



# THE SECOND LOOK LAW: A SAFER, STRONGER DC

## A Message from Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop

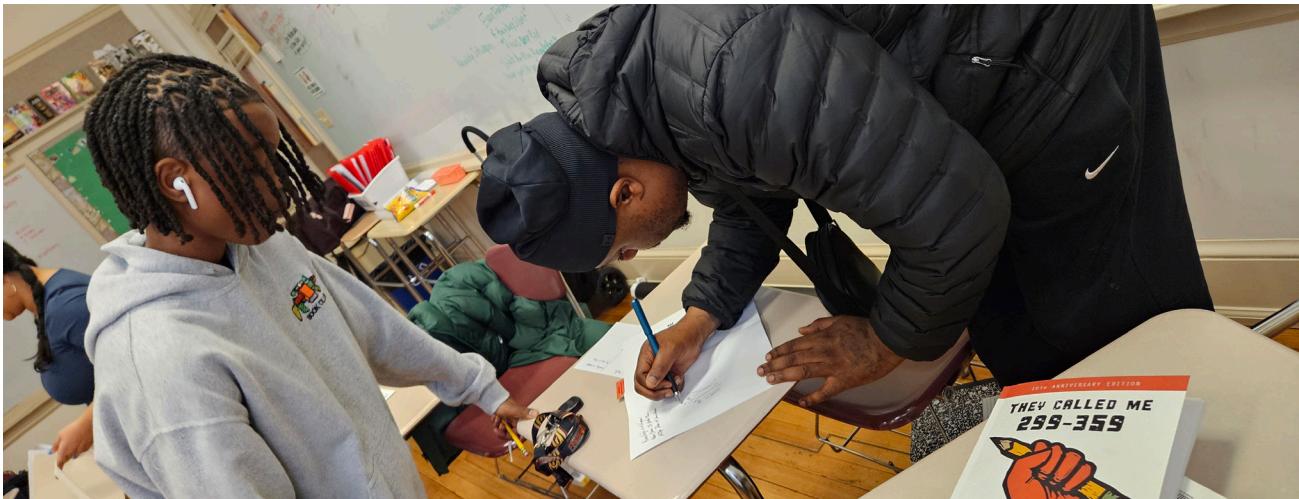


For more than twenty years, Free Minds has walked alongside people from Washington, DC who entered the criminal legal system at a young age and were charged as adults. We meet many of them in jail, stay connected through letters, poetry, and books during long sentences, and continue to support them when they return home. Because of this long-term relationship, we witness something many people never see: the deep personal transformation that can occur over decades.

As conversations about the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) grow more urgent, we believe it is essential to bring forward the human stories behind the policy. We rely on the critical research and data that many partners bring to this conversation. But what Free Minds adds is a window into the lived experiences that reveal the human impact behind the policy.

IRAA allows people who were under 25 at the time of their arrest, and who have served at least 15 years of their sentence, to petition a judge for resentencing. It is not automatic. It requires extensive evidence of growth, accountability, and transformation. Judges evaluate conduct, educational progress, mentoring, healing, and plans for reentry. Only those who demonstrate extraordinary change are granted release.

At Free Minds, we know what that level of growth looks like. We see the years spent earning degrees, studying, mentoring others, rebuilding after trauma, and taking ownership of harm done. These efforts began long before IRAA existed. We also see what happens when people return home: they become mentors, caregivers, business owners, violence interrupters, artists, case managers, and leaders who make DC better every day. They return with a deep commitment to strengthening their communities and preventing future harm.



This booklet shares the stories of several Free Minds members who returned home through IRAA. Their journeys are varied, but the common thread is clear. Each person came home ready to contribute, care for their families, and build safety and opportunity in their communities. These are not abstract policy outcomes. They are real lives that illustrate what is at stake in the current debate.

We share these stories because the public deserves a fuller picture of what IRAA truly accomplishes. Not assumptions, but lived experience. Not headlines, but human beings. Our hope is that as you read, you see what we see each week in our book clubs, support circles, and reentry programs: people who have done profound work to rebuild themselves and who bring immeasurable value to the District.

Violence shatters families, lives, and whole communities. The individuals in these pages carry an unrelenting purpose: to end cycles of violence, and to build peace for all in DC. Their stories show us that accountability and redemption can coexist.

Thank you for taking the time to read these stories. They illustrate what is possible when we choose hope, repair, investment, and our shared humanity.

Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop, a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC, is the vision and legacy of a young man named Glen McGinnis who was incarcerated in the adult criminal legal system at the age of 17. Since 2002, Free Minds has been providing long-term, holistic support for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth who were given extreme sentences. Currently, Free Minds serves almost 350 recipients of DC's landmark legislation, the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act and Second Look Amendment Act. Here are just a few of the many stories that demonstrate the incredible impact these individuals have had in fostering healthier, safer, and more just communities in DC.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### James: From the Streets to Wall Street, Building financial futures for DC youth

When James stood on Wall Street watching a group of DC teenagers make their first investments, he thought about the years he had spent preparing for that moment, not for himself but for them. The young people were his students in From the Streets to Wall Street, a financial literacy program he created to teach budgeting, investing, and wealth-building as tools to break the cycle of poverty. For many, it was their first time in a place of financial power and opportunity, seeing for themselves that they belonged there.

James came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after 30 years of incarceration. He returned the day before Thanksgiving in 2019, the first holiday meal with his family in three decades. That day was more than a reunion; it was a moment of healing for everyone. His mother and sister, who had never stopped believing in him, were finally able to share a meal, a prayer, and a sense of peace. "It was the best Thanksgiving of my life".

Since coming home, James has built a life centered on teaching, mentoring, and advocacy. He turns every skill he has learned into a way to help others move forward. Through From the Streets to Wall Street, he partners with local schools and community programs to teach young people about the stock market, insurance, and financial planning. With grant support, he provides stipends so participants can make their first investments and see what it means to build something that lasts. He also founded Strive to Drive, a program helping adults earn commercial driver's licenses and find steady employment with transportation agencies. To James, financial stability is one of the strongest forms of violence prevention there is.

