

OPEN DOORS 2020

ANNUAL REPORT

Reducing Recidivism by Investing in People



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



This year was unprecedented in so many ways. One of the strongest lessons we will take away from 2020 is the way in which the COVID pandemic revealed the full extent of Rhode Island's ongoing mass incarceration crisis. There are many reasons why Rhode Island suffered so heavily from the pandemic, but one

clear reason is that our society had already largely abandoned so many. Instead of having medical, public health, transportation, public housing, workforce development, and social service safety nets, we invest in prisons, which did not bear the brunt of the pandemic well. Ruth Gilmore Gilmore, Professor of Geography at the City University of New York, wrote *"Where life is precious life is precious. In places where carcerality is an all-purpose solution to social problems, we see the deadly effects of COVID so clearly on the surface of society, everywhere."* This last year revealed the interacting weaknesses in our social fabric in extreme ways.

During this time, the support we provide here was more pressing than ever. We would like to express our utmost gratitude and compassion for the staff that worked despite the dangers, the community of funders that came together to buoy our efforts, and the people we support who have survived these trials with their spirits intact. Back in March, we received over \$10,000 in donations in a matter of days, which allowed us to provide emergency food, housing, and cleaning supplies to many homeless and recently incarcerated people. Due to generous funders such as Liz Chace, Blue Cross Blue Shield, the United Way, and the

Rhode Island Foundation, we were able to expand our programs—hiring new staff and opening up a second transitional house that provided refuge for many who would otherwise have been stuck in prison during the outbreaks. And we have seen the energy that poured into our streets after the death of George Floyd continue through campaigns to find alternatives to our ongoing mass incarceration epidemic.

This report tells some of these moving stories, such as that of Aladin Muminovic, a Bosnian refugee who was incarcerated in the Wyatt Detention Center by ICE until he became one of the first tenants of our new transitional house. OpenDoors provides a service that no other agency in Rhode Island provides, and for people like Mr. Muminovic, our programs can mean a whole new life. To many of our participants, who have met only shut doors for so long, these opportunities can seem almost miraculous.

We are very proud of the strides this agency took this year in response to the pandemic. As an institution, we grew our budget by almost 30%, added some excellent new members to the Board of Directors, and expanded the representation of directly impacted people on both staff and Board. While providing direct support to those in need, we also never lost sight of the more systemic change that is necessary to our prison system. In 2020, we began some exciting new projects, such as a transitional employment freight delivery business, a capital campaign to expand reentry housing for women, and our Justice Reinvestment campaign that pushes our state to invest in people, not prisons. We are forever indebted to all of our supporters and funders for allowing us to continue and grow this work.

Andy Horowitz, Board Chairman

OUR MISSION

OpenDoors was founded in 2002 to address the lack of resources for men and women coming home from prison.

Over the last 18 years, we have invested in alternatives to incarceration, and the investment has paid off. OpenDoors has proven that wrap-around services including housing, employment, and treatment can reduce recidivism and make communities safer.

Our holistic approach supports individuals as they prepare to leave prison, return home, and stabilize in the community. The agency's programs include our policy and advocacy on law enforcement issues, our one-stop Resource Center, our Employment Program, Permanent and Transitional Housing, and our 9 Yards Reentry Program. OpenDoors programs seek to promote economic self-sufficiency and reduce crime by improving job-readiness, addressing barriers to employment, and providing supportive housing.

OUR PURPOSE

At OpenDoors, we work towards building a world that invests in people not punishment.



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CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PATRICK WESTFALL
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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KOREN CARBUCCIA
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



RONALD HOPKINS
9 YARDS CASE MANAGER



ALETICIA K TJERINA
PROGRAM SPECIALIST VISTA



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POLICY SPECIALIST VISTA



BRIANNA CHIU
GRAPHIC DESIGN INTERN



CARA COTE
INTAKE SPECIALIST



HALEY MCKEE
POLICY AND MEDIA SPECIALIST



JUSTIN THOMAS
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

OUR STAFF



COVID RESPONSE EFFORTS FEED HUNDREDS

FEEDING THE HUNGRY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

In March of 2020, OpenDoors responded to the coronavirus crisis by establishing a relief fund to help individuals experiencing homelessness, facing food insecurity, and returning home from prison practice safe social distancing and maintain stability. We raised over \$10,000 for the fund, which provided over 50 tents and various supplies for Rhode Islanders living on the streets; clean socks, underwear, and sheets for men coming home from prison; and food for those most vulnerable to the virus.

