

TO RESCUE AND RESTORE

Those who live in the shadows of society—the prisoner paying his debt to society, the teenager forced into a gang or stolen from parents to work in a third-world brothel, or the woman abused by a husband who promised to love her—suffer not only pain but hopelessness. It seems that the world has either forgotten them, or worse, deemed them unfit for rescue or restoration.

Into this void step courageous volunteers, charities, and caring neighbors who shine their light in some very dark places. It was exactly these types of healers who President Bush designed the faith-based initiative to support. This chapter presents a justice cluster of sorts, providing a snapshot of the faith- and community-based partners that serve prisoners, troubled teens, and abused women.

It was a paradox for the president's motorcade to arrive at a prisoner reentry facility located along the same Baltimore streets used to film the HBO gang-and-drugs series called *The Wire*. On the day following President Bush's last State of the Union address in January 2008, spending a full day at a hardscrabble inner-city neighborhood in the company of two dozen men whom society would prefer to forget was not in the White House communications team's script. But it was in the president's heart.

“Fellas, I’m here to tell you that America is a land of second chances,” said President Bush to the men of the Jericho re-entry project. Those assembled were understandably reticent to speak in the president’s company, so he broke the ice by saying, “You know, the Book I read says the first will be last and the last will be first.” Then he told them that they shared some common struggles. “You’ve heard of the twelve-step program, haven’t you?” inquired the President. They nodded. “Well, I had a two-step program. I found Jesus, and I quit drinking.”

One man among the group listening to this new rendition of the Texas two-step was Julius.⁵³ He sheepishly remarked that meeting a president was the most exciting moment in his life but that the experience was marred because he had to spend the time talking about his biggest failures. He went on to explain how he was starting over and how he desperately wanted his daughter to know the new version of himself.

When facing the national press an hour later, the president was prepared to give a summary of his prisoner reentry initiative and the good work being done at Jericho. White House speechwriters had included Julius’ story in the prepared remarks, and of course it would be necessary to spell out his failures in order for the press to appreciate how far he’d come. As the president turned to the talking points about Julius’ journey from drug dealer to re-engaged dad, I could sense his mind flashing back to the intimate exchange just moments earlier. And as Bush was himself the father of daughters, I had observed in earlier instances how tender he became when promoting the virtues of fatherhood and healthy families. Now, before the assembled press, I could tell he was envisioning Julius’ daughter watching the speech, and he didn’t want to rehearse Julius’

⁵³ Name changed to protect identity.

crimes. Like a quarterback calling an audible, the president lowered his cards and went off script.

With Julius standing at his side, Bush skipped over the prepared text and shared instead how he was a lot like the men at this facility. Then he repeated his earlier exchange with them about his own life struggles, this time before the cameras. I immediately surveyed the press pool and noticed that they had found their news hook; headlines in papers coast-to-coast the following day reported on his visit with this headline: “At Faith-Based Event, Bush Recalls Drinking Problem.”⁵⁴

To the press, Julius’ story was predictable, and the good work being done at this facility was impressive but not newsworthy. But a president of the United States reflecting on his own battles sold newspapers. So on the day following his last State of the Union address, the president traded a day’s worth of good news for some bad articles. What did he get in exchange? A family blessed by another step in the father’s recovery.

We were not there to win political points in the afterglow of the previous night’s State of the Union address. We were meeting with men who lost their voting rights and were hidden—if not despised—by society. We were not there to highlight our success but rather these men’s significance. President Bush’s kindness to Julius and his willingness to forfeit his media message for human dignity is among the many untold stories of his presidency.

It was also an unlikely story given that he was the leader of a political party known more for “lock ’em up” than help them out. Successful politicians in the 1970s through the 1990s often campaigned on a “get tough on crime” message. Republicans

⁵⁴ “At faith-based event, Bush recalls drinking problem,” <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/29/us-bush-faith-idUSN2962792620080129>.

Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, as well as Democrat Bill Clinton, each made the issue a key plank in their road to the White House. Violent crime had become a menacing problem over the past several decades, prompting judges and lawmakers to fill the jails with new laws like “three strikes” (imposing sentences of twenty-five years to life for persons convicted of three or more serious crimes) and a war on drugs.

The result was double to triple increases in jail and prison populations during the Nixon to Clinton administrations. From 1974 to 2001, the United States saw a 1.1 million increase in the number of adults in prison; up from 216,000—a five-fold increase! By the new millennium, America had 5 percent of the world’s population, but it was holding 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. There are approximately 1.5 million criminals behind bars at any given time, and roughly 650,000 are released each year. The cost associated with our prison system is staggering. Annual prison costs are approximately \$60 billion. Conservatively, the cost of housing a prisoner each year is \$25,000.^{55,56,57,58}

A Heart for Restorative Justice

Due to policies aimed primarily at maintaining order in the facilities, there has been more attention focused on restraint than rehabilitation. For example, contact with the outside world is significantly restricted for inmates to protect against contraband being smuggled in. The unintended consequences of this policy is that

⁵⁵ Thomas P. Bonczar, “Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974–2001” Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, 2003.

