College & Community Fellowship

2016-17
Annual Report
The mission of the College & Community Fellowship is to eliminate individual, social, and structural barriers to higher education, civic participation, and economic security for women with criminal convictions and their families.
Dear Friends,

When I first joined College & Community Fellowship as a student in 2000, I never could have imagined the impact we would have as an organization, the strength of the community we would form, and the ways in which we were destined to grow over time. From our humble beginnings serving six women in our first year, we have grown into a nationally recognized agency serving hundreds of people annually.

In our 17 years of service, our students have earned 327 college degrees with a cumulative recidivism rate below 1%. We have stepped into the world of advocacy to make sure that justice-involved people everywhere, not just our students in New York City, have a fair chance at higher education. We have scaled up our impact by creating a technical assistance program to help other agencies around the country serve their own communities using our program model. But perhaps most importantly, we have built a resilient and compassionate community.

CCF’s students, alumnae, staff, board, volunteers, and supporters make up a community that challenges common perceptions of people with criminal justice histories. We are program directors, social workers, lawyers, teachers, and counselors. The success of our program, and of the hardworking students we serve, demonstrates the true impact of a holistic approach to higher education as a road to long-term success.
As we grapple with a new reality of a changing political landscape, CCF is prepared to redouble our efforts to ensure that the gains we have made in the last several years are preserved. Our inspired community will continue to fight for fair access to education for all. As Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Here at CCF, we are prepared to change the world. The work we have done over the last year includes investing in our staff’s skills and expertise, cultivating relationships with other agencies which are ready to step into the world of higher education for justice-involved people, and planning strategically with our board for the future of CCF.

Looking toward long-term sustainability, we will:

• expand our national technical assistance program with a special interest in Southern states
• begin to implement the changes we outlined in our strategic plan
• continue to advocate for justice in partnership with other thought leaders in the criminal justice reform movement.

And, as always, we will be working to harness the strength and capability of CCF students through our robust combination of academic and financial counseling, community support, and encouragement of civic engagement.

We are so grateful for the financial support that makes this work possible, and we thank our major funders: Barbara Martinsons, Ford Foundation, ECMC Foundation, Trinity Wall Street, US Department of Justice, New York Community Trust, Open Society Foundations, Hearst Foundation, NoVo Foundation, and the Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation. We also thank our Board of Directors, whose financial support and professional expertise move our work forward. A full list of supporters can be found at the end of this report.

I trust that, after reading this annual report, you’ll become a supporter too. With a growing network of passionate and dedicated individuals, we are working together to ensure the best possible future for our women, their families, and their communities. Join us!

Vivian Nixon
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
COLLEGE & COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP
WOMEN are the fastest-growing prison population, so the many reentry services which target only men or focus on short-term goals leave important gaps. Although those services are crucial, CCF fills the gap in reentry services with gender-responsive, long-term programming. When we examine the correlation between lack of education and high incarceration rates, it becomes clear that access to education can drastically increase quality of life for justice-involved women, and can help break the cycle of crime and poverty. And because many women impacted by the criminal justice system are primary caretakers of young children, our work has ripple effects across generations.

COLLEGE & COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP’s core work is our direct service, helping formerly incarcerated women earn their college degrees. Our national programs (p. 11-14) are all informed by the work we do on the ground with those directly impacted by the justice system. CCF works with students to identify their strengths, skills, and desires to set them on a path to success. We invest in our students’ academic careers by sticking with them from intake to graduation and beyond. Unlike reentry services which define success through short-term accomplishments such as 90-day job retention or completion of a group workforce development program, we harness the strengths of our students to build an enduring, vibrant community of women pursuing higher education. Our community activities create a space free of stigma for our students, who too often have been told they cannot achieve their goals. When women come out of our program, they choose community-strengthening careers like public policy, social work, and counseling. The best reflection of our work is the students themselves: when we succeed, our students become economically self-sufficient, and are able to give back to their communities.
CCF Students

WHO THEY ARE

Race/Ethnicity
- 60% White
- 22% Black/African-American
- 14.5% Hispanic/Latina
- 2.5% Bi/Multi Race
- <1% Asian