The fund helped restore hope in the lives of the marginalized and forgotten even during these trying times. For five months, we delivered over 200 meals to Rhode Islanders across the state struggling to eat because of closed food pantries and soup kitchens. Through partnerships with the City of Providence, Hudson Street, and volunteers from St. Martin's Church, we were able to feed the homeless through direct outreach at local Providence and Pawtucket bus terminals, as well as low income families all over Rhode Island.

Despite 2020's challenges, we appreciate all the ways our community has come together to support one another in these unprecedented times. To everyone who donated to our relief fund, thank you!





NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN INSTILLS HOPE

GARDENTIME PARTNERSHIP BRINGS GARDENING PROGRAM TO OPENDOORS

In the fall of 2019, OpenDoors partnered with Garden Time, a non-profit organization that runs gardening programs for men and women at the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institutions, and connects its graduates to employment programs and opportunities in the green industries upon their release. Our partnership resulted in a new Reentry Community Garden at our public housing building in Providence, and come spring-time, this garden will be used by OpenDoors residents and Garden Time graduates. In the years to come, Garden Time will use this new community garden space to host further classes and workshops for the men and women who participated in their program while incarcerated—allowing them to continue gardening on the outside.

OpenDoors and Garden Time hope that this space can help low-income families who have been impacted by the justice system access fresh, locally grown produce and that it will serve as an educational space for OpenDoors clients, Garden Time participants, and community members in the surrounding Silver Lake area. Food justice is intertwined with environmental, racial, and social justice, and we hope this initiative with Garden Time will help our community grow and flourish in new ways.



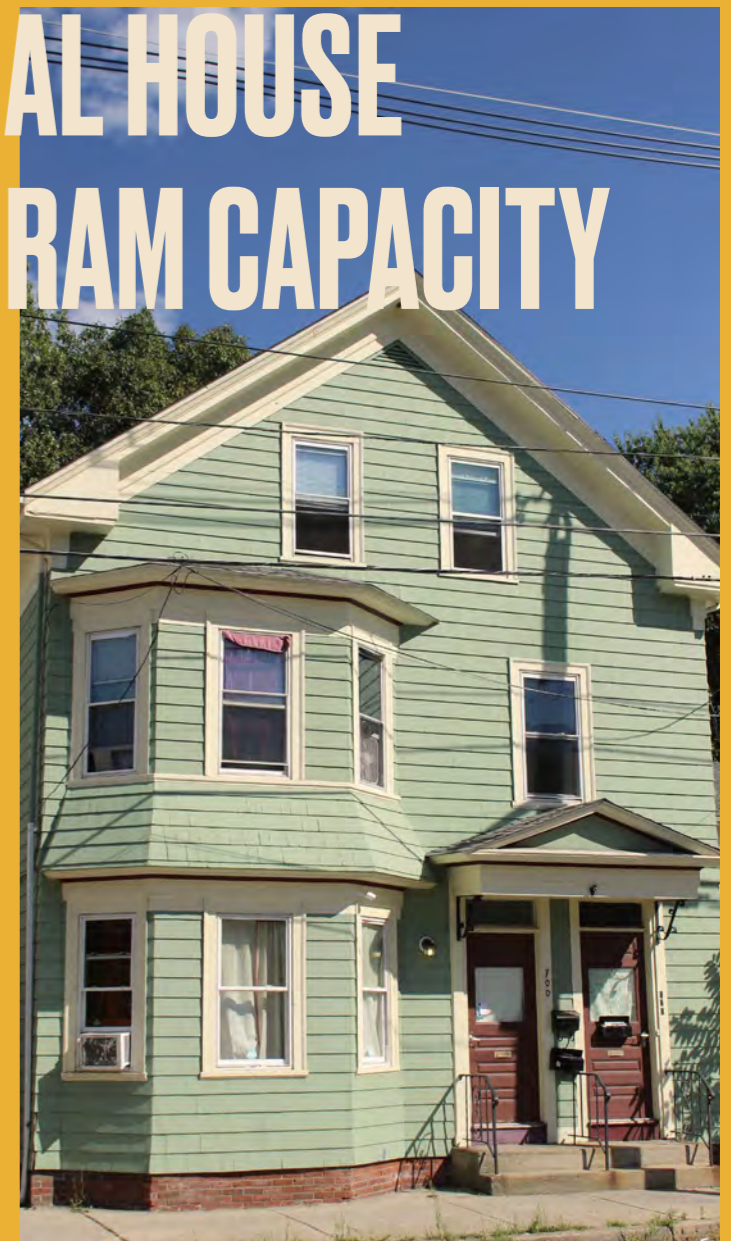
NEW TRANSITIONAL HOUSE INCREASES PROGRAM CAPACITY