⁵⁶ Adam Liptak, “Inmate Count in U.S. Dwarfs Other Nations” *The New York Times*, April 23, 2008.

⁵⁷ E. Ann Carson and Daniela Golinelli, “Prisoners in 2012—Advance Counts” Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 25, 2013.

⁵⁸ United States Department of Justice.

prisoners become increasingly isolated from healthy outside influences and more acclimated to the values and behavior of fellow inmates.

The current system also falls short when it comes to prisoner reentry. The typical prison reentry program gives ex-convicts \$100 upon release and a one-way bus ticket back to the same social network that helped them get in trouble the first time. They are also met with unemployment and housing discrimination, compounded by their often-limited job skills and frequently their substance abuse or mental health problems. It's not surprising, therefore, that two-thirds of these former inmates are arrested for new crimes within three years of their release from prison. The wasted lives are tragic, and this formula makes for unstable communities when they're out and continued swelling prison populations when they're in.

George W. Bush acquired a passion for restorative justice during his days in Texas as a young aviator for the Texas Air National Guard in Houston, where he flew Convair F-102s with the 147th Reconnaissance Wing. Bush was recruited by former Houston Oiler tight end John White to be a mentor at an inner-city nonprofit called Project PULL (Professional United Leadership League). "It was tragic, heartbreaking, and uplifting, all at the same time," said Bush. "I saw a lot of poverty. I also saw bad choices: drugs, alcohol abuse, men who fathered children and walked away leaving single mothers struggling to raise children on their own." Then he found out that a young boy from PULL named Jimmy was killed in a gang shooting. Bush said this boy had been "like a little brother." His heartbreak was profound.⁵⁹

When he became the governor of Texas twenty years later, Bush made juvenile justice reform one of his top four priorities. He returned to Houston as governor to tour a Prison Fellowship

⁵⁹ George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 58.

program, the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, during its first year of operation. The prisoner reentry program offered Bible study, job training, and mentoring as a pathway to preparing for life outside the prison walls. Swept up in the moment, Governor Bush joined a group of fifty-five prison inmates in a rousing chorus of “Amazing Grace.”⁶⁰ He joined arms with a forty-six-year-old inmate named George Mason, a convicted murderer. It was not the only time the two would meet. As president, Bush was able to give Mason a hug when Mason visited the White House to participate in a briefing on the InnerChange program’s success in restoring ex-offender’s lives.

The InnerChange Freedom Initiative was tested in the Jester II Unit (nicknamed “God Pod”), and it became the signature effort by Prison Fellowship’s founder Chuck Colson, who observed a similar model achieving remarkable results in Brazil. Colson himself knew about second chances. A presidential aide in Nixon’s law-and-order White House, armed with service in the Marines, an Ivy League education, and a law degree, Colson thought his only flaw was pride. That changed on July 9, 1974, when he spent his first night in prison for his role in attempting to cover up the Watergate burglary. Prior to incarceration, his friend from politics, Raytheon chairman Tom Phillips, gave Colson a copy of C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*. This book was instrumental in leading Colson to become a practicing Christian while in prison.⁶¹

Colson’s religious conversion was greeted with widespread skepticism at first, but he lived a post-prison life marked by authentic witness, integrity between his beliefs and action, and a relentless love for the downtrodden, especially the prisoners who, like him, would be marked by their prison number for the rest of their lives.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 215.

⁶¹ Charles W. Colson, *Born Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008).

His desire to give other prisoners the inner joy and transformation he experienced, even while being “on the inside” behind bars, gave InnerChange its name and mission.

Colson went on to become a successful author and renowned Christian leader. He went far beyond public redemption to win the \$1 million Templeton Prize for religion. He donated the money to his ministry, Prison Fellowship, and raised many millions more over a quarter century following its founding. He recruited tens of thousands to work in more than two-thirds of America’s prisons, and he used his conservative credentials and political savvy to change “lock ’em up” policies to a restorative justice approach that prevented crime and redeemed prisoners’ lives so that they could make a healthy return to society.⁶²

More God, Less Crime

Dr. Byron Johnson, whose Baylor University research team I joined after leaving Washington, D.C., was invited to the White House in June 2003 along with Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson to present an evaluation of the InnerChange program Bush had visited five years earlier. Johnson’s research revealed that InnerChange program graduates were rearrested at an 8 percent rate, far lower than the 20 percent recidivism rate of the inmate control group.⁶³

President Bush liked what he saw of InnerChange when visiting the new program as Texas governor. Now, as president, he wanted to extend its benefits to prisoners across the country. On

⁶² Tim Weiner, “Charles W. Colson, Watergate Felon Who Became Evangelical Leader, Dies at 80,” *New York Times* (April 21, 2012).

