the lines for reentry you know trying to get good job as a management manager or program managers and coordinators and all these different things because it's resources and there's money coming in. So all they want to do is just kind of serve the same purpose maybe as a DHS worker or somebody who I work here and I just provide you with a service and that's it and I'll connect you with you know a menial labor job you know being a janitor or something like that. The reality is we are the example that these people need. And the example that I want to provide them with somebody who has a PTSD body and you know and by 2025. You know so my heart has a P D. They can look at and say this is what I can aspire to do aspire to become instead of being a president you know and I don't have nothing against anybody if that's your profession if you want to be a janitor go ahead and do that and be the best of whatever you want to be.

[00:40:20] But there should be other options available. And I want to provide all of the options that we need to be on a front line. You talk about education being a part of that but really what it really comes down to is not education is about what kind of education you're getting because real education leads to liberation. You know the word educate comes out of the Latin word dos which means to bring out so there's something in you that needs to be excited are ignited into a point to where now you're moving in a way that is moving everybody else. So that's that's what is about the liberation. And I realized that when it comes to true liberation we need to be on a front line. We need to find out our own liberation. And instead of sitting back and expecting someone else to do that and say well you went to school for X Y and Z can you come here and help write this grant can you come here you know provide some case management or some program coordination direction we need to be on our front lines.

[00:41:10] And that's the reality because that's the way is really if we're gonna look look at things being impacted in an effective way then those people who understand it the most and we'll get it from a certain aspect they don't. They are the ones we need to be on the front lines.

[00:41:25] Those are ones. Mr. frankly should be funded millions of dollars and I'm just being honest with you I'd be a real deal six dollars to lock people up if this man is doing the work to keep people out. Why is he not being funded millions of dollars to do that already cause she'd be funneling millions of dollars to anybody who's doing his work was on the front lines of doing his work should be given access to those resources to really help the people that they're helping. I've seen you guys on the front line I knows there. Then all of a sudden when you when you get out you apply for a certain position you start to see other people and you didn't you I never knew used it is in this type of work. Well a couple years I was and I was a you know maybe I was doing something different. But you're here because the money is funneling through. Was it the money stream dries up you're not gonna even be here. Day individuals who got the skin in the game that needs to be funded and like I say you should be receiving millions of dollars to do this work. Mr. Franklin and even you. KEITH And that's the reality so I'll let Mr. Franklin come in. I

[00:42:21] Mean the point at the point is you did you did that you eloquently just pointed out the simple fact that a big part of the solution to the problem of recidivism is the fact that for years there was a process that felons can't teach film unions to have association regardless of how well you're doing in the community today.

[00:42:53] The there is a shift that people who have actual practical experience and knowledge in these fields and have made transitions and transformations home are the best teachers to go back in and guide other people out. So what's the Pied Piper a where. And that's pretty much how I see myself at the flag ship and that's was it. I give. I don't speak for the department but I do give department corrections their props because they did say there is something wrong with our system and we need to find these people out here who have successfully re-enter and let's see if they'll be interested in coming back a and helping us with other people.

[00:43:41] Hey got the simple fact is when we talk about the word arrest we forget that the word means to put to sleep. So when they put the handcuffs on you put the handcuffs on everything the appetites the desires everything.

[00:43:56] And prior to an individual getting ready to come out those visions and those faces and all the stuff that was going on prior to him getting locked up start to creep through his dreams and start to become real.

[00:44:09] Because when I came out I couldn't get a job in accounting but I couldn't go back to be a laborer.

[00:44:16] And a lot of the people and places and things that I was engaged with prior to getting locked up were the same people places and things I wound up and it wasn't too long before I was right back where I was that prior to being locked up set myself up to be locked up again unconsciously not even knowing it. So one of the good things about the change today is the fact that they are looking at a number give him his props historical weight post prison education project because he's been doing the work for years and is pre engagement is going inside these institutions six to 12 months before an individual's release and finding out what is it that that person wants to do. Does he want to go to school. Does he want a job. What is it he wants to do and how can we help him map that out for me. We go in today and we look at where a person is at. When we first started out by worked on a project called The Second Chance reentry pilot project we went in and we looked at individuals six to 12 months short.

[00:45:27] But in reality when we talking about reentry reentry should really be looked at in the criminal justice system in the court to figure out why is this individual stand in front of Judge. And what do we need to do to start tracking this person if we want to send him to the Department corrections. Do we need to start setting up a pathway so that we don't have to re-incarcerating once you don't served his time when he gets out.

[00:45:51] So today we're we're now in Shelton which is receiving center and we're engaging with individuals at that level so that we can start moving them in a direction of figuring out why are you here. What do we need to help you with what professional services do you need.