Age
- 25% Aged 20-29
- 29% Aged 30-39
- 25% Aged 40-49
- 16% Aged 50-59
- 4% Aged 60+

38% Have kids under 18

WHERE THEY STUDY

Schools
1. Borough of Manhattan Community College
2. Hunter College
3. Lehman College
4. Hostos Community College
5. Bronx Community College

Majors
1. Human Services
2. Social Work
3. Counseling and Community Health
4. Sociology
5. Non-Profit and Business Management

Certifications
1. Business Administration
2. Information Technology
3. Certified Nurse Aid
4. Case Management
5. Credentialed Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC)

WHAT THEY ACHIEVE

Graduation Numbers
- 41 Master’s
- 24 Bachelor’s
- 7 Associate’s
2015-17

Cohort graduation rates as high as 93%

Recidivism Rates
New York State formerly imprisoned females after 3 years vs. CCF Fellows after 17 years
- 27%
- <1%

327 degrees earned since 2000
13 degrees earned in school year 2016-17
We transformed women’s lives through higher education

Through new initiatives in our Academic Support Program, and our work with women as they are released from prison, CCF continues to break down barriers to higher education and economic stability for our students.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM

Our services begin with outreach within New York State’s women’s prisons and among the various community-based organizations that serve women in the process of reentry. Women interested in our program receive a free College Readiness Consultation to ensure that they have the support and resources to succeed in college. If a woman isn’t yet ready for college, she can join our Community Sisters program to stay connected until she’s ready to apply. From the time a woman enrolls in the Academic Support Program, she receives regular individual counseling, financial coaching, community support, and opportunities for leadership and scholarships from CCF. Our tight-knit community of new students, CCF Fellows, and alumnae help us share resources and build social capital within the CCF network.

In 2016-17, CCF helped 13 women earn their college degrees. To date, CCF students have earned 327 degrees, including a Ph.D and a J.D.
CAREER ENHANCEMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

CCF staff are always learning about the challenges our students face even as they work toward their college degrees. One challenge has been difficulty making ends meet while in school, or difficulty becoming competitive in the job market after school. In response, CCF launched the Career Enhancement Education Program, which helps our students earn high-quality career certifications in the business and health fields. CEEP students can earn a certificate as a stepping stone to a college degree, or to advance their careers after earning a degree!

This year, CCF helped 16 women earn certificates in areas like business accounting, project management, medical assisting, computer coding, and more. Many of our students are enrolled at Hostos Community College in the School of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, so Hostos put CCF Fellow Belinda on the cover of its winter catalog for certificate courses!

PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

CCF’s Peer Mentoring Program matches alumnae with women who will be released from prison within 90 days, to help them work higher education into their reentry planning. Since the launch of the program in 2015, CCF has matched 62 mentees with 10 mentors. In 2016-17, almost one-third of our intakes to the Academic Support Program were mentees enrolled in the Peer Mentoring Program. We know that facing challenges is always easier when there’s someone cheering you on. Thank you to all the CCF mentors for giving back to the community!
ONE of the biggest barriers to college for people with criminal justice histories is filling out an application that asks the question “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” In fact, a report we released with the Center for Community Alternatives in 2013 proved that two-thirds of applicants with criminal justice histories never even complete their applications. Because few colleges have any protocol for how to handle justice-involved students, requirements for admission often include extensive interrogation and requests for documents that are legally sealed (or in some cases, nonexistent).

FOR the last several years, the Education from the Inside Out Coalition has been advocating for the State University of New York to “Ban the Box” on college applications. In September 2016, the SUNY Board of Trustees voted to move the box off their applications! Over 3,000 New Yorkers each year will be affected by this measure. We thank all the dedicated EIO Coalition members who worked tirelessly to make this happen, including student advocacy groups on SUNY campuses.

L: EIO Coalition members rally to Ban the Box at the SUNY Board of Trustees meeting.
R: CCF staff and students celebrate at our Ban the Box Victory Party.
We used art to build knowledge and awareness

The Theater for Social Change Ensemble, one of CCF’s oldest programs, uses theater to reach new audiences and build awareness about mass incarceration. The TSC is comprised of CCF alumnae who write and perform original pieces about their experiences with incarceration and the transformative power of education.