⁶³ Since the 2003 release of Johnson’s research on InnerChange, Grant Duwe and Byron Johnson conducted a cost-benefit analysis of the InnerChange program in a Minnesota prison. This 2013 study not only found the InnerChange program effective in reducing recidivism, but also found that it saved Minnesota taxpayers more than \$8,300 per participant (<http://www.lifescienceglobal.com/home/cart?view=product&id=642>).

January 20, 2004, Bush delivered his State of the Union address, which included these words: “America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”⁶⁴ He then proposed a four-year, \$300 million Prisoner Reentry Initiative to help ex-convicts get help with jobs, housing, and life skills. This would become one of many “second chance” government-funded start-ups whose roots grew out of President Bush’s own faith.

Prisoner reentry affects all Americans. Its success or failure has implications for public safety, the welfare of children, family unification, and community health, and its challenges are significant. Employers typically view ex-offenders as a severe liability. If they were to commit a crime on the job, business owners could face a lawsuit that would potentially force them to close their doors.

A year before President Bush announced his national program, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives designed a \$25 million, three-year pilot program called Ready4Work to test various strategies. The agency’s faith-based director, Brent Orrell, collaborated with Public Private Ventures (PPV), prisoner reentry practitioners, scholars, and philanthropists to build Ready4Work so it could overcome the obstacles and build upon the research findings that ex-prisoners who find and keep steady jobs and get connected in their communities have a much better chance of staying out of jail.

Operating with faith-based partnerships in eleven cities, Ready4Work targeted those most likely to return to prison—eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old, nonviolent, nonsexual offenders.

⁶⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/01/20/sotu.transcript.7/index.html>

Across the country, the 4,500 ex-prisoners in the program were predominately black men, with an average age of twenty-six. Half had been arrested five or more times, and the majority had spent more than two years in prison.

With employment rates for ex-prisoners dismally low, the Ready4Work sites worked hard to provide job training for felons and nurture relationships with potential employers. Their work paid off, and almost 60 percent of Ready4Work participants got a job.⁶⁵

Mentors Make the Difference

Men and women leaving prison needed accountable and supportive relationships to work around their cultural deficit. Reentry can be a time filled with so much fear, anger, isolation, confusion, and sadness that it can send ex-prisoners spiraling back down unless someone is there for them. Mentors supply both emotional and practical support. The practical support is necessary to meet the dozens of everyday challenges that years in prison can make so daunting, such as finding a place to live, getting a driver's license, and figuring out how to commute to work.

For twenty-five years, Gary Walker of Public Private Ventures (PPV) has been designing, developing, and evaluating many of the nation's leading initiatives for at-risk youth. "Faith-based programs are rooted in building strong adult-youth relationships and are less concerned with training, schooling, and providing services, which don't have the same direct impact on individual behavior.... [Only mentors can say], 'You need to change your life, I'm here to help you do it, or you need to be put away.'"⁶⁶ PPV evaluated the

⁶⁵ *Ready4Work: Final Research Report*, U.S. Department of Labor, September 2008.

⁶⁶ <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/coh1.pdf>.

mentoring component specifically and found that those who met with a mentor were twice as likely to obtain a job and stay in that job longer.

Ready4Work partners with churches to cultivate mentors. Mentors range in age from eighteen to eighty; most are male; and more than 85 percent are African American. The last point is significant. Traditional mentoring programs have often found it difficult to recruit a diverse body of volunteers, but a heroic network of African American pastors have called parishioners into action.

James from Jacksonville, Florida, is a wonderful example of the power of a mentor. James had a ten-year criminal history by the age of twenty-eight. Thanks to the support he received from Operation New Hope, a church mentoring program that works in tandem with Ready4Work, he has been employed for more than two-and-a-half years and is earning \$11.25 per hour. He also has worked hard to repair his credit and was able to purchase a new home. Now he is giving back by return visits to Operation New Hope, where he shares his success in the Ready4Work program with others.

In his book, *Giving*, former President Bill Clinton lauded Operation New Hope and its founder, Rev. Kevin Gay, for its Ready4Work model.⁶⁷ As a presidential candidate, U.S. Senator Barack Obama also singled out Ready4Work as an example of the type of innovation he would pursue in his White House faith-based effort.

Scaling Prison Reform

When President Bush announced turning the trailblazing Ready4Work initiative into his full-scale Prisoner Reentry Initiative during the 2004 State of the Union Address, Julio Medina from New York City was seated next to First Lady Laura Bush. As founder of Exodus Transitional

⁶⁷ Bill Clinton, *Giving* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

Community (ETC), he has helped more than 3,000 men and women make the transition from prison to society. His own prison experience made him see that most of his fellow inmates did not want to continue a life of crime, but rather they simply wanted to be good citizens and heal some of the damage they had done.

