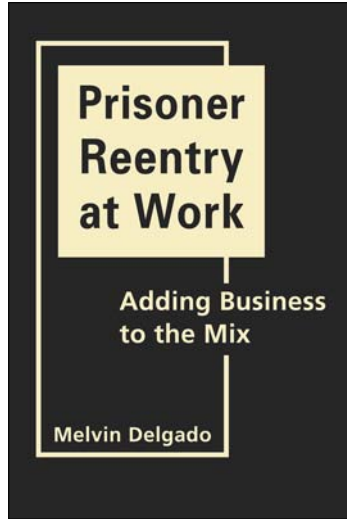


EXCERPTED FROM

Prisoner Reentry at Work: Adding Business to the Mix

Melvin Delgado

Copyright © 2012
ISBN: 978-1-58826-818-1 hc



LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS

1800 30th Street, Ste. 314

Boulder, CO 80301

USA

telephone 303.444.6684

fax 303.444.0824

This excerpt was downloaded from the
Lynne Rienner Publishers website
www.rienner.com

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Returning Ex-Offenders to Society	1
2 Community Reentry	31
3 Employment Issues	89
4 Homeboy/Homegirl Industries	117
5 The Delancey Street Foundation	145
6 Implications for Theory, Policy, and Practice	167
7 Further Challenges	173
<i>References</i>	189
<i>Index</i>	227
<i>About the Book</i>	241

1

Returning Ex-Offenders to Society

Does this nation have a prison problem? This book and countless other books and scholarly articles answer this question in the affirmative (Mauer 2006). Is this the kind of problem that is national rather than regional in scope? The answer again is yes. In some circles, only national defense can be considered a national problem. However, society attempts to address numerous problems that are national in scope as if they were local in character. How we address prisoners once they have paid their price to society upon their release is a major national issue, but it takes on even greater significance in certain geographical sectors of the nation, and cities bear a disproportionate price.

It is generally agreed that the country spends too much taxpayer money on the criminal justice system and that this money can be re-allocated to more “worthy” social causes or even returned to taxpayers in the form of tax cuts. However, there is certainly no consensus on how best to reform the prison system to make it more cost-efficient and humanitarian, with benefits to all parties. As a result, this lack of consensus has led to great debates about prison reform at all levels of government.

Finding a consensus on this question has been complicated by a number of social and economic factors. The national economic recession has both spurred the call for prison reform in order to cut costs and has made it extremely challenging to fund new and highly innovative initiatives (Richards, Austin, and Jones 2004). It has also made it dif-

difficult for ex-offenders to find employment upon their release at a time when “law-abiding” citizens without criminal justice experiences cannot find suitable employment. This effort at consensus is made more difficult by the fact that the majority of the newly released or soon-to-be-released inmates are of color, with low formal educational attainment. Therefore, how does this nation successfully address the problem of the social causes, including racism, in addressing the issue of record numbers of inmates?

The importance of finding equitable solutions to the projected mass deincarceration movement (the release of inmates in great numbers over a relatively short period of time) in the United States goes far beyond economics but also involves issues of fairness and equity—key elements in any thriving democracy. The finding of equitable solutions is almost akin to putting justice into criminal justice, particularly when viewing the subject of incarceration from a social justice perspective (Ross and Richards 2009).

The issue of how best to release hundreds of thousands of former inmates into the community and society is one that is only now starting to get serious attention from the general public, academia, and government. Strategies for enhancing public safety, while accomplishing the goal of releasing ex-offenders, are very much on the minds of all sectors of society, including the police and the courts (Jones and Flynn 2008; La Vigne et al. 2006).

The financial burden of prisons is considerable and has increased dramatically over the past twenty years as states have increasingly used prisons to punish criminal behavior, for example, rather than educate or rehabilitate inmates. It is estimated that corrections cost states approximately \$47 billion in 2008 (Moore 2009c). On average, states spent \$29,000 a year on prisoners and almost three times this amount in the case of older adult inmates—an ever increasing age group within prisons and one that is increasingly being considered for early prison release (Delgado and Humm-Delgado 2009). Prison costs, incidentally, do not take into account the financing interests on bonds issued to build prisons.

By serving as a motivator for cutting costs, the national fiscal crisis has been credited for states across the country holding fewer prisoners (Archibold 2010; Schwartz 2010a). This crisis has also resulted in a greater reluctance on the part of states to sentence individuals without considering the financial costs associated with these sentences. In

2006, an estimated 713,000 inmates were released from state and federal prisons in the United States, or the equivalent of three times the size of the US Marine Corps and, some would argue, probably just as deadly (Colson 2004; Solomon 2008).

As a result of state and local government fiscal crises, the number of returning ex-inmates will only increase in size in the immediate future, as is already occurring across this country, necessitating quick and effective responses to meet the projected need—for support services related to employment, living arrangements, and necessary assistance for ex-inmates—resulting from this mass exodus. States such as California, Kentucky, New York, and Virginia, for example, have instituted or plan to institute early prisoner release programs in response to overcrowded prisons and increases in financial costs. In California 15,000 inmates will be released early, in Kentucky 2,000 inmates, New York 1,600, and in Virginia 1000 inmates are scheduled to be released early.

States are clearly struggling with the immense costs of their prison systems and attempting to balance budgets while maintaining public safety. Schmitt and Warner (2011) argue that reforms in prison sentencing are needed if society is to accommodate current and future ex-offenders into the labor market. Current “get-tough on crime” policies are effectively dooming a generation of ex-offenders to life on the margins of society, with little prospect of becoming constructive members of their communities now and in the future (Mauer 2011a).

The costs of incarceration to taxpayers have been a key motivator for Missouri, which in 2010, for example, was the only state in the country to provide judges with the financial costs of a prison sentence (Davey 2010): “The intent behind the cost estimates . . . is transparent: to pressure judges, in the face of big bills, into sending fewer people to prison” (pp. 1, 4). This program has caused a great deal of debate about the feasibility of reducing sentencing to a measure of dollars, and critics argue that certain social costs do not lend themselves to such measurement.

Overall prison costs will only be expected to go up without a dramatic shift in vision, policies related to correctional justice, and investments in initiatives and programs that facilitate reentry and reduce recidivism (Pinard 2007). Colgan (2007) notes that the savings can be widespread and go beyond prisons: “The savings to taxpayers that could be achieved by . . . programming [initiatives that facilitate reen-

try] are substantial. . . . What is less easy to calculate is the ripple effect these investments may have on poor and minority communities that are often hard-hit by the revolving door of crime” (p. 117).