A natural mentor and advocate, James serves as a Free Minds Peer Supporter, providing one-on-one guidance to members returning home and helping them navigate their first months back in the community. He also chairs Thrive Under 25, where he advocates for young people charged as adults and



**“Standing on Wall Street with those young kids, watching them make their first investments, connected everything I had worked on for years. It showed them what is possible when someone believes in them.”**

works to protect and strengthen the Youth Rehabilitation Act. He has testified before the DC Council, met with policymakers, and helped ensure that lived experience shapes policy decisions that impact emerging adults. Through this work, he demonstrates how leadership and accountability can change entire systems.

James also serves as a voice for restorative justice, speaking with young people who have been charged with gun offenses and helping them understand the ripple effects of violence. Additionally, when a victim chooses forgiveness but cannot be present, he steps in to share perspective and guide the conversation toward accountability and healing.

At home, James finds joy in the simple moments that once felt out of reach: driving his nieces and nephews to school and spending quiet weekends with his family. “I missed so much time,” he says. “Now I give it back every chance I get.”

James wants people to understand that IRAA works because it gives people who have grown and changed the opportunity to contribute. “Have you ever made a mistake at 16 that you wouldn’t dream of making now?” he asks. “That’s my story. But the story of me today isn’t what happened in 1989. It’s what I do every day to build something better.”

This is what IRAA makes possible: leaders who turn experience into education, and who build stability and hope where they once faced barriers.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### Pete: Showing young people what's possible, one relationship at a time

When Pete picks up one of the teens he mentors for a haircut, their drive across the city becomes the real work. They talk about school, stress, family, and what tomorrow could look like. He takes his mentee to neighborhoods he's never seen before opening small windows to new possibilities. Pete says his role is simple: "show him a different way to move." That steady, everyday presence is what keeps young people connected and supported.

Pete came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after serving over two decades. Coming home gave him the chance to become the person he had already spent years working to be: patient, thoughtful, and deeply committed to his community. Since then, he has dedicated his life to guiding young people toward safer futures.

As a Credible Messenger, Pete mentors youth who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. He meets with them weekly, helps them access school and work resources, takes them to appointments, and makes time for real conversation. He currently supports eleven young people, walking alongside them as they navigate hard choices and imagine different futures. To Pete, progress happens one relationship at a time.

Pete also works in violence interruption in Ward 8, responding when harm occurs, reaching out to families affected by violence, and helping ensure they receive support and resources during the most difficult moments. On any given day, he might coordinate with other intervention workers, speak with a grieving family, or work with community members to prevent retaliation. His work reduces harm and strengthens safety — in real time, on real blocks, with real lives.



**“The youth we work with are smart, talented, and just need support. Once they know someone cares, they start to care about themselves. I just try to be there.”**

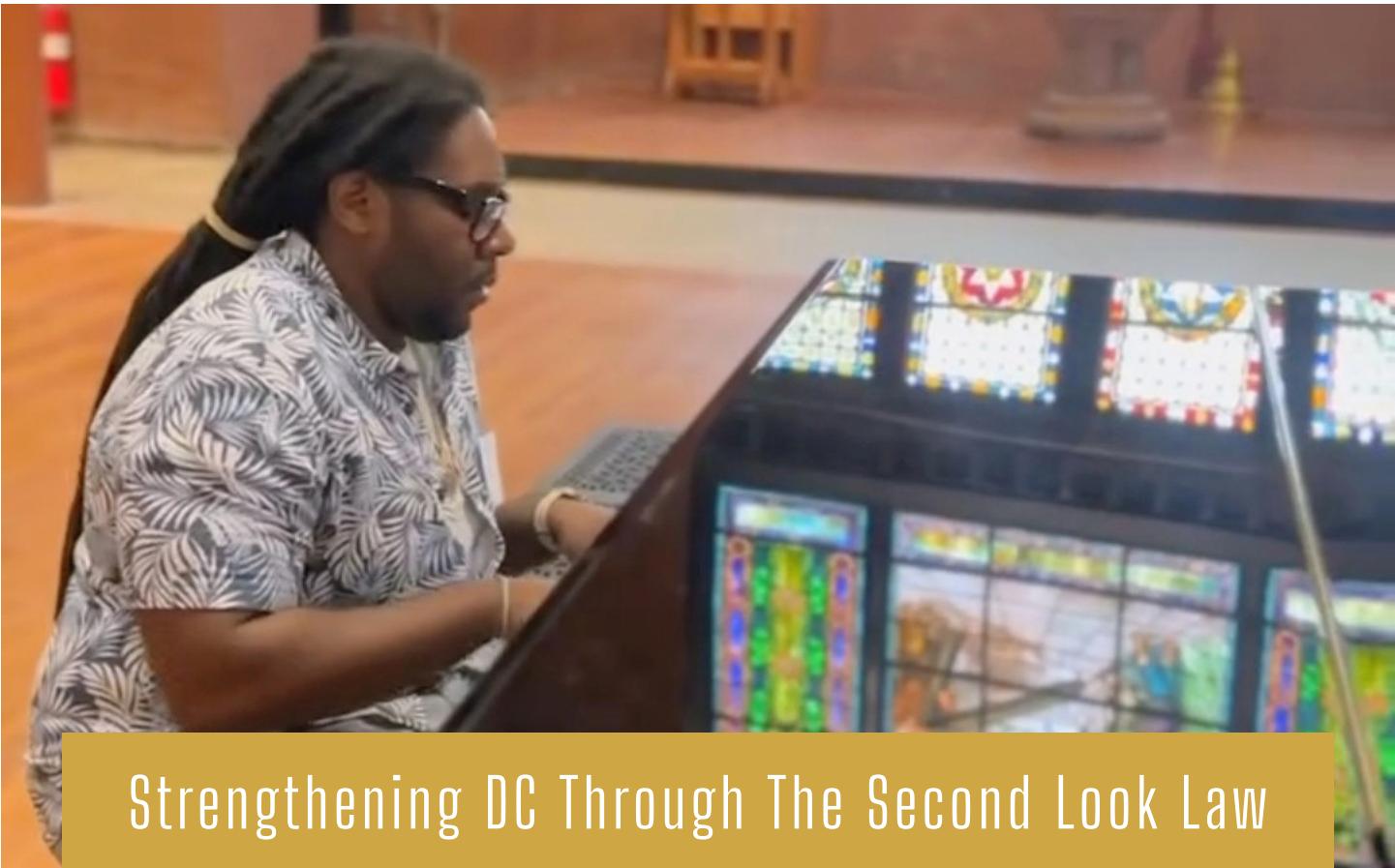
Alongside fellow IRAA recipient James, he now serves as Co-Executive Director of the reentry organization Neighbors for Justice supporting individuals returning home from DC Jail and from federal prison. Together, they focus on reentry support, community healing, and ensuring that people coming home have the stability and belonging they need to succeed.

