



# THE ROCK

REENTRY ROCKS'  
QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO CREATE THE LIVES THEY ENVISION



**A word from Reentry Rocks Director Sharon Richardson:**

Topic: Life Happens

For the first edition of this newsletter, I wanted everyone to feel, understand, envision, and embrace. I wanted to encourage everyone throughout the holidays to hold on to the gift of joy and support each other through the weight of sorrow. I wanted to tell all of my sisters that I understood their plight and that it will be okay but then my worst fears became my reality. After two years running, with a number of health complications, I tested positive for COVID-19 and everything stopped. For a time, my life flashed before my eyes. I was so sick. What started as a birthday celebration for my daughter became a series of phone calls with a number of positive cases. Everyone in my house and almost everyone at work was sick at the same time. I was so afraid. This was holiday time and life for Reentry Rocks had taken off: THIS COULD NOT BE HAPPENING! As I was getting better my sciatic nerve was triggered and I was hospitalized, unable to walk. It was horrendous. I was completely immobile, on a COVID unit, trying to explain that I was post-COVID, but still testing positive. Suddenly my 20 years flashed before me. My 11 years home flashed before me. The women I work so hard for flashed before me. My family and friends; my coworkers and colleagues. I stood still in time for seven long days. As I cried and prayed, my spirit took me back to Bedford Hills. I was reminded of two phrases - **What you think it is**, and **What you believe it will be**. It was at that moment I let go of the FEAR and saw my healing. Life happens and no matter what you are being told, never stop believing you have another chance. If I would have stopped believing, I may not have been here to write this article. Please be safe out there. GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

Thank you for supporting Reentry Rocks.

## CONTENTS

Letter from our Founder  
*Sharon Richardson*

**Cover**

What's going on  
at Reentry Rocks?

*Updates*

**Pg. 2**

Participant Spotlight:  
Bridget Osborne

**Pg. 3**

Highlights from Alumnae

**Pg. 4**

Staff Spotlight & Shout-Outs

**Pg. 5**

News in the  
Justice-Involved Community

**Pg. 6**

Coming in 2022

**Pg. 7**

# UPDATES: What's going on at Reentry Rocks?

A Look into our programs, events and announcements



## Mother's Day Photo Extravaganza

If 'Woosah' could be described, it would be this day. Mother's Day 2021 was a time for recognition and rejuvenation. This team was a handpicked combination of board, staff, volunteers, and participants. We came together to celebrate mothers and to celebrate each other. The day consisted of a magnificent three-part photoshoot, brunch, and a tea party that was absolutely hilarious. We laughed, cried, prayed, and honored those who came before us.

## Sentenced to Dance with Reentry Rocks

We are happily welcoming the return of our creative arts program Sentenced to Dance led by choreographer and master teacher Baba Obediah Wright. This healing program engages participants in forms of self-expression, empowerment, and love of self. Participants have a safe space in which to dance and breathe the breath of life creatively. In August 2021, Reentry Rocks led a 3-day intensive workshop at the Mark Morris Dance studio. On the final day, the women danced in 'Dumbo' by the Brooklyn Bridge. It was such a powerful piece, we cannot wait to share it with the world. We thank *Husky Style Productions* and honor every worker who was on board. This program speaks to the participant's pain, suffering, joy, love, and life experiences. We walk, we laugh, we cry, we run we persevere. We have been Sentenced To Dance!



## Spring Virtual Gala

### AT THE WALL



Our first fundraising gala **At the Wall** made history in spring 2021 as we hosted a virtual night of celebration that featured awards including a gratitude award for Reverend Dr. Herbert Daughtry, a guest speaker segment with V (formerly Eve Ensler), participant testimonials, and the premiere of a short documentary on founder Sharon Richardson.

With over 100 attendees, we fundraised \$23,000 for direct programming for formerly incarcerated women. We have used the funds to support our fall and winter cohorts' stipends. If you missed our gala, you can rewatch it on our YouTube channel. We thank all our supporters and hope to see you at our 2022 fundraiser!