However, when they got outside the prison walls and ran into barriers, they fell back into old patterns. He created ETC to help them overcome these obstacles, and he returns to prison regularly to deliver a message of hope. He also teaches at the New York Theological Seminary at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Auburn, New York.⁶⁸

At a White House Compassion in Action roundtable I hosted on prisoner reentry initiatives, Medina introduced us to Greg, a young man who was profiled in the documentary *Hard Road Home*,⁶⁹ which highlights Medina's East Harlem Ready4Work site. Greg was first incarcerated as a juvenile, and then a second time as a young adult where he spent two years in prison. When he arrived at Medina's Ready4Work program, it was obvious that he was a kid who had made some serious mistakes, but he also showed intelligence, humor, warmth, and tremendous potential. Greg thrived in Medina's program. At the premier of *Hard Road Home*, he stood in front of a nearly full, 1,200-seat theater and explained that his journey was not over. "I'm still getting services from Exodus," he said, "so I can improve my skills and get a better job."

Ready4Work has served nearly 5,000 incarcerated individuals like James in Jacksonville and Greg in East Harlem. On average, the program costs approximately \$4,500 per participant, which is far less than the \$25,000 to \$40,000 cost per year to house an inmate.

⁶⁸ http://www.etcny.org/Julio_Medina.html.

⁶⁹ *Hard Road Home*, Macky Alston and Andrea Meller, directors; Greenhouse Pictures, 2007.

Most important, Ready4Work re-arrest rates are 44 percent lower than the national average, and despair has been replaced with hope.

By the time President Bush arrived in Baltimore to visit the Jericho Project in January 2008, the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Labor (DOL) had implemented a new way of doing business, both inside the prison walls and post-release. DOJ was working with faith-based and community groups to prepare inmates for release, much like InnerChange, which had proven so successful in Texas. DOL built on its Ready4Work experience to partner with programs like Jericho to integrate these men and women back into society through good jobs and stable housing.

Between the DOJ and the DOL, there were thirty reentry programs being funded across the country, serving more than 10,000 ex-offenders. The vast majority of them were placed in jobs, and their re-arrest rate one year after release was less than half the national average. With final adoption of the Second Chance Act in 2008, the Bush era prisoner reentry reforms are now the new normal in criminal justice.⁷⁰

“And How Are the Children?”

Mentors are the key to keeping ex-convicts from re-offending, but mentors are also critical for keeping the children of former felons from pursuing the same path. Children of prisoners are more likely to face material and familial instability than their peers. And in America today, there are more than 1.7 million minors who have one or both parents in some form of state or federal criminal supervision.⁷¹As the national press continued to cover the faith-based initiative merely as a debate in church-state relations,

⁷⁰United States Department of Justice.

⁷¹“Parents in Prison and their Minor Children,” Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010).

President Bush rallied the faith community to volunteer its time and invest its love in these at-risk youth. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives director Bobby Polito collaborated with HHS Assistant Secretary Wade Horn to invest \$49 million per year in the national Mentoring Children of Prisoners initiative. The program paired more than 100,000 children of prisoners with volunteer mentors from 2003 to 2008. To comprehend the enormity of this accomplishment, note that it took the esteemed Big Brothers Big Sisters *100 years* to find mentor matches for 100,000 children.

Much like InnerChange was the grassroots, faith-based inspiration behind the Prisoner Reentry program, President Bush's first faith-based director, John DiIulio, found the blueprints for President Bush's eventual Mentoring Children of Prisoners initiative in a Big Brothers Big Sisters/Public Private Partners venture called Amachi.⁷² Led by the former mayor of Philadelphia, Reverend Wilson Goode, Amachi matches loving, faith-motivated mentors with at-risk children. They recruit mentors from the same neighborhoods where the kids live, which helps create a stronger community connection. Mentors are inspired by the program's mission, which is captured in its name. "Amachi" is a Nigerian Ibo word meaning "Who knows but what God has brought us through this child." The mentors help answer to that question in many positive ways.

Rev. Goode invokes another African saying to recruit mentors. He explains that the Masai warriors greet one another each morning with the phrase "Casserian Engeri." Translated, this means "And how are the children?" Warriors always give the traditional answer,

⁷²<http://www.amachimentoring.org>.

“All the children are well,” whether they are fathers or not. This priority of protecting the young and powerless meant that their community was safe and at peace. It’s a question Goode challenges Americans to adopt, and it’s a promise that the Mentoring Children of Prisoners initiative helped fulfill.

Consider the story of Kayla Booze, an angry teenager in New Orleans at risk of dropping out of school. Kayla had been an eager elementary student who got As in her classes and loved art projects before her father was arrested for shooting a man in a barbershop fight. Entering middle school lost in a haze of confusion and frustration over her absent father, Kayla was paired with Brenda Williams through the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program. Williams met with Kayla every two weeks. The two would go to church and out for meals, or they’d simply go for a walk in the park. Williams even joined Kayla’s mom for a meeting with the principal to discuss Kayla’s declining grades. Together, both mom and mentor sprung into action, and Kayla restored her grades, taught herself piano, and began preparing for college.⁷³

The Obama administration ended the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program in 2012 despite the best efforts of Miss America 2012, Laura Kaepler, who used her crown to lobby for the Domestic Policy Council to restore the funding. The Kenosha, Wisconsin, native had watched her own father taken to prison for a white-collar crime, and she credits a family friend for being her mentor during the crisis. “After dance class, she would do something as small as take me to McDonald’s for a fifty-cent ice-cream cone and sit there in the parking lot and talk,” Kaepler said. “Had I not had Katie’s guidance, it would have been very

⁷³ <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/2012/0325/No-child-left-alone-Volunteers-mentor-children-of-inmates>.

easy to go down a negative path and follow a negative crowd of friends.”⁷⁴

One Heart

Undeterred by the federal government’s diminished role, Big Brothers Big Sisters continues to expand its effort. In recent years, they’ve been teaming up with Texas high-school football to create a statewide mentoring initiative. The vision for the initiative grew out of a football game that showed how sports can be used to change lives.

