

The Department of Corrections says that 52 percent of released offenders in Oregon had no home to go to in 2008. In 2009, 4,461 inmates are scheduled for release.



Alicia McGinnis with her baby, Destiny.

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included 16 years of homelessness. Art is passionate about the lack of support for former prisoners, and, especially, the difficulty of coming back to a home that deems you undesirable.

"Unless you have family," says Rios, "you're out of luck." For many criminals, says Rios, even family can be unforgiving.

Speaking bluntly about prison life, Rios unveiled the cyclical criminal patterns of his family.

"There was one year," he recalled, "where I went to county (jail) 114 times." When he served his first hard sentence, a six-month stint at Folsom Prison, he joined some of his family members who already were locked up. When he got out of Folsom, however, his remaining family refused to take him in.

Rios takes particular pride in the way California is dealing with the issue of homelessness. Specifically, he mentioned EDAR (Everyone Deserves a Roof), a Los Angeles initiative that provides cart-sized, collapsible shelters, as well as a recent effort in Sacramento, where 10-foot by 10-foot transitional housing units were being built — an attempt to ease prisoners out of living in tiny cells.

Once you've been in prison, society "sees you as a violent person with no remorse," he says. Transitioning out of prison life was especially difficult for Rios, a recovering addict who has been sober since 2006. Given that many of the resources available for ex-cons are dependent on clean urine samples, it's no surprise that finding housing and employment is difficult. Post-prison, it took Rios two years to get back on his feet.

"I don't want to be continually punished"

Even though they are free of the constraints of prison, both Gollyhorn and McGinnis find their lives in a state of flux. Gollyhorn has been evicted from his Hillsboro home and has been staying with McGinnis and Destiny while he waits for a room through Transitions Project Inc. For the first time in his life, he is focused and has plans on going to school for engineering.

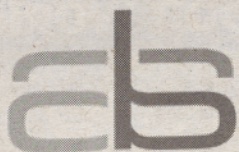
His eyes light up when he talks about the possibilities for his future, but it's the past that seems to solidify where he is at present. "I want my rights back," he says, noting the extreme difficulties in finding work for a person like himself — someone, in particular, who has been legally designated a "kidnapper" based on one of the charges from his arrest. "I don't want to be continually punished for a mistake I made."

Rios spoke of how there should be better housing and drug treatment programs, but that, most importantly, there should be assistance with family reunification. Rios was a primary player in a homelessness protest last year and continues to make appearances at City Hall in the name of equal rights for the homeless and more resources for former prisoners. Ending the cycle of transitioning from prison to the streets and then back into prison will take an entire societal transformation, according to Rios, who said, "Change the attitude. Seriously."

For all three, though, having a second chance at life is a crucial thing. It is family support, which for all of them includes the community of friends they have at places such as Sisters Of The Road that keeps them going. "If your family can't look out for you," says Gollyhorn, "who's gonna?"



"Unless you have family," says Art Rios (above), "you're out of luck." For many criminals, says Rios, even family can be unforgiving.



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