

The Architecture of Reentry and Cognitive Reform

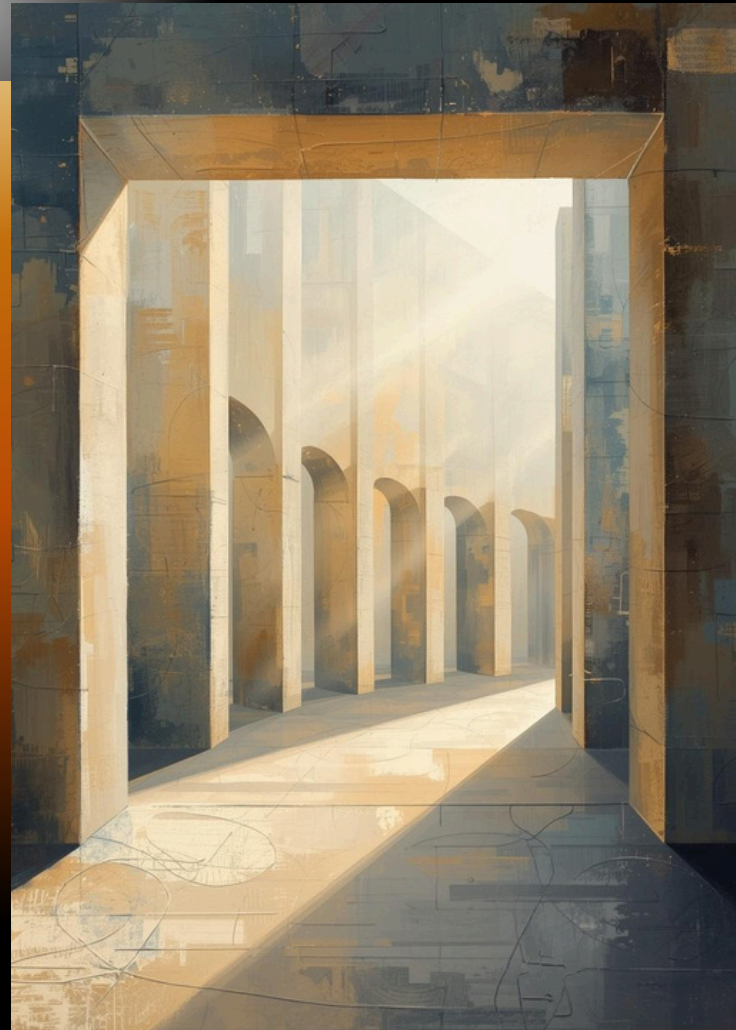
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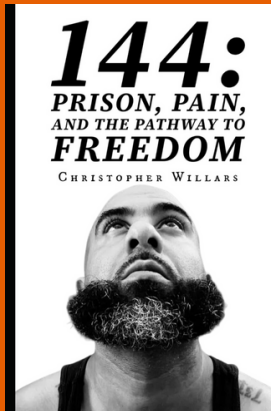
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**TESTIMONY TO THE VERMONT
HOUSE CORRECTIONS &
INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE**



Creating Success Stories, Not Just Recidivism Stats



The 144-Year Perspective



The Number: 144 years—a sentence technically beyond a human lifespan

Psychological Shift: Pursuing reform when there is no "end" in sight

Foundations of Change: Radical self-accountability rooted in faith and family support

The Lens: Viewing incarceration as a space for reform, not just "warehousing"

Deconstructing the "Prison Ego"

