



CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE

Department of Research and Planning



The Vicious Circle:

Race, Prison, Jobs,
and Community
in Chicago, Illinois,
and the Nation

Dr. Paul Street
*Vice President for Research
and Planning*
Chicago Urban League

contents

Introduction

Race and the Mass Incarceration Policy Decision: The Rise of <i>Prison [and Ex-Offender] Nation</i> "	4
Part II: Race, Prison, Higher Education, and the War on Drugs in Illinois and Chicago	9
Part III: Race, Poverty, Ex-Offenders and the Leading Return Communities in Chicago and Illinois	15
Part IV: Racial Reparations in Reverse? The Color and Geography of Prison Growth.....	28
Part V: Labor Market Consequences for Ex-Offenders	32
Part VI: Mass Incarceration as Self-Fulfilling Prophecy	38
Part VII: Conclusion and Recommendations	40
Endnotes	44

Acknowledgements

This report relied heavily on the skilled research and statistical assistance of Chicago Urban League Research Specialist Dennis Anthony Kass. Crucial advice and information have been generously shared by Sharron Matthews of the Chicago-based Council for the Reduction of Recidivism Through Employment (C.A.R.R.E.), Cheryl Chukwu of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, Diane B. Williams of the Safer Foundation, Devah Pager of Northwestern University, Christopher Uggen of the University of Minnesota, Sara Wakefield of the University of Minnesota, Bruce Western of Princeton University, the Planning and Research Department at the Illinois Department of Corrections, Marcia K. Festen, and Terry Thomas. Terry Thomas provided invaluable editorial assistance and Laurie Sherman provided graphic design services.

This report was made possible by a grant from the Woods Fund of Chicago.

The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs, Community and Mass Incarceration In Chicago, Illinois, and the Nation

**Dr. Paul Street
Vice President for Research and Planning
Chicago Urban League**

Executive Summary

Were he to miraculously return 36 years after bringing his Freedom Movement to Chicago, Martin Luther King, Jr., would be disappointed to learn that the same issues and institutions on which he originally focused still produce stark patterns of black-white inequality, segregation, and poverty in the Chicago area. He would also be struck by the *dramatically elevated significance of one particular institutional force* in the perpetuation and deepening of those patterns: *the criminal justice system*. Most particularly he would be concerned with the new regime of racially disparate mass incarceration that has emerged largely under the auspices of the War on Drugs during the last 25-30 years.

In Illinois and Chicago as throughout the nation, that system is helping to create a permanently criminalized underclass that cycles in and out of courts, prisons, and the most marginal sections of society and the economy. It releases a steady stream of very disproportionately black ex-prisoners into a small number of relatively impoverished and predominantly black zip codes, where the resources for meaningful social and economic reintegration are all-too scarce – the very same crime-generating environments from which they came. The unfortunate but not surprising reality is that a large proportion of them commit new crimes and return to prison.

This racially and geographically lopsided criminalization and mass incarceration is a civil rights problem in and of itself. At the same time, it also produces a significant and multi-dimensional “collateral” damage, both reflecting and exacerbating the social, political, and economic disenfranchisement of inner city black communities and deepening the inequality of wealth and income between blacks and whites. In Chicago and Illinois as throughout the nation, the decision to criminalize and incarcerate the predominantly black urban “underclass” at the expense of more positive, proactive, and productive social expenditures and without appropriate concomitant attention to rehabilitation and reentry creates problems larger than those it set out to solve. It:

- perpetuates and deepens the segregation, alienation, inequality, and exclusion that led many former prisoners and ex-felons into “criminal” activity in the first place.
- deepens the labor market difficulty and other forms of disadvantage experienced by hundreds of thousands of minority men and women.
- piles new stigma on old, saddling shocking numbers of young men and (increasingly) women, many convicted minor and petty offenses, with the lifelong mark of a criminal record and the often damaging experience of incarceration.

- removes real and potential wages, purchasing power, economic development and political clout from the black community to predominantly white prison communities and corporations.
- diverts attention and resources away from confrontation with the deep underlying social problems that brought Martin Luther King to Chicago and continue to scar black inner-city experience today.
- privileges vengeance and punishment above forgiveness and pragmatism in public policy.
- works against a number of key policy goals of the larger society: public safety, stable family formation, long-term labor market attachment, poverty reduction, equal opportunity, racial integration and harmony, civic engagement, education, and balanced community development.

Here are some of the key research findings:

- The nation that proclaims itself the homeland and headquarters of world freedom comprises 5 percent of the world's population but houses more than 25 percent of the world's prisoners.
- The rate of incarceration in the US is 699 per 100,000, up from roughly 100 per 100,000 in 1970. The next highest rate in the world is Russia at 644 and the American rate is six times higher than those of Britain, Canada, or France.
- Blacks are 12.3 percent of US population, but they comprise roughly half of the roughly 2 million Americans currently behind bars.
- Imprisonment in the US during the last three decades has changed in Northwestern University sociologist Devah Pager's words, "from a punishment reserved for only the most heinous offenders to one extended to a much greater range of crimes and much larger segment of the population. Recent trends in crime policy have led to the imposition of harsher and longer sentences for a wider range of offenses, thus casting an ever widening net of penal intervention."
- In particular, huge numbers of Americans today are locked up for drug offenses and other transgressions that would not have met with the same punishment 20 years ago.
- More than 600,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons each year. That amounts to more than 1,600 a day and is indicative of a massive swelling army of ex-offenders, saddled with what a recent (August 10, 2002) cover story in *The Economist* called "The Stigma That Never Fades."
- Most prisoners return to a relatively small number of heavily disadvantaged minority neighborhoods, where they remain largely beyond the sphere of the mainstream society's awareness and concern.

- Nearly one in five black men has a prison record, an *“astounding” one in three black men* now possesses a felony record, and one in four black adult males is an ex-felon, no longer serving time in prison or jail or on probation or parole.
- In 1970, there were only 7,367 prisoners in the state’s 7 adult correction facilities. A generation later, Illinois’ prison population had reached nearly 46,000 (2001); the number of correction facilities had mushroomed to 27.
- Illinois’ rising state prison (IDOC) population (94 percent male) now stands suggestively close to the falling number of households (predominately female-headed) in the state receiving public family cash assistance – 46,801. In contrast, nine years ago the number of prisoners in Illinois made up less than 15 percent number of the state’s welfare families.
- To house its dramatically rising number of prisoners, Illinois has built 20 adult prisons, an average of one per year, between 1980 and 2000. The amount spent by the state on corrections has risen by more than 200 percent from just over \$377 million in 1980 to \$1.3 billion in 2000. Mass incarceration has emerged as one of the leading growth items in the state’s budget over the last sixteen (16) years, increasing from just over a third the amount it spends on higher education to nearly three fourths.
- It costs \$20,637 a year to house an adult prisoner and \$50, 286 to incarcerate a juvenile in Illinois. The cost of incarcerating one adult in Illinois is equal to more than four and a half times the state’s legally mandated public education “foundation level” of \$4,560 – the minimum expenditure determined to be required to meet the educational needs of a single child.
- Sixty-three percent of the state’s roughly 43,000 prisoners and 60 percent of its 32,000 parolees are African-American. In 2001, the state’s incarceration rate for African-Americans was more than ten times the rate for whites – a remarkable 1,550 per 100,000 for American Americans, compared to 127 per 100,000 for whites.
- *Black males between 18 and 65*, who comprise *just 4 percent* of the state’s total population, account for *fully 57 percent* of the state’s federal and state (IDOC) inmates.
- As of June 2001, there were nearly *20,000 more black males in the Illinois state prison system than the number of black males enrolled in the state’s public universities*. There are more black males in the state’s correctional facilities *just on drug charges* than the total number of black males enrolled in undergraduate degree programs in state universities.
- Just 992 black males received a bachelors’ degree (3.3 percent of all conferred) from those universities in 1999 while roughly 7,000 black males were released from the Illinois state prison system the following year *just for drug offenses*.
- The Drug War has been marked by extreme racial disparity in Illinois. In 1996, the respected international human rights organization Human Rights Watch reported, “blacks constituted *an astonishing 90 percent* of all drug offenders admitted to prison in Illinois.” By 2000, the percentage had barely fallen to 89 percent, making Illinois number two in the nation in terms of this key disparity.

- By the best recent social science estimate, Illinois in 2001 was home to 409,157 ex-felons (once but no longer in prison or on probation or parole), 134,219 former prisoners (36% of the ex-felon population), and 134,219 current felons. The state's total state felony population was more than two thirds of a million.
- The state was home to 215,957 black ex-felons (53% of the state's ex-felon population), 119,389 black ex-prisoners (55% of black ex-felons and a remarkable 81 percent of the state's ex-prisoners), and 74,783 current black felons. The state's total black felony population was 301,555 (55 % of the total state felony population).
- Male ex-felons are equivalent in number to 7 percent of the adult male population and 10 percent of the adult male workforce in Illinois.
- Male ex-felons are equivalent in number to 8 percent of the adult male population and 10 percent of the adult male workforce in the Chicago area (Cook County plus the collar counties).
- Black male ex-prisoners are equivalent in number to 16 percent of the black adult male populations in both Illinois and the Chicago area and to nearly one quarter (24 percent) of the black male workforce in the Chicago area.
- Black male ex-felons are equivalent in number to 42 percent of the black male workforce and 29 percent of the adult black male population in the Chicago area
- The total population of black males with a felony record (including both current and ex-felons) is equivalent to 55 percent of the black adult male population and an astonishing 80 percent of the adult black male workforce in the Chicago area.
- Black male ex-felons are certainly equivalent in number to a much larger share of the mostly low-skill jobs for which most formerly incarcerated offenders (70 percent of state and federal prisoners in the US lack even a high school degree) are qualified.
- They make up a particularly large portion, very likely a preponderance of the adult male population and workforce, in a number of Chicago neighborhoods.
- Ten (10) Chicago zip codes (including five on the city's West Side and four on the South Side) received 25 percent of Illinois prisoners released in the years 2000, 2001, and 2002. Fifteen zip codes, less than one fourth of all the city's zip codes, received more than a third (35 percent) of statewide prison releases and more than three-fourths (76 percent) of prisoners released to Chicago during those years. Just five zip codes on Chicago's West Side alone accounted for more than a third (37 percent) of the city's prison releases and 17 percent of the state's prison releases during the years 2000-2002.
- Of all state prisoners released to Chicago from 2000 to 2002, nearly half (48.2%) were African-Americans who served time for drug offenses.
- Of all black prisoners released to Chicago during that time, 61 percent served time for narcotics offenses.

- Of all prisoners released to Chicago after serving sentences for drug offenses, 92 percent were black
- Released prisoners are returning to the same communities from which they came prior to incarceration. Indeed, the city's top 15 zip codes for prison releases are very nearly (and in nearly the same exact order) identical to the top 15 zip codes for prison population.
- The preponderant majority of Chicago's released prisoner, probation, and parole populations returned to the city's mostly black South and West Sides and are especially concentrated in some of the most disproportionately Black sections of Chicago. Forty-two percent of all prisoners released to Chicago return to zip codes that are more than 90 percent black. Fifty-five percent return to zip codes that are more than 70 percent black and 70 percent returned to communities that are more proportionately African-American than the city as a whole.
- The city's ex-offender population is concentrated in neighborhoods that experience extreme socioeconomic disadvantage, exhibiting negative or weak job growth, high unemployment, high poverty/low median incomes, and low education levels.
- The top 15 zip codes for both probation (2000) and parole (2002) include 9 of the city's top 15 zip codes for poverty
- The top 15 zip codes for prison releases (2000-2002) contain 10 of the city's top 15 zip codes for poverty, 11 of the top 15 zip codes for unemployment, 10 of the lowest 15 zip codes for median income, and 10 of the lowest zip codes for possession of a high school degree.
- Each of the top 7 prison release zip-codes lost jobs between 1991 and 2000 and 12 of the top 15 prison release zip codes had double-digit unemployment rates in 2000.
- On the whole, the top 15 prison release zip codes' combined average poverty (28.5) unemployment (16.9), and under-education (36 percent of adults without a high school degree) rates are considerably higher than those of the city as a whole; median income and job growth numbers are well below average.
- These and other statistics from the city and its leading return communities provide some useful context for understanding the high and racially disparate recidivism rates that plague Illinois: 44 percent of the state's released prisoners and nearly half (48 percent) of released black prisoners return to prison within three years in Illinois.
- By the best recent social-science estimates, *incarceration carries a significant 10 to 20 percent "wage penalty."* Especially disturbing, ex-prisoners on average experience no real wage increases in their twenties and thirties, when young men who have never been incarcerated tend to experience rapid wage-growth. Prison time serves to channel individuals away from skilled occupations and into job sectors which are characterized by low wages, limited job stability, and fewer opportunities for advancement. Overall, incarceration appears to disrupt the career-building process such that prior work experience contributes little to future opportunities. Ex-offenders are left to start back at square one with respect to gaining a foothold in a particular occupation."

- Incarceration most particularly closes off employment avenues for ex-offenders in the public sector.
- *More than 60 percent* of employers would not knowingly hire an ex-offender. By comparison, *92 percent* of those employers would likely hire a *current or former welfare recipient* and 83 percent would hire someone who had been unemployed for a year
- Many ex-offenders banned or severely restricted from employment in a large number of professions, job categories, and fields by professional licensing statutes, rules, and practices which discriminate against potential employees with felony records. According to a study conducted by the DePaul Law School in 2000, of the then ninety-eight occupations requiring state licensure in Illinois, fifty-seven placed stipulations and/or restrictions for licensure on applicants with a criminal record, including in some cases even misdemeanors. Many of these 57 occupations can provide access to good-paying jobs and to lucrative self-employment opportunities.
- Racially disparate mass incarceration is a source of stability and security rather than chaos in prison hosting Illinois towns. The prison construction boom – fed by the rising “market” of black offenders – is an extraordinary source of jobs, tax dollars, and associated local economic multipliers for “downstate” Illinois communities.