# THE TRIPLE GRADUATE: BRIDGET OSBORNE



Bridget Osborne is Reentry Rocks' first triple graduate and a deeply appreciated member of the Reentry Rocks community. In October 2020, Bridget Osborne joined Reentry Rocks' 12-session Understanding Your Anger course. "I learned how to think and process information before I speak," said Ms. Osborne. With the supportive group, she successfully completed the course. "This process teaches you to recognize conflict in your life. It could only be done with people you trust, and I trusted the person running the program." Following the initial course, Ms. Osborne went on to complete Phase I and Phase II of the Entrepreneurial Fellowship program.

Ms. Osborne joined the fellowship in order to get support in launching her nonprofit organization. While incarcerated, Ms. Osborne would write newsletters with scriptures and messages to friends and family. From those newsletters, she started her own Ministry. It grew into an organization that provides support such as care packages and food donations to individuals still inside the prison walls. During her time in the program, she obtained her 501c3 status and acquired all of the necessary documents to formalize her nonprofit organization. Ms. Osborne learned that starting an organization or business "is not easy, you need to invest your time and you must work hard." Ms. Osborne is now the founder and Executive Director of her own nonprofit organization Sons and Daughters Ministry. It is her hope that she can reach more people through her organization. "There is a lot of people that deserve a second chance." As Reentry Rocks journeys into the new year, Ms. Osborne would like to see the organization continue to help and support individuals who need a fresh start. "Reentry Rocks is a good program for people who are serious about getting their life together, and if they can complete the programs, they can create the foundation for a long and successful life."

If you may be in need of services, would like to volunteer, or learn more, please visit Sons and Daughters Ministry at [www.sonsanddaughtersministry.org](http://www.sonsanddaughtersministry.org)

## Our Journey Thus Far...

Re-entry Rocks managed to flourish in spite of the pandemic which dominated 2020 and 2021. We were proud to enroll **60** women, switch our curriculum from in-person to online, and successfully promote 95% of the program participants. Some of the women have graduated two or three times from various aspects of our program. Here are some pictures of graduates from a few of our 9 cohorts:

The most frequent feedback received by our women: 90% were able to manage their emotions better, 90% have found a form of employment, 75% would refer us to a friend.



# Highlights from our Alumnae...



Little Mama's Catering  
Janice Lee



That Meatball Collective



**Carol Ann Madonia**

3x time Graduate



**JANICE LEE**

3x time Graduate

My name is Janice Lee and I am a triple graduate in the Reentry Rocks organization (Phase I, Phase II, and Understanding Your Anger). I am so grateful to God for many of the recent changes in my life. I come from a big family and I learned as a child that cooking alongside my mother in the kitchen is where I always wanted to be. It felt safe and allowed me to study cooking. The love of food is in my blood. When I found out about this training program to become an entrepreneur, I jumped at the chance to move closer to the dream of my own business. I accomplished these things while the world was shut down. The pandemic stopped a lot of things, but it never killed my drive. I was pushed to work hard and the staff was the absolute best! Being in class with women like myself helped me to build my self-confidence, strength, and belief that I can achieve and have success. My life is changing before my eyes. At 56 I am a few steps away from Little Mama's catering, LLC.