Pete is also active with Free Minds, where he trained as a Peer Supporter and is matched 1:1 with individuals returning home, offering support during the first months of reentry. He participates in The Build Up, a weekly book club and support group for people coming home through IRAA and similar pathways, as well as the IRAA Support Groups. He returns to these spaces because he knows the work doesn't end the day someone comes home. For Pete, healing is ongoing work that we do together through connection, accountability, and community.

What motivates him is simple. “The youth we work with are smart, talented, and just need support,” he says. “Once they know someone cares, they start to care about themselves. I just try to be there.”

Pete wants the community to understand that IRAA is working. “The guys who come home through IRAA are out here doing this work,” he says. “We’re mentoring. We’re interrupting violence. We’re supporting families. We’re building community. We’re helping the city.”

Pete’s story is proof that IRAA brings home neighbors who are already mentoring youth, interrupting violence, and helping the city stay safe.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### LaVander: Proving what's possible as a neighbor, artist and mentor

When LaVander couldn't access a piano while incarcerated, he drew the keys on the floor of his cell so he could keep practicing. That moment of determination captures who he is: creative, disciplined, and always moving forward. Today, LaVander channels that same focus into building a new life in Washington, DC, where his artistry and leadership enrich the community every day.

After 16 years of incarceration, LaVander returned home through DC's Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA). The law, designed to give people sentenced as youth a chance to demonstrate their growth and transformation, opened the door for LaVander to share his many talents with the world. Since coming home, he has embraced every opportunity to give back.

LaVander is a working artist and entrepreneur whose creativity fuels connection across DC. He creates detailed drawings and collages and has built a small business designing one-of-a-kind greeting cards — intricate works of art that celebrate love, resilience, and community. His pieces have been featured in a yearlong traveling exhibition showcasing artwork by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated artists, sparking dialogue about justice and redemption.

He also performs as a pianist at community events and local venues, sharing the music he once practiced on a floor-drawn keyboard. Alongside his creative pursuits, he is building a steady career in hospitality, first as a busser and now training as a server, demonstrating his drive to contribute to the city's cultural and economic life in equal measure. Adding yet another dimension to his growing professional path, LaVander recently graduated from an IT program and applies his creativity just as seamlessly to technology as to his art and music. Through every role, he brings the same creativity and care that guided him through his years of confinement. His days are full, but his purpose is simple: to use his gifts to inspire and support others.



**“I want people to see what is possible. When we come home, we want to contribute, and we do: to our families, to our neighborhoods, to DC.”**

LaVander remains deeply connected to Free Minds, the nonprofit organization that first introduced him to the power of books and writing while incarcerated at age 17. Now, as a Poet Ambassador with Free Minds, he travels across the city to perform his poetry, share the words of currently incarcerated members, and tell his story so others can understand the human experience behind incarceration. He also participates in weekly reentry book clubs and support groups, offering encouragement to others who are finding their footing after release. “I want people to see what’s possible,” he says. “When we come home, we want to contribute and we do — to our families, to our neighborhoods, to DC.”

LaVander’s return home shows that IRAA is working exactly as intended: giving people the chance to come home and contribute deeply to the well-being of DC. Through his art, his music, and his entrepreneurship, LaVander reminds us that when we invest in second chances, we invest in safer, stronger communities.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### Jaye: Creating opportunities for healing, growth, and leadership

While she was incarcerated, Jaye sent a poem to Free Minds. Free Minds staff and volunteers mailed it back to her covered in handwritten notes of encouragement from strangers in the community. One message said that her poem had helped save someone's life. Seeing that feedback, Jaye realized that her story and her voice could support others, and she has carried that purpose with her ever since.

Jaye returned to Washington, DC through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA). The law released her from home confinement and years of federal supervision. That freedom made it possible for her to work, build stability, and step into leadership roles that benefit young people and families across the city.

After coming home, Jaye completed the Georgetown Pivot Program, a nine-month business and entrepreneurship program, where she won first place in a pitch competition for The Art-o-Mobile, her vision for a mobile art studio that brings creative wellness programming directly to schools and neighborhoods.

Since then, as owner of The Art-o-Mobile, Jaye has facilitated art and leadership workshops for children and older adults, guided creative self-expression groups, and directed skits and hands-on projects for school career days. As a Free Minds Poet Ambassador, she shares poetry and testimony in classrooms, community spaces, and local events across DC. In every setting, she creates space for people to speak about their experiences, connect with one another, and feel seen.

Alongside her community work, Jaye is building a long-term professional foundation as a leasing associate with a management company that supports employee growth and advancement. She continues to develop The Art-o-Mobile during evenings and weekends, preparing materials, leading sessions, and planning for expansion.



**“I want to build the next generation of leaders, healers, and community builders. Everyone deserves to know they matter.”**

She stays closely connected to her family, including children and grandchildren, and to the women she met while incarcerated, many of whom are also rebuilding their lives through creativity and service.

Jaye's goal is consistent and clear: to help young people recognize their value and see leadership as something they already hold within themselves. “I want to build the next generation of leaders, healers, and community builders,” she says. “Everyone deserves to be treated like Royalty.”

Her return home has strengthened DC. Through her work, young people are developing coping skills, building confidence, and finding healthy ways to express themselves. Families are experiencing support and connection. And the city is benefiting from someone who is deeply invested in its future.

