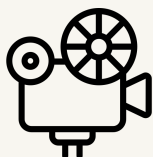




# IN THEIR HANDS DISCUSSION GUIDE

From JustLeadershipUSA in partnership with In Their Hands, LLC

## IN THEIR HANDS



### About the Film

[\*In Their Hands\*](#) is a film about one man's fight for freedom that pulls back the curtain at the politics of parole. It is produced and directed by Dan Protes. A production of In Their Hands, LLC.

### About JustLeadershipUSA

[JustLeadershipUSA](#) amplifies the power of people who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system to self-organize and empower their communities to dismantle racist and oppressive systems in their communities to build a just U.S.

### Watch the Film

The film is currently airing on PBS stations across the country and is available for streaming anytime on the PBS app and at [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org).

## Questions to Discuss After the Film

- What does the title “In Their Hands” mean to you? In whose hands is Ronnie? The courts, the state, the community, or in our own?
- The documentary showed how media coverage affected the parole board and its decisionmaking. What role does the media play in shaping public opinion about incarcerated people and the criminal legal system?
- How did race, poverty, and access to quality representation influence Ronnie’s case? And how do these factors typically determine who ends up behind bars and who has an opportunity for release?
- What emotional toll did Ronnie’s incarceration take on his family and community? And how is this similar or different from your own experiences?
- What changes have you witnessed in your correction system’s approach to life sentences and parole?
- The film shows the power of support systems when working to challenge policy issues. What more can our policymakers and communities do to support access to justice post-conviction? What more can be done to support impacted families?
- In the documentary, we are offered a rare glimpse into the interplay between legislators and members of one state’s parole board. How can independent oversight of pardon and parole boards be achieved in a way that shields the process from politics?
- Due to an increasing average age in prisons across the country, support systems and public health agencies are having to grapple with the intersection of elder care and reentry barriers. How do you see these barriers play out in your community? Where should reform start?
- Across the country, jurisdictions are increasing penalties for assault and violence against law enforcement — including correctional officers. Do you believe these increased penalties will deter violence? What impact will these mandatory minimums have on the system and on society?
- The story features the incredible resilience of Ronnie Carrasquillo as he fights for a second chance. How could legislators and members of parole boards learn from the lived expertise of Ronnie and others impacted by parole decisions and second look sentencing?
- When courts and parole boards make decisions about whether an incarcerated person is suitable for release, should the system consider who the person is today, the nature of the offense for which they were convicted, or both?

# Ways to Take Action

You've just watched *In Their Hands*. Now what should you do? Here are actions you can take in your local community and the tools you can use to do them!

## Address Juvenile Life Without Parole

With 28 states now banning juvenile life without parole (JLWOP), many individuals sentenced as children to life without parole are becoming eligible for parole. This change presents an opportunity for parole boards to implement processes that recognize the distinct experiences, challenges, and rehabilitation needs of those who have spent their formative years behind bars. It also provides a pathway for a second chance at life for people sentenced to JLWOP.

- [Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth – Interactive Map of States that Ban Life without Parole for Children](#)
- [Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth – PAROLE Preparation An action guide for understanding and preparing for your parole hearing](#)
- [Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse – Criteria and Procedures for Meaningful Parole for People Sentenced as Youth](#)

## Organize an Expungement Day Event

An expungement clinic is a free community event that helps individuals understand and navigate the process of clearing eligible conviction histories. They typically include legal assistance, resources, and guidance to those seeking a fresh start, ensuring they have the tools to remove barriers to employment, housing, and other opportunities.

- [Record Clearance Clinic Playbook](#)
- [Clean Slate Initiative – Record Sealing Resources including a 50-State Survey of Expungement Laws and Forms](#)
- [Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois – Expungement Summit Toolkit Outline](#)

## Build Awareness on Applying For Federal and State Pardons

The primary purpose of pardons is to offer a path to redemption for those who have demonstrated genuine remorse and rehabilitation. By removing the legal consequences of a conviction, pardons can restore civil rights, such as voting and increasing opportunities for employment and housing. Events focused on or inclusive of education and applications for pardons enhance Second Chance Month offerings.

- [Record Clearance Clinic Playbook](#)
- [Clean Slate Initiative – Record Sealing Resources including a 50-State Survey of Expungement Laws and Forms](#)
- [Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois – Expungement Summit Toolkit Outline](#)

## **Bring An Elected Official On A Visit To A Prison or Jail**

Jails and prisons may provide tours to public organizations, educational institutions, social service groups, community representatives, law enforcement, and correctional professionals exclusively for academic, educational, or professional reasons. These tours are available based on facility discretion and scheduling. To determine eligibility, guidelines, and any restrictions, check the official website of the facility you are interested in visiting. Some examples include:

- [The Tennessee Department of Correction](#)
- [Cook County Jail Tour Information](#)

## **Call For A Second Chance Month Proclamation In Your State/City**

A proclamation honoring Second Chance Month from your city, county, or state brings vital visibility to the importance of second chances and the challenges of reentry. It strengthens advocacy efforts by officially recognizing the need for policy improvement, helping to build public awareness and support for policies that remove barriers for people with a conviction history.

- [North Dakota Proclamation of Second Chance Month](#)
- [Georgia State Governor Proclamation of Second Chance Month](#)
- [Delaware State Senate Proclamation of Second Chance Month](#)

## **Educate Employers And Public Agencies About Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Individuals**

Employers are increasingly interested in exploring hiring opportunities and accessing the untapped talent pool of skilled employees who are directly impacted by the criminal legal system. To address this, businesses, public agencies, and community organizations can facilitate discussions about fair hiring practices and creating pathways to employment for justice-involved individuals.

- [National Employment Law Project – Fair Chance Toolkit](#)
- [Council of State Governments Justice Center – Strategies To Engage Employers In Conversations About Hiring Applicants With Criminal Records](#)
- [Jail to Jobs – Second Chance Hiring Toolkit for Employers](#)
- [National Reentry Resource Center – Hosting an Employer Engagement Event](#)

## Host A Reentry Simulation Event

This immersive experience puts participants into the shoes of someone reentering and allows stakeholders of all kinds experience the challenges faced by individuals returning to society after incarceration.

- [Community Spring – Just Income Virtual Reentry Simulation](#)
- [The U.S. Attorney’s Office – Prepackaged reentry simulation kit for community partners \(ZIP File\)](#)
- [The U.S. Attorney’s Office – Hosts Reentry Simulations throughout the district and the country](#)
- [ReEntry – A Look at the Journey Back to Life](#)

## Coordinate A Warrant Clinic

A warrant clinic plays a crucial role in providing second chances to individuals with outstanding warrants, particularly for non-violent offenses, missed court dates, or minor infractions.

- [Growing Real Alternatives Everywhere \(GRAE\) – Sign up for a Warrant Clinic in select cities in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina](#)

## Share #Secondchancesinaction On Social Media

- [Use our social media toolkit to spread the word about #SecondChancesInAction or promote your event\(s\) online!](#)