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Investing in Founders Others Overlook

We support formerly incarcerated founders...
Because everyone deserves a second chance.



Every year, more than **600,000 Americans leave prison** ready to rebuild their lives and rejoin their communities. Many of these individuals possess the drive, resilience, and determination necessary to start private-sector businesses.

Still, they encounter significant barriers: limited professional networks and a lack of access to funding.





Redemption Ventures exists to change that.

Through mentorship and nonextractive charitable grants of up to \$30,000, we aim to provide aspiring US-based formerly incarcerated founders (startups and small businesses) with the resources and guidance they need to succeed in the entrepreneurial world.

Our goal is to help determined formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs turn second chances into thriving businesses, creating jobs in their communities and disrupting the unforgiving cycle of recidivism.



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Our Mission

Raising the Bar for Reentry Entrepreneurship

Our founders know first-hand the struggles that formerly incarcerated people face when they reenter society.

A lack of access to economic resources and a lack of trust leave many people unable to find stable employment after leaving prison. This vicious cycle of unemployment contributes to high rates of recidivism in the United States, where nearly two-thirds of formerly incarcerated individuals go back to prison.





Our Mission

At Redemption Ventures,
we want to break that cycle.

We bring private sector rigor to reentry, focusing on entrepreneurship as a pathway to long-term security.



By providing formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs with access to business resources, mentorship, and grants, we help them turn ideas into thriving businesses. This encourages formerly incarcerated individuals to go beyond retraining and instead build new ventures, changing their paths from uncertain to successful.



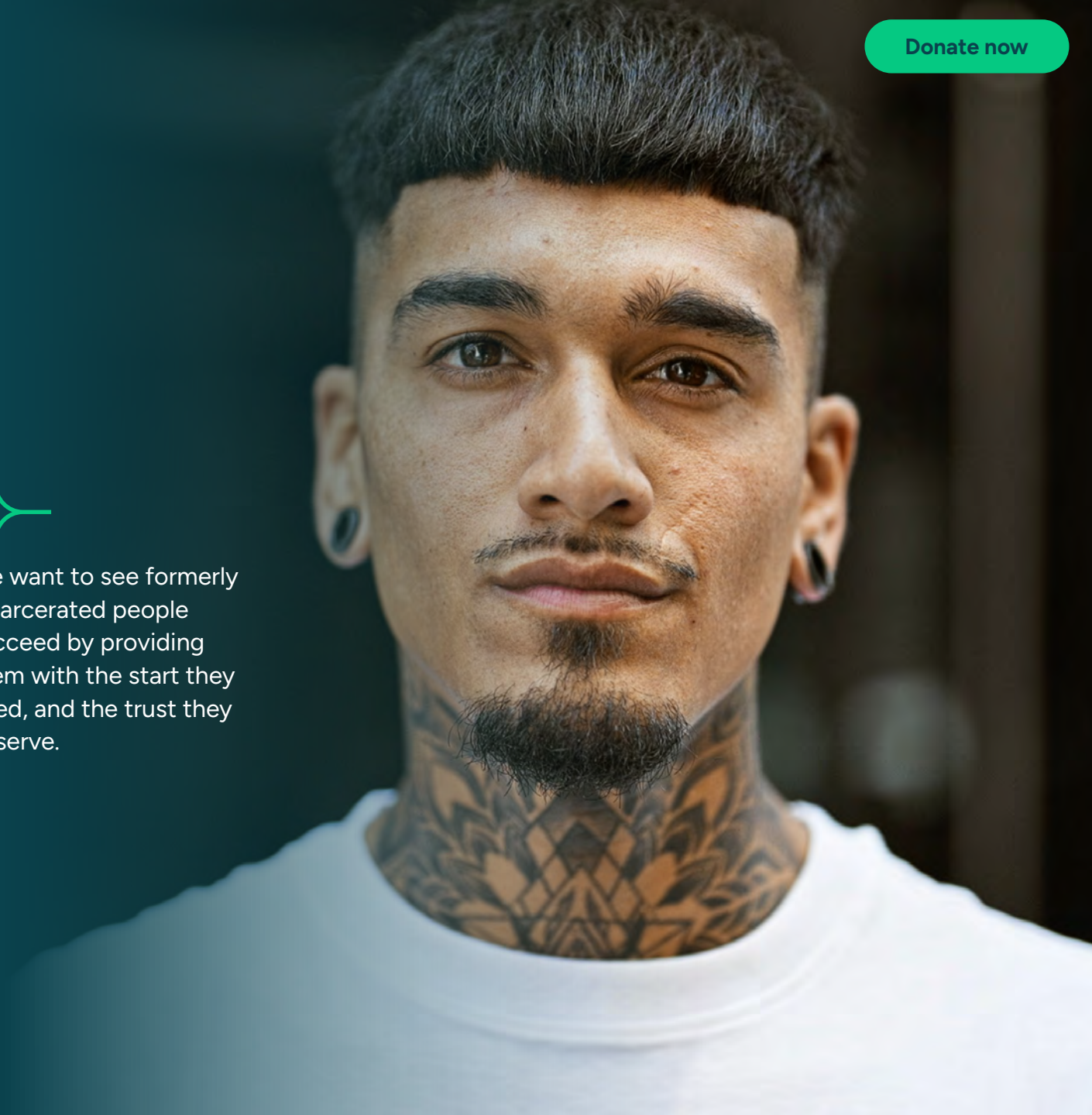
By putting down roots within their local areas, these business owners will generate financial stability for themselves and their families, as well as opportunities within their communities.