Jaye's story shows how IRAA allows people who have done the hard work of healing and growth to come home and help young people, families, and entire communities thrive.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### Antoine: Building stronger communities through art, education, and mentorship

When Antoine was incarcerated at age 21, he had completed only the 7th grade. Determined to change the course of his life, he earned his GED and then became a tutor, helping others earn theirs too. He served as a suicide companion in the psychology department, led wellness classes, and used writing and poetry to make sense of the world around him. Even while serving a life sentence, Antoine committed himself to growth, healing, and helping others do the same.

After 22 years, Antoine came home through DC's Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA). The law gave him the opportunity to bring his discipline and compassion back into the community. In the two and a half years since, he has done just that: immersing himself in work, learning, and service.

Antoine is building a career defined by creativity and care. He began as a resident artist at a local art museum and was later promoted to assistant curator, curating exhibits that celebrated the power of transformation through art. As a Free Minds Poet Ambassador, a role that brings poetry, storytelling, and advocacy into schools and community spaces, Antoine has delivered talks at Georgetown University, the World Bank, and schools across DC, using his story to connect with people and inspire change. He has also joined the board of a local theater company where he helps design programs that give artists impacted by the criminal legal system a platform for expression.

Alongside his creative work, Antoine has held roles supporting people in recovery and continues to expand his professional skills through an impressive array of training and certifications. He has completed peer support training through Free Minds, earned CPR and First Aid credentials, and received national recognition for his workplace readiness through the ACT WorkKeys program. Currently pursuing a Microsoft Office Specialist certification, he sees each new skill as a building block toward long-term stability and community impact.



**“Many of us had long given up on harmful thinking and actions, recognizing our traumas and dealing with them in the most productive ways possible. Positive thinking, growth, and the desire to help others is what brought us back to society.”**

What matters most to Antoine is the way he shows up for others, especially young people. He visited a local middle school through Free Minds, where he met two students described by their teachers as struggling to meet expectations. By the end of the workshop, the students had written their first poems, one titled “Free Mind”. “It melted me,” Antoine said. “You could see the impact right away. They just needed someone to listen.”

Antoine often reminds people that those who come home under IRAA have already done the hardest work: confronting their past, healing from trauma, and preparing to contribute. “Many of us had long given up on harmful thinking and actions, recognizing our traumas and dealing with them in the most productive ways possible,” he says. “Positive thinking, growth, and the desire to help others is what brought us back to society.”

Today, Antoine is known not just as a talented artist and mentor, but as a pillar of strength in his family and community. His journey shows that DC’s IRAA/Second Look Act is more than a law; it is a path for people who have transformed their lives to come home and help transform their city.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### Greg: An artist shaping culture, uplifting humanity, and strengthening DC

While incarcerated, Greg used whatever space he had inside his cell to draw for hours, studying line, shadow, and the faces that lived in his memory. Art became both a discipline and a lifeline. It was how he made sense of the world and how he held on to himself. His talent had appeared early, when he won second place in a Duke Ellington School of the Arts competition in eighth grade. But inside, it became something deeper: a way to imagine a future beyond incarceration.

Greg came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after sixteen years of incarceration. His release gave him something he had fought for throughout his sentence: the chance to rebuild his life, reunite with his family, and share his art with the world. One of the first lessons he carried home was simple. Creativity can be a force for healing, and healing can be a path back to community.

Greg's art reflects that belief. He describes himself as an artistic engineer, someone who builds images that carry history, memory, and meaning. His portraits highlight the richness of Black culture and Black creativity. His large-scale pieces weave together subjects, symbols, and textures that honor his roots while pushing into new artistic territory. His work has been featured in local exhibitions, including the Beauty Behind Bars Collective, and he continues to create bold, intricate pieces that draw viewers into deeper reflection.

What Greg is most proud of is not only the recognition his art has received, but what it allows him to give. As a husband, father, and community member, he now uses his talent and story to inspire others. He knows how powerful it can be for young people to see creativity as a way forward, especially for those who come from the same neighborhoods he did. He believes art can change how people see themselves and what they imagine for their futures.



**“You can expect me to create art that expresses my identity and uplifts humanity. That is the purpose I carry home.”**

Throughout his journey, Greg has remained connected to Free Minds, an organization he says nurtured his voice and gave him a place to grow. Through poetry, feedback, and community, he experienced firsthand what it means to be supported, encouraged, and seen. He carries those lessons with him into every space he enters.

Greg believes deeply in what IRAA makes possible. It creates the conditions for people who have done the work to come home and contribute in meaningful ways. “You can expect me to continue to create art that expresses my identity,” he says, “and to introduce Black themes into American modernism. I want to inspire, to evoke thought, and to uplift humanity.”

This is what IRAA allows. It brings home creators, mentors, and community builders who are ready to use their gifts to strengthen the city they love.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

### Anthony: Finding his voice, and helping others find theirs

When Anthony first sat down to write a poem while incarcerated, he did not know he was a poet. He had never written one before. He only knew that the words inside him needed somewhere to go. When Free Minds mailed his poem back covered in handwritten feedback from people he had never met, something shifted. He realized his voice had value and that authentic expression could open doors to connection with others.

Long before he came home, Anthony focused on growth, understanding, and responsibility. He studied constantly, reflected deeply, and looked for ways to help others do the same. Anthony came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after twenty-eight years of incarceration. What he remembers most about his release is his family. Relatives poured into the house for days, eager to see him home. Their pride and joy affirmed what he had worked so hard to rebuild within himself.

Since coming home, he has built a steady life through hard work and perseverance. He completed Project Empowerment, earned a range of construction certifications, and has worked for more than two and a half years in insulation and weatherproofing on large apartment projects. He often leaves home before sunrise to travel to job sites, but he still finds time to attend The Build Up and the IRAA Support Group at Free Minds. Writing remains a grounding practice for him, and he is working on books that blend poetry with the insights he gained from years of reflection, learning, and growth.

