

Discussion Guide

AFTER INCARCERATION, THERE'S LIFE

BEYOND THE WALL



"Beyond the Wall is riveting, gritty, powerful and provocative, but it is not a film – it is real life."

– Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian

The film captures "the powerful emotional, financial and even spiritual challenges they face as they try to stay out of prison."

– WBUR Radio Boston

"Stark Reality"

– Newburyport News

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This **Discussion Guide** is intended to help *Beyond the Wall* screening organizer(s) facilitate meaningful discussions before and/or after the screening. The guide includes discussion questions, facts, the film synopsis and filmmaker information, as well as frequently asked questions about reentry after incarceration.

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2 | Screening Information

Thank you for hosting a screening of *Beyond the Wall*. Your screening is an important step towards educating your community and starting a public dialogue around the many struggles that individuals face when returning to their community after incarceration. Below is information to help you plan your screening. Contact us with any questions at: impact@beyondthewallfilm.com.

About the Film:

Beyond the Wall highlights one of the most critical issues in criminal justice reform: the flood of prisoners returning to our streets and communities each year where they face tremendous challenges and barriers. The film follows five formerly incarcerated men who are attempting to rebuild their lives on the outside with little support from the U.S. criminal justice system. Through this compelling and personal account, the film vividly shows their struggles and strategies for survival beyond the walls of jail and prison.

Before Your Screening:

1. Before your screening, please complete our Host a Screening form at: beyondthewallfilm.com/host-a-screening
2. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)
3. Promote your event on social media! Please share our website (beyondthewallfilm.com) with your network and encourage them to attend.
4. Secure a guest speaker/panelists for a post-screening discussion. Screenings are often most powerful when accompanied by a guest speaker who has firsthand experience with the issue. We encourage you to include speakers who have experienced the criminal justice system and the reentry process, and/or those who are passionate about reentry and reducing recidivism.

After your screening:

1. Send us photos from your event for us to share on social media
2. Encourage your audience to take action. Ask your audience to support a reentry organization near you. Donate to or volunteer for an organization that is dedicated to the successful reentry of formerly incarcerated citizens in your neighborhood. You can find a list of reentry organizations through the National Reentry Resource Center's [state-by-state resources guide](#).
3. Help break down the stigma of jail and prison by talking about re-entry on your social media platforms.

Incarceration and Reentry in the U.S.

Background Information

Themes

Criminal Justice | Reentry | Substance Abuse | Racial Inequity | Employment | Mentoring

Facts

INCARCERATION IN THE U.S.

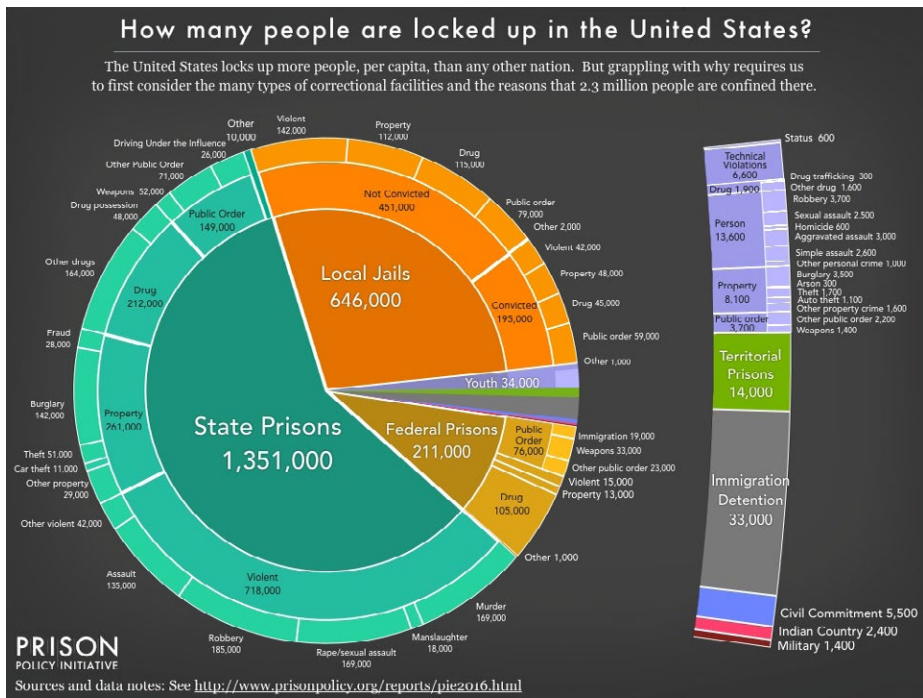
2.3 Million incarcerated in U.S. daily [Source: Prison Policy Initiative](#)

