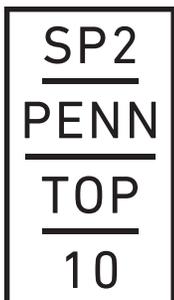


**ENDING MASS INCARCERATION REQUIRES
TRANSFORMING TALK INTO ACTION**

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The United States has more people in prisons and jails than any country in the world, yet mass incarceration has had essentially no impact on violent crime rates since the 1990s and on property crime rates since 2000. Instead, it has caused staggering social and economic damage to our society, including disproportionate incarceration of people who are African American, Hispanic/Latino, experiencing mental health and substance use problems, and affected by poverty and limited education. Mass incarceration's perpetuation of inequality, loss of liberty and suffering is in contrast to the United States' identity as a just nation.

There are multiple reasons for the dramatic increase in the number of people incarcerated in the United States during the last four decades, including lengthy mandatory minimum sentences, limits on early release, increased incarceration for parole violations, and the ongoing "War on Drugs." The erosion of social services, the criminalization of U.S. immigration policy, and increased income inequality have also contributed to it. However, we are in the midst of growing recognition across the nation, and among politicians from across the political spectrum, that mass incarceration demands action.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- We spend over \$80 billion annually on federal, state and local corrections.
- There are more than 2.2 million adults incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons.
- There are more than 4.7 million adults on probation or parole in the U.S.
- The number of people in prison has grown by 700% since 1970.
- With just under 5% of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for more than 20% of its imprisoned population.
- From 1990 to 2005, a new prison was built every 10 days.

WHY IS THIS ISSUE IMPORTANT?

There are disturbing differences in the rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity. Approximately 12% of the U.S. population is African American; however, African American men and women comprise 37% and 22% of the incarcerated population in the United States, respectively. Since 2000, there has been an increase of more than 50% in the number of people who are Hispanic/Latino who are incarcerated.

Incarceration has profound impact on families. More than half of adults in state and federal prison in 2007 had minor children, reflecting, at the time, 2.3% of all children in the United States. Having an incarcerated parent presents a number of challenges for children, including risks for emotional and behavioral problems, transitions in caregiving arrangements, poverty, and food insecurity.

Mass incarceration's impact on people with mental illness is a significant concern. People with mental illness are often charged with nonviolent acts, cannot afford small bail amounts, and experience treatment in jail that worsens their mental health, including abuse, inadequate health care and excessive solitary confinement. Further, about 68% of people in local jails and 46% in federal prisons experience substance use problems; however, the majority of people with need do not receive treatment during incarceration or upon return to the community.

Even after incarceration, prison or jail time has lasting effects, including ineligibility for public housing, student loans, food stamps and numerous professional licenses. A history of incarceration can also limit employment options and opportunities to rebuild one's life.

BROAD SOLUTIONS

Addressing mass incarceration and supporting public safety will require approaches that involve many social and economic issues in our society. Needed elements include:

- Recognition of the harsh impact imprisonment has on individuals, families and communities and the importance of proportionality between sentences and the illegal activity.
- Sentencing reform.
- Greater use of executive clemency.
- Analysis of policy impacts related to race, ethnicity, and gender before and after implementation.
- Drug law reform.
- Alternatives to incarceration.
- Incentives for state and local governments to pursue reforms that decrease incarceration and further public safety.
- Evidence-guided emphasis on community re-entry from the outset of incarceration.
- Family-focused services for individuals and families affected by incarceration.
- Improved access to substance use and mental health treatment in jails, prisons, and communities.
- Adequate funding and resources for public schools, including resources to ensure student safety; support relationships between students, teachers, and staff; and avoid police presence in schools.
- Grassroots advocacy.

As momentum grows in the call for criminal justice reform, we must make sure it remains a national priority during and beyond the 2016 presidential election. Campaign debates, discussions and platforms must be translated into well-considered, comprehensive actions that will end mass incarceration, support public safety, and align with aims of the U.S. as a just society.