In 2017, CCF founder Barbara Martinsons led the Theater for Social Change Ensemble throughout Southern Arizona on a performance tour, in addition to their usual invitations at colleges and universities. Through their performances, TSC members have the opportunity to advocate for criminal justice reform in a way that resonates with audiences. At CCF, we believe that empathy is the key to serving our students with dignity. By forging emotional connections between TSC performers and their audiences, we are able to build empathy for women with criminal justice histories.

2016-17 performances include Hunter College, CCF block party, University of Arizona, and churches in Arizona and New York City.
We built a national program to address a national problem

How can justice-involved people across the country find the same opportunities we offer at CCF? Through our new College Achievement in Reentry Technical Assistance Project (CARTAP).

Over the last several years, we’ve seen an increase in college-in-prison programs and in college access for incarcerated students. But at CCF, we know that the transition from college in prison to college in the community can be a challenge. Without community-based organizations to help students make that transition, many never complete their degrees.

Our new technical assistance program, CARTAP, provides hands-on training and tools for reentry agencies, educational institutions, and parole and probation offices to build higher education supports into their existing programming. Every site we work with serves justice-involved people who need help on the pathway to graduation. By sharing the success of our model, which boasts graduation rates as high as 93% and a cumulative recidivism rate below 1%, we can make sure that higher education is accessible to all.

Interested in receiving technical assistance? Contact us!

Top: Associate Director of Technical Assistance, Lettisha Boyd, trains the staff of North Carolina Dept of Public Safety.
L: Lettisha and CCF Fellows discussing CARTAP.
R: Lettisha trains the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, comprised of parole and probation officers.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In our pilot year, we selected five sites (dark blue) from a pool of applications (light blue) representing eight cities and nine agencies.

Among our inaugural cohort you’ll find two community colleges, two community-based organizations, and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Interested in receiving training from CCF? Contact us!
Graduation 2016

In June 2016, 13 CCF students graduated with Associate’s, Bachelor’s, and Master’s degrees. CCF Alumna Victoria Roberts hosted the event, while Melissa Harris-Perry, the Maya Angelou Presidential Chair of Wake Forest University, delivered a keynote speech about the power within our students. Valedictorian Amy Stone and Salutatorian Josephine Cochrane gave addresses touching on past feelings of hopelessness and the ways that CCF helped them create pathways to the futures they wanted for themselves and their families.

United State of Women Summit

In the final year of the Obama presidency, his administration hosted the first-ever United State of Women Summit. The Summit, held in Washington, DC, covered topics from gender-based violence and financial abuse, to successful women entrepreneurs and opportunities for collaboration nationwide. Obama administration officials invited Executive Director Vivian Nixon to participate in a panel discussion about women in the criminal justice system!
Harlem Block Party

In August 2016, CCF hosted its second Annual Harlem Block Party at the Adam Clayton Powell State House. We brought together 24 community organizations, showing Harlem residents the services available in their own neighborhood with a special emphasis on promoting the value of education for young people. CCF Alumna and board member Yolanda Johnson-Peterkin emceed the event with energy and expertise!

Our dance competition was a hit among the kids, who all received backpacks filled with school supplies, compliments of CCF. A special thanks to our 2016 summer interns, who made this Block Party possible!

Career Education Enhancement Program Convenings

With a generous grant from the New York Women’s Foundation, CCF launched the Career Education Enhancement Program (CEEP) to help our students earn high-quality career certifications. We held a Business Convening in October 2016, and a Health Convening in March 2017, for our students pursuing careers in the business and health fields. Students had the chance to network with potential employers, and hear success stories from their peers who have already launched their careers. Thank you to CCF Fellows Vivianna and Joyce for sharing your experiences in the medical field on our panel!
A Conversation with Michelle Alexander

Michelle Alexander, author of The New Jim Crow, has been instrumental in bringing the conversation about criminal justice reform to a wider audience. In November 2016, John Jay College of Criminal Justice generously hosted our event, Unlocking Potential: How Access to Education Contributes to Ending Mass Incarceration. Executive Director Vivian Nixon and Michelle Alexander discussed the changing political climate and how it might affect the work CCF has been doing for 17 years. Dr. Alexander’s insight and extensive knowledge of the history of mass incarceration made for a memorable, and motivating, conversation.

Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education

Anna Deavere Smith, the award-winning playwright and actress, performed her one-woman show “Notes from the Field” in November 2016. The show, comprised of interview clips from around the country, examined the relationship between incarceration and education. As a gift to CCF’s Theater for Social Change Ensemble and other alumnae, Anna held a meet-and-greet for the CCF group after the show!
The Moth

The Moth, a critically acclaimed storytelling program on National Public Radio, launched a workshop series to help people with criminal justice histories tell their stories. After two full-day workshops here at CCF, students had the chance to invite friends and family to hear the stories they had honed over the previous month. Thank you to The Moth for your generosity and for your interest in elevating the life stories of people with criminal justice histories!

Clockwise from top left: CCF Senior Associate of Development Melanie Steinhardt moderates a conversation between Vivian Nixon and Michelle Alexander; Vivian and Michelle with John Jay College of Criminal Justice President Jeremy Travis; CCF staff and students pose at the holiday party; CCF staffer Jannell Daley and her daughter; CCF students sharing their stories on The Moth; CCF group with Anna Deavere Smith after her one-woman show.

CCF Holiday Party

One of the highlights of our year is the annual Holiday Party for all students and their families, which is open to the public. CCF staff played games with the children, while the adults competed in a dance contest. This year, New York Cares’ Winter Wishes program gave gifts to all of our students’ young children, while the New York Cares staff hosted family-friendly activities. Please join us for next year’s holiday party!
Spreading the word

CCF’s Executive Director, Vivian Nixon, travels around the country year-round to talk about our work, the criminal justice reform movement, and the importance of education for those affected by mass incarceration. Vivian’s journey from CCF student to successful executive director helps show our audiences how impactful CCF’s programs can be. In 2016-17, Vivian made over 80 appearances in 16 cities to help draw attention to the crucial work of College & Community Fellowship. Other CCF staff attend out-of-state trainings and advocate on behalf of our programs, which helps spread the word even further.

CCF’s national presence has helped inform the conversation about criminal justice reform countrywide and at all levels of government.

Left: Vivian delivering the 2017 Columbia Community Scholars Lecture; CCF staff Lettisha and student Joyce on Mission BX; Vivian receiving the Tribeca Disruptive Innovator award.

Right: Vivian honored by the New York Women’s Foundation alongside Linda Sarsour, Donna Lieberman, Cecile Richards, and Ana Maria Archila; Vivian with Piper Kerman, Bryan Stevenson, and Mary Alice Pappas at MorseLife Symposium in West Palm Beach.
Student Spotlight

“If they can see potential in me, then I can see it in myself.”

YOCAIRYS DIAZ always knew that she wanted to be somebody special. But when her parents divorced, Yocairys was still a child. Although both of her parents did the best they could for their three children, Yocairys felt that she had to make sure her brothers had the support their parents couldn’t always provide. “I had to grow up a lot faster than I would have liked,” Yocairys says.

Yocairys got her first job at 15, with older coworkers who drank, smoked, and went clubbing. “I wanted to do the things my older friends were doing, even though I wasn’t enough of an adult to make those decisions responsibly.” The pressure of her work, social life, and keeping her family together eventually resulted in a violent accident. Yocairys was sent to prison at age 17.

“When I went to prison, I took that as an opportunity to do some soul-searching and really figure myself out,” Yocairys says. While incarcerated, Yocairys earned her high school equivalency and took a business class. She also built a reputation as a mediator and peacekeeper. But Yocairys still didn’t know what she would do when she was finally released: “I thought I would just come home and try to work. I had in the back of my head that I should get an education but didn’t know how I could do it.”

In 2012, while on Riker’s Island, Yocairys was captivated by CCF’s Theater for Social Change Ensemble performance. Over the next few years, Yocairys was transferred from prison to prison, eventually landing at Taconic Correctional Facility. When CCF alumna and TSC member Yolanda Johnson-Peterkin visited Taconic a few years later to talk about her public housing program reuniting formerly incarcerated people with their families, Yocairys recognized her from the theater group and asked about CCF. As her release date drew nearer, Yocairys connected with CCF’s Recruitment Coordinator, Jacqueline Thompson, and our Associate Director of Mentoring Services, Warwick Williams.

