

## The FaithJustice Vision

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. The current criminal justice system relies on punitive measures to deter or prevent crime and tends to reinforce social structures of inequity. Incarceration causes financial hardship for families and communities, hindering economic security and participation and placing tremendous economic burdens on federal, state, and local governments. Dismantling the state of mass incarceration is an enormous task.

The FaithJustice Foundation is committed to being part of the movement for criminal justice reform. Our vision is to amplify the biblical perspective so that all people can experience the liberation, healing, restoration, and redemption God desires for all God's children.

## The Biblical Witness<sup>+</sup>

- “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed.” (Luke 4:18)
- “You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 16:19-20)
- Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place. (Hebrews 13:3)
- Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke, setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke? Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family? (Isaiah 58:6-7)
- “Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’ (Matthew 25:34-40)

## The Facts Today

- The U.S. incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation. The jail and prison population increased from less than 200,000 in 1972 to 2.2 million today. The U.S. has 5 percent of the world's population but nearly 25 percent of its prisoners.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 1 in 3 U.S. adults has a criminal record.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>+</sup> Scriptures are from the *Common English Bible* translation.

<sup>1</sup> Equal Justice Initiative, <https://eji.org/mass-incarceration>.

<sup>2</sup> National Employment Law Project, [www.nelp.org/campaign/ensuring-fair-chance-to-work/](http://www.nelp.org/campaign/ensuring-fair-chance-to-work/)

## The Facts Cont'd

- African Americans make up about 13 percent of the nation's population, but constitute 28 percent of all arrests, 40 percent of those incarcerated in jails and prisons, and 42 percent of the population on death row. African Americans are arrested at rates 2.5 times higher than whites; Native Americans were arrested at 1.5 times the rate for whites. African Americans and Latinos are less likely than whites to be sentenced to probation and more likely to be sentenced to prison. Black men are more than six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2014 more than 1 million children were arrested in the U.S. Black children were approximately two-and-a-half times more likely to be arrested than White children. Children of color were more likely to be formally processed and locked in facilities instead of connected to a community-based program.<sup>4</sup>
- It costs between \$26,000 and \$29,000 to keep one person in federal prison or at a Community Corrections Center for one year. In contrast, they yearly cost to educate one child in K-12 public school is approximately \$12,600. Taxpayers spend over \$50 billion annually for state prisons.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2012 there were 10 times as many persons with mental illness incarcerated than in state hospitals.<sup>6</sup>

## The Call to Action

- Educate yourself and your community.
  - Hold a public education event using videos, such as [13TH](#), [Broken on all Sides](#), [The House I Live in](#), [Redemption of the Prosecutor](#), or [Solitary Confinement](#).
  - Raise awareness of juvenile justice reform efforts by the [Equal Justice Initiative](#) and the [Children's Defense Fund](#), including their campaign to end the [Cradle to Prison Pipeline](#).
- Contact representatives to urge them to support [legislation](#) to end mass incarceration.
- Pay attention to District Attorney and Judicial elections with criminal justice reform in mind.
- Meet those affected by the criminal justice system: the incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and family members.
  - Volunteer at a federal prison through [Prisoner and Visitation Support](#).
  - [Write a Prisoner](#) has listings of incarcerated persons seeking pen pals.
  - [Human Rights Pen Pals](#) connects community members with people in isolation.
  - Mentor a child of a person living in prison
  - Serve as a healer to someone reentering your community from prison: assist with transportation, school applications, or a job search

## Resources

- For further study, read *The New Jim Crow* or other books on our [Social Justice Syllabus](#).
- [The House I Live In](#) is a powerful documentary about the drug war and mass incarceration.
- [13TH](#) is a 2016 documentary titled after the Thirteenth Amendment that explores the “intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the United States;”<sup>[3]</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Equal Justice Initiative, <https://eji.org/racial-justice/presumption-guilt>

<sup>4</sup> Children's Defense Fund, *The State of America's Children 2017*, page 32.

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/state-of-americas-children/2017-soac.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> The Federal Register & National Association of State Budget Officers

<sup>6</sup> The Treatment Advocacy Center, [www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/treatment-behind-bars/treatment-behind-bars.pdf](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/treatment-behind-bars/treatment-behind-bars.pdf)