14 ADDITIONAL BEDS TO SUPPORT MEN COMING HOME

OpenDoors opened its newest transitional house for men returning to the community from incarceration in the spring of 2020. The house is located a few blocks away from our Plainfield Street housing and office building in the Silver Lake area of Providence, and provides 14 additional beds of reentry transitional housing.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, OpenDoors provided these beds as emergency alternatives to incarcerated individuals seeking release due to risks from Covid infection. We worked closely with Federal Probation to provide housing to individuals provided medical release by the Federal Court, as well as collaborating with the ACLU to provide housing plans for individuals being held on ICE-Detainers at the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls.

This expansion allows OpenDoors to provide an intermediate form of transitional housing in tandem with our recovery house in Pawtucket and our section-8 housing units. Given the barriers to housing that people with criminal records face in Rhode Island, this additional housing will help our clients successfully take the gradual steps from prison to fully independent living.



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

ALADIN MUMINOVIC

Aladin moved to New Hampshire with his family when he was eleven, fleeing the Bosnian war. They were granted refugee status and the rest of his family became US citizens. Aladin never went through the citizenship process, and continued to live in the country as a permanent resident. As he was growing up, Aladin struggled with addiction and went to prison for a few short stays. Then, in 2019, he was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement for an old drug charge and held in the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls for close to a year, awaiting deportation hearings. Aladin is one of twenty-five ICE detainees released in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic, and due to his addiction history and lack of local family he was released to the OpenDoors transitional housing program. For the last 9 months, Aladin has worked, engaged in addiction counseling, and helped build a community of support at OpenDoors.



Aladin Muminovitch and his father

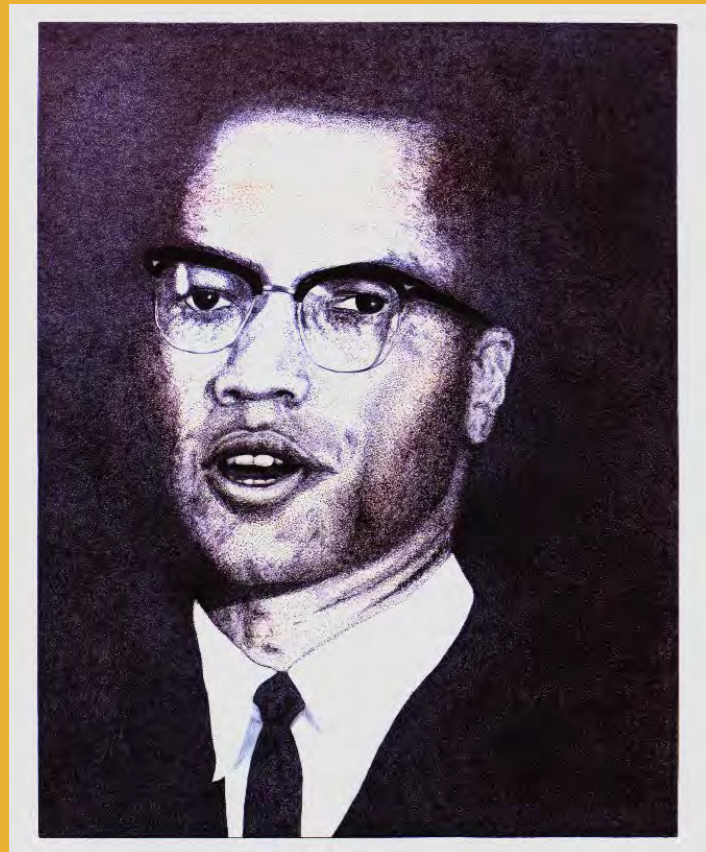
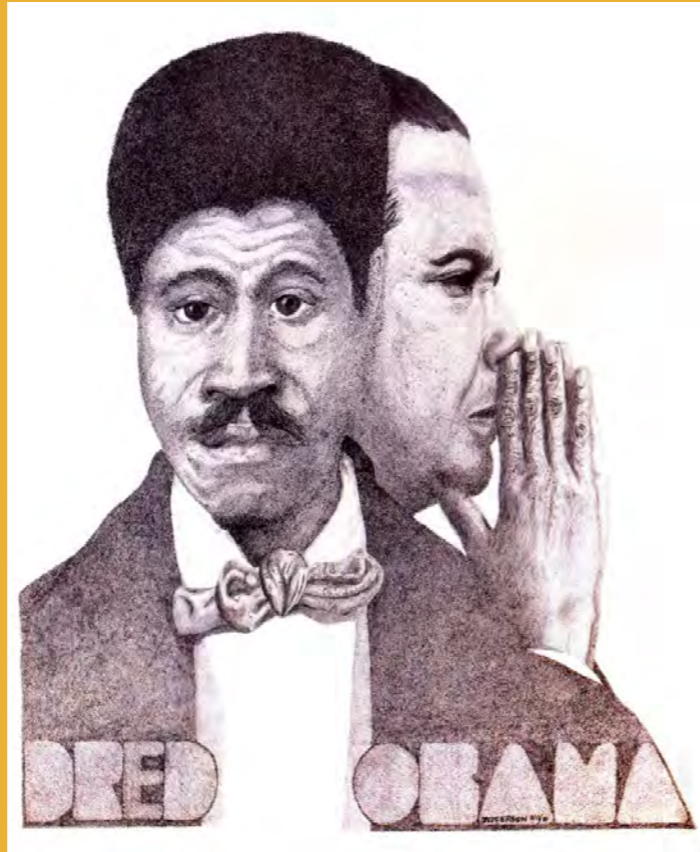
SPOTLIGHT