Travis (2007), like Pinard (2007) and Colgan (2007), sees hope of a new era in which reentry will be looked at through a different perspective by the criminal justice field: “Perhaps most important, the new reentry conversation is spurring important changes in the operations of the components of the criminal justice system most directly involved in influencing reentry outcomes. Conversations in the corrections field have embraced the challenge of rethinking their functions through a reentry lens” (p. 84). This new perspective has also carried over into presidential politics (Colgan 2007), other helping profession fields, and the communities these ex-offenders are returning to after an extended period of time of being away. The speed in which dialogue and funding has occurred is remarkable and a sign of a nation waking up to this immense issue at our doorsteps.

The subject matter is quite complex and bound to elicit a wide range of responses from the political left and right. Crime and incarceration are sociopolitical matters that every society must address (Mauer 2011b). Consequently, controversy will follow when ex-inmates are released back into society. This event will touch upon key moral and ethical principles among average citizens and the elected officials representing them throughout all levels of government. The criminal justice field and society cannot view ex-offender reentry from a business-as-usual perspective, as we witnessed the mass incarceration movement of the 1980s and 1990s and early part of the twenty-first century (Clear 2007; Pager 2009).

In the process, innovation is being called for in the field—and one that is increasingly participatory and empowering. Mauer (2011a) notes that the nation’s financial crisis provides an opportunity for positive change: “At a moment when the United States is experiencing a considerably reduced crime rate from the peak of the late 1980s, as well as serious fiscal constraints in public spending, it is opportune to consider how finite criminal justice resources could be used more strategically and effectively” (p. 76). Cheliotis (2009) comments on the importance of introducing innovation into reentry programs, such as temporary release, as a means of slowly reintegrating ex-offenders into community life.

Leadbeater’s (2007) call for innovation is worth heeding for the field of criminal justice and its efforts at developing reentry initiatives:

“All innovation involves the application of new ideas—or the replication of old ideas in new ways—to devise better solutions to our needs. Innovation is invariably a cumulative, collaborative activity in which ideas are shared, tested, refined, and developed and applied. Social innovation applies this thinking to social issues, education and health, issues of inequality and inclusion” (p. 2). Any efforts short of this goal are destined to waste resources, undermine political will, and seriously compromise the lives of ex-offenders, their families, communities, and ultimately society at-large.

People of Color and Criminal Justice

Thompson (2008) argues that any discussion of ex-inmate reentry is, de facto, a question about race because of the racial composition of this nation’s prisons. People of color (particularly African Americans and Latinos) have historically been overrepresented in the nation’s criminal justice system (Delgado 2001; Nixon et al. 2008; Patillo, Weiman, and Western 2004; Stone 1999). Their high rate of incarceration has been recognized by scholars (Pew Center on the States 2008a, 2009) and the United Nations (2008), and it has resulted in a lack of confidence in the judicial and criminal justice systems of the United States on the part of African American and Latino communities (Lopez and Livingston 2009). Further, it has also resulted in cynicism concerning any “real” efforts to help ex-offenders and their respective communities.

Pager (2009) goes on to raise a critical question about this movement:

At this point in history, it is impossible to tell whether the massive presence of incarceration in today’s stratification system is a unique anomaly of the late twentieth century, or part of a larger movement toward a system of stratification based on the official certification of individual character and competence. In many people’s eyes, the criminal justice system represents an effective tool for identifying and segregating the objectionable elements of society. Whether this process will continue to form the basis of emerging social cleavages remains to be seen. (p. 160)

The answer to this question will have profound implications for the nation’s cities and, more specifically, the communities that have been feeders into this criminal justice system, which has effectively served to depopulate these communities of their adult males and, increasingly, adult females, too.

The relative youthfulness of African American and Latino communities, for example, highlights the importance of community-based interventions, such as the one advanced in this book (Ballou 2008). These two groups will be emphasized throughout this book, but other groups (Asian Americans and Native Americans) will be addressed as the situation warrants. Oh and Umemto (2005) observe that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, too, have experienced a tremendous increase in incarceration rates (250 percent between 1990 and 2000) and have generally been overlooked in serious discussions about in-carceration and communities of color. These ethnic and racial communities also are challenged in getting information to families and community-based organizations on how best to serve their returning ex-offenders.

Corrections has historically been viewed from the devastating impact it has had on low-income urban communities of color. Nevertheless, an emerging view of community and corrections sees the deincarceration movement as a vehicle for community development (Meghan 2004). The incarceration movement has essentially played an important role in destabilizing inner cities across the country, by taking high percentages of adult males of color, and now more females, and incarcerating them, thereby disrupting the economic fiber and social relations of neighborhoods.

The return of these individuals to their respective communities, in turn, has the potential of reintroducing them as potential civic contributors (Visher and Travis 2003). The bringing together of small businesses and social enterprises with a potential workforce represents what I consider to be a viable match, as addressed in this book. A shift in paradigms regarding ex-offenders is very much in order because previous paradigms at reducing recidivism have failed. These paradigms have been deficit oriented and thus fail to examine the strengths of ex-offenders and the assets they bring to their communities (Delgado 2001; Vennard and Hedderman 2009).

Reentry Language and Concepts

Like any shift in paradigms, a new language and concepts get introduced in any discussion concerning ex-offender reentry. Language has played a critical role in shaping how this country has marched toward mass incarceration. Terms such as the *War on Drugs* and the *War on Crime* signify a sociopolitical stance signaling the nation's stance on "law-

lessness” and the severe and lethal consequences for those who break the law and must pay for their transgressions: namely, declaring war on these citizens (Jackson 2008). Chesney-Lind (2002) looks at the *War on Crime* as the *War on Women*, because of the extreme consequences for this particular group. Some would go so far as to argue that, in effect, it is just another version of a *War on the Poor*, which best captures the intent of the criminalization movement in this country.

Altheide and Coyle (2006) review how these terms have shaped public opinions and policies, and stress the need for a new facilitative language similar to *ex-inmate reentry*. As a means of introducing a new term to change the current dialogue about incarceration, they introduce the concept *smart on crime*, which looks at cost-effective and humane solutions to crime and incarceration. Like reentry, smart on crime brings a broader and more contextualized (social-ecological) meaning about the consequences of mass incarceration and seeks to lessen the demonizing of ex-offenders. In addition, it reaches out to new areas that must come into play in any successful reentry initiative or program.

Weaver and McNeill (2007) specifically address the importance of language in relation to ex-offenders and the role it can play in either facilitating or hindering reentry: “If the language that we use in policy and practice causes both individuals and communities to give up on the possibilities of change and reformation, it confirms and cements the negative perceptions of people who have offended and their situations as risky, dangerous, feckless, hopeless or helpless, then it will frustrate desistance” (p. 1). Weaver and McNeill (2007) set the stage for how we label ex-offender reentry and whether we take a “blaming the victim” approach or an asset, social-ecological perspective.