My name is Carol Anne Madonia. If you would have told me a year ago that I would be working towards my life's dream of owning my own catering business, I would not have believed you. I was struggling with addiction for years and after countless times in rehab and jail, I found my purpose through re-entry programs. New Hour for Women and Children of Long Island told me this story about a woman who had been incarcerated for over 20 years and came out and had a hard time finding employment. She decided to fight back against the stigma of incarceration. Sharon Richardson founded her very own catering business called Just Soul Catering and developed a re-entry program of her own called Re-Entry Rocks. I just happened to stumble upon this program. I could not believe it. The women who work for Reentry Rocks helped me to change my perspective. I am excited about this new direction and with the support of their amazing staff, I have remained steadfast in my journey. I am a triple graduate of the program and I am now the owner and operator of my very own catering business called That Meatball Collective and Catering Services. I am very grateful for the opportunity that God has given me. I plan to give back to my community by feeding our local homeless each day and offering employment to previously incarcerated individuals and former addicts. My goal is to one day start a re-entry program just like Sharon did. I would love to give others the same second chance that was given.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Patricia Zimmerman



In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, Patricia Zimmerman joined Reentry Rocks as the new mental health counselor and advocate. Ms. Zimmerman provides trauma-informed, support to formerly incarcerated survivors, including anger management, life skills, and evidence-based mental health counseling. We wanted to recognize the added pressure of women coming home in NYC who are compounded with challenges regarding reentry and COVID-19. Here at Reentry Rocks, we want women to understand that they have the ability to overcome any obstacles in their lives. You can learn to live with mental illness just like you learn to live with anything else. We understand from personal experience how unresolved mental health issues can affect every aspect of your life. We strive to act as positive examples and thus instill in our sisters the belief that if we can turn our lives around, so can they. We teach the women that they can change the way they think and process conflict and anger. This is not magic. It is simple deductive reasoning using a cognitive-behavioral approach. Change the way you think and you can change your life.

## REENTRY ROCKS "SHOUT OUTS"

We wanted to take a moment to shout out the people who make Reentry Rocks what it is. Some people want to remain anonymous, so we will honor that.

**Reentry Rocks Board of Directors** - Saying you all rock is an understatement. Each of you holds it together for this organization. You all believe in the vision and you all go above and beyond to make our mission visible to the world. Deborah, Annie, Melissa, Lela, Doretha. Thank you a million times.

**Reentry Rocks Advisory Board** - Thank you Jesenia, Josie, Rebecca, Eve, Tamar, and Jaya for all of your input and support over the years. You all are a part of this family and your voices are critical to our daily operation.

**Reentry Rocks Staff** - To our Executive Director Sharon Richardson; you are the wind beneath the wings of Reentry Rocks, thank you for dreaming and seeing the vision. A very special shout-out, to our office manager/trainer; thank you is not enough, you work magic for us. To Chandeeah Davis, when there is nothing left to do, YOU STAND! You are our consultant, grant writer, trainer, and sister. We love and honor you. To Patricia Zimmerman, Mental Health matters. Thank you for coming back to New York to be a part of Reentry Rocks' vision.

**Interns and Volunteers** - To the many individuals over the last few years who have given their time and shared their love for the work that we do. Autumnne, thank you for initiating and helping to make this newsletter a reality. MIRANDA!! You are amazing and hard-working. Thank you so much for all you do and the time you have dedicated to Reentry Rocks.

**LAST BUT NEVER LEAST** - We want to shout out every client who has trusted REENTRY ROCKS. We also want to recognize each and every formerly incarcerated woman who is part of the movement and has a passion for the work we do. We love you all and we are humbled by your support. Thank you and we hope to see you at our Grand Opening celebration.

# Have you heard?

## PAROLE LEGISLATION

Parole and probation policies that mandate re-incarceration for technical offenses and violations are a single part of the causes of high rates of recidivism.

Learn more here: <https://tinyurl.com/cutjryz>

## SOLITARY CONFINEMENT from #HALTsolitary

Solitary confinement is a cruel and unusual punishment that is a leading cause of mental health issues that develop and are exacerbated during incarceration.

