

Lunchtime Speakers

**Catherine Abrams
and
Desmond Haneef-Perry**
RECTIFY

Lunchtime Speaker

Catherine Abrams, LCSW-C, CAC-AD, RPS at RECTIFY



Catherine Abrams is the co-founder and clinical program manager at RECTIFY. She holds independent clinical social work licensure in Maryland and certification as a substance abuse counselor and peer supervisor. Cat earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from Salisbury University.

She spent six years working as a clinical staff member inside numerous Maryland State Correctional Institutions, including release planning, crisis intervention, officer training, and development of the state's largest peer specialist program. Prior to her work behind the walls, Cat worked as a clinician in Maryland community re-entry and drug court programs.

She sits on the Maryland Addiction & Behavioral Health Professionals Certification Board as the Education and Credentialing Committee Chair, and is the clinical director for Pyramid Healthcare.

Lunchtime Speaker

Desmond Haneef-Perry, CPRS at RECTIFY



Desmond Haneef-Perry is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Peer Programs at RECTIFY, a Forensic Peer Specialist with the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, former Peer Criminal Justice Coordinator at Helping Others Through Empowerment (HOPE), and served as the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Navigator at 3c Recovery Support Training Institute.

Entering prison at the age of 19, he served a total of 20 years on a Life sentence behind bars before being released in May of 2022. As an Inside Peer, Desmond helped to organize, coordinate, and facilitate the most extensive substance use disorder program in the Maryland Division of Corrections

The Jessup Experience

— Catherine Abrams, LCSW-C, CAC-AD, RPS —
Desmond Haneef Perry, CPRS —

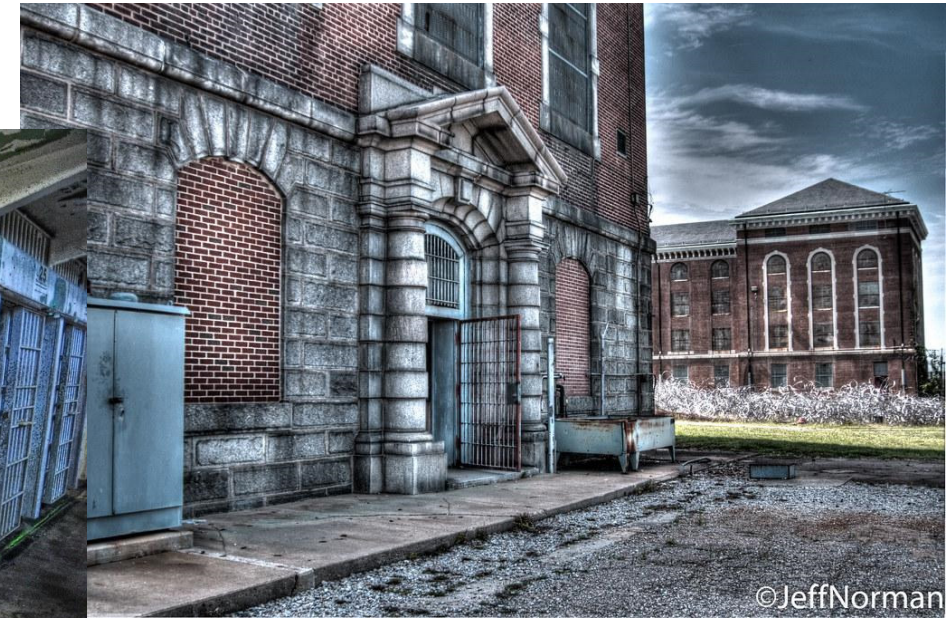
Jessup Correctional Institution

- Maximum Security male institution located between Baltimore City and Washington DC
- Houses a population of 1800 between a parole retake unit, intake unit, regional hospital, and general population
- Between $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{2}{3}$ of the state's juvenile lifer population resides at JCI



The Cut

The Maryland House of Corrections- The location where JCI currently stands- Maryland's Maximum Security Prison from 1879 to 2007 was infamous for the high levels of violence that occurred behind the walls.



Imagine living in a place where most of the prison population has "given up". A place where people don't care because they know that they are going to die in prison. Out of maybe 3500 inmates, maybe 1% of them may receive some type of legal remedy through N.J.'s appeal process. Once you're convicted of a crime in N.J., 9 times out of 10, you're serving the entire sentence. So, with no way out, people feel hopeless, tired, angry and just don't give a xxxx about life in general. Life has no value in Trenton.

Locked Down During a Pandemic

Even with the best efforts prisons and communicable living situations were highly contagious environments during the height of COVID-19. Maryland prisons, like many across the nation, followed CDC guidelines and instituted precautions to decrease the spread of the COVID.