What and how we label a social phenomenon often engender a great amount of discourse in academia. The labeling or naming process, as a result, is not one to be taken lightly, and the concept of ex-offender reentry is certainly not an exception. Mobley (2003) notes: “Naming and grouping individuals into value-free aggregates is at the heart of our political economy” (p. 219). This grouping of “undesirable” individuals facilitates the administering of interventions that extract them from their community and society. This is an important and controversial point, and takes on added significance when racialized, as in the case of the disproportionate number of African Americans and Latinos in the nation’s penal system.

Skinner (2010) raises the important consideration of when an ex-offender stops being labeled as such and assumes the more positive and

less stigmatizing label of *client*, *patient*, or even *consumer*. What we call the individual seeking services upon reentry becomes important in shaping the identity of those seeking assistance and those serving them. The premise “once an ex-con, always an ex-con” permanently spoils that individual’s identity with the negative social consequences that follow such labeling.

The School of Convict Criminology, which is sometimes referred to as *the insider perspective*, will be addressed in several chapters of this book. This school of thought has represented an emerging and an increasingly important perspective on the subject (Ross and Richards 2003a). Those who are part of this school of thought are described as convict scholars (Ross and Richards 2003b):

These men and women, who have worn both prison uniforms and academic regalia . . . are the primary architects of the movement. The convict scholars are able to do what most previous writers could not: merge their past with their present and provide a provocative approach to the academic study of criminology, criminal justice, and corrections. These authors, as a collective, are the future of a realistic paradigm that promises to challenge the conventional research findings of the past. (p. 6)

Those subscribing to the School of Convict Criminology pay close attention to language and avoid using terms such as *inmate* and *offender*, and instead advocate for the use of *prisoner*, *convict*, and *former prisoner*, as a means of highlighting the harshness of the experience encountered by these individuals. Labeling is a political act and should be recognized as such, and this school views using these labels as a means of empowerment.

Ward and Maruna (2007) advocate that the term *rehabilitation* be reinvented to counter the scorn and negative connotation associated with the concept of *prisoner reentry*. They argue that the language and concepts used to describe the process of leaving prisons and reengaging in community life have been punitive and stigmatizing, necessitating a new way of viewing these phenomena. The life scripts of a noncriminal future require a language that reinforces hope and helps ex-offenders socially navigate harmful community environments (Maruna and Roy 2007).

A number of terms will be used throughout this book, which seek to capture the experience of ex-inmate reentry into their communities

and society. As the reader will see, terms such as *reintegration*, *post-release*, *resettlement*, *reentry support*, *transitional care*, *aftercare*, and *reconnection* have emerged to help broaden the phenomenon from one of just entering back into society to one attempting to describe and analyze a process or journey that entails a variety of steps or stages (Cheliotis 2009; Griffiths, Dandurand, and Murdoch 2007). Lynch (2006), for example, stresses the concept of reintegration as a means of shifting focus from an individual to an ecological one, highlighting the interplay of individual and community factors. Yet this process is extremely complex and influenced by a wide range of factors related to the individual ex-offender and the circumstances awaiting him in his community (Kenemore and Roldan 2006; Sung 2011).

This attention to ex-inmate reentry has been spurred by the interplay of several considerations involving safety of communities, financial costs and considerations, legal concerns about ex-inmate constitutional rights being violated (disenfranchised), and humanitarian concerns. Implicit in the embrace of the concept of reentry is understanding the importance of rehabilitation (Ahn-Redding 2007). Reentry, in turn, captures a host of conditions and expectations that go far beyond “learning a lesson” about crime not paying and seeks to reconceptualize retribution by society and a profound change in attitudes and behaviors on the part of the offender (Eckholm 2006, 2008b; Hower-ton et al. 2009).

Not surprisingly, there has been a call in the criminal justice field for development of a consensus definition of ex-offender reentry programs. Seiter and Seiter (2003), too, raise the issue and provide two definitions that help capture universal qualities usually associated with reentry programs: “1. Correctional programs (United States and Canada) that focus on the transition from prisons to community (prerelease, work release, halfway houses, or specific reentry programs) and 2. Programs that have initiated treatment (substance abuse, life skills, education, cognitive/behavioral, sex/violent offender) in a prison setting and have linked with a community program to provide continuity of care” (p. 368). These definitions encompass critical elements, such as setting, time, and a set of activities related to ex-inmates, and will be used for the purposes of this book because of the focus on the social ecology of the reentry experience. Individualizing the ex-offender represents a crucial step in better helping his or her reintegration back into the community.

A Brief Historical Overview of the Reentry Movement

Prisoner reentry has been called the most challenging dilemma in US criminal history (Travis 2005). The sheer number of individuals involved in all facets of this system—including inmates, families of inmates, guards, courts, probation/parole staff, community service providers—highlights the significance of criminal justice as an integral part of society and particularly urban life. The tracing of any major movement is bound to be fraught with different interpretations of who is responsible and when it originated. The movement toward ex-offender reentry, however, has arguably been traced back to 1999 and the Clinton administration and, more specifically, to Attorney General Janet Reno and National Institute of Justice director Jeremy Travis (Cose 2006). If we accept this conclusion, then the ex-offender reentry movement is more than one decade old.

Piehl, LoBuglio, and Freeman (2003), however, place the concept of ex-inmate reentry into a broader and longer historical context:

The absence of thoroughly thought out and implemented prisoner reentry systems is a timeless concern. From Sutherland in the 1920s, to Glaser and Morris in the second half of the twentieth century, criminologists have looked for a better way to manage the release of inmates. . . . And yet, the country is again taking up the issue of prisoner reentry after spending 30 years simultaneously disinvesting in the type of support needed and vastly increasing the numbers of individuals scheduled for reentry. (p. 27)

Whether we examine ex-offender reentry from a long- or short-term historical perspective, it clearly is in this nation's consciousness and will only increase in significance in the next decade.

Not surprisingly, a variety of social paradigms can be used to better understand and address ex-inmate reentry into communities. However, a community capacity-enhancement paradigm provides a conceptual foundation from which to address a myriad of community issues, such as the ones addressed in this book (Delgado 2000). This paradigm is predicated on a set of values that stress empowerment, participatory democracy, cultural competence, and social justice. These values can be found in most, if not all, helping professions. The ex-offender reentry movement, however, can benefit immensely by this paradigm. The two social enterprise case studies in Chapters 4 (Homeboy/Homegirl Industries) and 5 (Delancey Street Foundation) present a

shift in paradigms away from deficits toward tapping the assets and strengths of ex-offenders to assist them in reentry.