LEONARD JEFFERSON

Leonard Jefferson's story is one of resilience in the face of many obstacles. He grew up in Long View, Texas, as well as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and after the 11th grade, was drafted to serve for the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War. Leonard served as an infrastructural laborer in Vietnam until 1966 when he came home. Throughout the Civil Rights Era, Leonard's political consciousness grew strong, as his personal experience in the war and his unjust experiences with the criminal legal system informed him first-hand about the racialized carceral disparities within our country.

In 1973, Leonard came to Rhode Island to work in a textile mill and since then, has held jobs as an auto mechanic, and bank teller. But his true passions lie in the creative arts: drawing, painting, stained-glass work, spoken word poetry, writing, and music. His life and politically charged artwork are chronicled in a book he published in 2012, "Pennsylvania Imprisons Blacks at Highest Rate", named after an article published about his story and the stories of many others. He has received multiple awards for his art, such as 1st place in the annual IMAGES exhibition put on by the University of Pittsburgh.

After serving a total of 37 years in prison, Leonard was released on parole in 2019 and moved into OpenDoors transitional housing. He has successfully completed our 9 Yards program, found community service opportunities, and after nine months, obtained permanent housing of his own. Leonard continues to stay politically active as an organizer with the "Behind the Walls" Committee at Direct Action for Rights and Equality, (D.A.R.E.).



All original artwork courtesy of Leonard Jefferson



SPOTLIGHT

JACOB ABBRUZZESE

Jacob Abbruzzese is from Cranston, Rhode Island and has been a resident of our transitional housing at 700 Plainfield Street since May of 2020. He comes to OpenDoors on pretrial release from federal detention at the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls, with a new outlook on life and unmatched determination. Jacob is 14 months into his sobriety and has found confidence and solace in his ability to move forward along a new path.

Formerly an IRS employee with a wife and three children, a divorce led him into a downward spiral and 10 years of crystal meth addiction—a place and a lifestyle Jacob never thought he would make it out of. Today, his life looks entirely different. He's rebuilt strong relationships with his children, found community in peer support, and is beginning training as a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist himself. He enjoys his full time job at Restaurant Depot, and his return to a life of responsibility and self-sufficiency. When asked about his future, he states he sees opportunities to move up in the Restaurant Depot company, but his ultimate goal is to be a resource for people going through what he once was.