To the casual fan, the last game of the season between Gainesville State School and Grapevine Faith Christian School appeared like any other prep school contest. The two teams from north of Dallas squared off under the Friday Night Lights; the band played, the popcorn popped, and the crowd cheered. But the color scheme was somehow out of place.

The Grapevine Faith Lions were donned in their red “home” jerseys. Their fans wore red coats, hats, and sweaters to brave the October North Texas chill. The opposing Gainesville State Tornados wore their white “away” team jerseys. So why had all those red-clad Lions fans formed a forty-yard cheer tunnel with a banner that said “Go Tornados” to welcome the opponents onto the field? And why had some 200 Lions fans filled the Tornados sideline bleachers to cheer for the visiting players by name?

Gainesville’s quarterback and linebacker, Isaiah, was confused. He told sportswriter Rick Reilly, “I never in my life thought I’d hear people cheering for us to hit their kids, they wanted us to.” In Riley’s recounting of the story for ESPN, Riley quoted Isaiah’s

⁷⁴ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, “Miss America has a faith-based platform for kids of prisoners,” June 6, 2012, religionnews.com.

teammate Alex, who thought maybe the fans were confused. “They started yelling ‘DEE-fense!’ when their team had the ball. I said ‘What? Why are they cheerin’ for us?’”⁷⁵

The Gainesville Tornados hadn’t heard cheers in a long time, if ever. As a matter of fact, they are usually the recipients of jeers and snickers as they leave the field. Tornado lineman Gerald says, “We can tell people are a little afraid of us when we come to the games. You can see it in their eyes. They’re lookin’ at us like we’re criminals.”

The skeptical reaction is understandable. As their weekly opponents leave the field to hugs from classmates, a dozen uniformed officers line the Tornados for the ride back to their maximum-security facility, operated by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

There are no home games for these boys. Every game is on the road, and the only smiles they see through their face masks are for the other guys. That is, until they visited Grapevine.

When Gainesville appeared on the Lions schedule, head coach Kris Hogan had an idea. He emailed his team parents, asking them to help divide Lions’ fans in two so half could cheer for the other team. Coach Hogan figured the Gainesville boys had probably never been cheered for at a game—he suspected they had more drug, robbery, and assault charges than touchdowns. His heart broke over the boys whose families had disowned them. “Here’s the message I want you to send,” Coach Hogan wrote to his team parents. “You’re just as valuable as any other person on planet earth.”

Reilly wrote that some of the Lions players were confused by the coach’s game plan. Hogan replied, “Imagine you didn’t have a home life. Imagine if everybody had pretty much given up on you.

⁷⁵ <http://sports.espn.go.com/espnmag/story?id=3789373>.

Now imagine what it would mean for hundreds of people to suddenly believe in you.”

And that’s just what happened when the Lions’ parents and junior varsity cheerleading squad gave the Tornadoes their first-ever fans. The Grapevine players said that they could see hope fill the Tornadoes players’ eyes. They hit with more intensity as the game went on, and they showered their coach with Gatorade bottles following their 33-14 *loss* to the Lions. After the game, Gainesville coach Mark Williams grabbed Coach Hogan by the shoulders and shouted, “You’ll never know what your people did for these kids tonight. You’ll never, ever know.” Coach Williams later shared that most of his players are severely underdeveloped emotionally and socially. He said that their emotional maturity may have advanced three years during that ballgame.

This was evident the second the game clock ticked down to zero. When both teams assembled at midfield for prayer, Tornado quarterback Isaiah (Gainesville only releases first names) asked to lead the prayer. “Lord, I don’t know how this happened, so I don’t know how to say ‘thank you,’ but I never would’ve known there was so many people in the world that cared about us.” Coach Hogan’s tears gave testimony to the biblical admonition that it is better to give than receive.

Mentoring is about mutual transformation rather than one-way charity. Big Brothers Big Sisters CEO Charles Pierson is a former football player from Vanderbilt. He led the Texas Big Brothers Big Sisters operation before becoming CEO of the national office. On behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Pierson is partnering with Steve Riach, producer of a new movie called *One Heart*, which will bring the Gainesville-Grapevine game to the silver screen.⁷⁶ Pierson

⁷⁶ *One Heart*, director Mark Robert Ellis; Et3rné Films, 2013.

hopes people will realize the power of sports and mentors in changing young people's lives. Pierson also is collaborating with Byron Johnson, a criminologist at Baylor University in Texas, to form the One Heart Texas Mentoring Initiative to reach 1,000 juvenile offenders each year for three years. Baylor will evaluate the program to determine its effects on social competence, academic improvements, and reduced recidivism.