Spatial Justice

The fields of human service, criminal justice, education, and health have utilized a variety of concepts that help to grasp the significance of a disproportionate unfair social and economic burden on communities and groups with particular socioeconomic characteristics. Concepts such as *equity, retributive justice, fairness, justice, territorial justice, and civic risk*, for example, have emerged to capture the consequences of this burden (Fainstein 2010; Harvey 2009; Hay 1995). Those involved with food justice and environmental justice, for example, have also played an important role in shaping spatial justice (Delgado, in press; Holifield 2001). However, the construct of spatial justice has expanded to cover such topics as pollution and waste sites, lack of playgrounds and access to green space, poverty, illness and disease, and inaccessibility of fresh fruits and vegetables. Soja (2010) argues that spatial justice lends itself to being used as a theoretical concept, as a method for undertaking empirical analyses, and as a strategy for shaping social and political action. The versatility of this construct or perspective enhances its attractiveness for use in ex-offender reentry discourse.

Brand (2007) places spatial justice within the confines of cities as a framework for better understanding the impact of social forces within this geographical entity: “While theories of justice often situate themselves directly within the space or time of the city, they do create a framework for understanding the production of injustice and conversely, the production of justice” (p. 8). Brand’s perspective fits well with the central thrust of this book because of the emphasis placed on urban social ecology.

There is undoubtedly great promise, but equally tremendous peril, when developing new perspectives or constructs, as in the case of spatial justice, for application in criminal justice or any other field (Brown et al. 2007):

The idea of “spatial justice” can be a useful way to reframe cultural and political work so that both analyses and tools become more precise. The important work of defining new terminology, however, always carries with it the related danger of endless classification,

obscuring the fact that language itself does not solve problems and, indeed, that many people have been fighting for justice-in-space for a long time—especially indigenous peoples and people of color. (p. 7)

Consequently, a new perspective and language cannot be accepted without serious thought as to its merits. I believe, however, that spatial justice lends itself quite well to the nature of this book as we examine ex-inmates of color and their reentry into their communities.

The construct of spatial justice provides an appropriate frame to help practitioners and academics examine and better understand the role of communities in facilitating or hindering ex-inmate reentry into society. William Julius Wilson's classic book, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner-City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (1987), focuses on the inverse relationship between residential and employment location of the workforce. Ex-offenders who originate in communities where employment is lacking are returned to these same communities upon release from prison, further exacerbating the employment possibilities.

Most practitioners are aware of how the convergence of multiple social problems in one geographical area impedes development of social and economic initiatives and of the importance of developing comprehensive service-delivery strategies that take the perspective of the whole person, rather than a portion, based upon funding priorities. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the nation's cities and, more specifically, inner-city communities.

Communities such as Roxbury (Boston), South Central (Los Angeles), Harlem (New York), or Southside (Chicago), for example, all elicit images of economically and socially distressed areas. These images, incidentally, are shared by millions of people who have never stepped foot in these communities yet can describe in great detail numerous social problems manifested there. The media certainly has played a large and influential role in perpetuating these images. Yet the reality is that these communities do bear a disproportionate social and economic burden within their respective cities.

Governments, which are the primary funders of social interventions, compartmentalize social problems and develop funding streams accordingly. Consequently, problems that generally cluster together get separated for the purposes of funding research and service delivery. Naturally, human beings experience problems in totality rather than separately. Unfortunately, funders do not share this perspective and rarely come together to develop initiatives that are holistically or comprehensively focused. Ex-offenders are certainly not an exception to this

viewpoint. Researchers, too, can be criticized for doing the same as governments.

Defining and Grounding a Spatial Justice Construct

The construct of spatial justice needs to be defined and grounded for it to have any significance in this or any other scholarly undertaking involved in better understanding how context influences outcomes in social interventions. Soja (2010) does not see spatial justice as a substitute or alternative form of justice. Instead, it is viewed as a particular emphasis and interpretative perspective. An unjust geography serves to highlight what on the surface may appear as unrelated circumstances or conditions, which, when placed under a geographical lens, highlights their interrelationship and lends itself for use in better understanding the social and economic consequences of ex-offender reentry.

There is a general consensus that the solution to massive ex-inmate reentry is to develop partnerships between key stakeholders, including communities. However, it would be unfair to advocate this position without an in-depth understanding of communities and the current challenges they face. As a result, the status of urban communities is very much tied to how well particular subgroups and, more broadly, communities fare as the country experiences dramatic economic and demographic shifts, dislocation of workers, and large-scale disinvestment (Brisman 2003; Freudenberg et al. 2005; Goodman 2008). The nation's problems, unfortunately, are not evenly distributed across all communities and geographical regions. Communities that are not able to respond to these challenges invariably will be host to countless numbers of ex-offenders of color upon their release from incarceration (Pryor 2010).

Blakely and Bradshaw (2002) also note that these economic upheavals have had a disproportionate impact on certain urban neighborhoods:

Inner-city neighborhoods in particular have suffered long-term decline for nearly three decades. . . . They have benefited little from the rising affluence of the nation, and economic restructuring has had little impact upon them. This made employment for inner-city groups more difficult to obtain and keep. . . . As inner-city neighborhoods lost their retail base, they also lost employment for residents. (pp. 11–12)

These communities have had more than their share of problems to contend with and now face prospects of even greater problems, as

large numbers of inmates are released into their communities without adequate preparation and support.

The status of what is often referred to as “low-wage” groups cannot be swept away because of their high concentration among certain urban neighborhoods and groups of color, such as those with histories of incarceration (*coercive mobility*) in the nation’s prisons (Barak, Flavin, and Leighton 2006; Visher, Palmer, and Roman 2007). Weiman (2007) cautions the corrections field about the consequences of weak labor markets and their implication for increasing recidivism risks (Bushway, Stoll, and Weinman 2007).

Weiman, Stoll, and Bushway (2007) comment on this caution: “Empirically, we situate the problem of prisoner reentry into the labor market within the context of the harsher political realities facing those on the socioeconomic margins since the mid-1970s, especially young, less-educated, inner-city minority males” (p. 29). Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2006) found that a booming economy increased the likelihood of employers taking chances and hiring less desirable workers, such as ex-offenders. Hannon and DeFina (2010) found that both property crime and violent crime, and ex-offender reentry challenges, were substantially reduced when strong economic conditions existed. High rates of unemployment increase competition for existing jobs, allowing employers to be highly selective about whom they hire, further pushing ex-offenders down on the list of potential hires.

