



CCEH COVID-19 Response Newsletter

Guest Blog: A Letter from CCEH's Shade Orimogunje



Dear Friends,

When I accepted to become a staff of CCEH, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. It was my first time working full time in a non-profit organization and I knew it would be different as it would involve working with people with lived experience, not directly but still majorly through the lens of data. I never would have imagined how working here would influence my perception of issues regarding housing, health and racism.

Shortly after joining CCEH, I was asked to assist with a project that involved a data match between the homeless response system and the criminal justice system. What I found alarmed me. The match showed that the majority of the individuals had revolved between the homeless system and the department of correction over the course of many the years and found it nearly impossible to find housing solutions upon discharge or release. Most spend what I would term "productive years" in incarceration and leave the prison system in their late 40s through to 60s, making it difficult to fully integrate back into the society without an assistance.

With years spent behind bars, people exiting the criminal justice system face housing re-entry issues due to criminal history, eviction history, and a lack of good credit history due to years of incarceration. Without a home, it's easy to fall back into the justice system, and in fact many individuals in the pre-trial population who made up about 50% of the sample population fall into this category. Further investigations reveal that these are not just homeless individuals, but individuals also affected mentally, behaviorally and health-wise. To cap it off, over 60% are people of color!

A few questions come to mind as I worked on this project; why are there so many persons within the labor force age range re-cycling through the criminal justice system? Why are there so many persons of color within this category when people of color make up less than 30% of the population in CT?

The data match resulted in a collaboration between CCEH and major stakeholders within the state's criminal justice system and Department of Housing to create viable housing solution for individuals who are at End of Sentence but also identified to need housing assistance. This collaboration now enables individuals to make calls to the 211 infoline 30 days before being discharged from DOC instead of 48 hours. This prevention is critical to stopping the revolving door between homelessness and incarceration.

The numbers are striking. Referrals made for individuals between April 1, 2020 and May 15, 2020 reveal that the Department of Correction will be referring 59 individuals who are "end-of-sentence" each month--- a total of more than 700 people over the course of the year. On top of this, an additional 354 people discharged on parole will require housing assistance. That's 1000 people a year.

The data shows that these people require significant support beyond housing itself: 53% of individuals referred from the Department of Correction will require mental and medical intervention along with housing needs and 90% of individuals referred will require intervention for drug and alcohol abuse. These are big numbers. The data shows that race is fundamentally intertwined with the revolving door between homelessness and incarceration. The match showed that 50% of individuals released at end-of-sentence will include Hispanics and African-Americans.

The numbers may be bleak, but there does seem to be a silver lining to pandemic. Recognition of the health implications of not having a home during COVID has elevated the importance of housing people coming out of criminal justice. As a result, our partnership with the Department of Correction has resulted in housing solutions for 71% of individuals who were released at end of sentence without clear housing options. Kudos to the collaborative!

I hope we gradually get to the point when homelessness is decriminalized and housing is made affordable to all.

Yours,

Shade Orimogunje

Commemorating Juneteenth

Juneteenth – also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day – is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States.

CCEH staff commemorated the day through acts of protest and learning. Here are some comments and pictures that staff shared of what they did personally to mark the occasion:

"My sister and I at the BLM protest in Hartford on Juneteenth." - Tashmia Bryant



"Took my daughter to her first protest and explained racism. She made this sign." - Allan Vega



"I spent the day buying food from Ricky D's, a Black owned rib shack, in New Haven. Went to a protest in Hartford, and attended a good friends Juneteenth celebration!" - Dana Kras



"I took my son to see this plaque commemorating the Amistad revolt - mounted at the customs house in New London where the ship was brought in to port." - David Gonzalez Rice



"I spent the morning educating myself along with a wonderful group of be homeful Ambassadors and then went to a rally and march thousands strong in downtown Hartford organized and led by students." - Ryan Beach



"I participated in a rally in Windham/Willamantic (by Frog bridge) for BLM. It was a small group of about 20-25 people and we held up signs on the corner of a large intersection. Lots of supportive beeps and waves, also got flipped off a few times." - Rose Kelly



"My family and I were driving on Juneteenth, so we listened to Ta-Nahesi Coates' interview with the Atlantic. This is our BLM lawn sign." - Richard Cho

"I spent the morning doing a little work, and then talking to my 9 year-old daughter about the meaning of Juneteenth. After that I attended the protest and march in Hartford." - Roy Graham

