

The Sentencing Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/unfinished-project-of-civil-rights-in-the-era-of-mass-incarceration-and-the-movement-for-black-lives/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

1705 DeSales St, NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036
202.628.0871
(fax) 202.628.1091
staff@sentencingproject.org

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While it may not excuse criminal offending, the destructive effects of mass incarceration and excessive punishment are visited disproportionately upon individuals and communities of color and reinforce that the project of the civil rights revolution remains unfinished. In recent years, there has been growing consensus across ideological lines to address mass incarceration. Yet, policy changes are incremental in approach and do not achieve the substantial reforms needed to significantly reduce the rate of incarceration and its collateral impacts. Incremental policy reforms include: reducing the quantity differential between crack and powder cocaine that results in racially disparate sentencing outcomes at the federal level and in certain states; reclassifying certain felony offenses to misdemeanors; expanding voting rights and access to public benefits for persons with felony convictions; and adopting fair chance hiring policies for persons with criminal records.

The Movement for Black Lives, or Black Lives Matter, offers a new public safety framework to finish the project of civil rights in the era of mass incarceration. This movement has a sophisticated analysis that seeks to address the underlying structural issues that result in poor policy outcomes for communities of color, including high rates of incarceration. The public safety framework does not excuse criminal offending, but offers a new approach of viewing justice-involved persons a disproportionate number of whom are African American and Latinos worthy recipients of public safety responses not dominated by arrests, admissions to prison, or collateral consequences.

In this article published in the current issue of *The Wake Forest Journal of Law & Policy*, Nicole D. Porter, The Sentencing Project's Director of Advocacy, discusses the collateral impacts of justice involvement on communities of color and how current social movements are challenging mass incarceration.

To read the article, download the PDF below.

Increase in number of women incarcerated in the U.S. since 1980

Sentencing Policy

1705 DeSales St, NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036
202.628.0871
(fax) 202.628.1091
staff@sentencingproject.org

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