Peck and Theodore (2006) advanced the notion that prisons are an urban labor market that has systematically created unemployment among African American males and their communities. Incarceration has created long-term erosion of the community, resulting in a growing ex-offender population group. Barkan and Cohn (2005) found that white non-Latinos, who were the most prejudiced against African Americans/blacks, were also more willing to support “get tough on crime” policies, raising important questions about the interrelationship between racism and incarceration in this country.

It is important, however, to end this section on a positive note. Ex-offenders who return and manage to engage in productive and pro-social behavior can be powerful role models for the community (Brooks, Visher, and Naser 2006): “One of the positive things about people returning is that they decided to commit their lives to making sure that the younger children don’t follow the same path, so they start volunteering in the community, and volunteering for different programs” (p. 14). Further, these individuals are in excellent positions to help advise

correctional systems how to establish reentry programs, and to have these ex-offenders play a more active role in these efforts and serve as role models should not be overlooked.

Ex-offenders who can successfully navigate their way back socially into their families and communities increase the social capital of these communities and, in the process, further reinforce positive views of themselves. It is not unusual to have these individuals rise to leadership positions. The case example of Delancey Street Foundation (Chapter 5) illustrates how program participants fulfill important speaking engagements in their communities as a way of giving back to society but also alter public perceptions of ex-offenders. Thus, they successfully turn a negative experience into a positive one for themselves and their communities. In essence, it becomes a win-win situation for the ex-offenders, their communities, and society.

As a result, ex-offender reentry can no longer be viewed as an individual experience but rather as a social-ecological event that actively shapes families, communities, and local government. Further, ex-offender release must also be viewed within the context of other social challenges faced at the community level, rather than as an isolated event. Social issues and problems do not exist in isolation from each other (Weiman, Stoll, and Bushway, 2007): “The vast majority of prisoners return to their home communities and so face the same gloomy socioeconomic conditions as when they left, although the cumulative toll of mass incarceration may cause further socioeconomic disadvantage and disorganization” (p. 55).

A spatial justice concept, as earlier noted, represents a viable lens through which ex-offender reentry can be viewed, thus helping the field to plan social initiatives that take spatial factors, such as community, into account. A spatial perspective, and, in the case of this book, one focused on urban communities of color, helps the field develop a greater understanding of the magnitude of the challenge because of the broad reach of the criminal justice field in select urban communities across the nation (Mauer 2011b).

Putting Community in Ex-Offender Community Reentry

Based on the South African experience, Van der Westhuizen and Lombard (2005) put forth a provocative proposition pertaining to commu-

nity and ex-inmates, with implications for the United States: “Crime originated in the community and therefore the community should not only be an important role-player in reporting and preventing crime, but also, along with other role-players, in taking co-responsibility for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender into society” (p. 101). There is tremendous value in encouraging community participation in the reentry movement when proper venues and opportunities are sustained (Boyes-Watson 2006).

It is ill advised to solely concentrate on preparing the ex-offender for reentry. Ex-offender motivation to succeed is closely tied to community factors that increase the likelihood of success in the reentry process (Wormith et al. 2007). Wilkinson (2005), too, notes that communities must be an essential ingredient of any offender reentry strategy. Mind you, definitions of community are boundless, with each definition having profound implications for service conceptualization and research (Coulton 2005). Nevertheless, the importance of community in discussions of ex-offender reentry necessitates that thorny conceptual issues be resolved in any community reentry initiative.

As it will be addressed in Chapter 2 in much greater detail, 95 percent of all prisoners will eventually return to their respective communities and will do so with a wide range of needs. One expert (Jones 2007) noted: “They don’t parachute into prison from outer space. . . . They come from real communities and go back to real communities. . . . Most of what they need to succeed is really not a function of state policies so much as what’s available. . . . Is there a place for you to live? Is there someone willing to give you a job? Is there a faith-based group willing to talk to you when you get stressed?” (p. 5A). As a result, states and local nonprofit organizations have created a number of initiatives to help ex-inmates reenter society and avoid committing crimes and eventual return to prisons, in light of their high probability of being reincarcerated. According to the US Bureau of Justice, two-thirds of inmates released from prison are rearrested within three years of their initial release (O’Brien 2002; Richardson 2006).

It is certainly ironic that the criminal justice field of ex-offender reentry has historically viewed community as a backdrop to the reentry process, with minimal attention to this setting as playing a particularly critical role in influencing ex-offender reentry policies and initiatives. Yet, community is where these individuals originated and where they will return upon release. Consequently, this book seeks to place community and social enterprises located there in a prominent position

related to ex-inmate reentry, and to do so in a manner that actively and meaningfully involves the community and its major formal and informal institutions (Blessing, Golden, and Ruiz-Quintanilla 2008): “There is a growing national recognition that no one entity can or should be solely responsible for ensuring successful community reentry for inmates. . . . Most crucial is the need to establish cross-agency and cross-community partnerships designed to facilitate the successful transition from incarceration as an inmate to making productive contributions as a community citizen” (p. 8).

The field of criminal justice must discover or rediscover, as the case may be, community as a source of support for ex-offender reentry (McGarrell, Hipple, and Banks 2003). Community is a construct that often gets bandied about in discussions but rarely gets the attention and analysis it deserves, particularly in any serious discussion of ex-offender reentry. The emergence of a new way of viewing ex-inmates and the communities from which they originate and eventually return hold much promise for the field.

The successful transition back to society will necessitate creative solutions that actively attempt to involve all sectors of a community (Mack and Osiris 2007). Anything less would prove of limited value and have dire consequences for the ex-inmate, his family, community, and, ultimately, society (Wilhite and Allen 2006). Efforts to address ex-offender reentry, as in the case of social enterprises, are best served when community capacity enhancement also transpires in the process.

A number of scholars have advanced a new paradigm or vision concerning ex-offenders and communities. This new paradigm views ex-offenders as possessing strengths or assets that can be tapped by society (Barton 2006; Burnett and Maruna 2006; Delgado 2001). An ability to survive incarceration is never to be minimized. Consequently, every effort needs to be made to identify these strengths and utilize them to help other ex-offenders and their respective communities. One former Wall Street investor (Catherine Rohr) founded the Prisoner Entrepreneurship Program when she and her spouse toured a prison and concluded that executives and inmates shared much in common (Prisoner Entrepreneurship Program 2009): “They know how to manage others to get things done. Even the most unsophisticated drug dealers inherently understand business concepts such as competition, profitability, risk management and proprietary sales challenges. For both executives and inmates, passion is instinctive.”

