

COMMUNITY TV/ CONNECTION

NOV 2019 | VOL.01 | NEWSLETTER | ISSUE NO.02



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STEPHEN'S TABLE NEWSLETTER

AN OPEN TABLE OUTREACH

In our first edition of Community Connection, we mention that our program is operated with “extraordinary respect” and a focus on “committed action in service of what matters to you.” We also promise to say more later. There’s quite a bit we want you to know about both. But let’s start with what we mean by “extraordinary respect.”

It’s a term that we picked up from Project Return in New Orleans (not Nashville) which came out of the doctoral research of Bob Roberts at LSU with Nelson Marks and Perry Bernard, both serving time at Dixon Correctional Institute in Jackson, Louisiana. They were studying the effect of a group intervention called Community Building

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CHATTANOOGA ENDEAVORS

We are striving for a day when legitimate second chances are accessible to all former offenders and their loved ones in the Chattanooga area.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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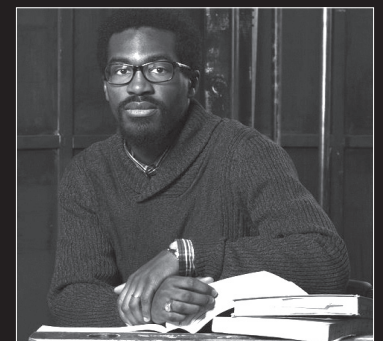
If you're from the Chattanooga area

REQUEST A FREE COPY OF OUR

- ☐ Chattanooga Area Services Directory
- ☐ Reentry Checklist
- ☐ Job Seekers Worksheet
- ☐ Prisoner Resources Directory

SIGN UP FOR

- ☐ Pen Pal
- ☐ Reentry Planning
- ☐ Employment Assistance



Decoteau Irby, Ph.D. Transformative Race Talk

IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOU DON'T KNOW

We had a very positive response to our first edition of this newsletter — both inside and outside prison. To quote one reader who is approaching the end of his prison term,

“ Thinking of getting out has got me really anxious and nervous. To see that you all have compiled a list of services that will help me along my journey. I trust my heavenly father and I know this is his hands at work.

No matter how many times we hear it, we're always surprised by what a simple list of services means to people. That's not to reduce the information. But to raise the question why anyone would leave prison without it. And to challenge other communities to do what we're doing in Chattanooga by compiling their own directory of services for reentry purposes. To keep it up to date. And to get it in the hands of people who need it.

— Tim Dempsey, Founding Director



Linda Pastan (b. May 28, 1923) postponed her writing career to marry and raise a family. After ten years at home, her husband urged her to begin writing again — and since the early 1970s, she has produced quiet lyrics that often concern the anxieties that exist under the surface of everyday life.

WHAT WE WANT

What we want
is never simple.
We move among the things
we thought we wanted:
a face, a room, an open book
and these things bear our names—
now they want us.
But what we want appears
in dreams, wearing disguises.
We fall past,
holding out our arms
and in the morning
our arms ache.
We don't remember the dream,
but the dream remembers us.
It is there all day
as an animal is there
under the table,
as the stars are there
even in full sun.

~ Linda Pastan



UNION GOSPEL MISSION



The Union Gospel Mission describes itself as a “faith-based, residential program that helps individuals with life-controlling issues find their purpose in life through a personal relationship with Christ.” The program is for men only and requires a minimum commitment of 2 months.

COMMUNITY SERVICE UPDATE

The Union Gospel Mission has become the second organization to be added to TDOC's list of approved transitional housing programs in Chattanooga — joining the House of Refuge to end almost twenty years with no halfway houses in the city. The facility is operated by Chattanooga Outreach and has been helping the homeless community for over 70 years. To learn more about what the Union Gospel Mission has to offer and to find out if you are eligible, please get in touch with:

Union Gospel Mission
Chad Roberts
107 Signal Hills Drive
Chattanooga, TN 37405
(423) 752-4998

TRANSFORMATIVE RACE TALK

Chattanooga Endeavors, with The Camp House, Derute Consulting Cooperative, and Grassroots Development, recently hosted a panel discussion on disrupting racism in organizations to an overflowing crowd at The Camp House. Our main speaker was Decoteau Irby, Ph.D.

Professor Irby teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Education and is the creator of Transformative Race Talk — a method for advancing equity and inclusion which stems from his work with one racially diverse suburban school community's efforts to better serve its increasing Black and Brown student populations.

Joining Professor Irby from Chattanooga was Ron Harris, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion — representing a corporate perspective; Franklin McCallie, Chattanooga Connected Co-Founder — representing a civic/community activist perspective; Phillip McClain, Chattanooga Police Department Master Patrol Officer — representing a law-enforcement perspective; and LaFrederick Thirkill, Orchard Knob Elementary Principal — representing a public education perspective.

Professor Irby is currently writing a book called “Stuck Improving” about a predominantly white rapidly diversifying community's efforts to advance a racial equity agenda and the challenges they faced in the process. The book is slated for publishing by Harvard Education Press in 2020.