11 Million cycle through local jails each year [Source: Prison Policy Initiative](#)

Over 700,000 are released from prisons each year [Source: Prison Policy Initiative](#)

Within three years of release, **about two-thirds (67.8 percent)** of released prisoners are rearrested.

- Of those prisoners who were rearrested, **more than half (56.7 percent)** were arrested by the end of the first year. [Source: National Institute of Justice](#)



4 Incarceration and Reentry in the U.S. Background Information (continued)

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

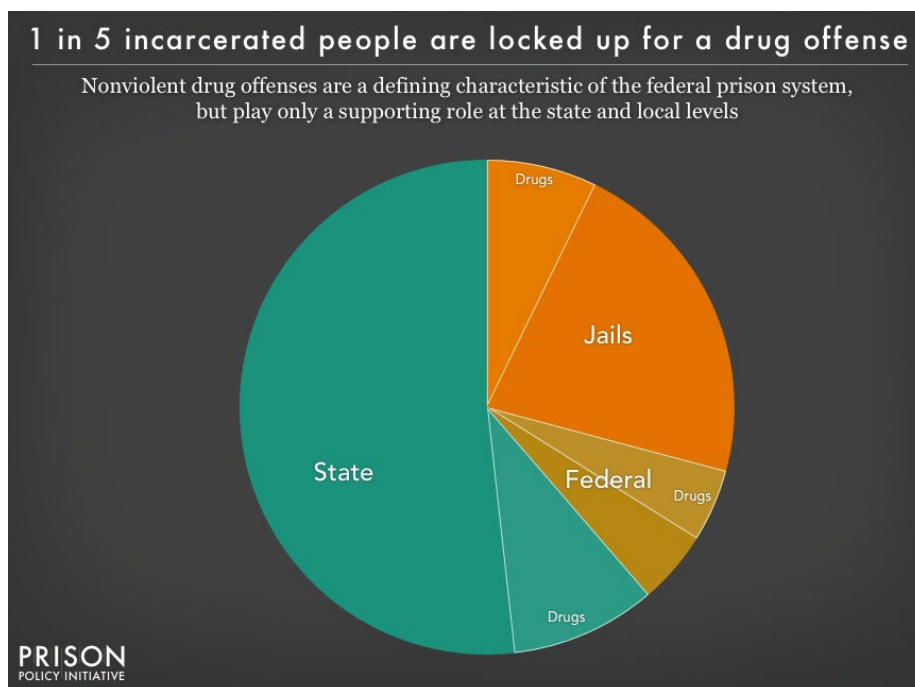
65% of people in prisons and jails have substance abuse history

Source: [National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse](#)

1 in 5 are locked up for drug offenses [Source: Prison Policy Initiative](#)

Three quarters of those returning from prison have a history of substance use disorders.

Source: [National Reentry Resource Center](#).



Incarceration and Reentry in the U.S.

Background Information (continued)

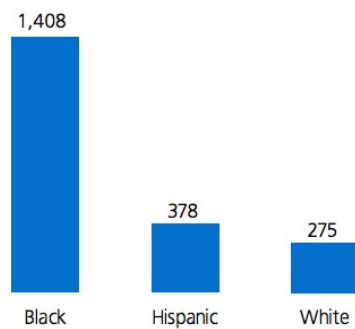
RACIAL INEQUITY

1 in every 10 African American men in their thirties is in prison or jail on any given day.

Source: [The Sentencing Project](#)

African Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 5.1 times the imprisonment of whites. In five states (Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin), the disparity is more than 10 to 1. Source: [The Sentencing Project](#)

Figure 1. Average rate of incarceration by race and ethnicity, per 100,000 population



Data source: United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 1978-2014. Bibliographic Citation: ICPSR36281-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2015-10-09; U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *2013 Population Estimates*. Annual estimates of resident population by sex, race, and Hispanic origin for the United States, states and counties: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment rates and earnings histories of people in prisons and jails are often low before incarceration as a result of limited education experiences, low skill levels, and the prevalence of physical and mental health problems; **incarceration only exacerbates these challenges**.