This study emerged from the observation by program and research staff at the Chicago Urban League that a rising and significant number of the League’s constituents and clients are plagued by felony barriers and prison histories which serve as effective barriers to social and economic advancement. It is structured in seven parts. Since Black Chicago’s interrelated problems with prisons, poverty, jobs, and community development are bound up with a national story, Part I traces the rise in the United States of a costly, policy-driven and racially disparate mass incarceration state – one that increasingly places prisons above higher education in government spending priority.

Part II does the same for Illinois, paying special attention to extreme racial disparities in the state’s prison population and the related War on Drugs. It also compares black males’ presence in the state prison system with their presence in the state’s institutions of higher learning

Part III provides estimates of the number of ex-prisoners, ex-felons, felons, and total felony-record population in Illinois and the percentage of the city and state’s population and workforce that is made up of people with prison and felony records. It also identifies specific Chicago communities that house the greatest number and share of the city’s former prisoners and current probationers and gives a partial social and economic portrait of those communities.

Part IV provides relevant demographic data on the racial and socioeconomic make up of the 27 prison towns where Illinois’ growing army of prisoners is warehoused and suggests how mass incarceration is creating wealth for those communities.

Part V examines the heavily racialized and deleterious labor market consequences of mass incarceration and highlights special barriers to employment and reintegration faced by ex-offenders – crucial background for the social policy proposals that we believe might close the vicious circle. It asks what might be achieved in labor market terms if policy priorities were to

change in ways that led to more young African-American males attending universities instead of doing time and details some of the labor market problems with existing ex-prisoner re-entry policy (or lack thereof) in Illinois.

Part VI discusses a number of related mechanisms whereby racially disparate criminal justice/mass incarceration policy itself plays a central role in the vicious circle, serving to perpetuate the very conditions associated with the emergence of crime in inner-city communities.

Part VII advances policy solutions that could contribute to breaking the vicious circle of poverty, racial inequality, criminalization, mass incarceration, and uneven community development, paying special attention to the vital question of ex-offender employment. Among the key recommendations:

Repeal mandatory sentencing laws, restore judges' discretion to determine which offenders truly deserve long prison terms and which can be safely rehabilitated in the communities where they live, and establish new structures for reviewing and revising state sentencing policies and pointing judges towards the most effective use of correctional options.

Replace prison time with treatment and intensive supervision for offenders convicted of drug possession and other petty drug offenses.

Repeal "Three Strikes" and other habitual offender legislation, permitting judges to make punishments that are commensurate to the harm done by offenders.

Appoint a sentencing commission to review legislation and regulation that governs criminal sanctions.

Create new prison and post-prison supports and responsibilities for prisoners and released ex-prisoners.

Use intermediate sanctions to address technical parole violations rather than returning offenders to prison.

Expand community drug treatment, educational, job training and other sentencing alternatives.

Develop effective approaches to public safety that draw on community resources and use problem-solving techniques.

Tax special interests that benefit from the mass incarceration policy decision for the development of prisoner rehabilitation, job-training, and ex-offender reentry programs.

Target funds saved by the rollback of incarceration to promote economic development, public health, violence reduction, and ex-offender rehabilitation in the urban neighborhoods that generate and receive a hugely disproportionate share of the state's rising army of offenders and ex-offenders.

End racial profiling in traffic and pedestrian stop-and-search and surveillance and cease racially disparate practices in the prosecution and sentencing of drug and other offenders.

Create a new policy focus and government agency to coordinate the transition from prison to work. With the number of prisoners now nearly equivalent to the number of welfare households in the state and nation, the time has come to give that transition at least some of the concentrated policy attention received by the transition from welfare to work.

Eliminate inappropriate barriers to, and create new possibilities and incentives for, the appropriate employment of ex-offenders.

Follow the lead of several states by enacting legislation that expands Fair Employment regulations to protect people with criminal records from employment discrimination. Under this legislation, employers are told that crimes may only be considered if they closely relate to the specific duties of the job.

Mitigate the stigma and some of the legal barriers associated with criminal histories by allowing certain categories of ex-offenders to seal or expunge their criminal records.

Offer certificates of rehabilitation and/or good standing to ex-offenders who either have minimal criminal histories or who have remained out of the criminal justice system for specified periods of time.

Educate the public about the fact that most ex-offenders were convicted of nonviolent crimes and pose minimal risk to co-workers, customers, and the public at large, especially when they are given a chance, *often in fact their first* chance to be included as productive and truly free citizens in the community.

A Newly Central Force in Black Poverty and Racial Inequality: The Criminal Justice System

Nearly 37 years ago, the great civil rights leader and social justice proponent Martin Luther King and his fellow activists in the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) came to Chicago. In alliance with local civil rights and social justice activists they were determined to challenge the complex social forces and institutions that produced endemic poverty, misery, isolation, and powerlessness in the northern black ghetto.

The issues and institutions on which he focused – inferior and segregated schools and housing, racial discrimination in the labor and real estate markets and the public welfare bureaucracy, weakened family structures, unattached and alienated youth, and racial imbalances in the electoral system – are the same ones that have preoccupied scholars, activists and others concerned with the persistently stark plight of inner city black communities ever since.

Were he to miraculously return to Chicago a generation later, King would be disappointed to see that these same forces and institutions still reflect and feed stark patterns of black-white inequality, segregation, and disproportionate black poverty in the Chicago area and the U.S. as a whole.¹ He would also be struck by the *dramatically elevated significance of one particular institutional force* in the perpetuation and deepening of that poverty, inequality, and uneven development: *the criminal justice system*.

Most particularly he would be concerned with the new regime of racially disparate mass incarceration that has emerged largely under the auspices of the War on Drugs during the last 25-30 years. In Illinois and Chicago as throughout the nation, that system is helping to create a permanently criminalized underclass of mostly male African-Americans that cycles in and out of courts, prisons, and the most marginal sections of society and the economy. It releases a steady stream of very disproportionately black ex-prisoners into a small number of relatively impoverished and predominantly black zip codes, where the resources for meaningful social and economic reintegration are all-too scarce – the very same crime-generating environments from which they came.

Mass incarceration now plays a key role in creating and perpetuating the overall tangle of social, political, and historical forces that perpetuate what Martin Luther King called the “triple ghetto: the ghetto of race, the ghetto of poverty, and the ghetto of misery.”

The unfortunate but not surprising reality is that a large proportion of them commit new crimes and return to prison.

This racially and geographically lopsided criminalization and mass incarceration is a civil rights problem in and of itself. At the same time, as King would quickly discern, it also produces a significant and multi-dimensional “collateral” damage, both reflecting and exacerbating the social, political, and economic disenfranchisement of inner city black communities and deepening the inequality of wealth and income between blacks and whites. Mass incarceration now plays a key role in creating and perpetuating the overall tangle of social, political, and historical forces that perpetuate what King called the “triple ghetto: the ghetto of race, the ghetto of poverty, and the ghetto of misery.”² It’s a classic vicious circle. For these and other reasons, the criminal justice system and particularly mass incarceration belong very much at the top of a modern-day civil rights agenda for Chicago and the nation.

Origins, Purpose, and Structure of this Study

This study emerged from the observation by program and research staff at the Chicago Urban League that a rising and significant number of the League's constituents and clients are plagued by felony barriers and prison histories which serve as effective barriers to social and economic advancement. Confronting this new reality, the League decided to learn more about the connections between its core issues and mission – poverty reduction and equal opportunity for minorities and the economically disadvantaged in all phases of American life³ – and criminal justice policy. What follows are the results of this investigation.

This study is structured in seven parts. Since black Chicago's interrelated problems with prisons, poverty, jobs, and community development are bound up with a national story, **Part I** traces the rise in the United States of a costly, policy-driven and racially disparate mass incarceration state – one that increasingly places prisons above higher education in government spending priority.

- **Part II** does the same for Illinois, paying special attention to extreme racial disparities in the state's prison population and the related War on Drugs. It also compares black males' presence in the state prison system with their presence in the state's institutions of higher learning
- **Part III** provides total and racially disaggregated estimates of the number of ex-prisoners, ex-felons, felons, and total felony-record population in Illinois and the percentage of the city and state's population and workforce that is made up of people with prison and felony records. It also identifies specific Chicago communities that house the greatest number and share of the city's former prisoners and current probationers and gives a partial social and economic portrait of those communities.
- **Part IV** provides relevant demographic data on the 27 prison towns where Illinois' growing army of prisoners is warehoused and shows how mass incarceration creates wealth and income for those communities.

This report asks what might be achieved in labor market terms if policy priorities were to change in ways that led to more young African-American males being sent to universities and colleges instead of prison.

- **Part V** examines the heavily racialized and deleterious labor market consequences of mass incarceration and highlights special barriers to employment and reintegration faced by ex-offenders – crucial background for the social policy proposals that we believe might close the vicious circle. It asks what might be achieved in labor market terms if policy priorities were to change in ways that led to more young African-American males being sent to universities and colleges instead of prison. It also details some of the labor market problems with existing ex-prisoner re-entry policy (or lack thereof) in Illinois.
- **Part VI** discusses a number of related mechanisms whereby racially disparate criminal justice/mass incarceration policy itself plays a central role in the vicious circle, serving to perpetuate the very conditions associated with the emergence of crime in inner-city communities.
- **Part VII** advances policy solutions that could contribute to breaking the vicious circle of poverty, racial inequality, criminalization, mass incarceration, and uneven community development, paying special attention to the vital question of ex-offender employment.

For a Second Chance: Enhancing Ex-Offender Employability

Among its many dimensions, a local, regional, and national civil rights and social justice agenda focusing on criminal justice policy must include central reference to the question of how ex-offenders can find the basic security that comes with the *attainment of legal livable-wage employment*. Without the attainment of such security, in a society based fundamentally on the employer-employee relationship, meaningful long-term reintegration into the "free world" is next to impossible and the vicious prison-feeding circle of poverty, crime, racial inequality, mass incarceration, and recidivism deepens and perpetuates itself.

To close the vicious circle, we are convinced, the city, state, and the nation *must* make a new commitment and find new ways to help former prisoners and other ex-offenders form meaningful and remunerative long-term labor market attachments.

We are in agreement with Chicago's distinguished Congressman Danny Davis, whose Seventh District includes a large share of the city's vast population of ex-offenders. As men and women in his district "transition from incarceration to freedom," Davis recently told Illinois' Senate Judiciary Committee, "*what they need most are jobs*. What they find instead," Davis has learned, "are cold stares, unreturned phone calls, and closed doors. The jobs are far and few between, and in most cases non-existent" even for "serious and earnest men and women, working to clean up their act, and transition into productive citizens." Denied what Davis calls "a second chance to become productive citizens," even rehabilitation-minded ex-offenders often find themselves re-enmeshed in illicit but income-generating activities that land them back in downstate lockups.

The needs of ex-offenders and the very disproportionately poor and minority-based communities that receive them are many and diverse, but few if any are more basic than a decent job. Without meaningful and remunerative attachment to the labor market, ex-offenders are likely to commit new crimes and resume their prior roles as raw material for a burgeoning prison industrial complex.

"Literally Incredible" Expansion

In the last two-and-a-half decades, America's prison population has undergone what United States' Bureau of Justice Statistics Director Jan Chaiken in 2000 called "literally incredible" expansion. Between 1970 and the turn of the millennium, in fact, the number of people behind bars in state and federal prison in the United States increased more than six times. That number rose from less than 200,000 to 1,328,063 by June 2001. By then, an additional 631,240 Americans were held in city and county jails. In all, the number of prisoners in the United States had swelled to more than two million.

Remarkably, the nation that proclaims itself the homeland and headquarters of world freedom comprises five percent of the world's population but houses more than 25 percent of the world's prisoners. Each year, approximately 730,000 people are imprisoned. The rate of incarceration in the U.S. is 699 per 100,000, up from roughly 100 per 100,000 in 1970. The next highest rate in the world is Russia at 644 and the American rate is six times higher than those of Britain, Canada, or France.

The U.S. incarceration rate began its dramatic upward acceleration in the mid-1970s, after nearly 50 years during which it mostly hovered around 100 per 100,000. This increase was followed by a spectacular upsurge in incarceration in the early 1980s. The second surge initiated a trend that has continued to the present.

"No other Western democratic country has ever imprisoned this proportion of its population," says Norval Morris, a professor emeritus at University of Chicago Law School.

He considers the high number of people held behind bars in the U.S. to be "appalling."

To house America's massive new population of inmates, states and the federal government built an estimated 3,300 new prisons during the 1990s, at a cost of almost \$27 billion, with "another 268 in the pipeline valued at an additional \$2.4 billion."

The development has received considerable public attention in recent years. A number of books and studies have been produced addressing these astonishing trends and bearing revealing and provocative titles like *Search and Destroy*, *Going Up The River: Travels in a Prison Nation*, *Lockdown America*, *The Race to Incarcerate*, and *The Celling of America*.

In addition to those behind bars, more than four and a half million Americans are on probation or parole, "doing time" on "the outside," under the watch of probation and/or parole officers, often taking mandatory

urine tests, and in some cases under home detention and leashed to electronic shackles. A record 6.6 million Americans are under the supervision of the criminal justice system in the U.S., as the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reported last August.⁴

"Cell Blocks or Classrooms?" Public Expenditures on Mass Incarceration

Both reflecting and advancing the rise of a mass incarceration state in the United States, American tax dollars have in the last two decades been massively diverted to criminal arrest and punishment. Between 1982 and 1998, the combined criminal justice expenditures of local, state, and federal government have nearly quadrupled, rising from less than \$35 billion to nearly \$136 billion a year. Correctional spending rose at a faster rate than any other type of state expenditure category, with state correction budgets nearly tripling during that time. At \$50 billion, prison spending accounts for more than a third of total criminal justice expenditures.

