

**Occasional Series on Reentry Research
Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

Women, Reentry and Everyday Life: Time to Work?

Panelist Biographies

September 12, 2008

Venezia Michalsen is an Assistant Professor of Justice Studies at Montclair State University in New Jersey. Her research and teaching focus on the topics of gender and justice, reentry and corrections. Before starting her position at Montclair State, Dr. Michalsen worked for almost six years at the Women's Prison Association (WPA), a non-profit organization in New York City which helps women with criminal justice system histories realize new possibilities for themselves and for their families. She began at WPA as a Research Associate, but left the organization as the Director of Analysis and Client Information Systems (ACIS), where she managed the collection and analysis of client, service and outcome data. Along with her WPA colleagues Dr. Dina Rose, Dr. Dawn Wiest and Anupa Fabian, Dr. Michalsen conducted the research and analysis which led to the report she will be discussing today: *Women, Reentry and Everyday Life: Time to Work?*

Dr. Michalsen earned her B.A. at Barnard College, her Masters in Criminal Justice at John Jay College, and her Ph.D. at the CUNY Graduate Center. For her doctoral dissertation, *Going Straight for her Children? Women's Desistance after Incarceration*, Dr. Michalsen interviewed 100 formerly incarcerated mothers about how their relationships with their children affected their desistance behaviors. Dr. Michalsen is currently working on publications based on her dissertation research and on the *Women, Reentry and Everyday Life* study.

Iris M. Hill serves as a Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Probation and has worked for the Department since 1984. Deputy Commissioner Hill rose through the ranks of the Department starting as a Probation Officer, Supervising Probation Officer Branch Chief, Assistant Commissioner and in February 2005 was appointed by the Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner of Adult Operations. In this capacity Deputy Commissioner Hill is responsible for providing probation services for approximately 47,000 adult probationers and for providing 30,000 pre-sentence investigations to the courts on an annual basis. Deputy Commissioner Hill has been instrumental in establishing and implementing services to ensure that the needs of the adult probation population are met while ensuring public safety. Deputy Commissioner Hill oversees approximately eight hundred staff members who function in a diverse scope of duties and responsibilities throughout the five Boroughs of New York City.

Alison Link, founder of The Leisure Link (www.leisurelinkconsulting.com), is a specialist in leisure education and views leisure as a social justice issue. Her company provides leisure-related coaching,

education, training and counseling services to enhance quality of life and community living. Ms. Link is also a consultant, adjunct professor, international presenter.

Ms. Link's clients include non-profit organizations, corporations, correctional facilities and other government entities, professional organizations and individuals. She has been working with prisoners, former prisoners and correctional facilities since starting her doctoral work, and has served as director of leisure education at correctional facilities. Ms. Link has also held senior-level positions in teen camping programs and community center programs for adults.

A doctoral candidate in social welfare at Yeshiva University, Ms. Link holds an M.A. in recreation and leisure studies from New York University, and received her B.A. from Brown University. Her dissertation research examines questions that primarily inquire about people who are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated and their behaviors, motivations, orientations related to time-use and leisure and the relationship of these factors to their recidivism or successful maintenance of freedom and a crime free life. Articles about her work have been published in the New York Times.

Nancy O'Brien is a Transitional Advocate at the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), mother of four and former attorney. She holds a B.A. in English from Long Island University and a Juris Doctorate from Hofstra University School of Law. In Ms. O'Brien's current role at CCA, she works in the Crossroads for Men Program assisting the formerly incarcerated remove civil barriers to reintegration.

Prior to her present position, Ms. O'Brien struggled to re-stabilize her own life when a felony conviction caused her to be disbarred. While incarcerated, she gave birth to her fourth child. Upon release, Ms. O'Brien completed mandated substance abuse treatment, returned to school become a Certified Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor, complied with the strict mandates of both the family and criminal court systems and reunified her family. Ms. O'Brien's life experiences have provided her a rich lens through which she engages in reentry work.