We want to see formerly incarcerated people succeed by providing them with the start they need, and the trust they deserve.

At Redemption Ventures, we don't just provide charity; we provide real, legitimate business opportunities to those who deserve them.

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How does it work?

Redemption Ventures supports early-stage entrepreneurs with criminal records through:



Grants

Founders can receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000 in non-dilutive capital to launch or strengthen their businesses. No compromise, no equity taken, just support where it is needed.

These grants are designed to support both established entrepreneurs in growing their businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs in turning their ideas into reality.



Mentorship

Each founder receives one year of mentorship from an experienced entrepreneur or business leader. Mentors will be available to guide their mentees through every step of the Redemption Ventures process. Many of the mentors we match with founders are successful, formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs who come from the same justice-impacted backgrounds and have turned their lives around through entrepreneurship.

Membership is not passive; it's hands-on and outcome-focused, helping founders handle the real challenges of launching a business and overcoming the extra challenges and barriers that they face in society.



Founder network

Participants join a growing community of entrepreneurs from across different industries. This network introduces them to connections that can provide peer support, industry knowledge, and exposure to new opportunities.

For many formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs struggling to enter the business world, this access is just as valuable as capital. Redemption Ventures connects individuals, showing them that they are not building alone.

The Outcome

Providing resources to a generation of new business owners who have been formerly overlooked.

Employment is a huge factor in lowering reentry rates. But we don't see re-employment as the limit for formerly incarcerated people.

We want to take it a step further and encourage returning citizens to generate capital within their communities, bringing prosperity and stability to a new generation of system-affected individuals.

By combining network access, mentorship, and capital, Redemption Ventures helps founders move from reentry to stability and success.



The Team



Glenn E. Martin

Glenn is the founder of several national criminal justice reform organizations, for which he has been recognized with multiple honors, including the Robert. F. Kennedy Human Rights award and the Brooke Astor award.

Glenn founded and served as President of JustLeadershipUSA, an organization he built as a tribute to his son Joshua, dedicated to cutting the U.S. correctional population in half by 2030. Prior to founding JustLeadershipUSA, Glenn was the Vice President of The Fortune Society, where he founded and led the David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. He also served as the Co-Director of the National HIRE Network at the Legal Action Center and co-founded the Education from the Inside Out Coalition.