[00:46:10] So by the time they get six months short we have an entire game plan for them to come back to the community to say this is everything I India to show change instead of walking off eight and a half years. All I had a young man it's on my case right now that we successfully brought out 44 years. Need any member G.D..

[00:46:33] Yeah how do we identify those people. And some Look here you're not lost. Ninety five percent of people incarcerated are coming home. And we need to prepare a we need to prepare for the release regardless of how much time we get because eventually they're going to be knocking on our doors and we need to make sure everybody that comes out of here is prepared.

[00:46:55] I think we need to even look before that and I think Mr. Wheeler has a little more expertise on this subject but I think we need to look at our schools. We when you look at our youth because all those people that you see in the prison system the really high percentage of those people went to school in our state as well. And I think that when you run schools like prisons with metal detectors and cameras and school cops and you know officers posted you actually create a prison culture in the education system right. I think that all those other problematic behaviors began before they even step before that judge because they're step a principal before that. Right. You doing some studies on this as well.

[00:47:50] Absolutely. Absolutely. And I'm just I just want to you know I admire the work that's being done by everyone out here. But I also want to be realistic about what's going on in terms of the nature being changed and I know that you know you work with the Department of Corrections but also realize that DLC and other different entities are not doing his work right now.

[00:48:13] Because that's what they want to do. They're there they're not funded to do this work. They're realizing that we have to change some of our practices because they're starting to hit us hard in our pockets so they're forced to try to make an alignment with people who are doing this work. If that was the case if they really want to do this work they have the resources and the capability to hire several of you know Mr. Franklin Smith if that's what they really wanted to do. So at the at the end of the day when we look at the recidivism rate being you know 70 percent plus for individuals who return to society. And I would just say column Bay just earlier this week in speaking at the youth summit the black prison caucus you saw and listen to those young brothers and they did they did their research very very eloquently well. And one of those data statistics they provided in terms of their research was in 2015 the state of Washington when it came to declining young people as juveniles to adults. One hundred percent of those juveniles was was juveniles of color.

[00:49:16] One hundred percent. One hundred percent.

[00:49:20] So what are we saying even when we talk about youth development but brain development Oh and I'll be realized it only applies if you're not if you're if you're if you're white. Well that's one and only title it becomes a part of reality. I'm not going to charge this young white person you know male or female as an adult. But when it comes to persons of color we can see what it looks like in reality. You know Soledad the way the dynamics plays out is a lot differently. And in 2016 it went down 15 points to 85 percent. So we're still dealing with the same dynamic. And so we we have to get on the front lines and do this work in a lot more effective ASP aspect.

[00:49:58] And honestly I'm one of those individuals where I don't want to be in.

[00:50:02] I want to work with these big systems but I don't want to definitely work for the big systems. If anything the systems need to work for us you need to work with us in order because right now what they're doing if you're sitting in a lot of these young people to prison you're basically saying that you're worthless. I literally when I was in Monroe and I was doing couples of sustainability you know they got to sustainability practices and stuff and I'm like they're able to do compose and renewable energy but they throw us away like this doesn't we're not renewable.


[00:50:32] You know you're saying you can get more out of garbage than you can get out of a human being you know.

[00:50:38] So you know we have allow a lot of work to do and every guard and just kind of lastly I mean there's two things and you know there's always been two directions to brain change in a time of good social change that you get in. I never forget when I was offered a position I actually went to my circle and and I tell people you know that I came up through and I appreciate my Islamic brothers and sisters because they can pray five times a day and it takes a lot of discipline if you see them they stop wherever they're at.

[00:51:11] And when it comes time to radio stop and pray.

[00:51:14] So if they can do that why can't I stop and think at least five times before I make a decision. Stop and think five times before I even open my mouth to say something. If I do that at least what comes out of my mouth will actually be proper in a point to where it won't offend nobody and it will encourage people. It was Dr. George nobles who said power is my ability to define reality and have other people accept that definition as if they created themselves. For me my definition is just wanting to be a good man to do good by other people. And for years people used to call me a convict. Today those same people are now calling me Mr. Franklin.

[00:52:04] Mr. Smith calls got.



[00:52:10] Thank you Mr. Smith. Thank you. Thank you. Thank both of you guys for including me in this case.

[00:52:17] I'd like to thank the Seattle Public Library and their staff or even having something like this. Excellent excellent excellent opportunity.

[00:52:24] Yes definitely yes.

[00:52:26] Yes. Thank you guys so much for the great conversation and we really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today too.

[00:52:34] And also thanks for all your amazing work and also thanks as well to the Seattle Public Library Foundation for making this podcast work as well as all the other free programs the library offers possible.

[00:52:50] Thanks again so much. Thank you.

[00:52:58] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

