

## Ron Pierce

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An alum of the N.J. Step program, he received his associate degree from Mercer Community College while at East Jersey State Prison. Ron continued his education when released and completed his undergraduate studies in Justice Studies, Summa Cum Laude, from Rutgers University-Newark in 2018 and was a recipient of the Vera Institute Scholarship. Ron then completed his master's degree in criminal justice at Rutgers University – Newark, in the School of Criminal Justice, in 2023, receiving a scholarship from the N.J. Step/Mountainview Program. Ron also completed the Just Leadership USA Leading with Conviction Leadership Training Program. He completed a writing course, receiving a certificate from the University of Michigan for Writing and Editing: Word Choice and Word Order in 2022.

Ron worked for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and, after graduating in 2018, as a Policy Analyst. During this time, Ron was instrumental in the passage of several bills into law, including voting rights for people on Parole and Probation, the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, and the Dignity Act (the act that created the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson as it currently operates). Ron was also an OCO Advisory Board member.

Ron is a frequent commentator and lecturer on issues related to voting rights, reentry, and the human rights of the incarcerated. Ron has testified numerous times before the State Assembly and Senate on various topics and before the U.S. Secretary of Education concerning the Second Chance Pell Program. Ron has appeared on Television on " *On Contact* with Chris Hedges to discuss voting rights. Ron appeared on C-Span as a panelist to discuss the book *The Class*. Ron was featured in a documentary called *Vote*. Ron has been published in *Star-Ledger*, *The Appeal*, *NJ Spotlight*, and *Truth Dig*. Ron also has two chapters published in an Encyclopedia called *American Prisons and Jails: An Encyclopedia of Controversies and Trends*. Ron also consulted on the writing of the play called *Caged*.

Ron is a League of Women Voters, Greater New Brunswick Area, and the Returning Citizens Support Group member. Ron sits on the Board of Directors for American Reentry Initiative and Transformative Justice Initiative and is a Co-Director of *All of Us or None*, South Jersey.

Ron's message is that opportunity breeds hope, and hope is the spark that ignites the flame of transformation.