- Zero physical contact from outside
- 23 hours locked inside cell
- 1 hour a day allowed for recreation and shower
- Religious services cancelled
- No access to substance abuse treatment
- Discontinuation of all volunteer services
- No court proceedings or movement on cases
- No support groups
- Already limited non-custody staff reduced or removed to telework for safety

we have been locked down since 2020, just because of Covid-19. No yard, no library, no indoor rec. So mentally, I was drained and only cared about playing video games. But then I joined the SMART Recovery Program and studied it. I learned that it is unlike any other program ever. I've learned that it was a program based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) tools. It's not a meeting, but group discussions. The SMART Recovery Program is a non-profit organization that offers free, self-empowering, mutual help groups for obtaining from any substance or activity addiction.

The SMART Recovery Programs also fosters other wellness programs to help with the mental anxieties of the mundane effects of "Life with Covid 19". Not having physical contact with family members, dealing with the lockdowns, limited recreation & exercise, limited movement within the prison, plus the constant threat of Covid itself from the outside. It's overwhelming to say the least.

SMART Training Camp

- September 2021
- 40 Men were identified and trained as SMART Recovery Facilitators
- Used the SMART Facilitator Training Online version printed out
- 3 weeks of training for 3 days a week for 2 hours each day.
- Additional trainings added:
 - Trauma informed practices
 - ACEs
 - Basics on brain's reward pathway and neurotransmitters
 - Intensified training on motivational interviewing
- Men were organized into teams and assigned to one of the general population housing units to facilitate meetings.

The SMART Men

- 4 Housing Unit Teams with 10 - 6 facilitators and 1 Housing Unit team with 3 Facilitars
- Each Team has a Lead Facilitator how helps organizes all of the meetings and facilitators in the housing unit
- There are 2 Coordinators who help with the overall running of the program throughout the entire institution.
- The men facilitate 58 meetings a week to over 500 total combined participants.
- The program is 100% voluntary and offers zero institutional incentive.
- The participants receive a certificate of recognition after attending 20 meetings.
- Low barrier program that focuses on retention and maintaining connection with frequent infraction obtainers.

The Purple Badge

- Purple was used as a branding and identification for the program in the institution.
- Participants were able to identify the purple flyers as connected to SMART, then the facilitators started wearing purple identification badges with their names on them. Then participants were given purple folders when they joined the program.
- Soon purple signified connection and belonging to the SMART family.

SMART is exactly what's been missing, it creates a social structure that single handedly destroys apathy, encourages empathy and provides a safe environment in an otherwise destitute reality we incarcerated citizens are forced to contend with for decades long periods of time.

The SMART meetings we attend, the personal responsibility, the self work, the entire SMART family that develops over time is what it takes to build community; to reduce violence and to change culture. These things happen not because they are slated to but because once you give me tools like ABC's, CBA's and the like, the men myself included begin to rehabilitate self, the radiance of such interpersonal change is contagious and SMART spreads to the masses of men fiending for change.

I am writing to inform you that the S.M.A.R.T program have done what prison was suppose to do, it changed me for the better. I can not

& the hard work they put into it, put into us. I have never even known that there are labels for the things we do & go through, A.B.C (Activating event, Belief, Consequence), A lot of people go through this label in life, something kicks off you do something to the person, you believe it was right even though it may wasn't, then there ya consequence whatever it might be for me just. This program & these great facilitators have open my mind & make me think about my actions in life. So I thank them & this program with all my heart & I'm going to ~~keep~~ keep being SMART even when my 20 are up.

Building a Community Changing a Culture

Issues may be addressed. Moreover, it allows for people to speak to each other that normally would not speak due to various reasons. Not only does this make SMART incomparable to other prison programming, but it makes it the necessary prison programming.

As a lifer with almost fourteen years in, there have been numerous ineffective programs in prison. There appears to be only two methods. It's either preaching at or the

they don't matter. By acknowledging that what they say matters lets the group know that they matter. This changes the dynamics of the environment by making a rehall feel less like prison.

trust no one.

The impact of being isolated in a place where you are not valued is demoralizing and dehumanizing. The color barriers, culture barriers, and language barriers create a place where being heard is craved. Yet relationships begin through conversations that break barriers. Instead of a community with no resources, the SMART community assists by being willing to hear those who are rarely listened to. This is what not only moves the needle of criminal justice reform but is the place where

From the “Black Hole” to “The Jewel of Jessup”

- Decrease in overdose
- Decrease in substance toxicity
- Decrease in violence
- Changes in community interaction - inter-group cooperation
- Development of pro-social and collaborative forms of addressing institutional issues and requesting reforms
- Recognition from outside entities (parole, judges, other institutions)
- Brought training for career certification program from Department of Labor.