When asked about his experience since release Jacob notes, "OpenDoors' 9-yards Program has helped me return

control to my life and I want to be able to lead others through telling my story. I still feel that I was put here on this earth to do great things and that's the message I want to get out; people who deal with addiction are worth saving, are worth another chance. I would love to someday be a substance abuse counselor, be the sponsor at the NA meetings, be the guy who can talk someone through their darkest moments, because I've been there and I understand. I know that not everyday is going to be easy, but there's no one in my life now with a self-serving agenda, and I know now that drugs don't fix problems. I spent a long time trying to escape reality, but now I rely on a higher power. I have surrendered myself to life and everyday I cling to the core beliefs I have once again found and a plan for the future. Everyone at the transitional houses has been so welcoming and treated me like they truly care, so I just take it day by day."

Down the road, Jacob will have more legal trials but he remains focused on his sobriety and a life of stability despite the uncertainty. He feels hopeful that evidence of his rehabilitation will ease the outcomes. He has been a selfless helping hand to others in the transitional housing and a joy to have with us.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

This year, in addition to our regularly supplied services, we worked with the RI Department of Corrections to give Rhode Islanders who are currently incarcerated a direct line of contact to our Resource Center. It has become a vital source of aid for those nearing release or parole and seeking more comprehensive discharge planning services.



Resource Center Coordinator Koren Carbuccia takes a call directly from someone imprisoned in the ACI.

71

INDIVIDUALS PROVIDED TRANSITIONAL OR PERMANENT HOUSING AT OpenDoors

488

CLIENTS RECEIVED SERVICES AT OUR RESOURCE CENTER

32

PEOPLE IN OUR JOB PROGRAM REPORTED FINDING EMPLOYMENT

81

INTAKES FOR PEOPLE PREPARING FOR RELEASE FROM PRISON

350

RIPTIKS GIVEN FOR TRANSPORTATION TO WORK AND PROGRAMMING

\$17,108

OF NECESSITY FUNDS PROVIDED IN DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

INVESTING IN PEOPLE, NOT PRISONS

This year, OpenDoors pursued multiple initiatives concerning the reinvestment of resources currently used to arrest and incarcerate Rhode Islanders into evidence-based rehabilitative alternatives—programs that promote addiction recovery, increase employment, prevent crime, and reduce incarceration. We've been working in partnership and coalition with many other local organizations to push for meaningful changes to our criminal legal system, in the wake of a pandemic that has had particularly detrimental effects on the low-income, and minority Rhode Island communities that are overrepresented in Rhode Island's prison.

OpenDoors worked on several important justice reinvestment policy issues this year. As part of the State's FY 21 Budget, OpenDoors worked with a large number of stakeholders, including the Council of State Churches, the NAACP, and legislators, to allocate funds within the DOC budget for community based reentry services. OpenDoors also helped create the Close High Security Coalition to end the use of long-term solitary confinement in the ACI and close the High Security Center. The state currently spends around \$17 million dollars to incarcerate around 85 people a year in this highly restrictive facility, and this coalition is working to end this practice, freeing up funding that can be reinvested into more rehabilitative solutions.

Another one of our ongoing initiatives entails the study of court fines and fees. OpenDoors presented at the 'Summit on Fines, Fees, and Mandatory Assessments' on our fifteen years of progress reforming the state's court fine and fee collection practices, which has dramatically reduced the use of de-facto 'debtor's prison' in the state. OpenDoors is now leading a research and policy project for the City of Providence to re-evaluate the city's use of municipal fines and fees, which will hopefully result in significant policy changes at the city level in 2021.

OpenDoors has worked to push Rhode Island to reinvest in people, not prisons in 2020 and will continue these efforts in 2021.



JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

Investing in People. Not Punishment.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS FOR MAKING 2020 A SUCCESS!

2020 was a hard year for all of us. Facing a global pandemic challenged our community in new ways, but you stood up for the most vulnerable, and for that we are forever grateful. From preparing meal bags for the homeless to donating to our COVID Response Fund, all of your contributions allowed us to support those struggling most throughout this trying year.

So, thank you for helping us open up our doors during some of the most difficult times for our community. Because of you, we were able to provide direct support to people with criminal records facing severe obstacles to housing, employment, and stability.



SPECIAL THANKS FOR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

Liz Chace
Judge Jack McConnell
Clay Rockefeller
Bishop Knisely and the Episcopal Diocese

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2020 FUNDERS:

The City of Providence
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island
Governor's Workforce Board of Rhode Island
Rhode Island Department of Health
Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals
United Way of Rhode Island
The Rhode Island Foundation
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Social Justice Investments

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The Board, as required by bylaws, has a membership comprised of 25% people that either are formerly incarcerated or have family members that were incarcerated.