

Philadelphia Reentry Coalition's Survey of Nominees – 2021

Name: Assata Thomas

Organization: The Institute for Community Justice

Position in Organization: Director

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: Since October, 2015

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

- I currently serve as administrator for the Institute for Community Justice, including management of data and reporting, fiscal oversight, and fiscal development activities, oversight of 17 full time staff members, 1 part time staff member and volunteers
- Manage formalize partnerships between ICJ and the Philadelphia Department of Prison, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Community College of Philadelphia, Action Wellness, Adult Parole and Probation, The Public Defender's Office, The Reentry Coalition, The People's Paper Co-op, The Men's Resource Center, 1199C and others
- Manage HRSA funded Special Project of National Significance demonstration project, the Enhancing Linkages Project, including managing all reporting requirements
- Direct logistics and manage and direct all aspects for annual Beyond the Walls: Prison Summit
- Coordinate provision of services and assessments through the Access to Recovery program, including management of referrals to GED, ABE, Parenting, Anger Management, Financial Literacy, Life Skills and Career Development classes
- Coordinate billing and record keeping, curriculum development and retention activities

I received my BA from Rutgers University, as an adult student, in African American Studies and Urban Studies with a minor in Sociology. I received the outstanding senior student award as well as Academic honors in African American Studies. I am currently in pursuit of a Masters Of Restorative Justice degree at Vermont Law School with an anticipated graduation date of Spring 2022. Lastly, and perhaps of most relevance, I am an African-American woman with a felony conviction. My life experiences coupled with my academia make me well equipped and qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

For the sake of space, I only included a brief summation of my relevant work and personal experience. I am happy to provide more information upon request.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

My initial involvement with the coalition upon my hiring at ICJ in 2015 was very much an active participant. I was on several subcommittees and attend meetings regularly. Upon my promotion to Director in 2017, I remained a member of the coalition but was unable to attend as many meetings as regularly as prior to my appointment. Yet, I remained engaged, committed and supported the Coalition via my team members and myself.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I am running for a position on the Steering Committee as I believe that not only do I have what is necessary to move the Coalition forward in its mission of supporting returning citizens, but I possess the

qualities of excellent, integral leadership who is able to speak truth to power in ways that are productive and lend to the best possible outcomes. I am action-oriented and more focused on actions rather words. My record of accomplishments and partnerships speak for themselves. Yet, it isn't about ME, but about what ICJ has been able to provide for in the supporting of impacted persons.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I would like to sit, **listen** and then talk with other committee members and leaders and hear from others about their concerns and then collaborate on what the priorities should be.

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Please keep the entirety of your responses to less than a page

Name: Jacqui Johnson

Organization: Sankofa Healing Studio

Position in Organization: Executive Director

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: 3 years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

I am a Social Justice Art Therapist that centers the mental health and wellness of those directly-impacted by incarceration. I firmly believe that collaboration amongst reentry organizations is crucial. Each organization brings an important resource to the table; collectively we are able to reimagine what reentry looks like and provide a holistic support system that mitigates the harms caused by incarceration to our citizens. As a trauma therapist, I create spaces of healing for youth and adults during and post-incarceration. This experience allows me to bring a unique perspective to the group. I identify as an activist-supporter; its important to not only support our community but to also fight to change the systems causing harm.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc) I have been involved with the Coalition for the last three years. I attend almost all of the meetings and have participated in activities over the years. The most rewarding part of my involvement in the Coalition has been the ability to be connected to organizations that offer resources to my clients that Sankofa is unable to provide. I have had the opportunity to collaborate with several organizations and use them as a direct referral source.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I believe in the mission and the values of the Coalition. I would like to offer my resources and commit time to removing the barriers that our citizens are facing when returning home.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I would like to see trauma-responsive care incorporated into every aspect of reentry. It is time for us as a collective to change the narrative about what healing looks like. Traditional approaches have caused additional harm to the reentry population. Community healing requires all aspects of community support to come together in an innovative way that truly meets peoples where they are and provides what they need. Those who are directly-impacted should and will have their voices centered in the process.

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Name: Jay Adams

Organization: The Institute for Community Justice

Position in Organization: Senior Reentry Support Specialist/CHW/FPSS

How long have you been involved in the Coalition? 5 years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

As a Community Health Worker, I am familiar with the health care landscape here and would like to be a part of Healthcare committee to make things better for formerly incarcerated folks.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc.)

My organization has been a member of the Coalition since its beginning and I work with several of its members to advocate for my clients.

Why are you running for a spot-on PRC's Steering Committee?

I want to be part of the conversation and share my experiences in the hope of finding ways to improve the healthcare disparities that present and formerly incarcerated folks face.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I would like to bridge and close the gap that folks face when trying to receive the proper medical attention before, during and after incarceration.

