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What is Prison Abolition?

Prison abolition is the elimination of our current prison system for more reformed and humane version. It is the creation of a more fair and just prison system, especially one that doesn’t discriminate based on race. Primarily, mass incarceration targets low-income and minority groups, which means that more and more of these groups will be presented in media as criminals and will be shunned from society.

Mass incarceration of minorities, mainly of African Americans, was first created through a small loophole in the 13th amendment. Criminals are excluded from the rights in the 13th amendment. Thus, former slaves were charged with various small crimes, so that they could be barred from receiving protection under the 13th amendment. Since this loophole has been greatly exploited, more and more African Americans have been imprisoned and denied basic rights (in certain states), such as voting. They have been portrayed as criminals, and this image has been carried over the years, to present day. The 13th Amendment says that "Except for criminals, everybody else is free" (13th).

Reform comes in as a way to erase this image of criminality off of this group of people, and create a prison system where someone is arrested with valid means, not solely based off the color of their skin. Labeling a whole race as criminals when most of them are innocent, it is not the correct way to regulate crime. “We now have more African Americans under criminal supervision than all the slaves back in 1850s” (Booker, 13th).

Tying it all together, prison abolitionists wants to create a system where imprisonment is not discriminatory and disenfranchisement does not occur. This will hopefully decrease the amount of inmates in our prisons and give everyone the rights they deserve.