Glenn is the founder and visionary behind the #CLOSErikers campaign, which celebrated a major victory in 2019 when the NYC Council agreed to close Rikers Island. Glenn launched both GEMrealstate and GEMtrainers, a multi-state real estate investment company and a successful non-profit consultancy, respectively. GEMrealstate provides and creates housing opportunities for formerly incarcerated tenants in multiple states, easing the housing struggles of reentry.

He has also been a media guest on national news outlets such as NPR, MSNBC, Fox News, CNN, Al Jazeera, and CSPAN.



The Team



Victor “DIVINE” Lombard

DIVINE is a serial entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and justice-system advocate working in the tech space.

He is the founder of Solvent, a platform that provides financial tools to individuals excluded from the banking system. The company was founded on DIVINE’s experience navigating poverty and the barriers to exclusion faced by individuals reentering society.

DIVINE began his entrepreneurial career at BLAK Fintech, serving the unbanked and underbanked. He later worked with Mobility Capital Finance, contributing to social justice initiatives alongside digital marketing and development work. In 2015, DIVINE spent time as an Entrepreneur in Residence (EIR) and Executive Assistant to CEO Greg Selkoe at Karmaloop, gaining experience in high-growth startup environments and consumer-facing businesses.

In addition to his work in tech, DIVINE has over 25 years of experience in the independent music industry and media as a record label executive and as an artist, with songwriting, producing, recording, performing, and audio engineering. His work sits at the intersection of culture, community, social impact, entrepreneurship, and tech innovation. He recently founded NOTES with Hip-Hop legend RAKIM, a music-tech company built to empower independent urban music artists and creators in the global creator economy.



The Team



Ron Bauer

Ron Bauer is a venture capitalist with over 25 years of experience financing early-stage and growth businesses. He is focused on the Life Sciences, Technology, and Natural Resources sectors, where he has created several exciting ventures with leading entrepreneurs and scientists from academic institutions around the world.

Ron was the Co-Founder of Turkana Energy, which merged with Africa Oil in July 2009. The company went on to have a peak market value of over \$3 Billion, having raised more than \$2 Billion of equity. Ron was also a principal and founding investor in 180 Life Sciences (NASDAQ: ATNF), Pasithea Therapeutics (NASDAQ: KTTA), Stran & Co (NASDAQ: SWAG), Genflow Biosciences (LSE: GENF), Trio Petroleum (NYSE: TPET) and HemogenyxPharmaceuticals (LSE: HEMO).

Ron is heavily invested in assisting the Justice Impacted Community, as well as founders or entrepreneurs who have been justice impacted or have gone through the criminal justice system and need guidance, motivation, or assistance in overcoming the challenges of starting a business or raising capital.

By far, Ron's greatest personal quality is his ability to adapt himself to changing economic climates and diverse sectors. He holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Cambridge.



The Redemption Ventures Story

November 2014

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Glenn E. Martin founds JustLeadershipUSA

Glenn founded JustLeadershipUSA, an organization dedicated to empowering justice-impacted individuals by providing rigorous training for leadership positions.

Through this work, Glenn helped shape the national conversation around justice reform, with a focus on advocacy and policy.

2022

|

Divine launches Solvent

Victor "DIVINE" Lombard founded Solvent, a fintech company focused on improving access to financial services, credit, and financial literacy for system-impacted individuals.

Solvent addresses a clear issue: many returning citizens are excluded from financial institutions, creating a deprivation that underpins recidivism rates.

Fall 2022

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Ron Bauer begins mentoring Divine through Village Capital

While developing Solvent, Divine is mentored by Ron through the Village Capital program. This mentorship provides industry guidance and support.

At the same time, Ron becomes connected with Glenn through their work in criminal justice reform.

While these relationships are being built, a pattern becomes clear. The system supports reentry, but opportunities for serious entrepreneurship are lacking.

May 2025

|

The idea

Through their combined experience in justice reform, entrepreneurship, and mentorship, Glenn, Divine, and Ron develop an idea to shift the conversation around reentry and entrepreneurship to combat recidivism.

