

# Make a Difference in Keeping First-Time Offenders from Returning to Prison

*Researcher seeking former prisoners to talk about what kept them out of the system. Michigan ex-offenders asked to take a survey and be interviewed.*

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, USA, February 13, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Whether a neighbor, cousin, brother, husband, uncle or friend – being of color in America means knowing somebody who has been affected by incarceration," says Capella University Doctoral Candidate, Linda F. Williams, MSW. "This study does not focus on racial implications because recidivism is an equal opportunity disease."

Between 2012 and 2013, Michigan reduced recidivism rates from 31% to 28.9%. There is no denying

the significance of these numbers. According to a March 29, 2017 [press release](#), the achievement moved Michigan into one of the top 10 states in the nation with the lowest recidivism rates. "These numbers measure recidivism within the first three years of release. This study focuses on successful reintegration beyond the 3- to 5-year mark. Here is the rub," according to Williams. "By the eighth post-release year, 49.3% had recidivated. What is unclear, according to Williams, is how many of the 3-year success rate were

included in that eighth-year figure."

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Linda F. Williams, MSW



Emergent Voices Research Study

## UNTOLD STORIES: RETHINKING THE PROVERBIAL BOX

A considerable number of exoffenders face the same cumulative post-release disadvantages. Williams is studying the question of why do some prevail in reintegration while others do not. "It will take more than thinking outside the box to achieve sustainable reductions in recidivism. Asking the people who have experienced this, may result in a whole new perspective on the matter."

Williams describes the study as asking, "What is the box and is the box, as defined, accurately described?" She wants to hear the stories of those who have successfully reintegrated despite systemic challenges. "I can think of no better person to define 'the box' than those who have successfully navigated the choppy waters of reintegration."

During her undergraduate work at Calvin College, Williams completed an applied research project on recidivism that was instrumental in a Prison Fellowship and Hope Network partnership in a prisoner reentry program in Grand Rapids. Herb Start, who was then the Hope Network CEO, asked Williams

to co-write the Prison Fellowship New Initiatives Grant proposal. The program was modeled after recommendations in her thesis. Williams went on to earn a Masters of Social Work from Western Michigan University.

"Emergent Voices: Reintegration and Desistance from the Perspectives of Formerly Criminal Justice-Involved Individuals" is a research project Williams is conducting as part of her doctoral studies at the Capella University School of Public Service Leadership. Dr. Robin Ersing, PhD is supervising the study, which is designed to understand, from the perspectives of formerly criminal justice involved individuals, turning points that led to their decisions to desist from criminal activity.

#### TAKE THE SURVEY

Individuals who have served time in the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), with a most-recent-release date of January 1, 2009 can take the survey at [Emergent Voices Research Survey](#).

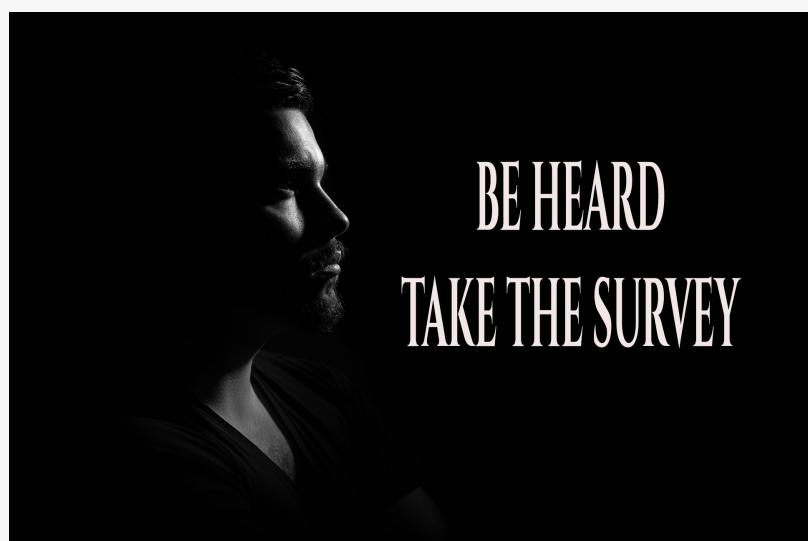
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Take the Emergent Voices Survey

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