

Bishop T.D. Jakes Inspires Former Prison Inmates to Start New Lives—DALLAS, Feb. 25, 2011

100 EX-OFFENDERS HONORED AT THE POTTER'S HOUSE GRADUATION CEREMONY

In Texas, some 70,000 prisoners are released each year and more than half of those returning to prison within three years—but The Potter's House of Dallas is working to decrease that number. The Potter's House of Dallas will celebrate with 100 ex-offenders graduating on Saturday, Feb. 26, from the Texas Offenders Re-entry Initiative (T.O.R.I.) program. The ceremony will be held at The Potter's House of Dallas, 6777 W. Kiest Blvd. in Dallas, and will begin at 4 p.m. CT. Bishop T.D. Jakes will deliver the commencement address and Cory Williams, an ex-offender who got his life back on track with the support of the church, will share his post-prison experiences.

"Ex-offenders need counsel, care and direction," said Williams. "T.O.R.I. does just that by providing a multitude of services that help ex-offenders like me overcome obstacles and former mindsets with practical programs that help us get re-established as caring, contributing members of the community."

Founded in December 2004 by Bishop Jakes, T.O.R.I. is an intensive 12-month case management program that offers six core services: employment, housing, education, family reunification, health care and spiritual guidance. Since its inception, T.O.R.I. has served more than 7,000 formerly incarcerated individuals returning to Texas.

Texas has one of the largest prison populations in the United States with the number of inmates increasing 61.5 percent between 1995 and 2000*. The American correctional system is also expensive—costing tax payers \$60 billion each year**. In Texas the cost to incarcerate offenders is \$49.40 per inmate per day, versus only \$.98 per day to rehabilitate ex-offenders through the T.O.R.I. program***. The U.S. recidivism rate is also very high with 67 percent of former prisoners re-arrested and 52 percent re-incarcerated within three years of their release, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The T.O.R.I. program recidivism rate is at a low eight percent. Due to the program's success rate and high need for the program's services, T.O.R.I. is working to expand to include even more ex-offenders. It has kicked-off a year-long campaign to raise money.

"With the more than 70,000 prisoners released each year, the demand for our services is greater than our current resources," said Tina Naidoo, a licensed social worker and executive director of T.O.R.I. "The best way to get ahead of the demand is for individuals, corporations and foundations to rally around T.O.R.I.'s mission and support it so we can expand our services, serve more people and end the cycle of incarceration indefinitely."

"The proof of T.O.R.I.'s effectiveness is clearly indicated in its extraordinary low recidivism rate," said Bishop T.D. Jakes, senior pastor at The Potter's House and founder of T.O.R.I. "We are proud of our graduates for completing this program and our alumni who apply the lessons learned and continually work hard to beat the statistics."

INTERVIEW/B-ROLL OPPORTUNITIES:

- Bishop T.D. Jakes, senior pastor of The Potter's House of Dallas, founder of the T.O.R.I. program

- Tina Naidoo, executive director of the T.O.R.I. program
 - Cory Williams, ex-offender, member of The Potter's House
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About The Potter's House

Located in Dallas, The Potter's House is a 30,000-member nondenominational, multicultural church and humanitarian organization led by Bishop T. D. Jakes, twice featured on the cover of *Time* magazine as "America's Best Preacher" and as one of the nation's "25 most influential evangelicals." He is currently awaiting the release of his next film project, *Jumping the Broom*, slated for release on May 6, 2011. The Potter's House has four locations, The Potter's House of Dallas, The Potter's House of Fort Worth, The Potter's House of North Dallas, and The Potter's House of Denver and a Spanish language church, Casa de Fe. ThePottersHouse.org

About Texas Offenders Re-entry Initiative (T.O.R.I.)

Founded in December 2004 by Bishop T.D. Jakes under the umbrella of the Metroplex Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), a nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization that bridges economic voids in urban America, T.O.R.I. is an intensive 12-month case management program that offers six core services, including: employment, housing, education, family reunification, health care and spiritual guidance. Since its inception, T.O.R.I. has served more than 7,000 formerly incarcerated individuals who have returned home to Texas. medc-TORI.org

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*[Justice Policy Institute, 2000](#)

**[Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, 2006](#)

***[Texas Public Policy Foundation, 2008](#)