Philadelphia Reentry Coalition's Survey of Nominees – 2021

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Name: Jeffrey Abramowitz

Organization: JEVS Human Services

Position in Organization: Executive Director of Reentry Services

How long have you been involved in the Coalition? 5 years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

I presently the Executive Director of Reentry Services for JEVS Human Services and Program Director of Looking Forward Philadelphia. I was a 2018 Fellow for JustLeadership USA and have served as the Director of Student Services & Workforce Development for Community Learning Center (now Beyond Literacy). I was appointed to the PA Reentry Council and serve as Chairman of the Employment Committee and Co-chair the Reentry Committee for the PA Workforce Development Board. I proudly sit on the Executive Board of the Coalition on Adult Basic Education and serve on the board of directors of Community Forgiveness & Restoration and Advisory Board of Philadelphia Petey Greene Program. I am currently a subject matter expert for the US Department of Education. **I am also a citizen who served five years in a Federal Prison, experienced homelessness, and now wear a pair of new and improved glasses.**

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc.)

On PRC I have served as Co-chair of the Community Engagement Committee for the past two years and have been active on the Employment Subcommittee and Steering Committee. Over the past year I have worked with the Steering Committee to develop the new PRC Bylaws and Strategic Plan.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

As a citizen with lived experience, an educator, administrator, and leader in the community, I am driven to educate the world on the challenges facing returning citizens and driven to find the solutions for those individuals and families who have been touched by our justice systems. With over 23,000 men and women returning to Philadelphia each year, and thousands of others needing supportive services it will take a village to begin to fix the problems imbedded deep in our justice system. With my experience, leadership, passion, and drive, PRC can and will make change happen for this entire City and serve as a model of change for our country.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

Over the course of the upcoming years I hope to prioritize organizational transparency, look for ways to support and promote those organizations doing great work; bring diversity, equity and inclusion into the discussion for everything we consider and do; work to engage new stakeholders and reengage those that have played a key role in PRC over its' lifetime; find new, innovative, and creative ways to connect individuals to reentry support services; and most importantly find ways to bring our communities together the address the issues plaguing our city.

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Name: Karima N. Rose, Ed.M.

Organization: First Step Staffing

Position in Organization: Executive Director

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: 1 year

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

As the relatively new (February 2020) Executive Director for First Step Staffing I have directed the expansion of our community referral partnership, grown our philanthropic contributions that have resulted in doubling our charitable giving and increasing our partnerships by 30%. I presently serve on the following committees: Philadelphia and Bucks Counties Continuum of Care Coalition, serve on the Board for Inspiring Minds, Executive Board member for the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network (PA-NEN), as the immediate past Board President and recently joined the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services Racial Equity Committee. Prior to transitioning into workforce development my career was in nutrition and food access, where I spent 20 years steering change and developing partnerships. I have formerly served as the President of the PA Nutrition Education Directors group, where I worked closely with partnering agencies to develop, implement, manage, and evaluate Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) projects. In this role, I provided leadership and advocacy support for other public health professionals in the areas of nutrition, public health, fiscal management, program evaluation, data management, and program management. Lastly, I was awarded the Minority Business Leader Award by *Philadelphia Business Journal*.

Simply stated, I have the passion for making connections that result in providing resources for individuals and families from under resourced communities, that have historically been shut out from opportunities and have endured racial and economic inequality. I have the commitment, talent, leadership skills, and perseverance to carry out change for the better.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc).

I have attended full coalition meetings and one subcommittee meeting.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

Streamlined collaboration and partnerships that will reduce the points of touch that an individual will need to experience in order to address all wrap around supportive services. For instance: Identification restoration, expungement services, employment placement, training, housing, family reunification, to name a few. From my lens all of the PRC partners are doing amazing work, yet we tend to operate in silo's. I would like to see the PRC take a stronger approach at intentional collaboration for comprehensive supportive services to our target population.

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Name: LeBrian

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: 2 years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

For the past two years I've been working as the Reentry Coordinator at Broad Street Ministry. I have 2.5 years of experience as a job developer in Philadelphia and lived experience as a formerly incarcerated man. I was a single father for 6 years in PA and know the family services of Greater Philadelphia from experience.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

I am an active member of the Reentry Coalition Working group. I also helped organize the covid job fair

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I thought it would be a great position to try out for. I always wanted to be a part of the PRC's leadership team and I believe I can bring a wealth of knowledge to help the PRC's overall agenda of helping returning citizens

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I would like for the PRC to have more of a voice with the state parole board and the courts. My goal is to save years off sentencing by providing the courts and the parole board with reputable organizations that can act as a diversion from prison/jail.

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Name: Maurice Jones

Organization: PAR Recycle Works

Position in Organization: Co-founder, GM

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: 5 Years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

Professionally - the everyday experience of individuals searching for employment and identifying the barriers to maintaining employment at PAR allows me to give unique insight to others who may not experience this daily.