Franklin McCallie (left) with LaFrederick Thirkill (right)

We will be conducting training with Professor Irby in Chattanooga in January and March 2020 to teach anyone who is interested how to implement his Transformative Race Talk model at the organizations where they work or volunteer.

BLOG POST SECOND CHANCES

WATCH OUT FOR CHARLATANS(FROM OUR BLOG)

In the helping field, we've gotten the knack of crisis management. Unfortunately, we're not so good at creating lasting change. You're given food but can't make a meal. You're provided shelter but can't make a home. You're placed on a job but can't build a career. We know how to get people out of a jam. But to help them move on in their lives — to really thrive — we have a lot to learn.

Getting the right help in the right amount at the right time can be the difference between keeping prison in the rear view mirror and running headlong into it. However, sometimes what looks like the right help

comes up more than a little short. We'll explore other reasons for this in the future. For this edition, we want to say something about charlatans.

It's an unfortunate fact that the helping field attracts all sorts of needy helpers with all sorts of personal agendas which makes looking for help a thorny matter.

You've heard the phrase “beggars can't be choosers.” Don't buy it! Not only *can* beggars be choosers — we believe that they need to be choosers.

When you're looking for help be careful not to get caught up with personalities. Be wary of organizations that promote their philosophy over their services, that lift up their founder like a prophet, that believe everyone needs what they have, or that claim no one else can do what they can. These organizations and their charlatan leaders probably need you more than you need them.

Now, the fact that they need you is not a reason by itself to refuse their help — especially if the help they offer is help you need. But it is a reason to watch out for snake oil.

FRAGMENT

Each class at Chattanooga Endeavors receives a “fragment” to consider as part of our work-readiness training. They are fragments in that their meaning is incomplete. And their meaning is incomplete until it is broken to the heart. Like Christian parables, Rabbinic allegories, or Zen koans, our fragments don't explain themselves. Instead, they are intended to invite deeper reflection.

Although you're missing the context, you can still work with one of our fragments. Here's how: Over the next week or two let the fragment

below be your companion. Keep it in the back of your mind as you go about your business. And as the opportunity arises, spend some time meditating on its meaning and searching yourself for how it is true for you.

We would be honored to hear back from you about your experience with the following fragment:

**You love the idea of what you hate to do;
And hate the idea of what you love to do.
What is this doing in you?**

DEAR STEPHEN

From one of our readers, we have the following question:

I am flattening my sentence and have nowhere to go. Since being locked up I have given my life to Christ and would like to participate in a faith-based halfway house. Will Stephen's Table help me to find a good place to start?

As you probably know, most Tennessee prisoners flatten their sentences — 76% to be exact. And, as you probably know as well, this is a mixed bag when it comes to reentry. You trade more time in prison for fewer rules in the community. However, you don't have access to resources like Reentry Housing Program (RHP) funds.

Of course, you have many more residential options because you're not restricted to TDOC's list of approved halfway houses. However, you have to find these on your own and cover their costs by yourself.

For example, there are 15 Oxford Houses in Chattanooga and none are on TDOC's list. Rent varies by locations. But you can expect to pay around \$100 a week in rent and common expenses, if you can get in. And they don't take IOUs. Nor do they meet your condition of being faith-based.

To be sure, there are a lot of faith-based programs on TDOC's list. In fact, 79 of the 135 approved programs are listed as faith-based or with some religious requirement — including The House of Refuge and The Union Gospel Mission in Chattanooga.

But just because a program is faith-based, doesn't mean that it's a good fit for your faith. And sorting through all the practicalities from prison is not easy. That is why we offer a hand with reentry planning. Let us know when you're within 6 months of coming home and we'll schedule a call.

EXTRAORDINARY RESPECT

Continued from cover

on a literacy program for prisoners. What they found was that prisoners learned better in an environment that promotes human dignity — which they referred to as “extraordinary respect” to distinguish it from the kind of respect that is earned.

At Chattanooga Endeavors we believe in the inherent and absolute dignity of the human person — which is unaffected by one's assets or actions. Whether returning from prison or retiring from the pulpit, we view every person as an equal among peers and make a conscious effort to treat all those we serve with uncompromising compassion and “extraordinary respect” in everything we do. We'll say how in the next edition.

ON THE YARD

BY ETHERIDGE KNIGHT

A slim
young fascist
fresh from the Hole
slid into me
murdered me
with his eyes
and said, “Man,
why ain't you
doing something?”

All night
I sat up
All night
wrote 5,000 words
explaining how
I
was doing something

but the slim cat —
beautiful fascist
didn't buy
it — nor
did I
completely.



ETHERIDGE KNIGHT IN PRISON BY TERRANCE HAYES

CHATTANOOGA ENDEAVORS | SECOND CHANCES FOR FORMER OFFENDERS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

www.chattanoogaendeavors.org

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