

**Occasional Series on Reentry Research
Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

**Impact of Formerly Incarcerated Persons Helping Others
Panelist Biographies
April 18, 2008**

Tom LeBel is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Helen Bader School of Social Welfare. In 2006 he received his Ph.D. from the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

Professor LeBel's scholarly work incorporates a "strengths-based" perspective in regard to people currently or formerly incarcerated. Professor LeBel's dissertation, "Invisible Stripes? Formerly Incarcerated Persons' Perceptions of and Responses to Stigma," involves research conducted in New York City and Upstate New York. Professor LeBel has authored and co-authored several articles and book chapters on prisoner reintegration, prison reform, stigma, desistance from crime, and substance abuse treatment.

Professor LeBel has served as a panelist and discussant for prisoner reentry related projects sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Law and Justice and The Urban Institute. Professor LeBel is presently a Co-Investigator for the "Supporting Jails in Providing Drug Abuse Services to Women Project," which is funded by the Bureau of Justice Administration.

Jamila Diaz is a Fellow at College and Community Fellowship and currently enrolled at Bronx Community College completing a Bachelor of Arts in liberal arts with a concentration in paralegal studies.

Ms. Diaz is the mother of two children, one boy, aged fourteen and one girl, aged nine. She was released from prison in 2007 after serving six and a half years. The adjustment from being a person living inside a prison to a person living in free society has been a difficult struggle for Ms. Diaz, especially as it relates to reuniting with her children. She cites societal stigma as one of the toughest barriers to overcome but chooses to be proactive in combating such stigma by recreating her self image, enrolling in school and setting concrete goals for her future.

Through the College and Community Fellowship, and with the help of mentors including John Jay College of Criminal Justice Professor Andrea Cantora, Ms. Diaz will reach her goal of earning a Bachelors degree. After earning her degree, Ms. Diaz hopes to work in the field of prisoner reentry, possibly at a public interest law firm, helping other people coming out of prison find new paths and recreate themselves in the free world.

Alexis Gadsden serves as Vice President of Special Projects at Outreach Project Institute in New York City and is responsible for the development and implementation of specialized

services and innovative program models to address the needs of women with children and other special populations.

Ms. Gadsden is a graduate of Fordham University and holds a Masters degree in social work, with 30 years of experience in the provision of chemical dependency treatment and behavioral health care. She also completed the Columbia University Graduate Program School of Business Management Training Program.

Ms. Gadsden has worked in government relations and served as a liaison for a Mayoral Immigration Task Force and served as a member of the Governor's Advisory Board on Alcohol and Substance Abuse. She has worked as a peer reviewer for the Administration of Children and Family Services and has extensive experience in program improvement and developing systems of accountability in the United States and in the Caribbean.

Ms. Gadsden's passion is developing programs to improve service delivery to women, children, and adolescents, and working to improve the quality of life for disenfranchised people. Having struggled with addiction to heroin, cocaine, and a multiplicity of other drugs beginning at the age of 18, since her graduation from a therapeutic community in 1976, Ms. Gadsden has dedicated her life, time and energy to the service of others "one day at a time."

Yolanda Morales is the Director of Transitional Services at the Fortune Society. Ms. Morales came to Fortune in April 2003, after serving five years in prison for a drug charge. She enrolled in the Career Development Unit and seven months later was hired as an entry-level counselor. One year after beginning as a counselor, Ms. Morales was promoted to Senior Counselor where she supervised the pre-treatment substance abuse program. Soon after, Ms. Morales was promoted to Director of Transitional Services for the Rikers Island Discharge Planning program.

Ms. Morales earned a Bachelors degree in Sociology from Long Island University in 1982. She also participated for one year in Columbia University's Masters Program. Ms. Morales serves as a delegate for New York State's Dress for Success, a women's organization that helps women in transition.