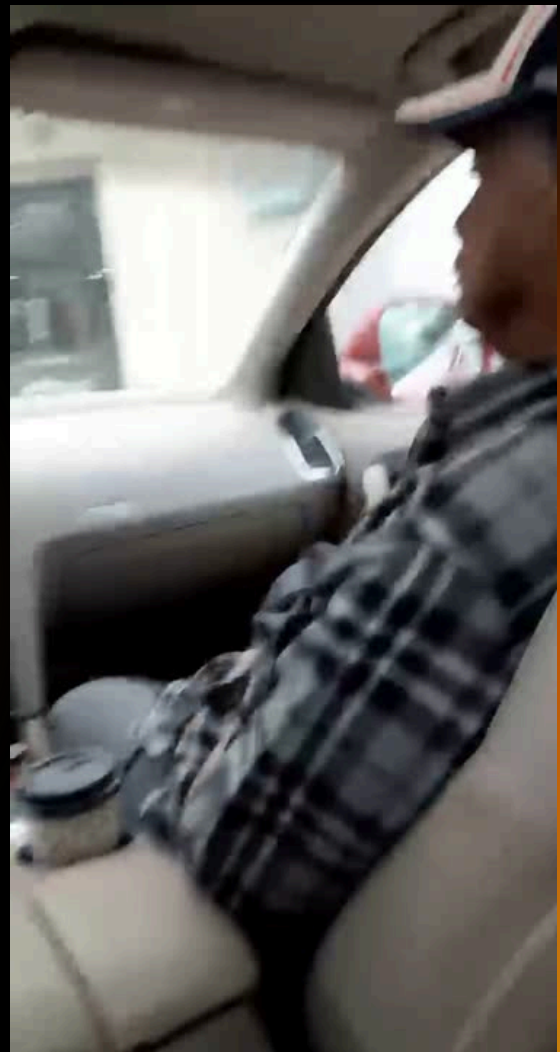


Prisonization: The psychological adaptation required to survive long-term high-security environments

The Mechanism: Adopting a hyper-masculine, guarded persona to avoid victimization

The Reentry Hurdle: Chronic hypervigilance is a survival trait inside, but a "maladaptive" liability outside

Mental Health & the "Grey Wave"



The PTSD Reality - PTSD rates among incarcerated men are roughly 10x higher than the general population

Incarceration - Derived Trauma -High-security environments exacerbate pre-existing trauma

Systemic Gaps - Services often prioritize acute crisis (suicidal ideation) over long-term trauma-informed care

Aging in Place - Systems lack the infrastructure for a population where cognitive decline meets untreated PTSD



Transition Shock: The First 72 Hours

- **Psychological Whiplash:** Moving from a hyper-regulated environment to total autonomy
- **Decisional Atrophy:** In prison, 100% of "low-level" decisions are dictated; release triggers "choice overload"
- **The Data:** The first 72 hours are the most critical, yet many are released without a mental health bridge





The Support Ecosystem as a Game Changer

- **Primary Predictor:** Family support is a main predictor of "desistance" (stopping criminal behavior)
- **Turning Points:** Stable relationships redefine identity from "ex-offender" to "husband," "son," or "provider"
- **Social Capital:** Family provides housing and emotional regulation that state compliance programs cannot

Vermont Dynamics: Trust & Support

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- **Systemic Credibility Gap:** Deep lack of trust between justice-impacted individuals and the Department of Corrections (DOC)
- **The Paradox:** Low-risk individuals have a high level of anxiety which can cause a higher recidivation rate if over-supervised by traditional state institutions
- **Probation Support Groups:** Assistance from Peer Support Groups to alleviate strain on Probation and Parole offices





The Credible Messenger Model

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Peer Mentorship: Utilizing individuals with lived experience to bridge the "Trust Gap"

24/7 Situational Support: Peer mentors are available during evening "danger zones" when parole officers are off-duty

Proven Impact: Urban pilot programs show a 50% reduction in violence through a model for mental health and peer support

Financial Literacy Partnership - Vermont DOC; Vermont Treasury; & NorthCountry FCU: This partnership reduces recidivism by equipping incarcerated individuals with essential money management and banking skills to ensure a stable and successful transition back into the community.



Legislative Pillars for Reform

- **Implementation of the 1115 Medicaid Waiver:**
Ensures no "mental health gap" 90 days before and after release * *Cost savings - Nonprofits, such as The Life Unit inc, can have certified individuals that can have their hours billed through Medicaid.*
- **Support for Presumptive Parole (Act 148):** Shifting from "warehousing" to "earned release" as the default
- **Alternative Treatment Courts:** Moving toward courts for mental health/substance use with a 1 to 2.2 cost-benefit ratio

Conclusion

- **Cognitive Reform:**
Replacing "criminal thinking patterns" with "pro-social problem-solving"
- **Mental Health Initiatives:**
Providing mental health support during and after incarceration.
- **Conclusion:** This story is proof of concept—radical accountability plus systemic support equals a contributing neighbor



SUCCESS



Questions?