Anthony stays closely connected to Free Minds because, in his words, it feels like family. He values the safe space where members talk honestly about their struggles and successes, and he continues to send in poems for feedback. He believes community is built through expression, listening, and the willingness to see one another fully.



**“I came home to a family who was proud of the man I had become. Now I use that strength to help others find a safer path.”**

What Anthony wants people to understand is simple. People can grow. People can change. And when someone receives support, encouragement, and a chance to be heard, the results ripple outward in ways that strengthen entire communities. “No matter what situation you go through in life,” he says, “there can always be a better story after the fact.”

His story is proof that IRAA creates space for that better story. It allows people who have done the inner work to come home, reconnect with their families, and use their experiences to help others find a safer path.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

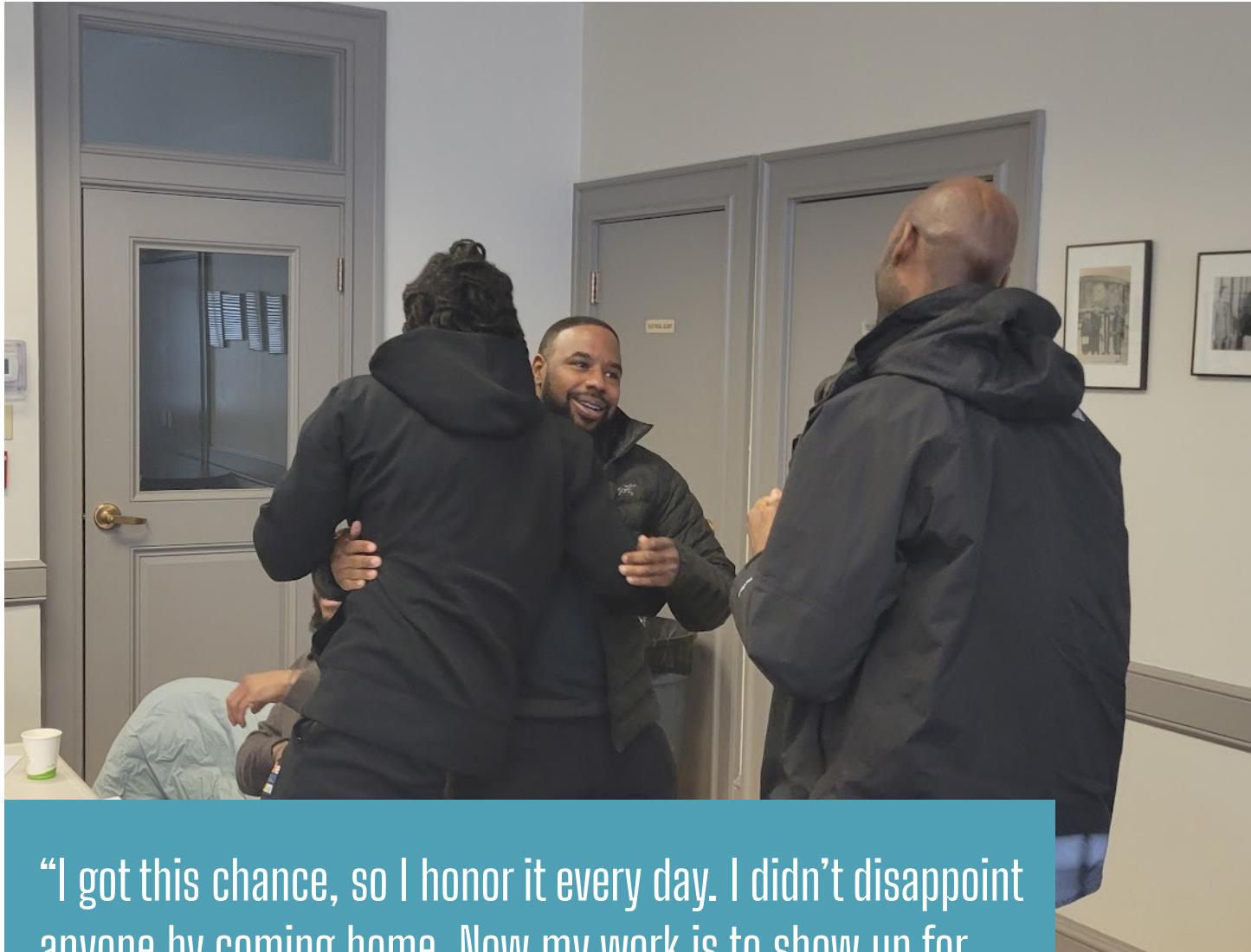
### James: Turning lived experience into leadership that breaks down barriers

When James walks into Washington DC's juvenile facility to meet with young people, he sees versions of himself at 17. He listens, holds space for their stories, and speaks openly about choices, healing, and future possibilities. As a Credible Messenger, he works with youth who have been impacted by the criminal legal system, offering the guidance and support he once needed. His goal is simple: to make sure the next generation has paths forward that he did not.

James came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act (IRAA) after serving 24 years. Through the IRAA process, his years of growth and accountability were taken into account, allowing him to return home and reconnect with his family and community. Since then, he has worked to ensure that other young people have the same chance to grow, repair harm, and rebuild their lives.

After returning home, James began working in construction for two and a half years, starting as a laborer and becoming a carpentry apprentice. During that time, he also began mentoring youth in detention facilities and in the community through a Credible Messenger program. That experience opened the door to an advocacy career.

Today, James serves as Co-Executive Director of Neighbors for Justice, a reentry organization supporting individuals returning home from DC Jail and federal prison. He helps shape reentry support, build community networks, and advocate for policies that expand opportunities for people returning home. He also serves as the Strategy Chair for Thrive Under 25, a diverse coalition that works to support youth under that age of 25 in the adult legal system, working to protect and strengthen the Youth Rehabilitation Act and ensure resources are made available for emerging adults in DC. He meets with councilmembers, testifies at hearings, and uses his lived experience to inform and influence policy.