There are 200,000 of America's youth incarcerated in juvenile facilities like Gainesville, and many are them are children of prisoners. The human services systems are often inadequate to handle the type of challenges these children face. Pierson, Riach, and Johnson know of a community asset that has the solution: local churches. The Big Brothers Big Sisters experience with Amachi, and now *One Heart*, paves the way for the faith community to save young lives.

Helping America's Youth

Another Texan, Laura Bush, has a similar heart for at-risk youth, which prompted her to make Helping America's Youth her signature initiative as First Lady. Announced by President Bush in the 2005 State of the Union, Helping America's Youth was a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing youth, particularly at-risk boys like the ones at Gainesville, and to motivate caring adults to support youth in three key areas: family, school, and community.

Mrs. Bush began the effort by visiting exemplary programs, such as Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles. As his neighborhood achieved status as the gang capital of the world in the 1980s, Father Greg Boyle, or "Father G" to neighborhood kids, realized the only way to turn things around would be to work with gang members directly. Believing that "nothing stops a bullet like a job," he created an employment program for the gang members that eventually spun

off new business start-ups, such as Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Silkscreen, and Homeboy Graffiti Removal. Father G leveraged the kids' entrepreneurial talent and directed it in a constructive and profitable direction.

Mrs. Bush visited another gang violence prevention program in Chicago called CeaseFire, which sends former gang members to the streets as outreach workers. There they teach young people who've grown accustomed to violence what a better kind of cool looks like. The program's creator, Dr. Gary Slutkin, says that the former gangbangers are "followed around like Pied Pipers because these kids are so hungry for a good example."⁷⁷

A different type of organization that made a deep impression on the First Lady was the National Debate Project in Atlanta, which uses debate techniques to improve the critical thinking and leadership skills of K–12 students from low-income neighborhoods. It also teaches them to resolve conflicts with their minds rather than their fists. Students participating in the program debated such topics as whether the United States should intervene in Sudan and whether rap music should be allowed in schools.

These visits led to a White House Conference on Helping America's Youth held at Howard University in October 2005. Mrs. Bush assembled more than 500 parents, civic leaders, faith-based groups, and experts to assess the problem and design solutions. Research was presented demonstrating the unique challenges that America's youth face today. Said Mrs. Bush:

“We all know that the challenges facing young people in the United States today are far greater than they were for

⁷⁷ Dr. Gary Slutkin quoted in Laura Bush speech at Regional Conference on Helping America's Youth, November 8, 2007.

children just a generation ago. Drugs and gangs, predators on the Internet, violence on television and in real life are just some of the negative influences that are present everywhere today. And as children face these challenges, they often have fewer people to turn to for help. More children are raised in single-parent families, most often without a father. Millions of children have one or both of their parents in prison. Many boys and girls spend more time alone or with their peers than they do with any member of their family.”⁷⁸

Following this White House conference, the First Lady hosted six regional conferences—Indiana, Colorado, Tennessee, Minnesota, Texas, and Oregon—and she participated in 125 other events in twenty-four states, plus the District of Columbia, to train local youth-serving organizations. One tool that proved especially useful was the Web-based *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth*. This guide highlights resources Americans can use to form partnerships and implement successful programs.

To ensure the continuity of Mrs. Bush's youth initiative, the president signed an executive order to establish an Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs to continue the coordination of faith-based programs with the federal government that Helping America's Youth had created. It also tasked the work group with developing rigorous program assessments to determine best practices and promote cost effective solutions for achieving better results for at-risk youth, such as mentoring.

In his 2003 State of the Union address, President Bush said, “One mentor, one person, can change a life forever.” Through

⁷⁸ Laura Bush speech at Regional Conference on Helping America's Youth, November 8, 2007.

a combination of Mentoring Children of Prisoners, Helping America's Youth, and other Bush administration compassion agenda efforts to combat youth violence and build healthy life skills in all children, the Bushes demonstrated their love for children. They also used their White House platform to show that government can help place problems before the public, but it is only the heroic work of community partners who can solve them.

Modern-Day Abolitionists

Criminals aren't the only prisoners who need to be set free. There are 27 million people who live in modern-day slavery around the world, a total greater than all those taken from Africa in the 400-year trans-Atlantic slave trade. Human sex trafficking is a \$32 billion annual industry, making it the third largest industry of illicit activity on the planet, with profits greater than ExxonMobil.

Like William Wilberforce, who, more than 200 years ago, leaned on people of faith to help end slavery across the British Empire, today's faith community plays a central role in both combating human trafficking and helping its victims heal. International Justice Mission (IJM) founder Gary Haugen leads a team of 300 full-time lawyers, criminal investigators, and social workers mobilized in sixteen offices around the world. Motivated by faith and equipped by their professional training, the IJM staff conducts professional investigations, intervenes on behalf of the victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and seeks structural change.

