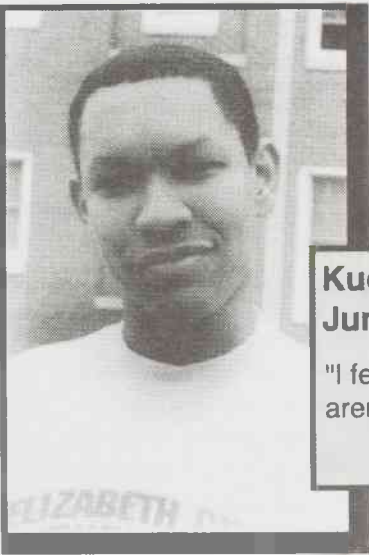


Talk of ECSU:

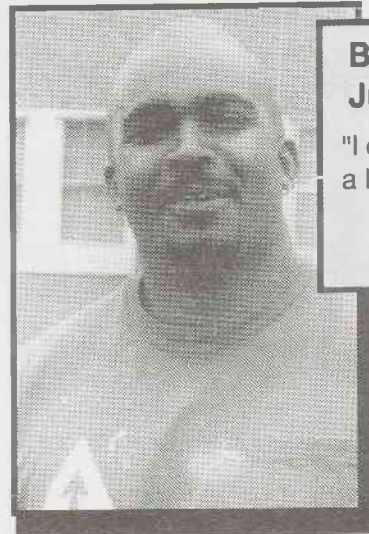
by Franklin Scott and Jemayne King

Do you feel safe on campus?



Kuchambi Hayden
Junior, Portsmouth, Va.

"I feel safe but not because of campus police. They aren't doing anything."

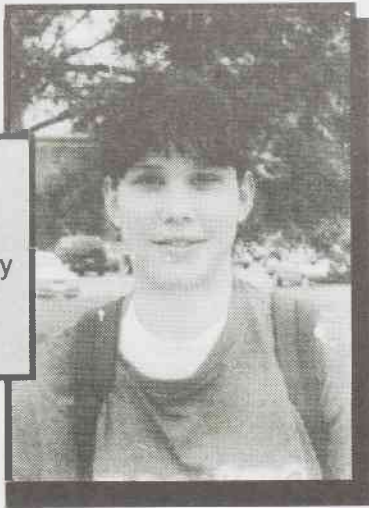


Barry (B-Monk) Junior, Pamlico, N.C.

"I don't feel safe. Anybody can carry a gun or a knife. It's not safe."

Rachel Leone
Freshman, Creswell, N.C.

"Yes, the students here are friendly and security is always around."



Vonice Brawn
Freshman, Elizabeth City, N.C.

"I don't live on campus but when I'm here I feel safe."



GUEST COLUMN

Former prison inmates need help: job skills, education, faith in order to rebuild their lives

by Renesha Collier

Allen Cavell, a convicted drug dealer from Richmond, Virginia, was recently released from prison. In a telephone interview, he said that without the help of barber school, he would be unemployed.

"No one is willing to give a young black man straight out of prison a chance," he said. "People don't think we can change."

After a person has been incarcerated, going home can be a difficult task. "Jailbirds" are usually viewed by the business community with suspicion. Since most businesses discriminate against ex-cons when it comes to hiring, how is an individual expected to make a fresh start?

While I don't believe this is strictly a race issue, I do believe that the government should provide mandatory programs and educational opportunities to assist former prison inmates with rebuilding their lives after jail.

Not only will rehabilitative programs help build discipline and self-esteem, they will also help individuals like Cavell re-enter society with a fresh start. There is a tendency to demonize criminals, but in actuality most of them are not that different from law-abiding

citizens. They have names, faces and families just like us. But, unlike us, many of them have displayed poor judgement and made bad choices—which have resulted in their being behind bars.

Rehabilitation programs will give former prisoners an opportunity to learn valuable job skills, to include vocational training and other education as needed. Most criminals have had rough childhoods, which is a contributing factor to their lives of crime. Abuse, neglect, drug use, alcoholism, fighting parents, no emphasis on schooling and the lack of encouragement and love are all factors that can cause a person to turn to a life of crime. By not finding what they need at home, many young people look elsewhere, such as the streets.

Rehabilitation programs can give them a valuable second chance to live a more positive life, by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to survive "off the streets."

Learning communication skills will help them with filing out applications, going through the interviewing process, and choosing proper attire. Vocational training can offer actual hands-

on experience and can teach skills in auto mechanics, electronics, computers, landscaping, cosmetology, childcare, nursing, and a host of other vocations. Remedial programs can assist high school dropouts in earning a diploma, which, in turn, can lead to them furthering their education.

If this sounds like a lot of expense, consider that it costs about \$50,000 a year to keep a prisoner behind bars. Who foots this bill? The taxpayers.

Doesn't it make sense to consider ways we can cut down on this expense? Rehabilitation programs—much less costly than prison—can cause a dramatic transformation in a person's life, allowing him the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society.

While rehabilitation programs may be an efficient and productive remedy, many people feel that prisoners have wronged society and should not be given another chance. They believe prisoners should not be helped because "they brought their problems on themselves."

However, several studies have shown that many former prisoners who return to a life of crime do so because they lack the opportunity to pursue legitimate careers. Many ex-convicts

don't feel as if they are a valuable part of society. This sense of not belonging is the inevitable result of being locked up in a cage.

Society, too, looks on these individuals as if they are worthless and irresponsible. We should not forget that people in jail are, in fact, people.

Moreover, many people who have made valuable contributions to society have been jailed, including Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Despite their having been in prison, these people brought about many positive changes in the way we live. Moreover, they are celebrated all over the world.

Perhaps there are more former prisoners who could bring about equally valuable changes, if given the opportunity.

By providing a sense of community, self-confidence and guidance, we can make a change in many former prisoners' lives. If our communities accept these individuals and try to help them, we can produce rehabilitated individuals who can make positive contributions to the societies in which they reside.