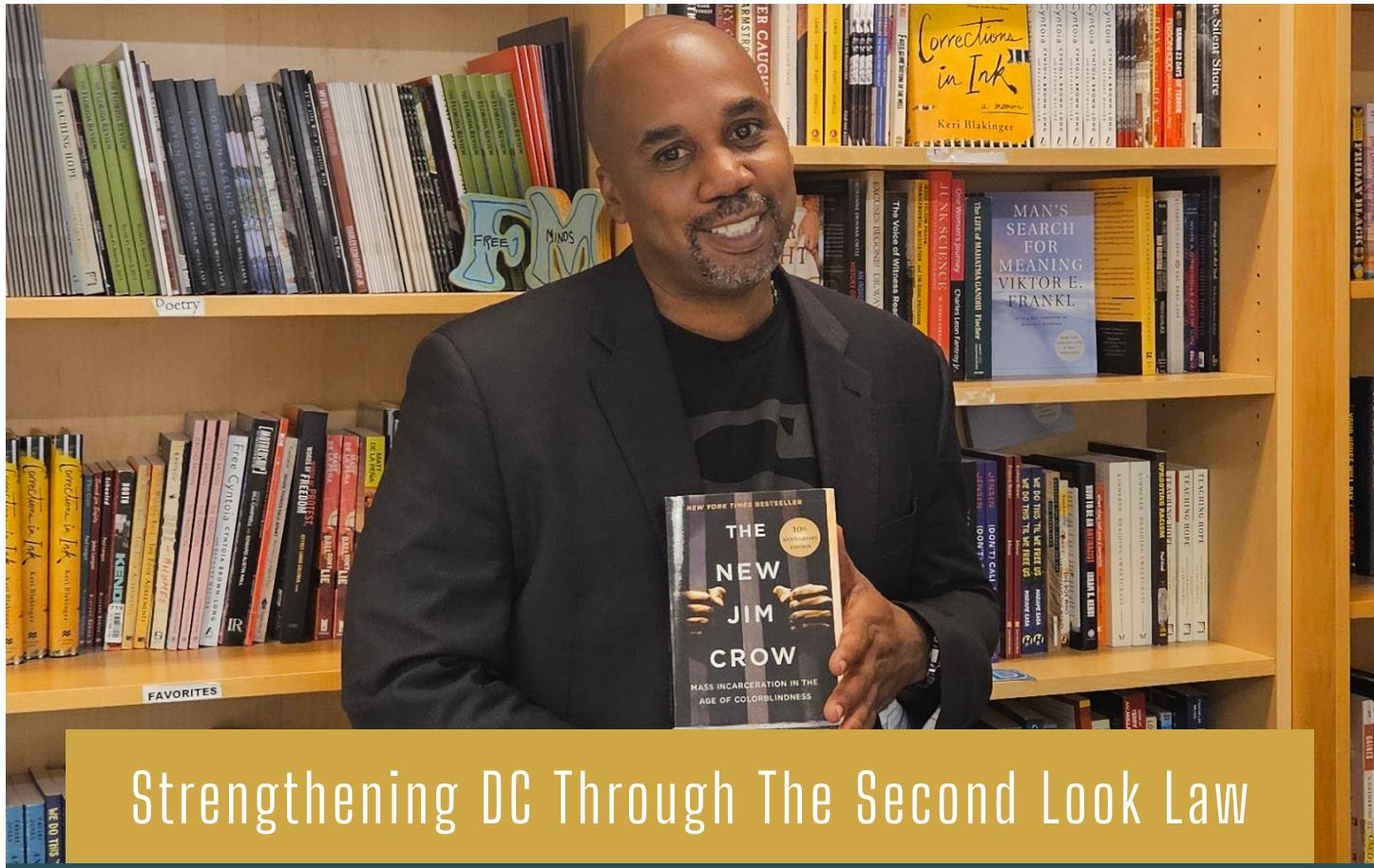


**“I got this chance, so I honor it every day. I didn’t disappoint anyone by coming home. Now my work is to show up for young people and help others get the same opportunity.”**

James first connected with Free Minds while incarcerated. He joined the book club and began writing poetry, staying connected to staff and members in the community through letters and shared reflection. Today, he continues to participate as a Poet Ambassador, Changemaker and Book Club Facilitator, a reader leader with youth in the adult system at DC’s juvenile system returning to DC Jail and youth facilities to lead discussions, share poetry, and remind others that their stories matter.

James is also building stability and a future for himself. Last year, he purchased his first home, a commitment to staying rooted in the city he loves. What means the most to him, though, are the everyday freedoms: walking to the cleaners, choosing between a Coke or a Pepsi at the corner store, going for a run, and deciding how to spend his time. “To be free,” he says. “That’s what I’m grateful for. And because I got this chance, I make sure I honor it every day. I didn’t disappoint anyone by coming home. My job now is to make sure others get the same opportunity.” Every day, he shows up for young people across DC, offering steady guidance, interrupting cycles of harm, and helping create the kind of safety and support he needed at their age.

James wants people to understand what IRAA makes possible: when people come home ready to contribute, the community gains leaders, mentors, and builders.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

Terrell: Building systems of accountability, healing, and community power

When Terrell helped create the Bounce Back Unit inside a level seven penitentiary, he was trying to shift more than the environment around him. He was trying to change the culture of incarceration itself. He and a small group of others designed a model rooted in responsibility, preparation, and community. They drafted proposals, developed a curriculum, and convinced the warden to let them build a reentry space where others could prepare for life at home. Years later, that unit still exists. It continues to support people as they begin the work of coming back to their families and neighborhoods.

For Terrell, that legacy matters because his transformation began long before he ever knew IRAA existed. "Before IRAA, I had already changed," he says. "I was preparing myself for society, and preparing others for it, too." His work inside the prison reflected a deep shift in how he understood himself, his community, and the responsibility he felt to both.

IRAA recognized that growth. After nearly twenty four years of incarceration, the law allowed Terrell to be resentenced and come home. He returned to a large and supportive family and immediately sought out ways to serve. From his earliest days home, he volunteered with Christian Legal Aid, helping people navigate reentry. He earned a paralegal certification and began assisting others with legal issues while building his own foundation.