"Today," writes the Justice Policy Institute, "it is costing states, counties, and the federal government nearly \$40 billion to imprison approximately two million state and local inmates, up from \$5 billion in combined prison and jail expenditures in 1978." At the state level, JPI finds, "the massive growth in state prisoners over the past two decades has meant that one out

Table 1: Comparative Incarceration Rates, 2000-2001

Nation or Social Subset of Nation	Incarceration Rate per 100,000
Japan	40
Switzerland	85
Italy	90
France	90
Spain	110
Australia	110
Canada	110
England	125
	400
Russia	675
USA (including local jails)	690
Black Adult Men in USA	
Blacks in Illinois (state prison only)	1,550
Black Adult Male in Illinois	
Black Adult Men in South Africa under apartheid (1993)	851

Sources: Prison Policy Initiative, Springfield MA, August 21, 2002; The Sentencing Project (2000); United Kingdom Home Office (2001); Justice Policy Institute and *Mother Jones*, "Debt to Society: The Real Price of Prisons" at www.motherjones.com/prisons; Human Rights Watch (2001) at www.hrw.org/campaign/drugs/

of every 14 general fund dollars spent in 2000 was spent on prisons."

Public investment in incarceration is now so extensive that *several large states currently spend as much or more money to incarcerate adults than they do to provide their citizens with college and graduate educations*. States now spend 60 cents on prisons for

every dollar they spend on higher education, up from 28 cents in 1980.⁵

The Color of "Prison Nation"

Beyond its sheer magnitude, the most striking aspect of America's prison and broader criminal supervision boom is its heavily racialized nature. As the penal population has

The Justice Policy Institute (2002) recently reported, there were more black men behind bars than enrolled in colleges or universities in the U.S.

risen, it has become significantly less Caucasian: non-Hispanic whites accounted for 42 percent of state prison inmates in 1979 but less than a third by the end of the 20th century.

But let us be clear about the group that is most especially targeted: *blacks are 12.3 percent of U.S. population, but they comprise roughly half of the roughly two million Americans currently behind bars*. Between 1980 and 2000, the number of black men in jail or prison grew five-fold (500 percent), to the point where, as the Justice Policy Institute (2002) recently reported, there were *more black men behind bars than enrolled in colleges or universities in the U.S.* On any given day, Chaiken reported, 30 percent of African-American males ages 20 to 29 are under correctional supervision – either in jail or prison or on probation or parole.

The incarceration rate for African-Americans is 1,815 per 100,000 compared to 609 per 100,000 for Latino-Americans, 99 per 100,000 for Asian-Americans, and 235 per 100,000 for American whites. For black adult males the incarceration rate is a remarkable 4,484 per 100,000, compared to 1,668 per

Part I, continued

Table 2: Race and Incarceration by State, 2001

Jurisdiction	Incarceration Rate per 100,000	Ranking of Incarceration Rate	Black Percentage Population	Black Population Percentage Rank
United States	699	1 (global)	12.3%	NA
Louisiana	1013	1 (state)	32	2
Texas	966	2	11	17
Georgia	952	3	29	3
Delaware	895	4	19	9
Mississippi	852	5	36	
Oklahoma	812	6	8	23
Alabama	792	7	26	6
Florida	772	8	15	14
South Carolina	756	9	29	3
Nevada	734	10	6.6	25

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002; U.S. Census 2000; Chicago Urban League Department of Research and Planning (July 2002).

100,000 for Hispanic males and 1,318 per 100,000 for white males. *Roughly one in ten of the world's prisoners is an African-American male.* In mid-year 1999, 11 percent of black U.S. males in their 20s and early 30s were in prison and 33 percent of black male high school dropouts were in prison or in jail.

Especially chilling is a statistical model used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics at the turn of the 21st century to determine the lifetime chances of incarceration for individuals in different racial and ethnic groups. Based on current rates, it predicts that a young black man age 16 in 1996 faced a 29 percent chance of spending time in prison during his life. The corresponding statistic

for white men in the same age group was four percent.⁶

Consistent with these findings, nothing is more likely to predict high incarceration totals and rates at the state level than the possession of a disproportionately large black population.⁷ In reviewing the list of the nation's leading ten states by incarceration rate, it is hard not to notice the prominence of the disproportionately African-American states of the formerly slave South.

Corrections, Indeed: America as "Our Brothers' Keeper"

The phenomenon of heavily disproportionate black mass incarceration is fraught with a savage historical irony. At the very moment that American public discourse in racial matters has

become officially inclusive – even David Duke now has to deny that he is anti-black – the U.S. is flooding its expanding number of cell blocks with an ever-rising tide of black people monitored by predominantly white overseers.

There is a widespread false belief among whites – ironically reinforced by the demise of open public racial prejudice – that African-Americans enjoy equal and color-blind opportunity. "As white America sees it," write Barbara Diggs-Brown and Leonard Steinhorn in their sobering *By the Color of Their Skin: the Illusion of Integration and the Reality of Race* (2000), "every effort has been made to welcome blacks into the American mainstream, and now

they're on their own... 'We got the message, we made the corrections [white Americans claim, P.S.] — Get on with it.'"

Corrections, indeed: as the racially skewed demographics of the American "correctional" system suggest, the U.S. in the age of mass incarceration is giving a darkly colored twist to the noble Christian notion that we are "our brother's [today 'our brothers'] keeper."⁸

A Policy Driven Development

At first blush, an outside observer from another country or planet might observe America's prison numbers and conclude that the United States experienced a significant upsurge in violent crimes during recent decades. This would be a reasonable inference from the *extreme measure* (by both historical American and contemporary global standards) of incarceration over the last 25-30 years. Contrary to the "law and order" rhetoric cultivated by many politicians and policymakers, however, there has been no clear or consistent pattern of rising criminality, including violent criminality, that might explain the upward trend of America's prison numbers.

"Since 1980," journalist Vince Beiser notes, "the national crime rate has meandered down, then up, then down again, but the incarceration rate has marched relentlessly upward every single year."

During the 1990s, indeed, the U.S. incarceration rates rose dramatically in spite of crime rates that fell, thanks largely to fairly robust economic

"...punishment reserved for only the most heinous offenders to one extended to a much greater range of crimes and much larger segment of the population."

Devah Pager
Northwestern University
Sociologist

growth during the "Clinton boom." "Crime is Dropping," noted the well-regarded public affairs journal *Illinois Issues*, "but the prison population isn't."

U.S. prison expansion since the mid-1970s is explained primarily by deliberate changes in criminal justice and sentencing policy. These changes include the introduction of mandatory and determinate sentencing (abolishing and more commonly diminishing prisoners' ability to reduce sentences through good conduct behind bars), and "three strikes" sentencing laws (life sentences for people convicted of a third felony). Also relevant are the introduction of "truth-in-sentencing" laws (which reduce judicial discretion to cut the length of sentences), "zero tolerance" (the rampant arrest and conviction of suspects for relatively minor and nonviolent offenses), the extension of sentences for certain offenses (especially drug trafficking and the use of weapons in the commission of a felony), and the now commonplace trial and sentencing of juvenile offenders as adults. A general massive increase in drug- and gang-related surveillance, stoppages,

frisk, arrests and prosecutions at all levels of government also underpins the rise of "Prison Nation."

The central factor is that imprisonment in the U.S. has "changed," in Northwestern University sociologist Devah Pager's words, "from a *punishment reserved for only the most heinous offenders to one extended to a much greater range of crimes and much larger segment of the population* [emphasis added]. Recent trends in crime policy have led to the imposition of harsher and longer sentences for a wider range of offenses, thus casting an ever widening net of penal intervention."

In particular, huge numbers of Americans today are locked up for drug offenses and other transgressions that would not have met with the same punishment 20 years ago. The incarceration rate for narcotics offenses was 15 per 100,000 adults in the U.S. in 1980. By 1996, according to a recent lead article in *The Economist*, this rate had risen nearly ten-fold to 148 per 100,000. Armed with such statistics, the article's author openly wonders if American policymakers are creating "Too Many Convicts" and ex-offenders.

It is largely for this reason that the majority of Americans entering the inherently violent space of America's "prison nation," where as many as seven percent of inmates are raped, now do so for nonviolent crimes. Between 1980 and 1997, the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) reports, "the number of violent offenders committed to state prison nearly doubled (up 82 percent)," but "the number of

Part I, continued

nonviolent offenders tripled (up 207%).” People who committed nonviolent crimes accounted for more than three-fourths of the nation’s massive increase in prisoners between 1978 and 1996. The Justice Policy Institute estimates that there are currently more than 1.2 million nonviolent criminals behind bars in the U.S.⁹

This point is crucial for those who wish to subvert the vicious circle created by mass incarceration and advance the cause of ex-offender re-integration. It cogently challenges widespread popular perception of ex-offenders as irredeemably violent and dangerous.

The Racially Disparate War on Drugs

These trends have impacted black communities with special harshness. While blacks make up just 15 percent of illicit drug users, they account for 37 percent of those arrested for drug offenses. They comprise 42 percent of those held in federal prison for drug charges and 62 percent of those in state prisons. Not surprisingly, white drug offenders are much less likely than their counterparts to serve time in prison. Blacks constituted more than 75 percent of the total drug prisoners in America in one third of all states (including Illinois), according to a report issued in 2000 by the prestigious human rights organization Human Rights Watch.¹⁰

An “astounding” one in three black men now possess a felony record, and one in four black adult males is an ex-felon, no longer serving time in prison or jail or on probation or parole.

Ex-Offender Nation: The Rising, Recycling, and Racially Disparate Army of Ex-Offenders

Americans are typically shocked to learn that more than 600,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons each year. That amounts to more than 1,600 a day and is indicative of a massive swelling army of ex-offenders, saddled with what a recent (August 10, 2002) cover story in *The Economist* called “The Stigma That Never Fades.” This reaction reflects popular ignorance about both the numbers going into prison in the first place and the relatively short terms that most convicts – especially the rising number of nonviolent drug offenders – serve behind bars. It also reflects the fact that most prisoners typically return to a relatively small number of heavily disadvantaged minority neighborhoods, where they remain largely beyond the sphere of the mainstream society’s awareness and concern.

Of the two million Americans currently behind bars, approximately 95 percent will be released, including more than half a million within the next year. This “steady stream of individuals, branded by their criminal records”

(Pager) is fed to no small extent by the War on Drugs, since drug and other nonviolent offenders tend to serve considerably shorter sentences than violent criminals (*see Table 9*).

It is not limited, however, to ex-prisoners. According to the best recent estimates, roughly 13 million Americans – fully seven percent of the adult population and 12 percent of the adult male population – possess felony records. While nearly one in five black men has a prison record, *an “astounding” one in three black men now possesses a felony record, and one in four black adult males is an ex-felon, no longer serving time in prison or jail or on probation or parole.*

The prison/felony distinction is critical in connection with employment issues. In the labor market, it’s the felony record that matters most, legally and practically speaking, for the typical job application asks prospective employees whether they have been convicted of a felony, not whether they have served time behind bars.

An astonishing portion – 40 percent within three years of release – of this returning army cycles back to prison. To a great extent the modern American mass incarceration state is fed by the recycling of disadvantaged ex-offenders back into the prison system. Of the 730,000 people entering prison or jail each year, 33 percent have been there before.¹¹

Race, Prison, Higher Education, and the War on Drugs in Illinois and Chicago

From Welfare to Prison State

Illinois, which housed the seventh largest state prison population in the nation in 2000, is no exception to these national patterns. In 1970, two years after Martin Luther King's assassination, there were only 7,367 prisoners in the state's seven adult correction facilities. A generation later, Illinois' prison population had reached nearly 46,000 (2001); the number of correction facilities had mushroomed to 27. In addition to the astounding increases in prison population, the state's parole population had increased to roughly 30,000.

The population of prisoners under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Corrections increased more than six times over between 1970 and 2001, and rose by more than 60 percent in just the last 11 years. It did fall back a bit closer to earth by the summer of 2002, dropping to 43,142. This slight drop, however, was at least partly explained by the release of a number of prisoners serving relatively short-term sentences for parole violations, and

likely does not signify the beginning of a secular trend toward lower prison populations.

Between 1980 and 2000, the state's incarceration rate for state (IDOC) prisoners rose significantly, from 94 per 100,000 state residents to 368 in 2000. These data, however, understate the true state rate, since they omit federal prisoners and people detained in county jail, including more than 10,000 alone in Cook

County Jail (the nation's third largest local penal institution), which now "books" (processes) more than 100,000 persons per year. Between 1990 and 2000, the total number of inmates in Illinois (combining state, federal, and local jail populations) rose 82 percent, from 37,000 to 68,000, the *Peoria Journal Star* reported two summers ago.

Illinois' rising state prison (IDOC) population (94% male) now stands suggestively close to the falling number of households (predominately female-headed) in the state receiving public family cash assistance – 46,806. In contrast, nine years ago the number of prisoners in Illinois made up less than 15 percent number of the state's welfare families.

To house its dramatically rising number of prisoners, Illinois has built 20 adult prisons, an average of one per year, between 1980 and 2000. The amount spent by the state on corrections has risen by more than 200 percent from just over \$377 million in 1980 to \$1.3 billion in 2000. Mass incarceration has emerged as one of the leading growth items in the state's budget over the last sixteen years, increasing from just over a third the amount it spends on higher education to nearly three-fourths.¹²

In Illinois, as throughout the country, citizens might well be concerned about the opportunity cost of this correctional spending. Every dollar spent to build and maintain prisons is of course not spent

Table 3: Prison Versus Higher Education Spending 1980-2000

Fiscal Year	Prison Spending (per resident)	Higher Education Spending (per resident)
1980-81	\$46.16	\$131.21
1985-86	58.00	147.90
1990-91	61.80	143.26
1995-96	77.26	107.59
1999-00	145.90	193.01
% change 1980-2000	214%	47%

Source: Justice Policy Institute and Mother Jones (2001).