President Bush hosted the first national training conference on combating human trafficking in Tampa, Florida, in July 2004. Calling trafficking a new form of slavery, Bush noted

the seriousness of the problem: Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked against their will across international borders; 14,500 to 17,500 of whom are trafficked into the United States. Victims of trafficking are recruited, transported, or sold into all forms of forced labor and servitude, including prostitution, sweatshops, domestic labor, farming, and child armies. Approximately 80 percent of trafficking victims are female, and 70 percent of those female victims are trafficked for the commercial sex industry.⁷⁹

“Human trafficking is an offense against human dignity, a crime in which human beings, many of them teenagers and young children, are bought and sold and often sexually abused by violent criminals... No one is fit to be a master and no one deserves to be a slave.... Our nation is determined to fight and end this modern form of slavery.”

—George W. Bush⁸⁰

When George W. Bush took office, very few people outside the international human rights community had ever even heard of the term human trafficking. In his first term, Bush spent \$295 million to combat trafficking in 120 countries. This funding was used to create special law enforcement units for this specialized crime and to care for victims, including \$35 million to faith-based groups to providing healing. In 2004, the State Department began elevating the profile of this issue with the release of its annual Trafficking in

⁷⁹ George W. Bush, speech at the National Training Conference on Human Trafficking, July 16, 2004.

⁸⁰ George W. Bush at the signing of the H.R. 972, Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

Persons report, which includes data on the scope of the problem and analysis of 140 countries' efforts to combat it. Countries that are the worst offenders are now exposed and threatened with sanctions.⁸¹

At a White House Compassion in Action roundtable in 2007, IJM's Gary Haugen told a story about a Cambodian woman named Mary and her daughter, Bofa, who lived in a squatter camp outside Kampong Chnang. One day some men came to the family and told them they could get Bofa a job peeling shrimp in the port cities. Mary refused, but the predators prevailed on Bofa's sense of financial responsibility for her family and wooed her away without allowing her to tell her mother. Mary thought Bofa was dead, but then she heard news from a friend that the girl was seen across the border locked in a Thai brothel.

The people who offered Bofa the job peeling shrimp were actually sex traffickers who beat her into submission and sold her repeatedly to paying customers. Mary called the police, but they demanded money. Unbeknownst to her, the U.S. government had funded IJM to train a police unit in Cambodia to fight sex trafficking. IJM rescued Bofa, as well as nine other women and children abducted by the same trafficking ring, and then they assisted in the brothel keepers' arrests.

My Sagamore Institute colleague, Amy Sherman, serves as a senior advisor to Haugen. They are considering ways to enlarge the role of the local church in this effort. IJM is able to get thousands of girls out of brothels, but it is only the transforming work of the church that can get the brothel out of the girl. Dr. Beth Grant,

⁸¹ George W. Bush, speech at the National Training Conference on Human Trafficking, July 16, 2004.

who, with her husband, formed Homes of Hope, a safe house for trafficked girls, told our White House roundtable gathering how this can be done.

Ten years ago, Grant received a call from her colleague in Bombay, who discovered more than 100 women enslaved at the brothels. “Can you please take thirty-seven little girls?” her colleague pleaded with her. Grant and her husband said “yes” and formed Homes of Hope, which now sponsors eleven aftercare homes in India and Nepal. They were stunned to learn that they are fighting a problem that has existed for thousands of years, since girls were trafficked through this region into the courts of ancient kings.

Grant has translated her program’s success into a curriculum for the Faith Alliance against Slavery and Trafficking. Called “Hands That Heal,” Grant teaches how to minister to the whole person. “What strikes me when I look into the eyes of victims in Calcutta, or Mumbai, or wherever I meet them, is the death in their eyes,” says Grant. To deal with the horror of their experience, something had to die in order for them to survive. Healing that wound must be transformational, and it must be holistic. “We believe that only God can take the brothel out of a young woman’s mind, body, and spirit and change the way she sees herself, so that she realizes she was created for a purpose and *that* is not it.”

Serious challenges remain. The need is the same in America as in other nations: to improve victim identification, rescue, police training, sensitizing judges, and other complexities. Perhaps the biggest problem is the insidious nature of the crime itself. While much has changed since the days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the lie which fueled that horrific chapter in history—a belief that some people are less than human—is at the root of sex trafficking

and slave labor today. Their subsequent demeaning actions are so violent and noxious that victims are afraid of being considered dirty, or criminals, or illegal aliens. Yet, we can't help them until we find them. Again, grassroots, faith-based healers prove indispensable allies in such a labyrinthine task.

Legislation and the Ongoing Campaign

President George Bush signed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 just before leaving office. He had worked with Congress on several similar pieces of legislation throughout his administration, but his final act was named for legislator from England who, as a youth, listened to Parliament debate the American Revolution.

