

Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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FOOD BRANDS FIGHT THE BACKGROUND CHECK

[Source: tastecooking.com 9/14/21](https://tastecooking.com/9/14/21)

A growing number of bakeries, restaurants, and ice cream companies are leading the charge to employ the formerly incarcerated.

"It's the same work I was used to in prison, but the difference is that, in prison, I was working for 10 cents a day." Alvin Wilson is a 66-year-old baker. Living in New York's Westchester County with his sister, he's spent the last seven years mixing brownie batter ingredients and packing the baked result at Greyston Bakery, the organization whose brownies can be found in your favorite scoop of Ben & Jerry's, from Chocolate Fudge Brownie to Brownie Batter Core. Greyston was founded in 1982 as an "incubator for open hiring," says the company's CEO, Joseph Kenner. Open hiring, second-chance employment, and "Ban the Box" activism are company practices that both eliminate background checks and actively recruit formerly incarcerated individuals, who are often up against stigma and discrimination while searching for jobs.

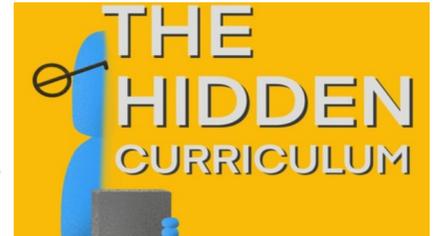
According to the American Civil Liberties Union, 75 percent of returning citizens are still unemployed a year after their release, and a 2021 report by the US Chamber of Commerce says that having a criminal record reduces employment callback rates by 50 percent for white men and 65 percent for Black men. "A lot of doors are closed for formerly incarcerated people such as myself," shares Mickey Wilkerson, who, after spending only three weeks incarcerated on New York's Rikers Island, had to put months of initiative (and patience) into getting her driver's license authorized—much less establishing full-time employment. The irony in Wilkerson's story, and that of many others, is what Alvin Wilson alludes to when mentioning his horrifying paycheck while behind bars: big-time food corporations have been leaning on incarcerated labor for decades as part of their supply chain. Yet once released, these same individuals are labeled as anything from a threat to the work environment to an unreliable employee, based on archaic, racist stereotypes.

The argument for open or second-chance hiring is first and foremost for companies to respond to this pool of potential workers, made up of Wilkerson and her compatriots, which is too often overlooked. Kenner, Greyston's CEO, argues that, particularly for an industry with razor-thin margins—which is also currently plagued with one of the greatest labor crunches in a generation—business can thrive when you incorporate open hiring. "Our partners are seeing their time to hire go from an average of 30 days to five or seven," he shares. "Right off the bat, the time, money, and resources that go into excluding people through background checks, résumé requirements, and interviews are re-allocated to better wages and keeping people."



The hidden curriculum of the registry

By Don R. . . The registry has a teaching function, as do the laws that relate to the registry. The obvious message is to follow the rules that the laws prescribe. But little concern is given to a second message, the sub-text, conveyed to registrants in these laws because it is “hidden” in the assumptions of the law as well as in the process of following the law. There are messages, indeed an entire curriculum, that is conveyed to registrants of which they—and often the writers of laws— seem to be unaware.



The concept of a hidden curriculum comes from research of children in working-class schools compared with upper-class schools. Researchers found that children in upper-class schools were given more time to answer questions asked in class, communicating the expectation that they would answer correctly if given enough time. The body language of the teacher communicated the same expectation. In contrast, the amount of time given to students in working-class schools was shorter, subtly conveying the message that they were not expected to give the correct answer. The body language and tone of voice used by the teacher communicated that they were expected to take orders, not give them; they were to be followers, not leaders. If a person looked only at what was being taught, this hidden curriculum remained covert, but careful examination of how classes were taught revealed the assumptions behind the teaching (Gearing and Epstein, 1982).

While in therapy for the offense that resulted in being listed on the registry, I carefully tracked and recorded my thinking and actions involved in going to a nearby drugstore for a jar of mayonnaise. The account is filled with concern to spot any possible child so that they could be carefully avoided. The goal was complete avoidance of children, an idea regularly underscored by my therapist and probation officer. Every few feet I would scan the surrounding area for children and take an alternate route to avoid any possible contact. Even eye contact could be considered a violation of the law, I had been told. The scanning and avoidance continued, such as taking an alternate aisle when a child was seen in the aisle with mayonnaise, followed by waiting and checking to see if the child had moved on. Eventually I was able to make the purchase, but not without worry that someone in the checkout line next to me might have their child join the line.

