

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

A Discussion of the Reentry Challenges Facing the Wrongly Convicted
October 5, 2007

Elizabeth Loebman is the Director of Group Services at the Fortune Society, where she has provided a variety of services to men, women, and adolescents involved in the criminal justice system since 2000. Prior to working at the Fortune Society, Ms. Loebman worked at the Women's Prison Association for four years. She has 15 years experience facilitating groups in jails and prisons in Miami and New York City.

Ms. Loebman served as Manager of Fortune's HIV Peer Education programs for six years, facilitating support groups and peer education trainings and assisting participants with diverse counseling and case management needs. She recently started a "long termers" support group for formerly incarcerated men who have spent at least 10 consecutive years in prison in an effort to assist them return to life in the community. She also works with the Fortune Society's Alternatives to Incarceration program.

Ms. Loebman is in her final semester at Hunter College School of Social Work, where she is pursuing her Master's in Social Work.

Alan Newton is the Student Director of Justice Initiatives for the Male Development and Empowerment Center at Medgar Evers College, a college of the City University of New York. Mr. Newton was exonerated through DNA evidence in July 2006 after serving 22 years in New York State's correctional system for a crime he did not commit. Since his release, he has enrolled at Medgar Evers College, where he is currently pursuing his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, after obtaining his Associate's degree during his incarceration.

Mr. Newton and his seven siblings were raised in the Bronx. A graduate of DeWitt Clinton High School, Mr. Newton worked as a Bank Teller and New York Telephone Company representative prior to his incarceration.

Jennifer Wildeman is a graduate student at Northern Arizona University (NAU) in Flagstaff, Arizona. While attending NAU, Ms. Wildeman worked as a Student Investigator for the Northern Arizona Justice Project, a non-profit organization composed of lawyers, university professors and student volunteers that investigates claims of wrongful conviction in the state of Arizona. Through her involvement with this organization, Ms. Wildeman became more familiar with the legal process of exoneration as well as Arizona appellate procedure. She became interested in the subject of wrongful conviction as an undergraduate student and wrote her graduate thesis on the challenges faced by exonerees when they are released from wrongful incarceration.

Ms. Wildeman's professional career began at the Coconino County Superior Courthouse, where she served as Assistant to the DUI/Drug Court Coordinator for Coconino County. Currently, Ms. Wildeman is a Court Liaison for a private company in Phoenix, Arizona.

Karen Wolff has served as the Social Worker at the Innocence Project for the past year. In this capacity, she works with clients nationwide who have been wrongfully incarcerated for an average of 12 years (some as long as 24) and subsequently exonerated through DNA testing. She assists clients transition to life after prison by connecting them to needed services, such as housing, job training, counseling, and medical providers; advocating and negotiating for them with service providers, landlords, and government offices; distributing emergency funds when needed; and simply being available to talk.

While obtaining her Master's in Social Work from New York University, Ms. Wolff worked with elderly homeless people in a transitional housing program on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where she helped to link them with permanent housing solutions. She later worked in a non-profit law firm representing parents intending to reunite with children placed in foster care.

Ms. Wolff also has 15 years of experience working with clients in poverty law and social justice arenas. As an attorney, she specialized in litigating sexual harassment and race/sex discrimination cases on behalf of employees. Before practicing employment law, she worked in legal aid offices where her clients were members of underrepresented populations including tenants, the elderly, domestic violence survivors, and migrant workers.