Part II, continued

Mass incarceration has emerged as one of the leading growth items in the state's budget over the last sixteen years, increasing from just over a third the amount it spends on higher education to nearly three-fourths.

on critical activities that focus on developing human capital in an effort to keep people out of prison in the first place. In fact, it is likely that massive correctional investment works against such efforts. The growth in correctional spending is almost certainly related to a decline of spending in other critical human development and social service areas.¹³

It's a matter of particular concern, perhaps, for Illinois, which ranks poorly in a number of social and human service spending areas, including Medicaid reimbursement, and state contributions to public education, where Illinois ranks 48th among the nation's 50 states. To put the issue in some context, we must consider the following:¹⁴

- It costs \$20,637 a year to house an adult prisoner and \$50,286 to incarcerate a juvenile in Illinois.
- The cost of incarcerating one adult in Illinois is equal to more than four and a half times the state's legally mandated public education "foundation level"

Table 4: Total Adult Prisoners, Admissions, and Exits Illinois, 1978-2000

Year	Admissions	Exits	Prisoners	Capacity
1978	7,483	7,219	10,944	11,736
1979	7,368	7,448	11,263	11,902
1980	9,022	8,482	12,102	12,025
1981	8,990	8,372	13,141	13,447
1982	9,932	9,052	13,967	14,047
1983	11,503	11,715	13,735	13,803
1984	10,148	7,270	16,549	16,109
1985	10,058	8,828	17,649	18,418
1986	10,820	9,224	19,184	19,418
1987	11,766	10,887	19,928	19,900
1988	10,864	10,119	20,554	19,993
	12,025	9,921	22,576	20,967
1990	16,909	12,068	27,295	22,616
1991	18,888	17,095	28,941	23,719
1992	18,494	16,876	30,432	24,215
1993	20,137	17,215	33,072	25,896
1994	21,621	18,950	35,614	26,527
1995	23,753	21,460	37,790	26,637
1996	22,828	22,099	38,373	27,785
1997	24,845	22,704	40,425	28,970
1998	25,839	24,106	42,140	29,421
1999	27,209	24,797	43,051	32,062
2000*	28,776	26,731	46,606	33,289

* Average Prison Stay (Exits): 1.4 years

Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections, Human Services Plan – Fiscal Years 1998-2000, Tables 11-13.

Table 5: Racial Disparities in General Versus Prison Population, Illinois, 1980 and 2000

Race/ Ethnicity	% of State Population (1980)	% of Prison Population (1980)	% of State Population (2000)	% of Prison Population (2000)
White	78%	37%	69%	24%
Non-White	21	62	30	75
Black	14	58	15	65
Hispanic	6	4	12	0
Asian		0	3	0

Sources: Justice Policy Institute and *Mother Jones* (2001).

of \$4,560 – the minimum expenditure determined to be required to meet the educational needs of a single child.

The cost of incarcerating a juvenile is more than 11 times the foundation level and, according to the Safer Foundation, nearly equal to what it would cost to send nine students to study criminal justice at the University of Illinois.

The Color of the Correctional and Criminal Supervision Population

If we add parolees and probationers into the mix, it is clear that a considerable portion of Illinois' population is under the supervision of the criminal justice system. As of June 2002, there were 31,908 state parolees, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections; at the end of 2000 the number of probationers

in Illinois stood at 139,029. Of these, nearly two-thirds are felony offenders.

These statistics are especially relevant for the Chicago area (Cook County plus the Collar counties), which is original home ("committing county" in IDOC's words) to 70 percent of the state's prisoners and residence for 73 percent of its parolees.

The impact of current mass incarceration policies are especially damaging to the state's African-American residents, 83 percent of whom live in the Chicago area:

- Sixty-three percent of the state's roughly 43,000 prisoners and 60 percent of its 32,000 parolees are African-American. In 2001, the state's incarceration rate for African-Americans was more than ten times the rate for whites – a remarkable 1,550 per 100,000 for African-Americans, compared to 127 per 100,000 for whites.
- For black adult males, the incarceration rate is a remarkable 4,383 per 100,00 adults. *Black males between*

Table 6: Race, Gender, and Origin/Residence of Illinois Prisoners and Parolees, 2001

Population	Cook County	Collar Counties	From (Prisoners and/or in (Parolees) Chicago Area (Cook plus Collar)	Female	Male	Black	White	Hispanic
<i>Prisoners</i> (45,629)	60%	10%	70%	6%	94%	64%	25%	10%
<i>Parolees</i> (27,547)	63	10	73	10	90	60	25	7

Source: Illinois Department of Corrections, 2001.

Part II, continued

18 and 65, who comprise just four percent of the state's total population, account for fully 57 percent of the state's federal and state (IDOC) inmates.

- In 2000, *The Chicago Reporter* reported that 20 percent of all black men ages 20 to 29 in Cook County were either in prison or jail, or on parole. If this ratio is expanded to include the city's probation population, it seems likely that a full third of that cohort is under the supervision of the criminal justice system.¹⁵

The Different Meanings of "Going Downstate"

Racially incongruent mass incarceration contributes to some remarkable institutional discrepancies. Two summers ago, a downstate journalist reported that blacks made up just six percent of Peoria County's nursing home residents but fully two-thirds of the county's penal population. "It's not uncommon," the reporter learned, "for the minority population in a jail to be three times what it would be [in the local community]."

Consider also the different racial meanings attached to the phrase "going downstate" by white and black youth in the Chicago area. Beyond the shared favorable suggestion of a trip to the state basketball tournament, the connotations are sharply (skin-) colorized. For many white youths in and around Chicago, the phrase evokes the image of a trip with Mom and Dad to begin academic careers at the prestigious University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign or one of the state's other many public universities.

Table 7: Black Males in Corrections and Higher Education, Illinois

Penal or Education Status	Number of Black Males
State Prisoners (June 2001)	27,450 (64% of all)
Enrolled in Public Universities, Bachelors Degree (Fall 2000)	6,252
Enrolled in Public Universities, All Degrees (Fall 2000)	7,640
State Prisoners – Drug Offenders (estimated for 2000)	8,000
Exits from State Prison for Drug Offenses (estimated –2000)	7,000
Bachelors' Degree Received, Public State Universities (1999)	992 (3.3% of all)
Bachelors' Degree Received, all universities and colleges in state (1999)	1,626 (3.0% of all)

Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections (1999, 2000, 2001); Illinois Board of Higher Education, *Data Book*, Fall 2000; Illinois Department of Labor, *Progress of Women and Minorities in the Illinois Workforce* (2002), Table 5-0.

But for younger Chicago-area blacks, especially males (6 percent of the state's prisoners are female), "going downstate" more commonly means a trip under armed guard to take up residence at one of the state's numerous maximum or medium-security prisons.

Indeed, as of June 2001, there were nearly 20,000 more black males in the Illinois state prison system than the number of black males enrolled in the state's public universities. In fact, there are more black males in the state's correctional facilities just on drug charges than the total number of

black males enrolled in undergraduate degree programs in state universities. To paint the picture yet more darkly, we might note that just 992 black males received a bachelors' degree (3.3 percent of all conferred) from those universities in 1999 while roughly 7,000 black males were released from the Illinois state prison system the following year just for drug offenses.¹⁶

"Astonishing" Disparities: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs

In Illinois, as throughout the nation, this remarkable and racially disparate expansion of the prison and criminal

Table 8: Drug Offenders in Illinois Prison, 1980-2000

Year	Absolute Number in State Prison	% of State Prisoners
1970	200	3%
1983	534	3
1985	673	4
1990	4725	17
1995	8415	22
2000	11,468	26

Source: Justice Policy Institute and Mother Jones (2001).

supervision system has been driven by aggressive public policy and enforcement. And while the Drug War policy has certainly been national in scope, it has been especially pivotal in our state. "In 1978, already facing overcrowded conditions," noted the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority in the fall of 1999:

IDOC projected the prison population to grow to 16,000 by 1988. But the introduction in 1978 of determinate sentencing and Class X felonies, both of which set longer sentences for most serious offenses, caused the inmate population to soar beyond expectations... The rapid growth of the [Illinois] prison population continued in the late 1980s and most of the 1990s. A tremendous surge in the number of drug offenders sentenced to prison, beginning in 1989, had a major impact. In 1970 there were only about 200 drug offenders in prison in Illinois, representing only about 3 percent of the total prison population... the crack cocaine

phenomenon and stiffer drug penalties helped bring the drug offender population from under 2,000 in 1988 to over 4,600 in 1990.

According to the ICJIA's senior scientist David Olson, drug admissions were the single largest factor swelling the state's prison population during the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, low-level drug offenses account for the single largest category of prison admissions in Illinois.

The Drug War has been marked by extreme racial disparity in Illinois.

In 1996, the respected international human rights organization Human Rights Watch reported, "blacks constituted an astonishing 90 percent of all drug offenders admitted to prison in Illinois." By 2000, the percentage had barely fallen to 89 percent, making Illinois number two in the nation in terms of this key disparity.¹⁷

Below are some key numbers that elucidate some of ways in which Illinois has led or been near the top of the nation in fighting drugs:¹⁸

Leading the Nation? Illinois Rankings in Incarceration and the War on Drugs

- *Percentage of Black Drug Offenders Admitted to Prison:* #1
- *Racial Disparities (High Black/Low White) in Incarceration for Drug Offenses:* #2
- *Prison Admission Rate for Drug Offenses:* #2
- *Share of State Prisoners Admitted for a Drug Offense:* #5
- *Racial Disparity in Male Incarceration:*..... #7

Table 9: Illinois Prison Population, 1999

Offense	% Sentences	% Admissions	% Exits	% Prisoners
Violent	25.0%	25.0%	25.7%	50.7%
Drug	40.0	40.1	40.6	25.4
Property	31.4	30.1	31.0	21.9
Other	3.6	4.8	2.7	2.0

Source: IDOC, Statistical Presentation (1999).

Part II, continued

To get a sense of the scale of the criminal justice system's racially disparate anti-drug campaign during the last decade of remarkable prison expansion consider the following statistic: in one predominantly black West Side police district containing less than 100,000 residents (District 11, which includes North Lawndale among other high poverty areas), police made *more than twelve thousand drug arrests (33 per day)* during just one year in the mid-1990s.¹⁹

Arrests for drug crimes, it is worth noting, are subject to a far wider spectrum of state-specific political priorities, legislative policies, and enforcement approaches than violent crimes and crimes against property.

Prison for Some, Suspended Licenses for Others

Perhaps nothing reveals more dramatically Illinois authorities' penchant for waging the War on Drugs in racially disparate ways than the state's enforcement of two 1989 bills mandating that a 15- or 16-year old youth automatically would be prosecuted as an adult if he or she was charged with selling drugs within 1,000 feet of a school or a public housing project. Under the state's Automatic Transfer laws, which Building Blocks for Youth (BBY) considers to be "among the most racially inequitable laws in the country," youth who have been convicted as adults can be transferred to adult prisons upon their 17th birthday and are automatically transferred on their 18th birthday.

Predictably enough given the nearly total absence of public housing

Under the state's Automatic Transfer laws, which Building Blocks for Youth (BBY) considers to be "among the most racially inequitable laws in the country," youth who have been convicted as adults can be transferred to adult prisons upon their 17th birthday and are automatically transferred on their 18th birthday.

projects in predominantly white communities in the Chicago area as well as the greater relative density of urban as opposed to suburban development, the outcomes of this remarkable legislation have been very racially skewed. Indeed, of the 393 young people automatically transferred to adult facilities in Cook County from October 1999 to October 2000, 99.2 percent of them were minorities. "Only three of 393 youth," notes BBY, "were white: 340 were African-American and 50 were Latino."²⁰

These findings are disturbing in light of evidence that white youth use illicit drugs at the same or higher rates as youth of color.²¹ They are doubly troublesome in light of recent reports on how local and state criminal justice authorities have chosen to deal with the rising number of "young [white] suburbanites" purchasing heroin and other illegal narcotics on the city's predominantly

black West Side. In August 2001, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that city police and the DuPage Metropolitan Enforcement Group (a "collection of the top drug cops from county departments") had selected a rather mild sanction for the suburban offenders. "Officers," the *Tribune* noted, "have seen teens make drug buys, traced the license plates of their cars and notified the registered owner, often a parent, where the vehicle has been."

Last June, both the *Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun Times* reported that Cook County prosecutors and police had increased the level of punishment for the young suburbanites, threatening to impound their automobiles and suspend their driver's licenses. William O'Brien, Chief of Narcotics for the State's Attorney's Office gave the following rationale for this "new crackdown," which contrasted sharply with the prison sentences faced by 15-year-old inner city youth caught selling narcotics next to a public housing project: when it comes to young and automobile centered suburban kids, O'Brien explained, "*driving privileges may resonate more... than the threat of jail.*"²²

Race, Poverty, Ex-Offenders and the Leading Return Communities in Chicago and Illinois

Estimating the Racially Disparate Number and Labor Market Significance of Ex-Offenders in Illinois and Chicago

How many people, especially African-Americans, are struggling with the mark of a criminal record and/or the experience(s) of incarceration in Illinois and Chicago? By the best recent social science estimates, adjusting for recidivism, mortality, and new releases, Illinois in 2001 was home to 409,157 ex-felons (once but no longer in prison or on probation or parole), 134,219 former prisoners (36 percent of the ex-felon population), and 134,219 current felons, producing a total state felony population of more than two-thirds of a million. The state was home to 215,957 black ex-felons (53 percent of the state's ex-felon population), 119,389 black ex-prisoners (55 percent of black ex-felons²³ and a remarkable 81 percent of the state's ex-prisoners²⁴), and 74,783 current black felons, producing a state total black felony population of 301,555 (55 percent of the total state felony population).

