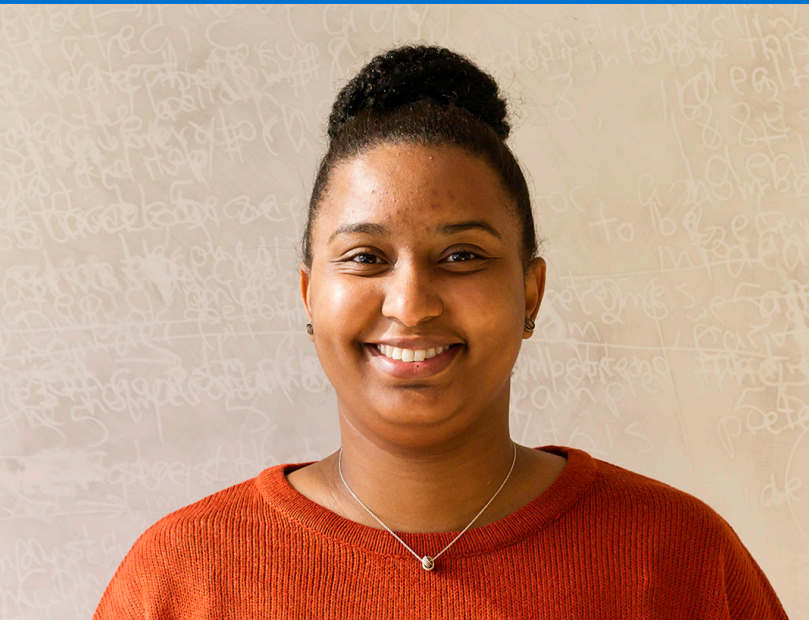
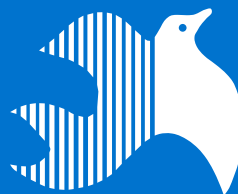




WORDS MATTER



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The Fortune Society
BUILDING PEOPLE, NOT PRISONS

WORDS MATTER

Today, there are over two million people incarcerated in the United States' jail and prison system. People with criminal justice histories are referred to in an array of dehumanizing labels, such as "inmates," "criminals," "prisoners," "convicts," "delinquents," "felons," and "offenders." Even after people complete their sentence of incarceration and return to the community, oftentimes these labels follow. Terms like "ex-inmates," "ex-prisoners," "ex-convicts," "ex-felons," and "ex-offenders" are used to categorize and stigmatize people affected by the criminal justice system.

Dehumanizing labels stereotype and marginalize people rather than support them while they rebuild their lives. Individuals with justice system involvement are not defined by their conviction history. The words we use to reference people should reflect their full identities, and acknowledge their capacity to change and grow.

Be mindful of how you speak about The Fortune Society's mission, the people we serve, our dedicated staff, and board members. We encourage you to use humanizing language—your example will inspire others.

STIGMATIZING	PREFERRED	DEFINITIONS
Offender, Inmate, Felon, Criminal, Convict, Prisoner, Delinquent	S/he is a person with justice involvement	Person or individual with justice system involvement; Person or individual impacted by the justice system; Person or individual affected by the justice system
Ex-offender, Ex-con, Ex-Prisoner	S/he has a history of justice involvement; S/he is formerly incarcerated	Person or individual with prior justice system involvement; Person or individual previously incarcerated; Person or individual with justice history
Parolee, Probationer, Detainee	S/he is under judicial supervision	Person or individual on parole; Person or individual currently under parole supervision; Person or individual on probation; Person or individual in detention
Juvenile Offender, Juvenile Delinquent	S/he is a young justice-involved person	Young person with justice system involvement; Young adult impacted by the justice system
Sex Offender	S/he has a sex offense history	Person or individual with sex offense conviction(s); Person previously convicted of a sex offense(s)
Mentally Ill	S/he has a mental illness; S/he has a mental health condition	Person or individual with mental health needs; Person or individual in need of/currently receiving mental health services
Homeless	S/he is experiencing homelessness	Person currently or previously experiencing homelessness
HIV/AIDS patient; Infected with HIV/AIDS	S/he is living with HIV; S/he is living with AIDS	Person or individual living with HIV; Person or individual living with AIDS
Addict; Substance Abuser	S/he has used substances in the past; S/he currently uses substances	Person with a history of substance use