I will admit that I was perhaps too careful, but I had heard repeatedly that jail could be the result of not being vigilant. The therapist once scolded me for not leaving a restaurant immediately when a family with two children sat at the next table. “All they have to do is accidentally touch you, and if an officer sees it and recognizes you, you can plan on a trip to the county jail.” It may well be that the therapist exaggerated, but at that point in therapy, I took everything I was told quite literally. I knew I did not want to return to the correctional system!

But what was the hidden curriculum of the rule to avoid children at all cost? Examining the results of such rules helps reveal what is being taught in a subtle manner. First, children must be “scanned” for and avoided constantly, for fear they might accidentally wave at you or say something to you. I had ignored children much of the time until I got into therapy, but now I learned they were dangerous and thus their presence must be monitored constantly. While done for a different purpose, this is of course the behavior of someone who solicits a child sexually. My actions and behavior were being subtly shaped into those of a pedophile actively seeking children.

I was not allowed to attend church. There were too many children there, I was told, and the possibility of accidental contact was too great. The therapist and probation officer worked with the pastor for me to have “chaperones” in church, observing me at least occasionally to be sure I did not get close to any children. There are two adult males in my church who have learned that I am potentially a reoffender, and their expectation now is that I will do so. This seemed absurd to me, since my original offense was not a contact offense. But the expectation of my harming a child is now in the minds of two leaders of the church and no doubt their spouses and other leaders in the church. I am expected to do something worse than my offense, which was looking at a computer screen.

The expectation influences perception. Anything that is deemed suspicious, such as a child entering the pew in which I am seated, is now a dangerous situation. As a result, I am instructed by the therapist and probation officer to move to a new row if this occurs. I must also move if a child sits directly in front of me or behind me, regardless of whether parents are present or not. This was for my own good, I was told, because anyone visiting could get the wrong impression. No doubt that was true, but particularly if the visitor was a police officer who knew my situation. Upon talking with the pastor, I decided to stop attending church.

It occurred to me that these rules were shaping me into taking the role of a deviant. These rules were written for people who are different from the average person, different in a sexual manner. Because a person is forced to take a deviant perspective to follow a rule, he or she tends to think from that perspective. The hidden curriculum gradually shapes the person into someone she or he is not. Any self-doubt that may exist is repeatedly confirmed by such laws. The message is, “You are abnormal.”

To pigeonhole people as perverse, and to influence them to act in an abnormal manner, is likely to create people who are in some ways abnormal and at the very least increases the likelihood of other problems.

As a society, we have created a nightmare for the many who will never reoffend and are not a threat to communities. Fortunately, many registrants refuse to let their status define who they are. Those who do succumb to the hidden messages do not always reoffend. They may commit suicide because they are convinced they lack worth and value. They may give up on a society that has rejected them and turn to criminal behavior in order to survive, a decision that supports the image they now hold of themselves. Interestingly, that behavior rarely involves any sexual component. They may survive for a while following this track, but when caught, they are now “recidivists” (at least as some count recidivism), and most everyone assumes they have reoffended sexually.

But the registrants I know stubbornly resist the labels and the hidden agendas of registry laws. They want to prove them wrong, because they are wrong. But such restrictions are in essence an additional sentence for registrants, forced on them after they have “served their time” and paid the prescribed penalties. **(continue on page 3)**



The hidden curriculum of the registry

It may be that some who favor such harsh laws see something of themselves in those who break society's laws. They may, at some unconscious level, see the shutting away of the "deviants" as a way of avoiding their own struggles with sexual attraction to children. It is easy to project deep fears about self upon others, and what group is more vulnerable to this than those who are on the registry?

For the most part, though, such harsh sexual offense laws are the product of sheer ignorance. There is a great deal of research that reveals the many misconceptions about registrants. Perhaps one day that work will receive the recognition it deserves. Perhaps someday there be justice for those on the registry. And perhaps our grandchildren, or their children, will ask us how it was that people could assume such terrible things about others without really knowing them. What will we tell them?

In the meantime, we who are registrants who are not reoffending must reject the "sex offender" label and status. We are not sex offenders if we have changed. It is an identity that must be categorically rejected. It is true that at some point in the past we have offended. But that is what we did, not who we are. It is the past, not the present. We have learned to be better, even if society fails to recognize that fact. And thus we must—when possible—become educators who, by the way we live our lives, reveal the lies hidden in the registry laws.