To grasp the daunting demographic and related labor market implications of these statistics and the *very racially disparate* nature and consequences of criminal justice policy/drug-war policy in Illinois, consider the following statisticsⁱ (see Tables 12 and 13):

- Illinois released roughly 38,000 ex-prisoners back to the community in each of the last three fiscal years.
- Male ex-felons make up seven percent of the adult male population in Illinois and are equivalent in number to 10 percent of the state's adult male workforce.
- Male ex-felons make up eight percent of the adult male population in the Chicago area (Cook County plus the collar counties) and are equivalent in number to 10 percent of the adult male workforce in the metropolitan area.

- Black male ex-prisoners make up 16 percent of the black adult male

populations in both Illinois and the Chicago area and are equivalent in number to nearly one quarter (24%) of the black male workforce in the Chicago area.

- Black ex-felons are equivalent in number to 42 percent of the black male workforce and 29 percent of the adult black male population in the Chicago area
- The total population of black males with a felony record (including both current and ex-felons) is equivalent to 55 percent of the black adult male population and an astonishing 80 percent of the adult black male workforce in the Chicago area.
- Black ex-felons are certainly equivalent to a much larger share of workers in the mostly low-skill

Table 10: Ex-Felons, Ex-Prisoners, Current Felons, and Total Population with a Felony Record in Illinois, 1999-2001

Year	Ex-Felons	Ex-Prisoners	Current Felons	Total Population with a Felony Record
1999	370,693	121,622	130,226	622,541
2000	386,813	131,209	134,219	652,241
2001	409,157	148,153	134,219	691,529

Source: Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2001).²⁵

i. In what follows below we conservatively assume that 85 percent of the state's ex-felons (both black and white) are male (the prison population is 94 percent black and the parole population is 90 percent male) and that (following U.S. Census data for the state) 83 percent of the state's black male adult ex-felons reside in the Chicago area. For the North Lawndale number cited below, see "Executive Summary: *Public Safety Ex-Offender Self-Sufficiency Act*" (2001), available from Chicago office of U.S. 7th District Congressman Danny K. Davis.

Part III, continued

Table 11: African-American Ex-Felons, Ex-Prisoners, Current Felons, and Population with a Felony Record, 1999-2001

Year	Black Ex-Felons	Black Ex-Prisoners	Black Current Felons	Total Black Population with a Felony Record
1999	169,981	85,642	73,000	328,623
2000	186,219	98,785	74,729	359,733
2001	215,957	119,389	74,783	410,129

Source: Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2001)

jobs for which most formerly incarcerated offenders (70 percent of state and federal prisoners in the U.S. lack even a high school degree) are qualified.

They make up a particularly large portion, very likely a preponderance of the adult male population and workforce, in a number of Chicago neighborhoods. According to Chicago Congressman Davis, citing a study by the research firm

Claritas, *fully 70 percent of men between ages 18 and 45 in the impoverished and very predominantly (90%) black North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's West Side are ex-offenders, saddled with a criminal record.*

The Return Communities: Recycling and Exacerbating Disadvantage

According to detailed release data provided to the Chicago Urban

The total population of black males with a felony record (including both current and ex-felons) is equivalent to 55 percent of the black adult male population and an astonishing 80 percent of the adult black male workforce in the Chicago area.

League by the Illinois Department of Corrections, ten Chicago zip codes (including five on the city's West Side and four on the South Side) received 25 percent of Illinois prisoners released in the years 2000, 2001, and 2002. Fifteen zip codes, *less than one-fourth of all the city's zip codes, received more than a third (35%) of statewide prison releases and more than three-fourths (76%) of prisoners released to Chicago during those years.*

Table 12: Ex-Prisoners, Ex-Felons, and Total Felony Population as a Percentage of Adult Male Population and Workforce, by Race Illinois, 2000

Correctional/Criminal Category	As % of Adult Male Population (4,417,904)	As % of Adult Male Workforce (3,208,305)	As % (black ex-offenders and/or offenders only) of Black Male Adult Population (571,100)	As % (black ex-offenders and/or offenders only) and of Black Male Adult Workforce (396,000)
Ex-Prisoners	3%	4%	16%	23%
Ex-Felons	7	10	28	40
Current Population with a Felony Record (Ex-Felons and Current Felons)	13	17	54	77

Sources: Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2001); U.S. Census; Illinois Department of Labor (2001); Chicago Urban League, Research and Planning Department.

Table 13: Ex-Prisoners, Ex-Felons, and Total Felony Population as a Percentage of Adult Male Population and Workforce, by Race, Chicago Area (Cook and Collar Counties), 2000

Correctional/ Criminal Category	% of Adult Male Population (2,841,311)	% of Adult Male Workforce (2,373,590)	% (black ex-offenders and/or offenders only) of Black Male Adult Population (460,894)	% (black ex-offenders and/or offenders only) of Black Male Adult Workforce (315,524)
Ex-Prisoners	3%	4%	16%	24%
Ex-Felons	8	10	29	42
Current Population with a Felony Record (Ex-Felons and Current Felons)	14	16	55	80

Sources: Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2001); U.S. Census; Illinois Department of Labor (2001); Chicago Urban League, Research and Planning Department.

By combining this release data with partial IDOC data on the residence (by zip-code) of current prisoners (2001), state parole and Cook County Probation data and socio-economic and labor market data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Illinois Department of Employment Security, we can determine a number of patterns:

- A preponderant majority (85.6%) of prisoners returning to Chicago are African-American (see Table 14).
- The War on Drugs figures prominently in the rising incarceration of black Chicago:
 - Of all state prisoners released to Chicago from 2000 to 2002, nearly half (48.2%) were African-

The city's ex-offender population is concentrated in neighborhoods that experience significant extreme socio-economic disadvantage, exhibiting negative or weak job growth, high unemployment, high poverty/low median incomes, and low education levels.

Americans who served time for drug offenses.

- Of all black prisoners released to Chicago during that time, 61 percent served time for narcotics offenses.

Table 14: Race and Former Drug Prisoners in Chicago

African-American percentage of prisoners released to Chicago	85.6%
Percentage of African-American prison releases to Chicago that served time for drug offenses	61.0
African-Americans as a percentage of prisoners released to Chicago after serving time for drug offenses	92.3
Blacks who served time for drug offenses as a percentage of prisoners released to Chicago	48.2

Sources: Detailed release data by zip code for Fiscal Years 2000, 2001 and 2002 provided by Illinois Department of Corrections, Department of Planning and Research, to Chicago Urban League; Chicago Urban League, Department of Research and Planning.

Table 15: The Geography of the Chicago Ex-Offender Population

"Side" of Chicago	Adults on Parole (2002)	% of Parolees	Probation (2000)	% of Probation	Prison Releases 2000-2002	% of Prison Releases
Central	163	0.95%	310	1.47%	470	1.10%
North	2096	12.19	4041	19.11	5989	13.97
South	8756	50.93	9831	46.48	19,606	45.74
West	5343	33.98	6959	32.95	16,833	39.27

Sources: Detailed release data by zip code for Fiscal Years 2000, 2001 and 2002 provided by Illinois Department of Corrections, Department of Planning and Research, to Chicago Urban League; Chicago Urban League, Department of Research and Planning; Detailed Probation Data by zip code provided by Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS); IDOC Parole Data for February 22, 2002.

Table 16: Prison Inmates as a Percentage (Relocated) of Total Adult Population and Total Population, 2001

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Areas	IDOC Estimated Adult Inmates 2001	Estimated Male Inmates 2001	% of Adult Male Population Incarcerated 2001	% of Community in Prison 2001
60624	Garfield Park (West Side)	1867	1755	13.8%	4.1%
60644	Austin (West Side)	1842	1731	10.2	3.1
	Division Street (West Side)	1805	1697	7.5	2.3
60612	Midwest (West Side)	1328	1249	10.4	3.5
60623	Hawthorne (West Side)	1318	1239	3.6	1.2
60621	Englewood (South Side)	1030	968	7.5	2.2
60628	Roseland (South Side)	998	938	3.5	1.1
60636	Odgen Park (South Side)	987	927	6.3	1.9
60609	Stock Yards (South Side)	947	890	3.7	1.2
60620	Auburn Park (South Side)	877	824	3.1	1.0
60615	Hyde Park (South Side)	863	812	5.0	1.9
60608	Pilsen (South Side)	855	804	2.1	0.9
	Jackson Park (South Side)	715	672	3.9	1.3
	Grand Crossing (South Side)	675	634	2.7	0.9
	Logan Square (North Side)	660	620	1.7	0.7

Sources: IDOC, partial detailed data on current (2001) prisoners' zip code of origin; U.S. Census (2000).

Table 17: Top Fifteen Zip Codes for Prison Releases (2000-2002)

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Area*	Number of Prison Releases 2000-2002
60624	Garfield Park (West side)	3929
60651	Division Street (West Side)	3746
60644	Austin (West Side)	3574
60612	Midwest (West Side)	2583
60623	Hawthorne (West Side)	2420
Total top 5		16,252
	= 17% of all state prison releases and 37% of all city prison releases	
60621	Englewood (South Side)	2226
60628	Roseland (South Side)	2155
60636	Ogden Park (South Side)	2134
60620	Auburn Park (South Side)	1704
60605	Downtown Station (Central)	1694
60609	Stockyards (South Side)	1476
60637	Jackson Park (South Side)	1408
60608	Pilsen (South Side)	1350
60647	Logan Square (North Side)	1356
60619	Grand Crossing (South Side)	1322
Total top 15		33,007
	= 35% of all state releases and 76% of city prison releases	

* Not at all identical with the same as community areas/neighborhoods

Sources: Detailed prison release data from Illinois Department of Corrections, 2002.

Forty-two percent of all prisoners released to Chicago returned to zip codes that are more than 90 percent black. Fifty-five percent returned to zip codes that are more than 70 percent black and 70 percent returned to communities that are more proportionately African-American than the city as a whole.

- Of all prisoners released to Chicago after serving sentences for drug offenses, 92 percent were black (see Table 14).

• Released prisoners are returning to the same communities from which they came prior to incarceration. Indeed, the city's top 15 zip codes are very nearly (and in nearly the same exact order) identical to the top 15 zip codes for prison population (see Tables 16 and 17).

• The preponderant majority of the city's released prisoner, probation, and parole populations returned to the city's mostly black South and West Sides and are especially concentrated in some of the most disproportionately black sections of Chicago, one of the nation's most racially segregated cities²⁶ (see Table 15). Forty-two percent of all prisoners released to Chicago return to zip codes that are more than 90 percent black. Fifty-five percent return to zip codes that are more than 70 percent black and 70 percent returned to communities that are more proportionately African-American than the city as a whole.

• The city's ex-offender population is concentrated in neighborhoods that experience extreme socio-economic disadvantage, exhibiting negative or weak job growth, high unemployment, high poverty/low median incomes, and low education levels. For example:

- The top 15 zip codes for both probation (2000) and parole (2002) include nine of the city's top 15 zip codes for poverty.

Part III, continued

Table 18: Top Fifteen Zip Codes for Parole (2002)

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Area	Adult Parolees
60644	Austin (West Side)	1329
60615	Hyde Park (South Side)	1573
60624	Garfield Park (West side)	1288
60644	Austin (West Side)	1236
60651	Division Street (West Side)	1216
60623	Hawthorne (West Side)	858
60636	Ogden Park (South Side)	799
60621	Englewood (South Side)	731
60628	Roseland (South Side)	728
60620	Auburn Park (South Side)	650
60612	Midwest (West Side)	607
60637	Jackson Park (South Side)	524
60609	Stockyards (South Side)	506
60619	Grand Crossing (South Side)	506
60649	South Shore (South Side)	506
60617	South Chicago (South Side)	473
Total		12,201
		= 71% of Chicago parolees and 38% of Illinois parolees

Source: Detailed parole data from IDOC

The top 15 zip codes for prison releases (2000-2002) contain 10 of the city's top 15 zip codes for poverty, 11 of the top 15 zip codes for unemployment, 10 of the lowest 15 zip codes for median income, and 10 of the lowest zip codes for possession of a high school degree. Each of the top seven prison release zip-codes lost jobs (as measured by

IDES) between 1991 and 2000 and 12 of the top 15 prison release zip codes had double-digit unemployment rates in 2000.

On the whole, the top 15 prison release zip codes' combined average poverty (28.5) unemployment (16.9), and under-education (36 percent of adults without a high school degree) rates are

considerably higher than those of the city as a whole; median income and job growth numbers are well below average.

Just five zip codes on Chicago's West Side alone accounted for more than a third (37%) of the city's prison releases and 17 percent of the state's prison releases during the years 2000-2002.

- Zip code 60624, a 98 percent black area that includes parts of North Lawndale, Garfield Park and other highly disadvantaged neighborhoods on the West Side, is the city's leading zip code for prison releases, the leading zip code for current prisoners in 2001, the second leading zip code for parole, and the third leading zip code for probation in 2000. The area covered by this postal designation lost 1,851 jobs covered by Unemployment Insurance during the heralded Clinton economic boom of 1991-2000. Its unemployment rate in 2000 was 24 percent, more than 14 points higher than the city average, and the fourth highest rate in Chicago. Nearly 40 percent of its residents lived in poverty in 2000, twice the city's average and the third highest rate in the city. The area's median income was \$22,446, more than \$16,000 below the city average. More than 40 percent of its adult residents lacked a high school degree, making it one of the seven most under-educated zip codes in Chicago (see Table 21).

