

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE ZEALOUS ADVOCACY; HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS, UP-TO-DATE, USEFUL INFORMATION FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PREVIOUSLY INCARCERATED PERSONS IN ORDER TO CREATE A PRODUCTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PERSONS MAY THRIVE, PROSPER AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SELF, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY.**



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs Newsletter – [www.orca.d.c.gov](http://www.orca.d.c.gov)**

**ORCA: The Man and The Mission Behind it.**  
By: Lashonia Etheridge-Bey  
In 2012 Mayor Gray spoke at the Annual Reentry Conference sponsored by The Office on Returning Citizen Affairs and he said, "I want all of the residents of the District of Columbia to know that they can come back to the district when they are released." Since then, he and Director Charles Thornton have set out to ensure that district residents not only return, but have vital resources and support systems in place to enable them to have an opportunity to successfully reintegrate. Charles Thornton has made major strides since becoming the Director of the agency in 2011. He orchestrated the largest M.O.U. between federal and municipal agencies to ensure the seamless transition for returning citizens by reducing the duplication of services and simplifying the wide web of district resources. ORCA has opened a newly renovated Reentry Resource Center complete with a digital lab, and space for assessments where clients will be able to express their needs and goals. ORCA has a referral process in place where they will connect returning citizens to crucial agencies who are on board to assist returning citizens with the daunting task of reentry. ORCA is also spearheading a female reentry initiative. In lieu of the fact that women are the fastest growing group of people who are becoming incarcerated, and over 100,000 children have mothers in

prison ORCA has resigned to developing gender specific programs. In addition to providing employment services to female returning citizens ORCA has launched The W.I.R.E. (Women Involved in Reentry Efforts). The W.I.R.E. is a group of candid, resilient women who have served time in the criminal justice system and their supporters. The women of the W.I.R.E. have first hand knowledge of how to successfully navigate through the reentry process. Members of the W.I.R.E. will engage in leadership training to become mentors to women returning from incarceration and educate community based organizations on the gender specific issues that

female returning citizens face. It is strongly believed that reentry should start prior to release and Director Thornton has collaborated with Faith Based Organizations, Government Agencies and Community Based Organizations to visit correctional institutions sponsoring Reentry Resource Fairs. Just this summer the group visited Rivers Correctional Institution, FCI Cumberland and there are plans in place to visit the women at SFF Hazelton soon. Director Charles Thornton is on a mission to help reduce recidivism in the District of Columbia and working tirelessly to raise ORCA up as the reintegration model for the country.



The women of The W.I.R.E. (Women Involved in Reentry Efforts) a network of formerly incarcerated women who have successfully navigated the reentry process and the women who support their efforts to



Mayor Gray and Director Thornton as the plans for the new Reentry Resource Center are unveiled.

## PHOTO GALLERY: OFFICE ON RETURNING CITIZEN AFFAIRS



Gabriella Bulisova created an award winning documentary "Time Zone" that chronicles the first year of Lashonia Etheridge-Bey's reentry process.



The newly renovated Reentry Resource Center is now headquartered at 2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. S.E. Suite 100.



Director Charles Thornton and Deputy Mayor Paul Quander at the 3rd Annual HAVCP Basketball Tournament sponsored by The Office on Returning Citizen Affairs.



Victor Battle (Job Developer) and Dr. Jerry Brown (Deputy Director)

### The Staff of the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs

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### A MESSAGE FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

Returning Citizens and Residents of the District of Columbia:

The Office on Returning Citizen Affairs (ORCA) is committed to providing quality services to help create a seamless transition back into the community. For those who desire to become self sufficient we are here to offer guidance, support and access to vital resources. The task ahead will be challenging, but not insurmountable. We ask only that you come **willing** to take advantage of the opportunities the District of Columbia have created for you to successfully reintegrate back into society and become a productive member of your community.

*Charles B. Thornton*