Terrell soon joined Break Free Education, which connected him to DC Justice Lab. There, he became a Campaign and Advocacy Fellow, contributing to efforts to eliminate mandatory minimums and expand opportunities for people returning from incarceration. One of his most significant efforts was supporting the push to allow residents of the DC Jail to testify directly at Council hearings. He worked with councilmembers, drafted arguments, met with the Director of the Department of Corrections, and testified at the Wilson Building himself. The legislation is now moving forward, a change driven in large part by Terrell's persistence.



**“Before IRAA, I had already changed. I was preparing myself for society, and preparing others for it too.”**

Today, Terrell works at Dreaming Out Loud as a Farm and Market Associate, supporting food access and economic opportunity in Wards 7 and 8. He also studies business and government contracting while building The Advocate House, an emerging organization focused on community-driven policy. His goal is to bring the voices of those most affected by DC's laws directly into the rooms where decisions are made.

Terrell sees his journey as proof of what is possible when people have the chance to grow and the opportunity to contribute. “People can change,” he says. “People are worthy of redemption. People should be acknowledged for the years we spent reconstructing ourselves.” He believes those years of work, often done quietly and without recognition, are part of what makes IRAA so powerful. It identifies the people who have already done the hardest work of all: changing from the inside out.

What Terrell is most proud of is not a single accomplishment, but a way of moving through the world. He understands how he operates, how others operate, and how systems shape the lives around him. That awareness guides how he builds relationships, how he teaches, and how he leads. It is the foundation of every contribution he makes to his community.

This is what IRAA makes possible. People who return home prepared to strengthen the places they love, and who create the very systems that help others succeed.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

Tyrone: Leading with wisdom, rebuilding futures through education and reentry support

When Tyrone sits across from someone preparing to return home, he remembers what it felt like to wonder whether he would ever have that chance. He listens closely, asks questions, and helps them map out a plan for education, housing, and employment. Today, as Director of Reentry Services at Georgetown University's Prisons and Justice Initiative, he uses his lived experience and academic training to support people at one of the most pivotal moments of their lives.

Tyrone came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after nearly twenty-five years of incarceration. His release opened a door he had long believed was closed. It allowed him to return to his family, pursue his education, and begin building a career centered on service. What matters most is that the opportunity also allowed him to help others do the same.

Soon after returning home, Tyrone enrolled in the Georgetown Pivot Program, where he took college courses and completed an internship at the Justice Policy Institute. He was later hired full time, contributing research, testimony, and policy guidance on sentencing reform and the implementation of IRAA. He continued his studies at Georgetown University, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies in 2025 and beginning a master's program in Policy Management soon after. Tyrone describes this period as one of rebuilding, grounded in purpose and possibility.

In his work today, Tyrone supports people both during incarceration and after release. He meets with individuals preparing to come home, helps them understand available resources, and guides them toward stability. He works with community partners to help them secure housing, educational opportunities, and employment pathways.



“IRAA gave me the chance to use my story and skills to help other justice-impacted individuals chart a meaningful path in life.”

Tyrone believes strongly in what IRAA makes possible. He often says that the law does more than reunite families. It returns people who have grown, matured, and worked tirelessly to rebuild themselves. Those individuals, he notes, are now contributing as educators, advocates, caregivers, and community leaders. “IRAA gives people who were sentenced as teenagers the opportunity to show their growth,” he explains. “If they have changed, they should have the chance to come home and strengthen the communities they once came from.”

What motivates Tyrone is simple. Every time he watches someone take their first steps toward a new life, he sees the ripple effect that policy and individualized support can create. His own story is proof. Through education, service, and leadership, he is helping shape a safer, more connected Washington, DC.

Tyrone’s path shows that when IRAA opens the door, people can return home as educators, policy shapers, and guides who make Washington, DC safer and more connected.



## Strengthening DC Through The Second Look Law

Saleem: Rebuilding his life, restoring community, and carrying forward a legacy of art and service

Saleem grew up surrounded by music, rhythms passed down through his family at Malcolm X Park. As a child, he learned to play drums by ear, sitting beside his father and uncle as they kept time for the neighborhood. In prison, the only place his art could go was onto the page. When Free Minds mailed his poem back with handwritten notes from strangers, it lit a spark that never went out.

That spark eventually became the drive behind a life built on service, steady work, and community contribution.

Saleem came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after more than two decades of incarceration. He returned determined to prove something to himself, his family, and the community that raised him. One of his first jobs was at a five-star steakhouse, where he used the baking skills he learned in prison to make fresh bread that became the restaurant's best-selling item. From there, he worked as an unarmed security guard for a luxury apartment building, building a reputation for reliability and professionalism.

Still, he wanted something more stable and personally meaningful. Saleem enrolled in Georgetown University's paralegal program, completed his certification, and began working for the DC government. Today, he reviews grievances submitted by residents, ensures agency responses meet quality standards, and helps resolve community concerns with fairness and care. His supervisors recently asked him to begin facilitating internal trainings because of his calm leadership and clarity in communication. He enjoys the work because it allows him to serve the public every day.

Saleem has remained closely connected to Free Minds. He participates in The Build Up, a weekly book club and support circle for members returning home. He serves as a Poet Ambassador sharing his writing at community events, and he works with partners like DC Justice Lab to advocate for stronger protections for people in confinement. He has visited the Mayor's Office to speak against solitary confinement and



**“The person I am now was shaped by years of rebuilding, studying, mentoring, and healing. IRAA gave me the chance to bring that work home so I could pour it back into my family and my community.”**

has shared his poetry and testimony with individuals and policymakers who rarely hear directly from people impacted by incarceration.

Outside of his job and community work, Saleem is still an artist. He writes poetry, draws, paints, and plays percussion instruments including congas, African drums, and the trap set. He recently performed as part of a theater production, surprising fellow cast members with the depth of his musical skills. His creative life is part of his grounding and part of his contribution to DC's cultural legacy.

Saleem wants people to understand that IRAA is not lenient. It is a rigorous process that requires decades of good conduct, accountability, and sustained personal growth. In his words, “People should be acknowledged for the years we spent reconstructing ourselves.” He believes the law works because it identifies people who have truly changed. “We were those who were overlooked,” he says. “Science has proven we could be redeemed.”