Also worth considering in trying to grasp the dire labor market circumstances from which prisoners come

Table 19: Chicago's Top Fifteen Zip Codes for Probation Population (2000)

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Area	Probation Population
60644	Austin (West Side)	1329
60651	Division Street (West Side)	1316
60624	Garfield Park (West Side)	1286
60623	Hawthorne (West Side)	1167
60628	Roseland (South Side)	1013
60609	Stock Yards (South Side)	943
60636	Ogden Park (South Side)	884
60620	Auburn Park (South Side)	819
60621	Englewood (South Side)	759
60619	Grand Crossing (South Side)	663
60617	South Chicago (South Side)	669
60629	Chicago Lawn (South Side)	664
60608	Pilsen (South Side)	636
60612	Midwest (West Side)	629
60637	Jackson Park (South Side)	626
Total		13,373
	= 67% of city population of adult probationers	

Source: Detailed probation data by zip code (2000) from Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety

and to which ex-prisoners return in Chicago are the recent findings of the Alternative Schools Network and the Center for Labor Market Studies. Using previously unpublished data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Center determined that more than 86,000 (20%) of Chicago's 16- to 24-year olds were out of both school and the job market at the conclusion of the

1990s. Employment prospects were especially poor for the city's black high school dropouts, three-fourths of whom were jobless in 1999 – a matter of no small concern in a city where 40 percent of first-time ninth-graders drop out within four years from predominantly black and Hispanic public high schools.

These and other statistics from the city and its leading return communi-

ties provide some useful context for understanding the high and racially disparate recidivism rates that plague Illinois: 44 percent of the state's released prisoners and nearly half (48%) of released black prisoners return to prison within three years in Illinois.²⁷ They also help explain a key finding that emerged from a series of ex-offender interviews and focus groups recently conducted by the Chicago Urban League. The League found a surprisingly strong sense among many ex-offenders that prison had provided an initially welcome time-out from the insecurities of life on "the outside."²⁷

The state and the city's rising, racially disparate, and returning (all-too-temporarily) army of ex-offenders is being dumped back into the very communities from which it came – the same ones that offer the least in terms of social and economic resources to encourage and enable successful reintegration.²⁸

With little education, few marketable work and other life skills, and earnings capacities damaged by criminal records and prison histories (see part V page 32), these ex-offenders are themselves part of the problem in the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The cumulatively rising ubiquity of the felon and ex-felon army in a small number of heavily disadvantaged neighborhoods deepens the city's persistent poverty-concentrating hyper-segregation by race and class, exacerbating the very conditions that give rise to criminal behavior and make meaningful reintegration difficult.

Part III, continued

Table 20: Social and Economic Factors in Chicago's Top 15 Parole Zip Codes, 2002

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Areas	Job Growth 1991-2000	Job Growth Rank (out of 52)	% Unemployed 2000	% Unemployed Rank (out of 51)	% Black 2000
60615	Hyde Park	-1368	35	10.3%	21%	68%
60624	Garfield Park	-1851	38	23.7	4	98
60644	Austin	-862	32	20.0	6	95
60651		-2401	46	18.0	7	71
60623	Hawthorne	-1020	34	15.4	11	35
60636	Odgen Park	739	16	24.4	3	98
60621	Englewood	-68	26	25.2	2	98
60628	Roseland	-581	29	16.4	9	95
60620	Auburn Park	1561	13	15.4	12	96
60612	Midwest	-1736	37	23.0	5	
60637	Jackson Park	2098	10	17.4	8	82
60609	Stock Yards	1979	11	15.04	13	39
60619	Grand Crossing	-1927	40	13.6	16	98
	South Shore	-655	30	14.8	14	97
	South Chicago	-979	33	13.7	15	55
Top 15 Average		-471		17.8		79
Chicago Average		439		10.1		

Sources: Detailed Parole Data from IDOC (2002); U.S. Census Redistricting Data (2001); U.S. Census SF 3 socioeconomic data (2002); Illinois Department of Employment Security, Where Workers Work (2001).

% Black Rank (out of 51)	Median Income 2000	Median Income Rank (out of 51)	% Poverty 2000	Poverty Rank (out of 51)	% Less than High School 2000	Less than High School Rank (out of 51)
13%	31571	38	23%	16	16%	39
3	22426	49	38	3	41	7
8	26930	45	30	9	39	8
12	32622	36	27	13	39	9
19	28203	41	31	7	56	1
5	27727	43	31	8	36	14
1	19718	50	42	2	39	10
9	38210	29	21	20	27	20
7	36334	31	19	23	25	23
14	25143	47	36	5	39	11
10	23228	48	38	4	27	19
17	25705	46	36	9	49	4
2	33631	35	18	24	22	27
6	27699	44	26	14	21	31
15	35534	32	21	21	22	28
	28979		29		33	
	38625		20		28	

Part III, continued

Table 21: Social and Economic Factors in Chicago Top 15 Prison Release Zip Codes 2000, 2001, and 2002

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Areas	Job Growth 1991-2000	Job Growth Rank (out of 52)	% Unemployed 2000	% Unemployed Rank (out of 51)	% Black 2000
60624	Garfield Park	-1851	38	23.7%	4%	98%
60651	Division Street	-2401	46	18.0	7	71
60644	Austin	-862	32	20.0	6	95
60612	Midwest	-1736	37	23.0	5	66
60623	Hawthorne	-1020	34	15.4	11	35
60628	Roseland	-581	29	16.5	9	95
60621	Englewood	-68	26	25.2	2	98
60636	Ogden Park	739	16	24.4	3	98
60620	Auburn Park	1561	13	15.4	12	96
60605	Downtown Station	3581	7	5.2	38	32
60609	Stock Yards	1979	11	15.4	13	39
60637	Jackson Park	2098	10	17.4	8	82
60608	Pilsen	293	22	11.2	19	19
60647	Logan Square	2332	9	8.7	26	7
60619	Grand Crossing	-1927	40	13.6	16	98
Top 15 Average		142		16.9		68
Chicago Average		439		10.1		37

Sources: Detailed prison release (2000-2002) data from IDOC (2002); U.S. Census Redistricting Data (2001); US Census SF 3 socioeconomic data (2002); Illinois Department of Employment Security, Where Workers Work (2001).

% Black Rank (out of 51)	Median Income 2000	Median Income Rank (out of 51)	% Poverty 2000	Poverty Rank (out of 51)	% Less than High School 2000	Less than High School Rank (out of 51)
3%	22426	49	38%	3	41%	7
12	32622	36	27	13	39	9
8	26930	45	30	9	39	8
14	25143	47	36	5	39	11
19	28203	41	31	7	56	1
9	38210	29	21	20	27	20
1	19718	50	42	2	39	10
5	27727	43	31	8	36	14
7	36334	31	19	23	25	23
21	56151	8	15	27	9	44
17	25705	46	36	9	49	4
10	23228	48	38	4	27	19
28	28026	42	28	11	52	2
36	35283	33	22	17	43	6
2	33631	35	18	24	22	27
	30622		29		36	
	38625		20		28	

Part III,

Table 22: Social and Economic Factors in Chicago's Top 15 Probation Zip Codes, 2000

Chicago Zip Codes	Chicago Postal Areas	Job Growth 1991-2000	Job Growth Rank (out of 52)	% Unemployed 2000	% Unemployed Rank (out of 51)	% Black 2000
60644	Austin	-862	32	20.0%	6%	95%
60651	Division Street	-2401	46	18.0	7	71
60624	Garfield Park	-1851	38	23.7	4	98
60623	Hawthorne	-1020	34	15.4	11	35
60628	Roseland	-581	29	16.5	9	95
60609	Stock Yards	1979	11	15.4	13	39
60636	Ogden Park	739	16	24.4	3	98
60620	Auburn Park	1561	13	15.4	12	96
60621	Englewood	-68	26	25.2	2	98
60619	Grand Crossing	-1927	40	13.6	16	98
60617	South Chicago	-979	33	13.7	15	55
60629	Chicago Lawn	-2238	42	11.5	18	26
60608	Pilsen	293	22	11.2	19	19
60612	Midwest	-1736	37	23.0	5	66
60637	Jackson Park	2098	10	17.4	8	82
Top 15 Average		-466		17.6		71
Chicago Average		439		10.1		37

Sources: Detailed probation data by zip code (2000) from Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety; IDOC (2002); U.S. Census Redistricting Data (2001); U.S. Census SF 3 socioeconomic data (2002); Illinois Department of Employment Security, Where Workers Work (2001).

% Black Rank (out of 51)	Median Income 2000	Median Income Rank (out of 51)	% Poverty 2000	Poverty Rank (out of 51)	% Less than High School 2000	Less than High School Rank (out of 51)
8%	26930	45	30%	9	39%	8
12	32622	36	27	13	39	9
3	22426	49	38	3	41	7
19	28203	41	31	7	56	1
9	38210	29	21	20	27	20
17	25705	46	36	9	49	4
5	27727	43	31	8	36	14
7	36334	31	19	23	25	23
1	19718	50	42	2	39	10
2	33631	35	18	24	22	27
15	35534	32	21	21	22	28
24	40279	25	15	30	37	12
28	28026	42	28	11	52	2
14	25143	47	36	5	39	11
10	23228	48	38	4	27	19
	29581		29		37	
	38625		20		28	

Racial Reparations in Reverse? The Color and Geography of Prison Growth

"A Massive Transfer of Value": The Color of Correctional Keynesianism

The impact of the hyper-criminalized population of black males (and an increasing share of black females) is rather different, however, in the downstate prison towns where Illinois warehouses its mainly Chicago-based urban felons. There mass incarceration is a source of stability and security²⁹ rather than chaos. The prison construction boom – fed by the rising "market" of black offenders – is an extraordinary source of jobs, tax dollars, and associated local economic multipliers for "down" (Illinois) or "up" (New York and Michigan) state prison-hosting communities, which are generally removed from urban areas where minority populations are concentrated.³⁰ Not surprisingly, these communities, themselves often gravely challenged by the de-industrializing and (family-) farm-destroying gales of modern market forces, have become part of a prison-industrial lobby that presses for harsher sentences and tougher laws, seeking to protect and expand their economic base even as crime rates continue to fall.

And they do so with good reason. As sociologist David Ladipo argues, the prison building boom serves as "a latter-day Keynesian infrastructural investment program for [often] blight-struck communities [that has] been phenomenally successful in terms of creating relatively secure, decent paid, and often unionized jobs." Moreover, this new correctional Keynesianism deftly employs law and order rhetoric to not only bolster lagging rural economies but also reallocate and redistribute the state's limited public resources in racially biased ways.³¹ According to distinguished criminologist Todd Clear, the "economic relocation of resources" from black to white communities that results from racial and related

geographic disparities in mass incarceration are considerable:³²

Each prisoner *represents an economic asset that has been removed from that community and placed elsewhere* [emphasis added]. As an economic being, the person would spend money at or near his or her area of residence — typically, an inner city. Imprisonment displaces that economic activity: Instead of buying snacks in a local deli, the prisoner makes those purchases in a prison commissary. The removal may represent a loss of economic value to the home community, but it is a boon to the prison community. Each prisoner represents as much as \$25,000 in income for the community in which the prison is

located, not to mention the value of constructing the prison facility in the first place. This can be a *massive transfer of value*: A young male worth a few thousand dollars of support to children and local purchases is transformed into a \$25,000 financial asset to a rural prison community. The economy of the rural community is artificially amplified, the local city economy artificially deflated.

According to the Chicago-based *Wall Street Journal* reporter Joseph T. Hallinan, "by building so many prisons so fast," American society has "created a climate in which it is now in nearly everyone's interest to argue for prison terms that are longer, tougher, harsher. Because only through longer, tougher, harsher terms can the prison boom perpetuate itself. And self-perpetuation is where the money is." Of special concern: the growing section of America's powerful corporate sector that increasingly relies for profits on the construction, supplying, maintenance, and even management and ownership of prisons.

It's a disturbing picture, full of unsettling parallels and living links to chattel slavery: young black men being involuntarily removed as "economic assets" from black communities to distant rural destinations where they are kept under lock and key by white-majority overseers. It is difficult to imagine a more pathetic denouement to

This new correctional Keynesianism deftly employs law and order rhetoric to not only bolster lagging rural economies but also reallocate and redistribute the state's limited public resources in racially biased ways.

America's long, interwoven narratives of class and racial privilege.³³

Beyond the jobs and related economic development they provide to prison towns, inner-city prisoners also draw considerable federal dollars, census count, and voting clout away from major cities, with negative consequences for inner city black neighborhoods. Here, perhaps, an unpleasant analogy might be drawn to the notorious three-fifths clause of the U.S. Constitution, whereby three-fifths of the ante-bellum South's non-voting and un-free black population counted towards the congressional representation of Slave states.

Generally quite poor, prisoners deflate the income profiles of downstate communities, making prison towns eligible for poverty-directed public dollars. The prisoners do not benefit, however, from the rural roads, schools, and bridges built with federal funds and the enhanced political influence exercised in downstate areas.

To complete the advantageous deal for prison communities, prisoners put relatively minimal strain on local infrastructure beyond occasional trips to court and the use of prison shower and toilet facilities. It is not surprising, then, that prison-hosting rural districts have become part of a prison-industrial lobby that presses for harsher sentences and tougher laws.

"Towns Put Dreams in Prisons": Prisons as "A Force as Much for Economic Development as for Public Safety"

A recent *Chicago Tribune* story, bearing the curious title "Towns Put Dreams in Prisons," is consistent with Clear's analysis. In downstate Hoopeston, Illinois, the *Tribune* reported, there is "talk of the mothballed canneries that once made this a boom town and whether any of that bustling spirit might return if the Illinois Department of Corrections comes to town." "You don't like to think about incarceration," Hoopeston's Mayor told the *Tribune*, "but this is an opportunity for Hoopeston. We've been plagued by plant closings." The Mayor's willingness to enter the "prison sweepstakes" was replicated by another small town mayor, Andy Hutchens of Ina, Illinois. In a passage that reminds us to include diversion of tax revenue among the ways that racially disparate mass incarceration transfers wealth from urban areas and the inner city to rural areas, the *Tribune* reported that:

Before [Ina's] prison was built, the city took in just \$17,000 a year in motor fuel tax revenue. Now the figure is more like \$72,000. Last year's municipal budget appropriation was \$380,000. More than half of that money is prison revenue. Streets that were paved in chipped gravel and oil for generations soon will all be covered in asphalt. And \$850,000 community center that doubles as a gym and computer lab for the school across the street is being paid for with prison money, Hutchens said. Because state and federal tax revenue is figured per capita, a prison population that puts no strains on village services is a permanent windfall for a little town such as Ina, Hutchens said.