“I realized I could start getting involved with CCF while on the inside.” Yocairys stayed connected until her release date in December 2016. Within 24 hours of her release, Warwick called Yocairys to invite her to the CCF holiday party the very next day. Feeling inspired, Yocairys showed up. Within six weeks of coming home, Yocairys had enrolled in CCF’s CEEP program (p.9) earning a certificate in dental assisting. This fall, she’ll begin a college degree program at CUNY City Tech.

“There’s no limit to what the CCF staff will do to help us reach our goals. No matter how discouraged I get, no matter the struggles I’m facing, CCF is here for me. If they can see potential in me, I can see it in myself.” For Yocairys, the best part of joining CCF is the community. “I love the way CCF brings women together to talk freely about what we’re going through. You can be comfortable even talking about your incarceration and you can’t do that anywhere else. It’s a place to reflect on the past and think about the future without being judged.”

Yocairys has a message for women who are still waiting to come home: “They need to know about CCF. They need to know that education is our key to moving forward. It’s the one thing no one can take away from us.”
When Latoya Phillip first came home from prison, returning to college felt like a safe choice. Without other plans in place, Latoya thought she might as well try to finish her Bachelor’s degree, but she wasn’t sure where it would take her. “I personally had never witnessed formerly incarcerated people making significant achievements in academia, so I was apprehensive,” Latoya says. “I was almost positive that nothing would come of this.”

Because Latoya had been enrolled at a CUNY school before her incarceration, she didn’t think she needed much help navigating her education. But when another reentering citizen pushed Latoya to come to CCF, everything changed. “Before CCF, I thought I would graduate but that I would never get a job. CCF introduced me to a community of women with similar experiences to mine. I was so inspired by the women getting their Masters’, going to law school, getting their Ph.Ds. I thought ‘if they can do it, so can I.’”

Through CCF, Latoya finished her Bachelor’s degree in criminal justice, and last year graduated with her Master’s degree in Public Administration from John Jay. “I wouldn’t have gotten my Master’s without CCF,” says Latoya. Her academic career included an internship with New York City Councilmember Jumaane Williams, which Latoya says she never would have pursued without the courage the CCF instilled in her.

“CCF affected my life outside of academia. I choose to live my life always doing the right thing,” Latoya says. “My decisions affect me and my family, but now I have another community I’m accountable to- my decisions affect CCF as well. I always have people I can turn to in a time of need.”

Since Latoya’s graduation last year, she has begun working for a nonprofit that helps homeless and at-risk veterans in New York City. Latoya sees this as a stepping stone to a career in criminal justice public policy. Her career goals stem from her feeling that “I now believe I can do anything I want to do, because of CCF.” Post-graduation, Latoya has also spent more time with her 8-year-old daughter, who sometimes accompanies her to CCF community activities.

In 2017, Latoya and her family started the Kenneth Solomon Phillip Award for Community Engagement. Each year, a CCF student who has made valuable contributions to the community, and who has shown a willingness to always lend a helping hand, will receive a $650 scholarship at our annual graduation ceremony. “My family and I don’t have much,” Latoya explains, “but giving back is so important to us. I love CCF because it impacts people on an individual level but it also affects society as a whole. This is just my family’s way of saying thank you.”
This year at CCF, staff and board participated in a six-month strategic planning process to plan for the next three years. After 17 years of service to the community and a great deal of program growth, it was time to ask: “What next?”

We are very proud to have maintained our core work since 2000, helping formerly incarcerated women earn their college degrees. This core work helps shape the other programs we run countrywide. A major takeaway from the strategic plan process is that our direct services to women in New York City will remain a top priority as we continue to grow. Without our work on the ground, we cannot hope to implement impactful programs in the advocacy and technical assistance arenas.