A large, three-state recidivism study found that **less than half** of released prisoners had secured a job upon their return to the community. Source: [National Reentry Resource Center](#)

6 | Action Resources

Post-event call to action (examples):

Here are some things you can do right now:

- Help break down the stigma of jail and prison by talking about re-entry on your social media platforms.
- **Support a reentry organization near you:** Donate to or volunteer for an organization that is dedicated to the successful reentry of formerly incarcerated citizens in your neighborhood. You can find a list of these organizations here: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/>

Social Media:

Please follow and like us for updates and calls to action. Be sure to tag us in your screening posts!



Twitter: @btwdoc

Sample post:

#BTWdoc humanizes the social and economic struggle of returning to life
#AfterIncarceration #ReentryMatters

Website Link: beyondthewallfilm.com



Facebook: @BeyondtheWallFilm

Sample post:

Beyond the Wall highlights one of the most critical issues in criminal justice reform: the flood of prisoners returning to our streets and communities each year where they face tremendous challenges and barriers. #AfterIncarceration #ReentryMatters

Website link: beyondthewallfilm.com

Media coverage:

Of the film and criminal justice issues: <https://beyondthewallfilm.com/press>

7 | Screening **Conversation Guide**

The best way to start a locally-focused conversation following your screening, is to invite someone that has experienced the criminal justice system (and reentry) to speak to your audience. (We can help you identify someone locally if you need help.) If that isn't possible, some of the below questions can help.

Recidivism

1. What are some of the barriers that individuals face when returning to the community after incarceration? How might this affect the success of their transition back into society?
2. Why do you think recidivism rates are so high in the U.S.?
3. What actions can be taken to lower recidivism rates here in the United States?
4. Are there ways in which you would like to get directly involved in assisting returning citizens. Do you know anyone working on these issues in your community?

Characters in the Film

1. Why are places like Billy's Barbershop so essential to a successful transition after incarceration?
2. Why is it important for returning citizens to have a mentor like Louie Diaz?
3. What does Louie mean when he says, "If you continue doing what you have always done, you will continue getting what you have always gotten"?
4. In the film Billy Cabrera says, "We get a handbook on how to conduct ourselves in prison, when you get released you don't get a handbook on how to live life." What does he mean by that?

Substance Abuse and Recidivism

1. After release from prison, 95% of people return to drugs and alcohol. How does substance abuse relate to recidivism?
2. What are some signs of relapse?
3. What can you do if someone you know is showing signs of relapse?

General Prison Population

1. Why is the United States the world's leader in incarceration?
2. What reforms should be enacted in the prison system in the United States to make it more effective and just?
3. What kinds of programs are available to incarcerated individuals in your community?

8 | Screening **Conversation Guide** (continued)

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRISONS AND JAILS?

Today jails, with limited exceptions, are city or county-level facilities that are governed by local law enforcement or departments of correction. They provide short-term confinement for individuals awaiting trial, sentencing or both and individuals serving a term less than one year. In contrast, prisons are facilities run by the state or federal government, typically confining felons or individuals serving sentences longer than a single year. The recidivism and incarceration statistics gathered differ between jails and prisons. Why? Basically, individuals spend less time in jails than in prisons. As a result, more people cycle through the jail system and are therefore recidivating at higher rates.

FACTS

65% of people in prisons and jails have substance abuse history

Source: [National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse](#)

2.3 Million incarcerated in U.S. daily

Source: [Prison Policy Initiative](#)

11 Million cycle through local jails each year

Source: [Prison Policy Initiative](#)

Over 700,000 are released from prisons each year

Source: [Prison Policy Initiative](#)

9 | Screening **Conversation Guide** (continued)

Frequently Asked Questions

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INCARCERATED IN THE UNITED STATES?

The American criminal justice system holds more than **2.3 million people** in:

- 1,719 state prisons
- 102 federal prisons
- 942 juvenile correctional facilities
- 3,283 local jails
- 79 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, and prisons in the U.S. territories.

Source: [The Sentencing Project, 2016](#)

WHAT IS RECIDIVISM?

Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release.

Source: [National Institute of Justice](#)

FACT:

Within three years of release, about two-thirds (67.8 percent) of released prisoners are rearrested.

Of those prisoners who were rearrested, more than half (56.7 percent) were arrested by the end of the first year.

Source: [National Institute of Justice](#)

10 | Screening **Conversation Guide** (continued)

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT ARE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES?

The collateral consequences of a criminal conviction are the legal sanctions and restrictions imposed upon people because of their criminal record. This can include access to employment, housing, voting, etc. There are currently over 40,000 collateral consequences for criminal record holders. You can search through the National Institute of Justice's database of collateral consequences at abacollateralconsequences.org.

HOW DO I LEARN MORE ABOUT REENTRY ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES IN MY STATE?

Every state has resources for individuals returning to society after incarceration. We invite you to reference the state-by-state Reentry Resource Directory created by the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRRC): csgjusticecenter.org/reentry/reentry-services-directory/

Additional **Film Information**

FILM SUBJECTS

Louie Diaz is a substance abuse counselor and re-entry specialist with the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office. In his youth, drawn in by the money and excitement, Louie sold drugs and stolen jewelry and became involved in a car theft ring. During his struggles with addiction, he received a ten-year prison sentence for stabbing a police officer while trying to flee a crime scene. It was during his last sentence that he made a commitment to change his life and developed a passion for helping other returning citizens. As a counselor and re-entry specialist, Louie now tends to the emotional and physical needs of others. We witness the strain this work places on him. Because he was formerly incarcerated, he finds obstacles that at times prevent him from doing his job. Louie knows drugs and crime from both a criminal and a treatment perspective. He knows all the signs and symptoms of relapse and when and how to intervene. If anyone falters, he is there to help.

Billy Cabrera is a former prisoner and drug addict. Billy's dream of becoming a Master Barber and opening his own barbershop came true with the help of his recovery network. Using the barbershop as a gathering place, Billy and Louie began assisting others on their path to reentry and recovery. Billy's Barber Shop offers free haircuts, cups of coffee and a resource center for returning citizens. It has become a vital link in the chain of re-entry supports, and even the local prisons and jails send returning citizens there.

Jesus Ruiz is 29 years old and has spent most of his adult life behind bars. Despite a long history of incarceration and 98 charges on his criminal record, Jesus will leave prison this time without any parole, supervision or support services. He has "wrapped up" his sentence. As we follow Jesus through his final days in prison, he expresses confidence that this time will be different. He is not coming back. With six children to support and mounting bills, Jesus walks a narrow line between living a sober, crime-free life and reverting to dealing for fast money.

Julio Rivera is recently released from maximum-security prison and admitted into a drug rehabilitation program. After saying his final goodbyes to his family and vocalizing thoughts of suicide, Julio's daughter asks Louie for help. Julio commits to a treatment program, challenging himself not to relapse by leaning on the support of Louie, Billy and his family and choosing sobriety one day at a time.

12 | Additional **Film Information** (continued)

FILM SUBJECTS

Pablo De Los Santos was incarcerated for assault and placed in protective custody. He dreams of one day earning his G.E.D. and going to college, but struggles with homelessness and drug addiction. With sub-zero temperatures and the snow of winter fast approaching, Louie tries to help him get off the streets and into a drug rehabilitation program.

Brian “Diddy” Nolette has been in and out of the criminal justice system since he was a teenager serving an adult sentence. He has been incarcerated 17 times, and at 32 years old he attempts to build a new life working as a barber and painter. Being incarcerated is the only life he has known since adolescence and he struggles in his new environment with the mounting pressures of life on the outside. He admits that he will never be able to beat his addiction unless he leaves the temptations and negative influences of his friends and the community he grew up in.

Rey Ortiz is a husband and father of five who hits rock bottom and asks for help with his addiction because he no longer wants to hurt his family. Rey participates in a residential detox program, volunteering as a cook and eventually gaining employment in a restaurant, his first time ever working.