"It really figures out this way," Hutchens told the *Tribune*. "This little town of 450 people is getting the tax money of a town of 2,700," Hutchens said, and then added with a grin, "And those people in that prison can't vote me out of office [emphasis added]."

The extent of some downstate' communities' dependence on relatively good-paying jobs in state prisons was made clear last Winter, when Illinois Governor George Ryan announced the impending closure of the Vienna Correctional Center, home to more than 1,200 black inmates in the southern tip of the state. A page-one *Tribune* article reported on resulting local union protests, noting that "at a time when other industry in Illinois' southern end is weak, Vienna and

Table 23: Adult Correctional Facilities Prisons and Prison Towns in Illinois

Adult Correctional Facility (Date Constructed)	Town	Distance from Chicago (Miles)	Number of Inmates (2001)	Black % of Inmates*** (2001)	Hispanic % of Inmates*** (2001)	White % of Prison Town Population*** (2000)
Joliet (1858)	Joliet	38.6	1213	68%	9%	69%
Pontiac (1871)*	Pontiac	96.5	1584	64	11	85
		355.7	3155	67	9	95
		243.2		70	13	
	ight			64	11	54
Vienna (1965)	Vienna	342	1372	68	10	98
				65	12	95
					10	
		247.3				97
					17	87
		232.9	1546	63	13	90
			1052			95
			1945		11	98
					13	72
					10	
Illinois River (1989)*	Canton	191.6	2173	64	13	
		243.1	2051	66	13	99
			1190	53	14	
		243.4	1195			
				50	8	51
	East St. Louis	289.9			7	1†
	Tamms	361.7	467	62	22	75
			1954	67	11	71
					7	86
			97			
			94			

**May use prison population in reported Census count (Institutionalized Population between 15-35% of Total City Population)

***Telephone communication with Brian Fairchild, Public Information Officer for IDOC, August 2001; †98% black

Sources: Illinois Department of Corrections (2001); U.S. Census.

other prisons dotting the farm fields are considered a force as much for economic development as for public safety." As coal mines closed during the 1970s, the paper reported, displaced workers turned to the Vienna and later the Shawnee correctional facilities for jobs. Further:³⁴

When their children graduated from high school, parents encouraged them to start a career in what appeared to be a dependable industry. "That was the only thing going on when I was coming up, that and the mines and the rock quarries," said Larry Flynn, who went to work at Vienna in 1985. "It ain't bad work and there are good benefits, if you can handle the stress." The pay is good too. A correctional officer can make about \$40,000 a year, not bad in a place where new homes sell for less than \$100,000... Over time, the local economy has grown up around the prison like a vine.

By applying Todd Clear's estimate of the average annual value added by one prisoner to a town hosting an incarceration facility, we conservatively (without factoring in either inflation or diverted public funds) estimate that African-American prisoners from just Cook County created more than half a billion dollars worth of economic development for downstate communities in 2001.

This is roughly equivalent to the current total wage and salary income (minus benefits) of the state's 13,424 prison employees. With an average annual salary of \$42,000 (Illinois Department of Corrections Budget Office, September 18, 2002), those

"It really figures out this way," Andy Hutchens, Mayor of Ina, Illinois, told the *Tribune*. "This little town of 450 people is getting the tax money of a town of 2,700," Hutchens said, and then added with a grin, "And those people in that prison can't vote me out of office."

employees earn a collective annual income of \$563,808,000. On average, each of the state's 51 correctional facilities (including also adult transitional centers, boot camps, and juvenile prisons) contributes an average of more than \$11 million of wage and salary income annually to the communities in which they are located. However, in the communities hosting the state's leading adult prisons, the local prison wage dividend and related economic multiplier are certainly much greater than the average.³⁵

Nowhere in the two stories cited above did the *Tribune* mention the race of either the keepers or the kept in these downstate communities.³⁶ Eighteen of the twenty adult correctional facilities constructed over the last two decades in Illinois are located in counties that are disproportionately white. Just four of the state's twenty new (post-1980) prison towns have black municipal populations above the state-average, but it appears that in three of these cases the black population exceeds the average only because they report prisoners as part

of their population. Visitors to such very visibly white downstate towns as Ina, Illinois (home of the Big Muddy Correctional Center), would be surprised to learn from the Census Bureau that the community is 42 percent African-American and 90 percent male. The explanation, of course, is mass incarceration (see Table 23).

Contrary to the Department of Corrections' declared mission of "assisting in" prisoners' post-release "reintegration to the community," Illinois prisons are being built over time at increasing distance from prisoners' point of origin. The state's very disproportionately black and Chicago-based inmates are being further and further removed from family, community networks, and support services that are vital to their successful reintegration into their communities of origin. Consistent with the notion that prison construction has become a job-creation strategy for areas hit by de-industrialization and farm failure, moreover, five of the six adult correctional centers constructed in the 1990s are located in the southern third of Illinois, where the average ratio of unskilled job seekers to available unskilled jobs (as estimated by the Midwest Job Gap Project) was the state's highest in that decade.³⁷

Labor Market Consequences for Ex-Offenders

Wage, Life-Earnings, and Occupational Penalty

The story of mass incarceration's role in transferring wealth out of urban and black communities is incomplete without factoring in the negative impact a prison record has on future earnings and employment. While mass imprisonment produces jobs and economic/community development for one section of the population, it at the same time exacerbates the already considerable labor-market difficulties of another section of the population.

Researchers and advocates tracking the impact of mass incarceration have identified a number of devastating consequences in high-poverty black communities. The most well known form of this so-called "collateral damage in the war on drugs" is the widespread political disenfranchisement of felons and ex-felons. But the economic effects are equally significant.

African-Americans are disproportionately and often deeply disadvantaged in competitive job markets by low skills, poor schools, weakened family structures, racial discrimination in hiring and promotion, and geographic isolation from the leading sectors of job growth. When felony records and prison histories are thrown into that mixture, the labor market consequences are often disastrous.

Thus, it is not uncommon to hear academic researchers and service providers cite unemployment rates as high as 50 percent for people with records. One study, based in California during the early 1990s found that just 21 percent of that state's parolees were working full time. In a detailed study, Karen

Needels found that less than 40 percent of 1176 men released from Georgia's prison system in 1976 had any officially recorded earnings in each year from 1983 to 1991.³⁸

These findings are consistent with numerous experimental studies suggesting that the employment prospects of job applicants with criminal records are considerably worse than the chances of persons who have never been convicted or imprisoned. They are also consistent with the testimony provided by job placement professionals who deal with ex-offenders. And even if the ex-offender is able to find employment, discrimination appears to continue. According to the *New York Times* in the fall of 2000, "even when paroled inmates are able to find jobs, they earn only half as much as people of the same social and economic background who have not been incarcerated."³⁹

The findings of scholars engaged in the difficult task of isolating the autonomous causative impact of criminal justice interventions and imprisonment are more than

suggestive of the penal system's negative effect on ex-offenders' earnings and labor market attachments. In the most widely cited study in the growing literature on the labor market consequences of criminal justice policies, Harvard economist Richard Freeman used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to investigate how criminal histories relate to employment outcomes. Limiting his sample to out-of-school men and controlling for numerous variables (drug usage, education, region, and age) that might bias upward the link between criminal records and weak labor market attachment, Freeman found that those who had been in jail or on probation in 1980 had a 19 percent higher chance of being unemployed in 1988 than those with no involvement in the criminal justice system. He also found that prison records reduced the amount of time employed after release by 25 to 30 percent.⁴⁰

Princeton sociologist Bruce Western has mined NLSY data to show that incarceration has "large and enduring effects on the job-prospects of ex-convicts." He finds that the negative labor market effects of youth incarceration can last for more than a decade and that adult incarceration reduces paid employment by 5 to 10 weeks annually.

By the best recent social-science estimates, *incarceration carries a significant 10 to 20 percent "wage penalty."* Especially disturbing, ex-prisoners

on average experience no real wage increases in their twenties and thirties, when young men who have never been incarcerated tend to experience rapid wage-growth. Consistent with these findings, Pager (2001) has recently found that:

prison time serves to channel individuals away from skilled occupations and into job sectors which are characterized by low wages, limited job stability, and fewer opportunities for advancement... those who have spent time in prison are severely handicapped in their ability to capitalize on prior work experience with respect to current employment opportunities. In most cases, the advantage of prior occupation-specific work-experience is reduced by one half if not entirely eliminated... Overall, incarceration appears to disrupt the career-building process such that prior work experience contributes little to future opportunities. Ex-offenders are left to start back at square one with respect to gaining a foothold in a particular occupation.

Incarceration most particularly closes off employment avenues for ex-offenders in the public sector, where employers are now most concerned about an applicant's criminal record. "The effect of prior incarceration on the likelihood of securing government employment," Pager notes, "is dramatic," corresponding to a 61 percent reduction in the odds of holding a government job after a stay in prison.⁴¹

"I lied today and said I wasn't incarcerated. You have to. People who have been incarcerated have a lot of trouble with jobs. They still look at the association with drugs, even if the person is clean. And if something happens at work, the person who was incarcerated gets blamed for it."

45-year old resident of Grace House, a transitional residential home for women coming out of prison on Chicago's West Side, speaking to *Streetwise* magazine in 1998

Barriers to Ex-Offender Employment

It is no simple matter to determine the precise degree of mass incarceration's labor market effect. The difficulty arises from the fact that, as three leading experts on this topic note, incarceration "may simply be officially earmarking severely disadvantaged men who would otherwise have poor job prospects." In Illinois as throughout the nation, "incarceration rates have reached astonishing levels at the margins of the labor market among men whose employment prospects are extremely poor even in the absence of incarceration."⁴²

Scholars have theorized about but can provide few definitive proofs of the relative quantitative significance of a number of causal mechanisms explaining incarceration's negative labor market consequences:⁴³

- The stigma of criminal conviction, seen especially in employers'

negative perception of ex-offenders as untrustworthy and/or dangerous, and reinforced by employers' fear of negligent hiring lawsuits.

- The deterioration of ex-offenders' individual human capital, including the erosion of job skills during incarceration and the exacerbation of pre-existing mental or physical illness.
- The loss of social capital as prisoners are removed yet further from the personal connections that match workers to employers and become more enmeshed in social networks that promote criminality. As Bruce Western notes, prison promotes precisely this form of social alienation: "the increasingly violent and overcrowded state of prisons and jails is likely to produce certain attitudes, mannerisms, and behavioral practices that 'on the inside' function to enhance survival but are not compatible with success in the conventional job market." The alternately aggressive and sullen posture that prevails behind bars is deadly in a job market where entry-level occupations increasingly demand "soft" skills related to selling and customer service.
- The punctuating effect of incarceration on the life course, disrupting the "normal" processes involved in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, when most workers are rapidly developing the individual and social capital necessary to produce strong and stable earnings in the rest of their working lives.

Part V, continued

• **Agglomeration effects**": the sheer volume of ex-offenders moving in and out of a relatively small number of heavily impoverished neighborhoods floods the unskilled labor markets in those communities, augmenting their supply of disadvantaged workers, weakening relevant social networks. Such trends may affect employers' locational decisions and thereby reduce employment opportunities for ex-offenders.

Beyond the dense complexity of the academic discussion, however, we can clearly identify several basic things regarding the labor difficulties encountered by ex-offenders. *First*, especially during periods of weak labor demand, employer bias against ex-offender job applicants is very real – no small matter given the employers' rather pivotal labor market role. Based on interviews with 3,000 employers by the Multi City Study of Urban Inequality, sociologist Harry Holzer finds that *more than 60 percent* of employers would not knowingly hire an ex-offender.

By comparison, *92 percent* of those employers would likely hire a *current or former welfare recipient* and *83 percent* would hire someone who had been unemployed for a year.⁴⁴

In an attempt to show what employers do as opposed to what they say regarding ex-offender job applicants, sociologist Devah Pager recently conducted an elaborate matched-pair testing audit in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, sending two teams of testers (one white and one black) out to apply for unskilled positions advertised in newspapers and the

"Employers will ask all these questions. They'll call and ask me: 'do you think he'll come in here and shoot the place up.' And that's ridiculous because he didn't go to prison for shooting. A person should be able to move into the market as long as the crime isn't related to the job... society is hypocritical. They say you're paying your debt in prison, but the debt doesn't even really start until you get out."

David Davis, ex-prisoner and assistant program director of St. Leonard's House, a housing complex for male ex-prisoners, speaking to *Streetwise*, 1998

state's on-line job database. Three hundred and fifty employers were tested. For white applicants, the possession of a prison record reduced the likelihood of being called back by a prospective employer by a ratio of two to one. Among black testers, the mark of a prison record reduced that likelihood by nearly three to one.⁴⁵

Many employers routinely conduct criminal background checks in numerous sectors, including banking, security, financial services, law, education, and health care. And while such checks are not particularly new, employers' capacity for performing them has been immeasurably enhanced in recent years by modern computer technology and the Internet. As a result, misleading or false information on a job application – which ex-felons might consider as the only route to employment – is much more likely to be caught than

in previous decades, prior to the advent of massive and easily accessible databases.

Second, ex-offenders face a daunting number of personal employment barriers, including work experience deficiencies, low education and skill levels, unstable family situations, histories of substance and physical abuse, and physical and mental health problems.