Over the next several years, CCF will be working to strengthen organizational infrastructure by hiring more administrative staff. New staff can help ensure that our programs run smoothly, and that our program staff has adequate support to do their jobs well. We will also be expanding our national technical assistance program geographically. And, we’ll be enhancing both our direct services and technical assistance through intensive staff training in trauma-informed service delivery.

COLLEGE & COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP has become a thought leader in the world of criminal justice reform over the last decade. Through collaborations with our community partners, governmental agencies, and criminal justice philanthropies, CCF has helped bring the conversation about criminal justice reform and higher education to a national level. As we move forward, we will continue to advocate for access to education as a key element to successful reentry, but also as a human right. We hope you’ll stay connected to our work!
# Financial Summary

Statement of financial position at close of Fiscal Year 2016

Fiscal year July 1 - June 30

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## Statement of activities and changes in unrestricted net assets

### SUPPORT & REVENUE

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### EXPENSES

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Changes in Net Assets  
($283,421)  ($124,545)  
Net Assets, Beginning of Year  
$1,077,894  $1,202,439  
Net Assets, End of Year  
$794,473  $1,077,894

**NOTE:** FY16 closed with decrease in net assets. As of May 2017 CCF is projected to close FY17 with a surplus of funding.
Supporting CCF
How you can help

COLLEGE & Community Fellowship relies on public and private support to carry out our work. The continued support of individuals and foundations underpins our ability help formerly incarcerated women complete their college education.

Make a financial contribution.
No donation is too small.

Ask your employer to support us
Many companies offer matching programs that augment the charitable donations made by their employees. Others allow their employees to nominate non-profit organizations for grants or other types of giving.

Consider planned giving
Gifts made as a result of estate planning or testamentary awards often enable donors to make larger contributions to a worthwhile and satisfying endeavor. We are building on an endowment that was started by our founder, Barbara Martinsons. This will allow us to reduce our dependence on annual donations.

Become a volunteer
Your passion, expertise and time would add to our success. We welcome volunteers who would like to help our staff in various ways, including administrative support, policy research, mentoring and tutoring.

Hire our alumnae
Employers should talk to us about qualified and skilled candidates from our pool of alumnae.

Get creative!
You can be an ambassador for CCF in many ways. Our board member Dawn Walker used a charity run as an opportunity to fundraise for CCF! (See below.) To learn more about supporting College & Community Fellowship, or to come up with creative ideas for fundraising, please call the Senior Associate of Development Melanie Steinhardt at (646) 380-7775.
Who We Are

Board of Directors
Peter Bakstansky, Chair
Barbara Martinsons, Founder
Irene Branche
Jacqueline Chu
Barat Dickman
Marie Hoguet
Jacki Kelly
Glenn E. Martin
Christopher Mendez
Dallas Pell
Yolanda Johnson-Peterkin
Rashida Richardson
Anthony Smith
Dawn Walker
Bridget Williams
Cheryl Wilkins

Advisory Board
Michelle Fine, Ph.D.
Diane Stevens Liotta
Susan P. Sturm, J.D.
Julie Johnson Staples

As of May 2017

Staff
Vivian D. Nixon, Executive Director
Maria Santangelo, Director of Programs
Melanie Steinhardt, Senior Associate of Development
Jarret Freeman, Executive Liaison
Warwick Williams, Associate Director of Mentoring Services
Lettisha Boyd, Associate Director of Technical Assistance
Angela Diaz, Academic Counselor
Jacqueline Thompson, Recruitment, Intake, and Support Coordinator
Wendy Romano, Program Assistant

Interns June 2016-June 2017
Sarah Barth
Ivelisse Gilestra
Emma Hattemeier
Rafi Levy-Lesko
Rebecca Wertheimer

Consultants June 2016-June 2017
Katy Taylor, Curriculum Development Consultant
Ruth Conner, Grant-Writing Consultant
Donors
We are grateful for the generous support of the following donors from June 2016-June 2017

$250,000+
ECMC Foundation
Ford Foundation
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Notes

1 Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Imprisonment rate of sentenced male prisoners under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional authorities per 100,000 male U.S. residents, December 31, 1978-2015). Generated using the Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool at www.bjs.gov.


3 College & Community Fellowship.
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