"I spent the morning learning about the history of housing discrimination in Connecticut along with our be homeful ambassadors." - Madeline Ravich

"I spent time watching 13th suggested by Linda Casey, it filled information gaps for me, I worry there wouldn't be an end to the systemic laws passed to enable incarceration of people of color. Watched Just Mercy recommended by Dana Kras. It's just not enough to be a law abiding person of color, your biggest crime is your skin color! And Roy Graham's recommendation-100 Years of Emancipation by James Baldwin." - Shade Orimogunje

"I had to work for several hours on Juneteenth which limited what I could actually do on 6/19, but I did do some research. My family decided that we could make the most impact by making a donation to either the NAACP, particularly to help with education and training, and to the Innocence Project CT." - Linda Casey

Journey Home Delivery

A special thanks to Journey Home for partnering with CCEH to distribute nearly thirty IKEA "Home Starter Kits" to clients in Central Connecticut and Greater Hartford. Below are some pictures from this week's delivery. A special thanks to Alison Sjoberg, for her guidance in the distribution process for the whole state. We love you, Journey Home!



Volunteers moving IKEA furniture that will benefit people transitioning from shelters into their homes.



Alison Sjoberg is all smiles even after doing some heavy lifting during a heat wave.

Kids explore race and homelessness

Our be homeful ambassadors met the morning of Juneteenth to learn about how the legacy of slavery drives homelessness today among people of color. Here are some of the resources the kids read and discussed with one another:

- [What is Juneteenth?](#)
- [The 1619 Project](#)
- [Living Apart](#)
- [Separated by Design](#)
- [To cure racism, treat the disease — not the symptoms](#)
- [The Rent is Still Due](#)
- [The Opportunity Atlas](#)
- [CCEH Race Equity Resources](#)

If you know of any amazing kids who care deeply about ending homelessness, please encourage them to reach out and become *be homeful* ambassadors by filling out this [form](#).

Thank you to the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Hartford



Thank you to the Jewish Community Foundation for naming CCEH the recipient of the inaugural JewGood grant.

As their [Facebook](#) announcement shared: "Connecting people with housing is one of the ultimate mitzvot. Housing provides individuals and families with personal stability and better health outcomes. The cost to society of sheltering individuals far exceeds the costs of housing them. In short, housing saves lives and helps everybody in Connecticut indirectly."

The funding will provide emergency assistance to rehouse families in the Greater Hartford area so that they can stay safe during COVID. We are thrilled and honored to be the recipient of this amazing grant. Thank you, JewGood!

COVID-19 Planning & Response for Homeless Assistance Providers

HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) invites homeless assistance providers and their partners to participate in weekly Office Hours to discuss COVID-19 planning and response on **Fridays from 2:30 - 4:00 PM EDT**. Presenters from the following federal agencies and their partners will be available for a live question and answer session.

To register please [click here](#).

How You Can Help

Our providers need your help! This [site](#) includes ways you can join Connecticut's homeless response.

Webinars & Additional Guidance

With information about COVID rapidly evolving, keeping up-to-date is more important than ever. Stay up-to-date by visiting CCEH's COVID Guidance Page, located at cceh.org/covid19.

Spotlight Webinar

[Communities Using Data to Analyze Racial Disparities During the Pandemic](#)

CCEH has partnered with the CT Fair Housing Center, CT Legal Services, and CT Department of Housing to provide you with an "Update on the Status of Evictions in Connecticut During the COVID-19 Crisis."

Upcoming Webinars

[Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic](#)

Wednesday, July 8, 2020 & July 15, 2020
2:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Previously Recorded Webinars

[Working with Landlords to Rapidly House Successfully: Recruiting, Engaging and Retaining](#)

[Hotels to Homes: Rapidly Housing from Hotels During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Addressing Racial Disparities in Homelessness During COVID-19](#)

[Verbal De-Escalation and Crisis Prevention During COVID-19](#)

[Responding to COVID-19: An Inside Look into Connecticut's Homeless Response](#)

[Caring for and Reducing the Transmission of COVID-19 in Shelters and Hotels: A View from the Field](#)

[Shelter to Housing Crash Course: Rapidly Exiting to Permanent Housing](#)

[Responding to Violence in the Home During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

Please [click here](#) to access our entire webinar catalog.



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