One way of marshalling ex-offender strengths is through civic engagement, which can consist of many different versions but ultimately must view ex-offenders' communities from an asset perspective and integral to any solution to the reentry challenges. These efforts, along with formal resources, can provide the right combination of forces to address the challenges ex-offenders face in transition to community and a life free of criminal activity. Social enterprises often provide opportunities for participants to engage in giving back to the community through service, as in the cases of Homeboy/Homegirl Industries and the Delancey Street Foundation.

The following are a few examples of projects that seek to view the community and ex-offender as assets that strengthen development of pro-social identities, as well as alter community images of ex-offenders, mobilize community capacity to provide informal support, and increase human and social capital (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2004). This change in perspective is best conceptualized as a shift in paradigms or world view, with all of the rewards and challenges associated with a radical shift in perspectives.

In England, to engage offenders within prison or after release into the community, ex-offenders have been recruited as health trainers or health promoters as a means of tapping their experiences and skills at developing trust with fellow inmates within and outside of prison (Centre for Clinical and Academic Workforce Innovation 2007). Pudup (2007) illustrates how ex-offenders can play important roles in cultivating community-based garden projects. Jucovy (2006) describes a mentoring program that also taps ex-offenders in helping other ex-offenders in their reentry process. Minc, Butler, and Gahan (2009), in turn, describe an innovative Australian radio project targeting inmates and ex-inmates and run by ex-offenders.

It may be highly unusual to find ex-inmates owning their own consulting firms, for example, as in the case of Dennis Gaddy, in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he advises inmates and organizations on prisoner reentry (Mazzella 2009). His unique perspective on the trials and tribulations of reentry provides him with expertise that academics do not possess and can be useful in facilitating the creation of ex-offender reentry programs and services. Ex-offenders who worked or owned small businesses before committing their crimes and ensuing incarceration are often in excellent positions to advise government and nonprofits on the creation of reentry initiatives.

The Case of Joseph Robinson

Although the case of Joseph Robinson is, without question, highly unusual, the fact that it even exists is testimony to the potential of small businesses playing a key role in successfully helping ex-offenders return to society and highlights the possibility that inmates or ex-inmates can run their own businesses, not unlike the desire of countless millions of others in this society. Thus, some readers may view Joseph Robinson as an aberration, while others, as I do, view him as an inspiration of what is possible.

Robinson's (2008) book title, *Thinking Outside the Cell: An Entrepreneur's Guide for the Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated*, captures both the spirit and intent of this book. A self-educated inmate in New York state (Elmira State Penitentiary) serving a twenty-five-to-life sentence for murder, Robinson decided to write a book to help other individuals with prison backgrounds start their own businesses (Johnson, 2008): "In prison, Robinson didn't find too many knowledgeable friends, except for the many books he read voraciously. Study eventually led him to appreciate the appeal of business enterprise and, ultimately, self-employment. If released inmates, who are often hard put to find and hold down decent jobs, could furnish work for themselves, he reasoned, how much better it would be for all concerned." Thus, he had an epiphany. "If I wanted to read a book on entrepreneurship written specifically for incarcerated persons, I would have to write it myself" (p. 1).

The Small Business in Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are best understood and appreciated when grounded in the field of small businesses, as the reader will see in the discussion of Homeboy/Homegirl Industries (Chapter 4) and Delancey Street Foundation (Chapter 5). These social enterprises do not appear small based on their budgets, the number of staff employed, and, certainly, their mission. The small-business aspect of social enterprises is closely tied to the human service aspects, representing a bridge between the for-profit worlds of business, small or corporate, and human service systems. The importance of profit goes beyond satisfying stockholders and enters the sphere of translating income into opportunities and services for a population group that would struggle in either sector.

The term *small business* enjoys a tremendous amount of popularity within the general population and in political circles. Historically, the role and importance of entrepreneurship in the United States has occupied a special place in the country's lore (Conte 2008) and particularly among the nation's communities of color (Halter 1995; Puryear et al. 2008). The 2008 national presidential election illustrated the role of small businesses and the emergence of a symbol, "Joe the Plumber," to help capture this sentiment. Small businesses represent the potential of ordinary individuals to harness the spirit of capitalism and succeed in this country. However, this term can cover a wide number of perspectives and definitions (Blackford 2003). Thus, it is important to provide a multifaceted perspective on what constitutes a small business.

Blackford (2003) notes that one must not be quick about labeling a small enterprise: "[T]he question of just what constitutes a small firm must be approached with caution. It is important to recognize that neither large nor small firms constitute homogeneous groups and to realize that a 'gray' intermediate area exists between these two groups. There are many gradations of 'smallness'" (p. 2). Utilizing a functional approach, small businesses can best be defined as commercial establishments with relatively simple management—usually the owner runs the business personally—and its clientele is typically bound by geographical factors, with the service or product catering to a particular clientele base.

Puryear et al. (2008) advance the notion that small-business ownership is well recognized as fulfilling three important roles within a community and society: (1) engine of economic growth; (2) proving ground for innovation; and (3) identification and creation of fertile markets. Conte (2008), however, identified another role: the economic development aspect of small businesses enhances their importance in stabilizing communities that are unstable.

Further, small businesses provide an opportunity for unemployed workers to start their own businesses as a means of surviving difficult economic times. Small-business concepts, when coupled with necessary social supports, can bring the world of business to the human service field, resulting in what is referred to as a *social enterprise*. These enterprises, in turn, benefit participants but also the communities in which they are situated, thereby enhancing community capacity when viewed from a social-ecological perspective. Social enterprises see the value of collaborative relationships with other community institutions

and thereby strengthen them in the process and create a situation where existing resources are enhanced.

Helping Professions and Social Enterprises

Having helping professions venture into the economic arena to support small business development represents a testament to any profession's willingness and opportunity to explore new horizons. In the process of doing so, the profession fulfills an important part of its mission to serve undervalued or marginalized groups and communities across the nation (Delgado 2011). Within marginalized communities, however, certain sub-groups face even greater challenges in their quest for stability and social mobility. One such group is people of color with histories of involvement in the criminal justice system (Delgado 2001). To have social enterprises take a further step and engage ex-offenders with the assistance of helping professions takes on added significance.

Roman (2006) specifically argues for innovative approaches to the ex-offender reentry social crisis because of the immensity of the challenges faced by ex-inmates, their communities, the penal system, and community-based organizations, as addressed throughout the following chapters. Marbley and Ferguson (2004, 2005), too, issue a challenge for collaboration to find specific solutions to the problems faced by ex-inmates of color in their reentry into their communities as they reclaim their lives. Chapters 4 and 5 will bring this reality to the forefront for the reader. The partnerships that will emerge among helping professions, small businesses, and ex-inmates will prove exciting but not without tensions and potential barriers.