We must stop letting the worst of the past define who we are in the present. We choose life by being the best people we can be, by being trustworthy neighbors and friends who do not fit the stereotypes that others have designed for us. We must be who we were born to be, not what laws imply that we are. We are worthwhile. We are valuable. We do not deserve injustice from unfair laws and the pre-judgements of people. We deserve justice. All of us. Every one of us.

The Treasure Chest HELP WANTED

Jesus said, "Oh, how I long to gather you up like chicks under a hen's wings." I wish I could help every one of you because, I believe in you and what the Lord is doing within you. For God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen that no flesh would glory in his presence. What encouraging words! Some of the smartest people I ever met were inside the prison walls. **They were just using their energy in the wrong ways.** I know the church is alive inside the fences. The reality is the needs are more than I can supply. This newsletter goes to prisons all over the United States. LAM ministry is a New Mexico based organization. Anyone who as ever tried to do an interstate compact knows that there are challenges to getting into the receiving state. The parole department (DOC) does not just open their arms and lovingly invite criminals from other states, especially SOs. One must have family ties, a support system, potential employment and housing, to receive a fair shot at interstate compact. However, there are 11 prisons in the state of New Mexico that we can reach out to. These men and women would have much greater odds of being ap-

proved, by the DOC, to be allowed to be a part of this community, upon their release. We are looking for the men and women who have embraced their time of corrections. Cultivated the soil of their hearts. Who have worked on the thoughts of their minds. Taking every thought captive and bringing it into the obedience of Jesus Christ. **Those of you who desire to be assets to The Kingdom, their families, community and society.** We have opportunities here in Tucumcari for employment, housing, and support system. Do not be deceived. You must work on yourself while you are there. By preparing your heart, mind, and employment skills. That you may hit the ground running once you arrive. **"There are no free lunches."** This small city needs every type of laborers for its workforce. LAM ministries is an agriculturally based ministry. Recently we met with the administration of the local community college (Mesa lands), who is the leading distance education provider into the prison system in New Mexico. We are currently working on getting curriculum into the prisons in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, bio fuel production, and renewable energies. However, this community of 10,000 needs workers in every field of employment from common labor, construction, clerical, com-

puters, culinary arts, mechanics and tradesmen of all sorts. Legacy Acres Ministries wants to come along beside you and assist you in becoming a successful returning citizen. Our goal as a 501©(3) nonprofit prison outreach is to provide educational materials to the returning citizen (**that qualifies by application**) that will enhance their employment opportunities upon their release. **Earnestly seek the Lord in prayer** and if you feel led, by the Holy spirit, to be a part of this ministry and community, and you have taken the necessary steps to understand your cycle of abuse, but, more importantly, how to interrupt your cycle that you may never re-offend again. We are willing to walk with you in your new life and road of successful recovery.

LAMB PO BOX 473 Tucumcari NM 88401 Wonderful blessings await you. **There is life after prison!**





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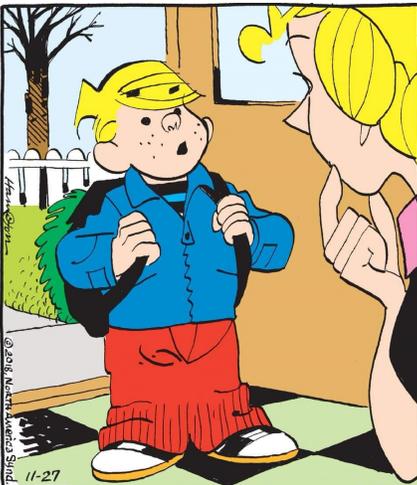
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We're on the Web
titushouseministries.org

Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



"THEY'RE GONNA TEACH US CURSIVE IN SCHOOL, BUT I TOLD 'EM I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TALK THAT WAY."

Being a Christian is like being a pumpkin!

God picks you from the patch and brings you in.
(John 15:16)

Then washes all the dirt off of you.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

He opens you up and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc.
(Romans 6:6:)

Then He carves you a new smiling face.
(Psalm 71:23)

And He puts His light inside you to shine for all the world to see.
(Matthew 5:16)




Circle of Concern has gone **ZOOM**

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered citizens, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We are meeting this month on **October 17, 2021** at 3 pm—5 p.m. MST. We will meet on Zoom. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.. He will send you the link to join by computer or phone. You can contact him at the number above or email him at

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