Personally - having gone to prison and trying to navigate the perils of returning to a place that doesn't consider me as a whole person, let alone a contributing member of society allows me to give voice to those facing those same perils.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

Participating in Coalition meetings, Employment subcommittee and assisting with the building of the Strategic plan.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

Colleagues, whom I respect, reached out and mentioned that my participation would be of value. I want to do the best good for those that are justice involved. If my lived experiences can facilitate that "best good", then it is my duty to serve in that capacity.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I'd hope for the Coalition to be the ultimate resource for those in the work and those that are looking for resources. My hope is PRC becomes the beacon for Justice not only in Philadelphia but in our state and country.

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Name: Michael McKee

Organization: Broad Street Ministry

Position in Organization: Director of Restorative Services

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: +4 years

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

Track record of volunteer efforts supporting incarcerated individuals and organizing in opposition to mass incarceration since 1997. After working in California and Maryland on a campaign supporting incarcerated military resisters, returned to Philadelphia and established in-house case management program at Broad Street Ministry in 2015. Responding to data that 60% of service users self-reported a history of incarceration or conviction, established a dedicated reentry services program at the same organization in 2017, securing more than \$690,000 in foundational grants to sustain the program throughout its first five years. Served on the City of Philadelphia's "100 Days Challenge" to successfully reduce chronic homelessness. Launched and managed the Welcome Home Hotline in 2020 in collaboration with the Office of Reentry Partnerships. Organizational member of the Coalition since 2015.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

Attended general and quarterly meetings, as well as regular meetings of the employment subcommittee. Hosted quarterly meetings and special events organized in collaboration with the Coalition. Supported efforts in developing the Covid Centralized Reentry Information Database.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I'm excited about the continued process of investing Coalition steering in the hands of stakeholders, especially in including and amplifying the voices and experiences of those directly impacted by incarceration. I see this role as formalizing BSM's commitment to the PRC and to model the opportunity for shared impact to other providers. I also believe nonprofits such as BSM have a responsibility to lend resources towards collaborative work magnifying community voices and to share our time and talents beyond the conventional nonprofit complex.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

I am curious about the potential for the PRC (or some member orgs) to serve as a bridge connecting organic community leaders (individuals, organizations, coalitions) with less access to government and foundational funding sources. I'm also interested in expanding opportunities for the Reentry Think Tank and similar groups centering the voices and expertise of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Philadelphia Reentry Coalition's Survey of Nominees – 2021

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Name: Rebecca Curry

Organization (if applicable): Philadelphia OIC

Position in Organization (if applicable): Employment Specialist

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: 6 months on the Employment subcommittee

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

Most of my professional career has been with the criminal justice system and serving residents of Philadelphia through wellness and social services with various organizations. I currently educate and empower our job seekers to become successful in their lives and careers.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

For about six months now I have been on the PRC Employment subcommittee working with that group to share information about job opportunities with the community. We put on two virtual job fairs and are in the process of planning and executing a third job fair, this one in person. As a resident of the city, I have attended a few in person PRC meetings and value the mission of PRC.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I am running to be on the PRC Steering Committee to have a larger role in supporting Philadelphia's residents with criminal justice involvement and to make sure all those who serve this population work together for the city's success. We are already members who are doing the work, but we can be more effective and efficient if we work together. As a problem solver, I love collaborating with others towards a solution and want to see the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition be the go-to resource for Philly's residents to get their needs met and their barriers addressed.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

One goal is to destigmatize having a criminal history and to educate Philadelphia about the collateral consequences justice involved individuals face daily. Another goal is build out a referral system for agencies to connect individuals to the proper resources needed.

Philadelphia Reentry Coalition's Survey of Nominees – 2021

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Name: Sharnine Weathers

Organization: Office of Homeless Services

Position in Organization: Program Manager

How long have you been involved in the Coalition?: N/A

Describe any relevant personal or professional experience that makes you well-qualified to serve on the Steering Committee and carry out the mission of the Reentry Coalition.

As a teenager and young adult, I was arrested and charged. Years after once I decided to go back to college, my past history found a way to keeping coming up in my future. I was denied employment opportunity and housing. I had to accept employment that did not judge my past history and was open to giving me another chance. It was hard initially with trying to seek employment with a misdemeanor, but I kept pushing through. I say all that to say that the system doesn't allow for reentry without judgment and discrimination and it needs to change in order for people to stop committing more offenses to survive in the world.

Please describe your involvement in the Coalition (subcommittees, meeting attendance, project participation, etc)

I was nominated by my co-worker as I have not participated in any projects so far.

Why are you running for a spot on PRC's Steering Committee?

I would like to change policies and the way people who've had or have criminal backgrounds are able to become productive citizens in society.

Do you have any specific goals in mind that you'd like the Coalition to accomplish?

Helping those who come out of prison regain some sense of normalcy. Also create programs, employment and housing to assist with their needs once they are released.