Small Businesses and Social Issues

Social enterprises that stress the use of business principles and ex-inmate reentry understand that the challenges confronting this population group go far beyond gainful employment. As will be noted in Chapter 2, ex-inmates fitting different profiles can be expected to benefit differently from involvement in social enterprises that specifically target them. The field of criminal justice cannot lump together all ex-inmates, regardless of their demographic profiles and sentencing his-

tories. As a result, a typology must be developed to more successfully address the specific challenges of ex-inmate groups to better utilize existing resources during community reentry, such as in social enterprises. In essence, a systematic effort to match inmate characteristics, circumstances, interests, and abilities with appropriate services is in order.

Exciting social and health programs have been developed that stress collaboration between small businesses and human services: for example, in the noncriminal justice arena, the use of Latino bakeries to disseminate information on diabetes and healthy eating habits; or the creation of a referral system between botanical shops and health centers for Latinos who are at high risk for HIV/AIDS to be tested (Delgado 2007; Delgado and Santiago 1998). Rodriguez and Sava (2006), in commenting on Latino-owned businesses in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, note the multifaceted role these institutions played in the community: "Historically, Latino-owned businesses also served as information centers and helped solidify the community's cultural retention. Latino newcomers to Milwaukee could learn information about housing and employment by dropping in at a south side tavern or restaurants" (p. 31). These small businesses are not social enterprises but for-profit businesses that embrace social responsibility and have a need to give back to the community. However, ex-offenders are often not the primary target of the assistance provided by these small businesses.

In the criminal justice arena, examples such as the Delancey Street Foundation (San Francisco) and Homeboy/Homegirl Industries (Los Angeles) typify how creative efforts at combining social enterprises actively involving ex-inmates and ex-gang members can address the goals of community economic development and assistance with reentry for those with criminal justice histories (Belluck 2008; Delgado 2001; Flanigan 2008; Russell 2008). Homeboy/Homegirl Industries and Delancey Street Foundation will each have chapters describing and analyzing their missions and programs with implications for organizations wishing to learn from their histories.

There are numerous other examples of how this social intervention can be implemented to help ensure that racial and ethnic community needs are addressed in a manner that is culturally affirming and relevant, and target subgroups that face prodigious challenges in society. As a result, urban small businesses can function to match residents, including ex-inmates, with needed health and social services. Nevertheless, these successful efforts have largely flown under the radar screen for the most part and deserve being studied.

Also, many helping professions may feel ambivalent about getting involved with criminal justice issues. Delgado (2001) notes: “Any effort to seriously work with and study the correctionally supervised, regardless of gender and ethnicity, must take into account the barriers associated with clients who are labeled ‘convicts’ or ‘ex-cons’” (p. xv). Thus, ambivalence will unfold regarding helping professions working both with small businesses and, in the case of this book, returning ex-inmates.

Greater attention to social enterprises opens up a vast new arena for community capacity-enhancement and development on the part of helping professions, with all fields benefiting, but more so fields that focus on the undervalued and highly stigmatized in this society, as in the case of ex-offenders and their reentry into communities (Delgado, in press). No resources, formal or informal, can be disregarded or ignored in the quest to meet the needs of one particular subgroup of ex-offenders: those of color from low-income/low-wealth backgrounds.

The subject of prisoner rehabilitation and community reentry is one that is starting to get increased national attention (Burk 2000; Butterfield 2004). One relatively recent public survey on the subject found that 87 percent of the voting public favor rehabilitation for inmates, and 70 percent favor services, both during incarceration and after release from prison (Krisberg and Marchionna 2006). Survey respondents identified job training (82 percent), medical care (86 percent), public housing (84 percent), and availability of student loans (83 percent) as significant factors in preventing ex-inmates from reentering prison.

In addressing the reentry needs of people with criminal justice backgrounds, how social enterprises can be supported in a manner that is culturally competent opens numerous possibilities for collaboration between the communities of color and helping professions. However, the creation of health and social services targeting these communities face numerous challenges (Sung 2011). Examples are those related to creating effective outreach and community education campaigns, and locating and supporting local leadership for involvement on agency boards, advisory committees, and task forces. However, a different lens is needed for explaining the relevance of the respective helping professions in getting communities of color to establish social enterprises and in the partnering and collaborative process between practitioners and agencies in providing the necessary assistance (know-how and resources).

The Goals of the Book

Based upon the magnitude of the number of African Americans and Latinos in prison, these two groups will be the focus of attention in this book, although Asian Americans and Native Americans will be also addressed. This book will focus on six goals:

1. Explore the potential role of social enterprises for providing a range of social, health, and economic support for ex-inmates reentering their community.
2. Illustrate how social enterprises aid ex-inmate reentry, using two case studies.
3. Examine incarceration and release trends and their implications for community development, along with how incarceration trends are evolving in urban centers.
4. Review the major challenges that ex-inmates face in reentry into the community, with particular focus on those of color.
5. Examine best practice models on community reentry, with a special focus on those that are urban, racial, and ethnic specific.
6. Provide an asset (capacity-enhancement) analytical framework from which to plan a variety of community reentry services for ex-inmates.

One final note: with my writing style I seek to reach both practitioners and academics, clearly different audiences, but with a common interest in the subject matter. This approach reflects my belief that practitioners and academics need to partner with communities, which can only be accomplished through common and accessible language. Thus, sections of this book may appeal more to one audience than the other because of how information is presented.

Overview of Case Studies

I always had a fondness for case studies as a result of my many years of practice in the field and trying to reconcile theory with practice. Case studies provide authors with a reader-friendly introduction to theory and new ways of thinking about practice challenges. The case of ex-offender reentry is no exception. Case studies are an excellent mechanism for bringing the academic world of research and scholarship together with the world of practice.

Two case studies have been selected for highlighting, and it is no accident that both are based in California, the state with the largest prison population and facing huge budget crises, necessitating the rapid release of inmates back into the community as a means of dealing with budget shortfalls. California is often thought of as leading the nation in a variety of ways. Proposition 13, a taxpayer ballot initiative to cut California real estate taxes, had national implications for property taxes and local budgets. Three-strike criminal policies, too, have set the stage for the nation, and countless states are following California in the early release of inmates. Thus, it only stands to reason that California (specifically, Los Angeles and San Francisco) will provide models of social enterprises to facilitate ex-offender reentry into the community.