Additional **Film Information** (continued)

FILMMAKERS

Jenny Phillips is a cultural anthropologist, filmmaker, writer and psychiatric nurse. She has a psychotherapy practice in Concord, Massachusetts, specializing in crisis intervention, family and marriage therapy, behavioral medicine, and mindfulness training. In 2002, working with the Alabama Department of Correction (DOC), Jenny successfully brought a Vipassana meditation program inside a maximum-security prison in Alabama. In 2008, Phillips produced and directed a documentary film, *The Dhamma Brothers*, with a national theatrical release and national broadcast on public television. Jenny is producer/director of *Beyond the Wall*.

Bestor Cram has over 25 years of experience as a director, producer and cinematographer. He founded Northern Light Productions, which has produced and directed scores of films including broadcast documentaries that concentrate on issues relating to contemporary society, science, art and history. His cinematography credits include the 1995 Documentary Academy Award winner, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision* and the acclaimed feature documentaries *After Innocence* and *Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner*, the Emmy nominated Discovery Channel special *Mysteries of the Sea: Freak Waves*; the HBO special *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case For Reasonable Doubt?*, the PBS/BBC series, *China in the Red*, and the PBS American Experience on Eleanor Roosevelt. Bestor's *Unfinished Symphony* premiered at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival and his current projects include four feature documentaries: *Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison*, *The Orangeburg Massacre*, *Killer Poet* and *Shoot the Messengers*. He is a producer of *Singing Revolution*, a recent theatrical release.

Andrew Kukura is a documentary filmmaker with 11 years professional experience as a producer, editor and writer. He has produced both short and long-format work for independents, broadcast outlets, museums, and non-profits. Recently, Andrew edited *Here Brothers Fought*, a 20-minute orientation for the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi and *One Day at a Time*, a history of Alcoholics Anonymous for the Hazleton Institute. He was the editor and writer for *The Dhamma Brothers* and *Circus Without Borders*.

Additional **Film Information** (continued)

ABOUT THE AFTER INCARCERATION, THERE'S LIFE CAMPAIGN

After Incarceration, There's Life is a national engagement campaign that intends to reach a wide audience through its screening series and by producing a number of digital materials, sound bytes, info graphics and memes that will be created to help spread the philosophy and ideas of the campaign on social media. These pieces can be easily adopted and re-branded by organizations working within the criminal justice reform space and will be highly share-able.

Engaging Returning Citizens

In order for the necessary programs and resources to be developed that will support returning citizens, it is paramount to promote an understanding of a valuable and often ignored resource: the formerly incarcerated who have successfully transitioned back into society. Through strategic outreach, and the networks of our partners, the campaign will ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals play a starring role in each of the other initiatives listed below.

State By State Screening Series

The campaign will develop state-specific strategies in targeted locations, coordinated with reentry events or programming already in development. Screenings of the film will feature local stakeholders; law enforcement, district attorneys, judges, state and city agencies and staff that implement reentry programming, corrections officers, substance abuse clinicians, churches and ministries, other NGOs and key personnel.

Screenings will include facilitated conversations to work toward local solutions, including but not limited to: sharing best practices, establishing a local speaker's bureau for the formerly incarcerated, and any other activities that help to build a seamless connection between prisons and jails and community-based programs.

Additional **Film Information** (continued)

Community Screening Series

Recognizing the need to educate communities about the realities of incarceration and offer opportunities to get involved, the general public will be included in screening conversations in order to provide an interconnected framework of support for returning citizens. Politicians, re-entry or corrections staff or local residents who were formerly incarcerated and are now serving as mentors will be invited to speak about the issues from a local perspective. Conversations will revolve around breaking down common stereotypes and barriers specific to their location. Intended outcomes from these events include increased involvement from the community in mentoring, donation and volunteer opportunities within local re-entry programming.

Prison Screening Series

Beyond the Wall will continue to screen in correctional facilities. Through these screenings, and the development and distribution of a unique film-based curriculum, the campaign aims to stimulate new conversations about re-entry and support preparation of individuals for release. Ultimately, this can strengthen re-entry and create more successful transitions into treatment programs.

Campaign Goals



Provide a forum for best practice sharing among key stakeholders and bring together coalitions of support to create new solutions.



Increase availability of **comprehensive and treatment focused reentry programming** for returning citizens.



Educate communities about the realities of incarceration and offer opportunities to get involved, featuring formerly incarcerated individuals as potential leaders in their community.

Thank you for hosting a screening of *Beyond the Wall* and advocating for a better reentry process.

Visit beyondthewallfilm.com for updates.