Wilberforce has been the inspiration for many abolitionists since his work in ending the British slave trade, including a fifteen-year-old from Atlanta named Zach Hunter. As Zach read about the history of oppression in America, he became angry at the injustice and dreamed of working alongside Frederick Douglas to end what Condoleezza Rice calls "America's birth defect." He then discovered how human trafficking had become a modern form of slavery, and he immediately found a cause fitting his generation.

Zach started the Loose Change to Loosen Chains campaign to raise funds and awareness. In the first eighteen months of his outreach, he spoke to a half-million students about the problem and the problem-solvers. "I believe God wants to use my generation to do great things and to improve the world," said Hunter. "I've told them (the students) something that Gary Haugen has taught me: that God has a plan to end the suffering and injustice in the world and his plan is us."

We invited Zach to speak at our White House Compassion in Action roundtable event alongside Haugen. He told us how his generation might be perceived as self-centered, but they know that the world is a small place because the media lets us see the suffering up close, and many of them feel responsible for what's going on. As we closed the roundtable with a video tribute to Wilberforce commemorating the 200th anniversary of his actions, Zach rolled out a petition across the President's Eisenhower Executive Office Building briefing room stage featuring more than 100,000 signatures of students and leaders who want to see slavery end. The campaign against injustice continues.

Mrs. Bush launched a campaign of her own on November 17, 2001, when she became the first woman to deliver a presidential weekly radio address. She used the occasion to speak out against the Taliban's harsh treatment of women and children and to launch her public advocacy on behalf of the women of Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

The First Lady put her ideas into action by helping to develop and lead the U.S.–Afghan Women's Council and by delivering remarks to gatherings such as the International Conference (*Centre de Conférences Internationales*) in support of the people of Afghanistan. In 2001, fewer than a million Afghan children were in school, and all of them were boys. At the end of the Bush presidency, six million Afghan children were attending school, and one-third of them were girls.⁸²

Mrs. Bush has a well-earned reputation of being graceful and soft-spoken. An exception to the soft-spoken part was on display over the human rights violations in Burma. She became

⁸² *Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Report to Congress, January, 2009, 72.

an outspoken critic of the military junta and a vocal advocate for jailed opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*⁸³ bemoaning the fact that Suu Kyi spent her sixty-second birthday under house arrest and in joining sixteen female U.S. senators in signing a letter urging the United Nations to step up pressure on the Burmese regime to release the political prisoner, she made sure her voice was heard.

Domestic Violence

Much like human trafficking, domestic violence flourishes in the dark corners of communities, where only caring neighbors can detect it. The issue of domestic violence has been in the public conscience for much longer than human trafficking, but it is kept neatly out of public view. Those who have stepped into this gap are highly motivated and sorely under-resourced. That prompted the Justice Department Center on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to work with agency staff to offer grants and training on such topics such as listening to and working with abused women, domestic violence in rural settings, and safety planning.

The Justice Department's Office of Violence Against Women supplied a \$2.9 million grant to thirty-nine rural, faith-based, and community organizations nationwide. Sandra Renfrow, director of a rural domestic violence shelter in southwest Arkansas, was one recipient of a Faith and Community Technical Support (FACTS) grant. At a FACTS event my office hosted at Baylor University (which administered the program), Renfrow told a story of a woman who was taken hostage from her Colorado home by a "boyfriend," who was a truck driver. Beaten and raped along their route south,

⁸³ "Bush: Suu Kyi's Long Journey to Freedom," *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2012.

she was allowed to use a public restroom in Arkansas. It was there that she saw a flyer for Renfrow's organization and tore off the telephone number.

The woman was able to escape in the next town. She found a police officer and showed him the domestic violence shelter information. Renfrow received a midnight call saying the woman was in an emergency room sixty miles away and wanted her help. Renfrow explained that she used grant funding for a "mobile outreach program" including posting flyers with phone numbers on little tear-off slips in every public women's restroom across six Arkansas counties. Within a couple of months, they saw their call volume double and a 62 percent increase in shelter use. Grassroots groups do not require a lot of money to have an outsized impact.

A woman named Kim from my home state of Indiana had been a victim of abuse for years. She lived in a remote part of the state, and her perpetrator would continuously taunt her by saying, "Nobody can help you here." She believed him, and the suffering persisted until one of our FACTS grassroots partners rescued her. Someone did find her, and rescued her, thanks to this project.

The return on investment for FACTS grants was impressive. The thirty-nine grantees increased services by 200 percent in such ways as help with down payments, job readiness, legal aid, and transportation. FACTS also translated into a staggering increase in volunteers and community education programs. Because of the overall success of this program, local centers that received FACTS grants were awarded another \$1.5 million in non-federal grants and donations after the FACTS grants ended.

Human trafficking and domestic violence are two examples of violence against women both at home and abroad. The

THE QUIET REVOLUTION

return of prisoners to society and the prevention of at-risk teens from becoming incarcerated themselves are among the nation's important justice pursuits. Through the compassionate response of caring individuals and the resources provided by the government, solutions are rising.