They begin to develop an idea:

What if some formerly incarcerated people were supported as entrepreneurs rather than retrained to enter a workforce that second-guesses them at every stage?

2025

|

Building Redemption Ventures

The Redemption Ventures model is created. A system that supports formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs from conception to success, combining grants and structured mentorship to push the conversation around reentry to new heights.

Unlike traditional programs, Redemption Ventures focuses on business creation and economic participation, not just preparation.

Case Study:

Building Solvent

The Problem:

When Victor “Divine” Lombard left prison, he faced many of the same barriers encountered by formerly incarcerated people attempting to rebuild their lives:

- poor credit
- financial exclusion
- limited access to banking
- lack of financial literacy
- restricted access to legitimate business opportunities

But his challenge was never a lack of ambition.

‘I’ve always had a hustler’s spirit, an entrepreneur’s spirit, if you will. I marketed the product, I sold the product, I made the money. I did everything that you do to run a business, it was just in an illegitimate way.’

After his release from prison, this lack of access to legitimate business opportunities contributed to an ongoing cycle of financial disadvantage.

Divine recognized this was not an individual problem, but a systemic issue faced by hundreds of thousands of individuals who leave prison every year.

Incarceration can build:

- resilience
- determination
- adaptability
- entrepreneurial thinking

Yet many justice-impacted individuals lack access to the systems that allow businesses to grow.

His experience reflects a challenge shared by millions: how to rebuild without access to the systems that enable financial stability?

In 2022, while developing the idea behind Solvent, Divine was mentored by Ron Bauer through the Village Capital program. Throughout this, Solvent began to take shape, going from a great idea to a successful business model.

Targeted mentorship and access to connections, which can otherwise be elusive to formerly incarcerated people, played a critical role in Solvent’s development and growth.



Building Solvent:

In 2022, Solvent was launched. An all-in-one ‘super neobank’ that empowers system-impacted individuals by providing digital banking and debit cards, and by supporting improved financial decision-making.

Solvent wasn’t built on theory, but on **lived experience**.

Divine understood firsthand how financial exclusion creates barriers to long-term stability and economic participation.

‘I didn’t have financial literacy. I didn’t have entrepreneurship education. Had I had those things, I know I could have been successful without being incarcerated.’

Solvent was built to close that gap by providing education and services that pave the road to financial access and stability.

Why it Matters:

The business is an example of what becomes possible when entrepreneurial talent is **supported rather than overlooked**. Innate hustle can become a driving force, experience can become market insight, and formerly incarcerated founders can build credible ventures- with the right support.

At Redemption Ventures, we aim to support more founders like Divine. Founders with the insight and ambition to build businesses, when given access to the right resources.





The barriers faced by formerly incarcerated founders are not insurmountable. We know that the problem is not a lack of talent or potential, but a lack of investment.

Too often, formerly incarcerated individuals are excluded from the systems that allow businesses to grow: access to capital, strategic guidance, and high-level networks.

Your support makes it possible for us to change that.

By investing in Redemption Ventures, donors help support a new generation of formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs to build long-term economic stability.

Contributions go directly to start-up grants and support the infrastructure needed to connect and help justice-impacted entrepreneurs fund their ventures.

A single investment can help fund:



Startup capital for a new business



Early-stage operational support



Mentorship and founder development



Licensing, equipment, and infrastructure



The transition from instability to ownership

At Redemption Ventures, we believe that reentry must go beyond employment. It must include ownership, investment, and access to opportunity.

Supporting Redemption Ventures also provides an opportunity for meaningful, tax-deductible giving while helping to build long-term economic opportunity in communities too often excluded from investment.

Whether it's through a one-time contribution or continued support, your donations drive real change where it matters most. Join us to support the future generation of U.S. businesspeople, invest in entrepreneurship, and create change.

contact@redemptionventures.org
redemptionventures.org

Donate now