Read further into it at <https://tinyurl.com/2bu6pzvy>  
and  
<https://tinyurl.com/uztk4h6>



## WOMEN'S MASS INCARCERATION from the Prison Policy Initiative

There is much attention drawn to the problem of mass incarceration, but how are women's experiences different from men's? Read about it <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2019women.html>

## Women's Month



March is commonly known as Women's History Month. Although women should rightfully be celebrated all days, March is chosen as the time where we collectively celebrate women's contributions to our world history and to our culture. Women have always been overlooked, particularly in the history of minorities. So for our 1st edition, we want to honor all women; those in jails and prisons across our land, those in impoverished communities who continue to be victims of poverty and who have suffered throughout the ages and still rise to be great no matter the cost. As formerly incarcerated women we have always understood the assignment. No women will be forgotten or left behind...

## Advocacy Tip

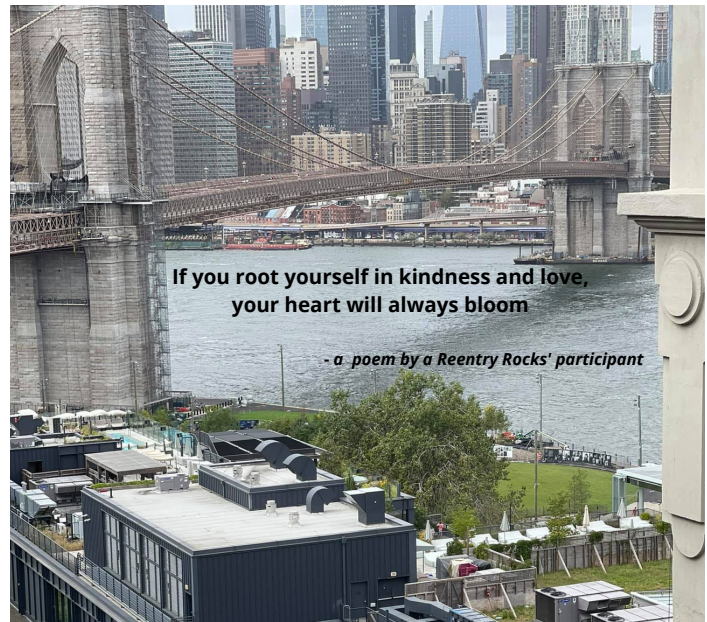
*What if I am not personally involved in the justice community but feel compelled to help? What can I do?*

- **Advocate** in your community to your council members and state legislators to prioritize decarceration and criminal justice reform.
- **Donate** your time and talents to a local community organization through volunteer work.
- **Educate** yourself on justice-related issues. These are not only relevant to incarcerated individuals. Talk to others about what you learned.

# Coming Soon

A GLIMPSE AT THE NEW YEAR

After a challenging end to 2021, we are stepping boldly into 2022. Reentry Rocks hoped for the type of support that would grant us office space, a kitchen to be able to train our program participants and our own studio for Sentenced to Dance. WELL, WE ARE FINALLY HERE! We placed our desire for success into the universe. What we got is so much more than just an answer. WE WERE GIFTED OUR VERY OWN SPACE IN DUMBO, BY THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE! We have pictures, video trailers, and all sorts of exciting things happening at Reentry Rocks so please stay tuned. The Grand Opening will be a black-tie affair! This year is our defining moment! We look forward to seeing all of you there. Until then, we ask you to stay safe and healthy...



## SUPPORT US

We rely on support from our community and those who believe in our vision to keep our programs going and to support our larger goals. Any gift to our 501c3 organization is tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

Give now at  
[reentryrocks.org/donate](https://reentryrocks.org/donate)

## CONTACT US

Email us at:

[info@reentryrocks.org](mailto:info@reentryrocks.org)

Visit us at:

[www.reentryrocks.org](http://www.reentryrocks.org)

Call us at:

**(718)913-1885**

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



@ReentryRocks

## VOLUNTEER WITH US

Reentry Rocks is always looking for volunteers!

If you are interested in helping recently released individuals, advocacy, or supporting survivors of domestic violence, email us.

Please provide a brief description of yourself, your interest/skills, and your availability. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

**email:** [info@reentryrocks.org](mailto:info@reentryrocks.org)