



Conference 2021

Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 1 - Session 1 Track A – Equity and Inclusion

1:00 – 2:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87447930712?pwd=VzlvNWVlOHBLUWQ1WXliY3BNejZTUto9>

Creating Paths for Other to Follow

Bashir Hawkins

Raritan Valley CC has offered an inside-degree program since 2010. Formal education is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by institutional and personal commitment to integrating the voices of formerly incarcerated scholars into the work. We will use the lens of our experiences to show the importance of business and personnel processes that not only welcome but prioritize the inclusion of our students in our work. We believe academically mature students can have a strong impact on recruiting, motivating, mentoring, and supporting newer students on the inside. But we also believe that growth in program staff should intentionally include alumni that are working to begin their professional lives. Formerly incarcerated scholars face challenges when transitioning from education to employment. These range from exclusion from certain industries based on background, to emotional challenges, such as self-doubt, when unfair hiring practices happen. Often, formerly incarcerated scholars have to lower their standards just to create a path for themselves. Some formerly incarcerated scholars have been able to make professional advancements and accept an obligation to assist others who have been similarly impacted. Programs involved in HEP must also be committed to providing pathways for their students. We all have to be conscious that there is a bigger goal, and that goal is to make the path clearer for the next person to follow! This will be a discussion between 2 RVCC employees who were former students, intentionally recruited because of their background (not excluded for it) and will be moderated by the program director.



The Impact of Trauma on Formerly Incarcerated Persons' Use of Webs of Support

Daniel Bullman

This project was originally submitted as an Undergraduate Independent Study presentation board for the 2021 Ball State University Student Symposium. Evidence indicates that webs of support can benefit outcomes of individuals as well as organizations. However, little is known about whether the justice impacted population has access to or utilizes support networks in achieving their goals. This paper reports the results of qualitative interviews with 4 adults with varying levels of conflict with the criminal justice system and compares findings with current work exploring the impact of trauma on individually perceived success. Research Question: Does trauma affect justice impacted individuals' use of webs of support? Research Method: 1. Four justice impacted individuals were recruited from two service organizations dedicated to higher education support for the formerly incarcerated. A four-question interview was conducted over video to determine individual perceptions of success, resilience, and use of webs of support. 2. Common themes were identified and compared to current literature examining individual support networks and webs of support after chronic exposure to trauma. Participants reported perceived career success despite the barriers they faced but indicated significantly different reactions to stress ranging from well controlled through planning, to anger and aggravation. All participants believed themselves to be more resilient than non-impacted peers because of resiliency as a defense mechanism. Discussion: Define Webs of Support vs Networking Discuss results of qualitative data. How policy restricts individuals' ability to seek upward mobility due to background through modern redlining. How do organizations or communities build inclusiveness with justice impacted individuals or families? There are varying levels of success across institutions of higher education and religious communities but establishing true webs of support instead of simple networking remain imperative for individual success and quality of life.



Creating Pathways to Advocacy with the Education Trust’s Justice Fellows Policy Program

Omari Amili and Patrick Rodriquez

The Education Trust is a K-12 and higher Ed policy organization that works to create equitable based outcomes amongst black and brown communities. We have found that the incarcerated population is affected immensely both during their schooling years and after. We have decided to tackle these issues by creating a fellowship that disrupts traditional pathways to professionalism and advocacy. The Justice Policy Fellowship consists of 8 fellows around the nation that have a vested interest in both the rights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people at the intersection of incarceration and education. This program was created hand in hand with formerly incarcerated leaders to ensure the design of a program that specifically focuses on policy training, networking and leadership skills to equip recently released individuals to become leaders and advocates for the issues that face their communities directly. Our presentation will center the Justice fellows as they reflect on their experience thus far, what they are working on and what they are planning their next steps to be. This program is meant to challenge the traditional methods used to train formerly incarcerated people for professional positions within the policy space



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Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 1 - Session 1 Track B - Advocacy

1:00 – 2:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84395974813?pwd=eERvYWRLenNhYU1pakdWbzFrUVJCUTog>

Unlock the Bar: Challenging the Barriers to Equity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession

Tolu Lawal and Dieter Tejada*

Unlock the Bar (UTB) in association with National Justice Impact Bar Association

The legal profession most often fosters systemic inequity by protecting the classist, elitist, and white supremacist institutions within America. We see this from the structures and processes of law school, to the barriers marginalized groups experience in the pre- and post-admission process, to the repressive legislations that lawyers either author or defend. It is imperative, so long as the legal profession continues to exist in this form, that the legal field uplifts, centers, and is led by the communities that the law most often harms. In 2020, NJIBA and UTB connected to lead UTB-NY, a coalition that takes direct aim at the barriers to entry into the legal profession set by the New York State Bar through its Character and Fitness (C&F) application. While the C&F purports to determine the “morality” and “professionalism” of potential lawyers, it functionally aligns more with the way the State policies marginalized communities through criminal and civil systems. This means that the Bar disproportionately affects system-impacted applicants who have devoted time and money to the pursuit of a career in law. It has often been said, “those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but furthest from resources and power.” No one is closer to the resources and power of the criminal justice system than those in the field of law, yet paradoxically no one is more restrained from accessing and entering the field than those impacted by the system. UTB-NY wants to call in to question the necessity of the C&F, and help envision a future for a truly democratized and accessible legal profession. In symposia, we would like to discuss our campaign, our solutions, and contextualize it as part of the larger discussion about abolition, equity, and collective liberation. For example of the kind of presentation we would build upon, please see this Character and Fitness Teach-in link: <https://www.unlockthebar.org/new-page>



Barriers to higher education for returning citizens in The USA and Australia.

Lukas Carey and Helen Skipper

Returning to the community after a period of incarceration can be challenging for anyone, with many barriers existing to a successful return. The same can be said for previously incarcerated people wanting to commence or continue with higher education, their challenges, however, can appear in different forms. This paper will explore the Lived experiences of a previously incarcerated, African American woman who is undertaking Higher education in the USA with a focus on barriers and mitigations and a previously incarcerated, White man teaching in the higher education field in Australia. The importance of lived experience and its value in education will also be explored with a focus on The USA and Australia and transnational similarities.

Speaking Up: Creating space for lived experience

Tina McPhee

This paper is a call to action. It is advocating for meaningful involvement of people with lived prison experience in important conversations or decisions that are about them. It is about giving formerly incarcerated citizens a seat at the table. It is about framing the lived experience voice as an expert in punishment and survival. It is written using my own lived experience of years of incarceration and invasive state surveillance as a carceral citizen. I will not be “free” from the parole system until the end of 2022. I am also nearing the end of my criminological training. I am both a student and a subject. From this standpoint, the following text will explore the concept of lived experience and interrogate the positioning of formerly incarcerated people in institutions that shape and engage criminal punishment policy. By focusing on the university-prison nexus, I can extrapolate both the tensions and opportunities that exist because of this dynamic. I will also explore Australian criminology’s failure to embrace lived experience voices – the voices of people the discipline has exploited and benefited from since the 1800s. Finally, and this is where action is required, this paper will suggest a path forward; a way to work together that benefits us all.