Saleem’s return has strengthened DC. He brings empathy to his government work, creativity to community spaces, and lived wisdom to conversations about safety and justice. He is proof that when people come home ready to contribute, the entire city benefits.



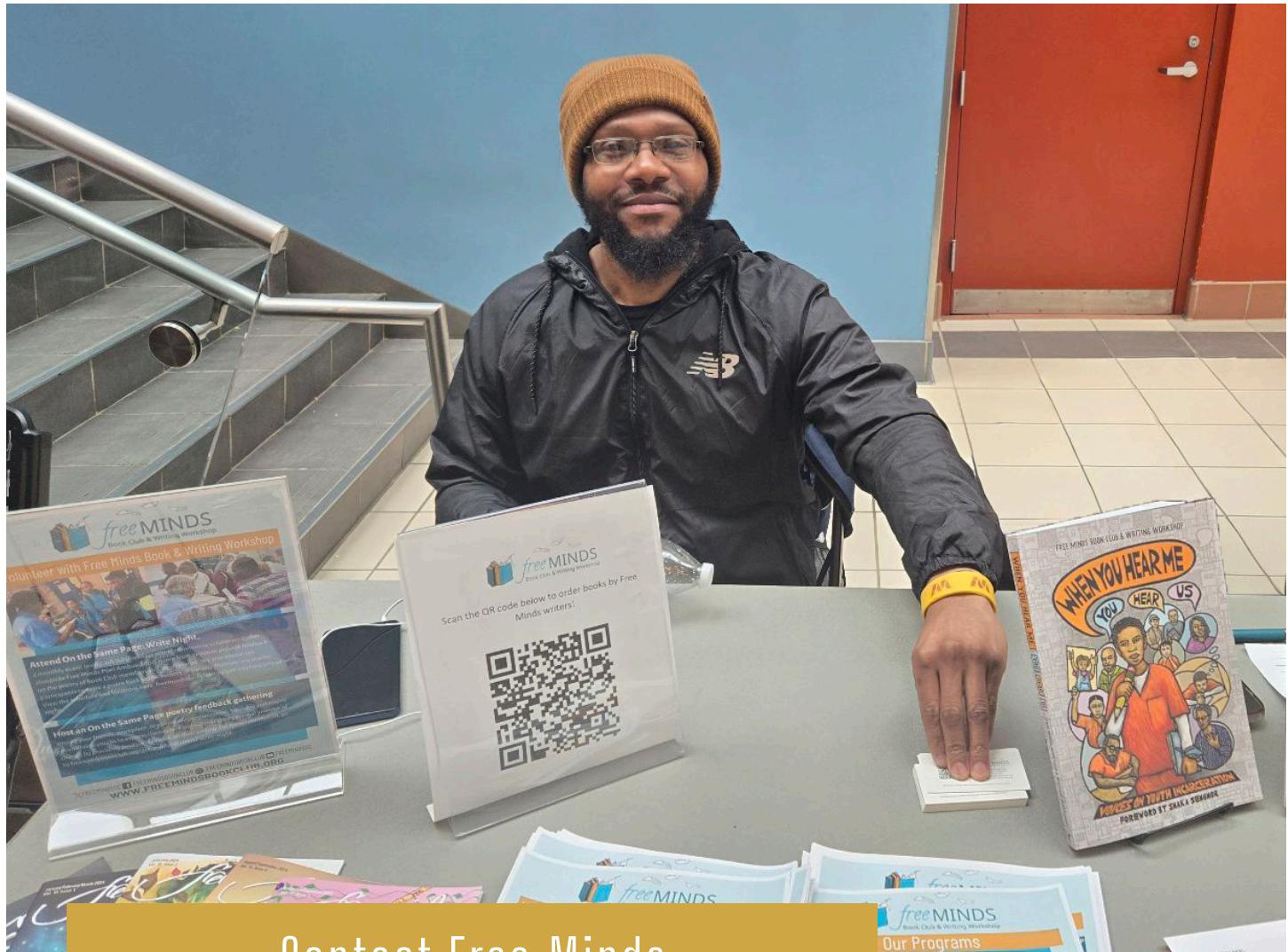
## The Impact of IRAA/Second Look on Our Community

The stories in this booklet reflect decades of growth, accountability, and contribution that rarely make it into headlines. Each person came home through the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Amendment Act (IRAA) after years of hard work that began long before this law was written. They studied, mentored others, faced the harm they caused, and prepared themselves to return as neighbors, caregivers, artists, advocates, educators, and violence interrupters.

Together, their journeys show that IRAA is not an abstract policy. It is classrooms where young people meet credible messengers who understand their lives. It is families gathered around dinner tables with loved ones they never thought they would see at home again. It is violence interruption in Ward 8, reentry planning in DC Jail, financial literacy workshops for teenagers, portraits and poems that change how people see themselves, and safe spaces where healing and accountability can coexist.

At Free Minds, we have the privilege of walking alongside our members before, during, and after incarceration. We see the years of work that go into earning a second look. We also see the impact when that opportunity is granted: safer communities, stronger families, and a District enriched by the talents and leadership of people who once were written off.

As debates about IRAA continue, we ask that these stories be part of the conversation. They are reminders that people can change, that investment and support matter, and that true public safety grows from opportunity, connection, and hope. When we choose to recognize human potential, we do more than open a door. We strengthen the city we all call home.



## Contact Free Minds

If you would like to learn more about our work, our members, or how IRAA shapes public safety and community wellbeing in Washington, DC, we welcome the conversation.

**Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop**  
1816 12th St NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
[www.freemindsbookclub.org](http://www.freemindsbookclub.org)

**Tara Libert, Co-founder and Executive Director**  
202.758.0829  
[Tara@freemindsbookclub.org](mailto:Tara@freemindsbookclub.org)

Free Minds has worked with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth and adults for more than twenty years, supporting our members from incarceration to reentry to community leadership. We are honored to share their stories, and we invite you to stay connected as we continue building a safer, more just Washington, DC.