Small businesses, which historically have played important roles within urban communities in the United States, introduced the concept of corporate responsibility from a small business perspective regarding ex-offenders returning to their respective communities (Delgado 2011). Although small businesses have been around since the founding of this nation and have evolved to accommodate the new groups entering this country, these establishments have generally been viewed from a narrow business, or for-profit, viewpoint. Academics have thus failed to create an understanding of their potential for broadening their reach for services to the community. Consequently, a vast potential arena of resources and community political will could address ex-offender reentry but has not been used.

The two cases, which follow in Chapters 4 and 5, fall under what Ferguson (2007) refers to as social enterprises or social ventures:

As one type of social development strategy, social enterprises can refer to a nonprofit organization, a socially minded business, or a revenue-generating venture established to create positive social impact in the context of a financial bottom line. . . . Common social enterprises used with vulnerable populations include vocational and social cooperatives, microenterprise assistance programs, peer lending, and technical training programs. (p. 105)

Social ventures attempt to interject social and economic spheres in an effort to create opportunities for population groups that are marginalized for a variety of reasons. As a result, social enterprises have opened up a new avenue to address a wide range of social issues, such as ex-offender reentry, with a potential to transform how society addresses the needs of this and other marginalized groups (Moss et al. 2011).

The inspiration for the development of Homeboy/Homegirl Industries can be traced to one individual and his capacity to utilize an assets perspective and tap into a community's desires for a better life, if given an opportunity. It was under the leadership of Father Greg Boyle, who devoted his ministry to working with gangs in East Los Angeles, that Homeboy/Homegirl Industries emerged in 1988 (Fremon 2004). This case study will also serve as the basis for examining the use of a community capacity-enhancement analytical paradigm in addressing the needs of ex-offenders involving small businesses.

The Delancey Street Foundation, in turn, was established in 1971, and it, too, owes its birth thirty years ago to the foresight and vision of one individual, John Maher. It was predicated on ex-offenders helping other ex-offenders (self-help), providing a wide range of products and services, including housing, handcrafted furniture, pottery, art objects, moving and transportation, decorating and catering, and a restaurant (Delgado 2001). The concept of social enterprises is not limited to adults; youth, too, can benefit from engagement with these establishments. However, for the purposes of providing in-depth case studies, one related to youth will not be included in this book.

Each of these case studies will highlight several key features related to the business and the ex-offenders who are involved in their operations. Each consists of the following eight sections: (1) historical origins, (2) community description, (3) mission statement/operating principles, (4) funding streams, (5) profile of participants, (6) activities and services, (7) evaluation of outcomes, and (8) lessons learned. It is my sincere hope that this case outline provides readers with sufficient information to make an informed decision as to what aspects of these cases have direct applicability to ex-offender reentry in their communities and which ones will need minor or significant modifications to meet local needs. Those who wish greater detail on these cases can go to the appropriate Web pages or contact the organizations directly.

Contributions to the Field

I often decide to write a book when the particular subject matter inspires me, and I come to the conclusion that there are no other books on the subject. There is absolutely no other book like this from a business, crim-

inal justice, sociological-anthropological, social work, or other helping professions perspective.

The topic of community reentry of ex-inmates, however, has enjoyed a certain degree of popularity. In the past few years, a number of excellent books stand out for their importance, such as: *In the Shadow of Prison: Families, Imprisonment and Criminal Justice* (Codd 2008); *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration* (Maruna and Immarigeon 2004); *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry* (Petersilia 2003); *Releasing Prisoners, Redeeming Communities: Reentry, Race and Politics* (Thompson 2008); *Behind Bars: Rejoining Society* (Ross and Richards 2009); *But They All Come Back! Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry* (Travis 2005); and *Prison Reentry and Crime in America* (Travis and Visser 2005).

A 2001 book by Shadd Maruna, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, represents an important effort at reshifting the paradigm on how to view ex-inmates by learning from those who succeeded. This book or any of the previously mentioned books take a particular focus on ex-inmates of color and the potential role of social enterprises as community resources in aiding their reentry. Mind you, as noted in the preface, social enterprises cannot be viewed as a panacea for all of the challenges facing ex-offender reentry. Social enterprises, however, can provide a venue for a portion of these newly released individuals.

The reader may, of course, have a viewpoint on the role of social enterprises in the field. That is to be expected due to the complex nature of the subject and the highly emotional charge it creates in most people within and outside of the criminal justice system. However, there is a need to keep an open mind on ex-offender reentry because a constructive dialogue helps increase the likelihood that new initiatives can better match the needs, aspirations, and circumstances surrounding the newest members of a free society.

What better way than to take essential elements of small businesses, an institution that has enjoyed such prominence and romanticism in our nation's history and in the communities where many of these ex-offenders reside, to help craft a comprehensive solution? Social enterprises have many of the attractive qualities of small businesses and interject a variety of social supports to enhance these enterprises to meet the particular challenges of addressing a population

group with multiple needs, while seeking to generate the income to support these activities.

Conclusion

The nation will have to invest considerable amount of funds and draw upon political will in order to successfully address the challenges associated with ex-offender reentry into the community and society. There will be an outcry from the public and their elected officials on the immense fiscal investment costs that reentry programs will require. The costs of these reentry initiatives may well approximate or surpass the costs associated with the actual incarceration. As the reader will see in the next chapter, those costs can be astronomical. If viewed from a social investment perspective, the costs may well be tolerated. Ahn-Redding's (2007) hugely popular book, *The "Million Dollar Inmate": The Financial and Social Burden of Nonviolent Offenders*, highlights these multifaceted costs to inmates, their families, and society.

This investment must be viewed within the context of the billions of dollars that states and the federal government have spent and are spending in incarcerating large numbers of men and women who could have benefited from alternatives to prison (Brooks, Visher, and Naser 2006):

The nation has invested billions of dollars into locking up offenders. The policies around reentry have become increasingly an avoidance of risks. The result, we have created a reentry door of offenders who will be committed to prison time and again as they fail in the community. This is not only a failure of the inmate, it is a failure of our release and reentry policies. . . . [W]ith billions focused on imprisonment, it is only fitting that a few million more be focused on prisoners' return to the community. (p. 381)

The following two chapters will contextualize and ground for the reader the magnitude of ex-offender reentry in this country. No state will escape its consequences, and few urban communities will not see dramatic shifts in their population composition, as more adult males and increasingly adult females enter their ranks after many years of being absent. The challenges are not only fiscal but social in character. Yet,

there is hope that the field of ex-offender reentry is on the cusp of a new era with all of the excitement and commitment associated with a new beginning. Social enterprises will undoubtedly be part of the solution to the reentry challenge for ex-offenders. They, however, will not be the total solution.