Third, ex-offenders face a number of *systemic* employment barriers beyond those posed by employer bias. "Throughout Illinois," reports The Ex-Offender Employability Task Force of the Illinois Workforce Investment Board, "ex-offenders are:

- barred from full access to public aid, food stamps, public/affordable housing, SSI, student financial aid
- discharged [from prison] without the identification papers/cards they need to access services and employment
- mandated to fulfill child support requirements shortly after release
- faced with widespread employer bias against hiring"

Many ex-offenders are also:

- faced with a chronic shortage of jobs, especially livable wage jobs, in the highly segregated, poverty-concentrated neighborhoods to which they are released; they are also disadvantaged by a lack of adequate transportation resources to reach job-rich communities
- banned or severely restricted from employment in a large number of professions, job categories,

and fields by professional licensing statutes, rules, and practices which discriminate against potential employees with felony records. Illinois along with other states has maintained restrictions on the issuance of licensure for occupations requiring state certification. According to a study conducted by the DePaul Law School in 2000, of the then 98 occupations requiring state licensure, 57 placed stipulations and/or restrictions for licensure on applicants with a criminal record, including in some cases even misdemeanors. Many of these 57 occupations can provide access to good-paying jobs and to lucrative self-employment opportunities.

- closed off by law and practice from a large number of jobs in the public sector. There has in recent years been a significant increase in the number of government agencies that have instituted highly restrictive hiring policies based on prior drug offenses on the state, county and city levels in Illinois. This has even led to the dismissal of incumbent workers, as recently occurred in the Chicago Park District.

Fourth, despite mounting evidence that education, drug rehabilitation, and employment are the keys to reducing recidivism, public policy and practice has been moving away from approaches that promote such goals. It has moved away from rehabilitation and meaningful commitment to effective re-entry policies to match the massive quantity of ex-offenders being released.

In Illinois as throughout the nation, ex-offenders' chances for successful reintegration are worsened by the de-legitimization of rehabilitation that has accompanied the rise of mass incarceration. Under the now dominant penal paradigm of literal "incapacitation," the percentage of inmates enrolled in drug treatment, job-training, or educational programs has been in steep decline since the 1980s. According to the Institute on Crime, Justice, and Corrections, just 9 percent of prisoners are currently engaged in full-time job-training or education activities. Numerous states have eliminated inmates' right to take college extension courses and Congress has repealed prisoners' right to receive Pell grants to pay for college tuition. As an inmate recently told the *New York Times*: "It says 'Department of Corrections, but there was no corrections.'" ⁴⁶

"What is so puzzling," notes Jeremy Travis, former head of the National Institute for Justice at the U.S. Justice Department, "is that at the same time that we have the prison buildup, we have decreased the attention we pay to the process of repatriation... We don't fund parole... 'Good time' has gone away. Most states spend most of their time building prisons, not services needed. Drug treatment is declining... and on the back end we have an increase in probation cases to deal with [ex-prisoners]."

Echoing Travis' concern about insufficient parole resources, the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority recently reported that "security and inmate control" have overtaken

"inmate rehabilitation" as the main concern of Illinois' increasingly crowded penal system. In February 1999, the ICJIA noted, *just 193 parole agents were charged with supervising more than 30,000 offenders on mandatory supervised release in Illinois – a daunting ratio of 160 parolees per parole officer*. The number of officers was subsequently expanded, but the main consequence seems to have been an increase of offenders caught violating the terms of their release and sent back to prison. Illinois has made relatively little investment in programs shown to be successful, such as education, drug counseling, and job-training in prison. ⁴⁷ The State, as a first response to a budget deficit, actually de-funded all prison higher education and decreased support of vocational training during the last fiscal year.

Fifth, America's massive army of ex-prisoners is being released to the communities that can least afford to help them. It is hard not to conclude that the very disproportionately minority composition and related economically disadvantaged nature of those communities contribute significantly to the relative invisibility of the ex-offender issue in the U.S. ⁴⁸

Sixth, many of the formal barriers to ex-offender employment are inappropriate and unfair. To be sure, certain hiring restrictions on people with certain criminal histories are fitting. But indiscriminate bans or restrictions on hiring people with petty drug and other offenses are beyond the pale of reasonable social policy and the American ideal of equal opportunity. ⁴⁹

Part V, continued

Seventh, since incarceration rates are especially high among those with the least power in the labor market – young and unskilled minority, particularly African-American, men – U.S. incarceration significantly exacerbates racial inequality. Racially disparate mass incarceration means that imprisonment's negative labor market effects will disproportionately affect blacks. "The relative rates of incarceration are so heavily skewed towards blacks," notes Devah Pager, that "any effect, however small, will have substantial consequences for racial disparities." Since blacks have long been disproportionately reliant on government employment, moreover, the public sector's special sensitivity to criminal records in hiring is particularly deleterious in its impact on the African-American community.

Reviewing the negative labor market consequences of mass incarceration – including its artificial suppression of the true black male unemployment rate, which stood at 39 percent in the mid-1990s when prisoners were factored in (which they are not in government calculations) – Bruce Western has recently concluded that:⁵⁰

The penal system has a pervasive influence on the life chances of disadvantaged minorities... Although typically the preserve of criminology, incarceration appears to shape aspects of inequality that are of traditional interest to stratification researchers.

It seems likely that status attainment, school-to-work transitions, and family structure are all influenced, perhaps even routinely, by

the penal system in the current period of high incarceration. From this perspective, the usual list of institutional influences on social stratification – schools, the families, and social policy – should be expanded to consider the coercive redistribution of life chances through incarceration.

The "Big Payoff" versus The Big House

Academic researchers tend to operate within a "zero-sum" framework when they study mass incarceration's negative labor market effects. They look at the offender population's generally disadvantaged pre-incarceration labor market circumstances and demonstrate how those circumstances are worsened by the mark of a criminal record and the experience of incarceration.

A different approach might employ a somewhat more hopeful and open-ended method, factoring in the *opportunity cost of public spending on prisons rather than education*. What might happen, this approach would ask, to the labor market circumstances of African-American males if society were to invest in their education instead of their incarceration? In a suggestive recent report titled "The Big Payoff" (July 2002), the U.S. Census Bureau makes the following synthetic work-life earnings estimates (ages 25 to 64) for full-time workers with different levels of education attainment:⁵¹

Doctoral Degree:	\$3.4 million
Professional Degree:	\$4.4 million
Master's Degree:	\$2.5 million

Bachelors Degree:	\$2.1 million
Associates Degree:	\$1.6 million
Some college:	\$1.5 million
High School Graduate:	\$1.2 million
Not High School Graduate:.....	\$1.0 million

Prison Itself as Lost Opportunity

At the same time, it is difficult to separate the labor market consequences of mass incarceration from the question of how prison life and re-entry programs have changed in recent decades, when the literally stated goal of criminal justice policy has shifted from the rehabilitation to the "incapacitation" of offenders. Beyond the potential educational or social services that are lost to correctional expenditures, *prison itself* has become something of a *lost opportunity*, counter-intuitively enough, for meaningful attachment to labor markets and society.

This is a key finding of interviews and focus groups conducted with 72 Chicago ex-prisoners by researchers Marcia K. Festen and Sunny Fischer for the Chicago Urban League. Among the many relevant outcomes of this research, the most compelling perhaps is the discovery of a tragic gap between many ex-offenders' sense that prison provided an almost welcome opportunity for "time out" and personal reform and the reality of their reentry process. "Among the ex-offenders interviewed," Festen and Fischer report, "the sincere decision to change one's life becomes a missed personal and societal opportunity as few respondents had the

Using these rough estimates of education's lifelong "payoff," it is possible to construct an admittedly simple exercise, but one which might be of more than academic interest to those interested in poverty-alleviation, crime reduction, and uneven patterns of social, racial, geographic, economic and community development within Chicago, Illinois, and the nation:⁵²

1. Using IDOC demographic data on the number and age-breakdown of parolees in Chicago (on February 2002), take the number of those parolees that are ages 18 to 24 (3,541) and divide them into educational categories according to federal data on the attainment levels of the correctional population:

$$3,541 \times .25 \text{ (high school degree)} = 1,062$$

$$3,541 \times .70 \text{ (no high school degree)} = 2,479$$

2. Take just one third of the high-school graduates among the city's 18-24 year-old parolees (= 354 parolees) and make them college graduates:

$$354 \times \$9 \text{ million (the lifetime earnings premium for college over high school graduates)} = \$319 \text{ million}$$

3. Take just one third of the high school drop outs among the city's 18-24 year old parolees (= 1,240 parolees) and make them high school graduates:

$$1,240 \times \$2 \text{ million (the lifetime earnings premium of high school graduation)} = \$248 \text{ million}$$

4. Calculate total lifetime earnings gain for upgrading the educational attainment of 1,794 young parolees in Chicago:

$$\$319 \text{ million} + \$248 \text{ million} = \$567 \text{ million}$$

necessary resources and supports to navigate the risks and opportunities that reentry presented." Surprisingly large numbers of Festen and Fischer's interview subjects claimed to see prison as "saving my life" in that it provided 'time out' from chaos and danger in the 'free world,' 'scared [them] straight,' and even offered opportunities for education and training.

The general sense of their comments, however, was that prison's potential as a time for transformation and rehabilitation was being wasted

because of the absence of clearly marked and functional pathways back to workplace and community. "Time in prison," Festen and Fischer find, "can be an important opportunity for inmates who are motivated to gain new skills and to rehabilitate their lives. Currently, ex-offenders find upon release, however, that the "skills" they had proudly acquired while in prison are often useless on the outside." Ex-offenders' comments about how in-prison programs help with reentry afforded a generally consistent view: preparation

for release was terribly inadequate. "In the absence of an integrated set of strategies and programs to enable successful reentry," Festen and Fischer conclude, "the possibilities for growth and direction engendered at the moment of release are often squandered."⁵³

The Proper Historical Analogy

Historical folklore romanticizes the large number of British and European prisoners and ex-offenders who peopled and prospered in colonial North America and Australia. Leaving aside the question of how many of those ex-offenders thrived, much less survived, the transplanted offenders of earlier eras landed anew in largely agricultural societies not yet based on waged and salaried labor with a concentration of privately owned conglomerates that control the means of production and distribution.

It is entirely more difficult for an ex-offender to "re-enter" a "modern" capitalist society in which the preponderant majority of working-age persons must find someone or a corporation willing to "take the risk" (make the investment) of hiring them. A more telling and accurate historical analogy in their case — and the racial consistency rightly suggests considerable historical *continuities of race and class* — is found in the economic and labor market circumstances faced by America's suddenly "free" former slaves after the Civil War — all black and woefully short on capital, skills, and education in a society that still despised and coerced them, after the Civil War.⁵⁴

Mass Incarceration as Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Mass Incarceration versus Public Safety

There is a savage, self-fulfilling irony in prison's negative effect on earnings and employment – deeply and centrally characteristic of the vicious circle imposed by the policy decision of mass incarceration. The significant negative labor market effect of the recent and ongoing judicial and policing policies and practices outlined above increases the likelihood that offenders will repeat the behaviors that got them into the criminal justice system in the first place. Research clearly shows that having a job with a steady and adequate source of income is strongly associated with reduced rates of re-offending. At the same time, reduced wages have been shown to increase illegal earnings and criminal activity. According to one widely cited estimate, a 10 percent decrease in wages is associated with a 10 to 20 percent increase in the likelihood of incarceration. "Crime rates are inversely related," Richard B. Freeman and Jeffrey Fagan have shown, "to expected legal wages, particularly among young males with limited job skills or prospects."⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the "war on drugs," which contributes so strongly to minority incarceration, inflates the price of underground substances. This combines with ex-offenders' shortage of marketable skills (a problem exacerbated by incarceration) to create an environment fraught with incentives encouraging parolees to engage in precisely the sort of illegal income-generating conduct that leads back to prison.

And the perverse ironies don't end here. As important as they are, negative labor market effects are just one of a number of ways that mass incarceration and the criminal justice policies that drive the prison regime serve to actually increase crime, at

least in the inner-city. Clear has discovered three "crime-enhancing effects of prison" on impoverished urban communities. *First*, the rampant arrest and incarceration of inner-city youth for drug crimes creates an ironic "replacement effect" that "cancels out the crime-prevention benefits of incapacitation." In the face of a stable demand for illegal substances, mass arrest and incarceration "creates job openings in the drug delivery enterprise and allows for an ever-broadening recruitment of citizens into the illegal trade."

Second, mass incarceration deepens the presence of destabilizing negative "social factors" that contribute to "criminality" in minority

communities: broken families, inequality, poverty, alienation, and social disorder.

Third, mass incarceration ironically undercuts the deterrent power of prison. "As more people acquire a grounded knowledge of prison life," Clear learned, "the power of prison to deter crime through fear is diminished." Thus, *Newsweek* reporter Ellis Cose noted two years ago that prison has "become so routine" in some neighborhoods "that going in can be an opportunity for reconnecting with friends." A drug-dealer from Maryland told Cose of his "panic on conviction. Having heard horror stories about young men abused inside, he fretted about how he would fend off attacks. Once behind bars," however, "he discovered that the population consisted largely of buddies from the hood. Instead of something to fear, prison 'was like a big camp.'"

The massive size of America's overcrowded prison population encourages "correctional" facilities' now widely recognized role as breeding grounds for crime and strengtheners of gang affiliation.

Clear and his fellow criminologist Dina Rose believe that certain U.S. communities have reached what they see as a curious criminal justice "tipping point" – the locus at which repressive state policies ironically drive up crime rates. When one percent or more of a neighborhood's residents are imprisoned per year, they theorize, mass incarceration

incapacitates neighborhood social networks to the point where they can no longer keep crime under control. As we have seen (*see Table 16*), more than a few Chicago neighborhoods on the South and West Side have passed this “tipping point.”⁵⁶

Mass Incarceration versus Welfare Reform and Marriage Promotion

Mass incarceration also stands in ironic and curiously self-defeating relation to welfare reform. At the very moment that the broader political and policy-making community has proclaimed the necessity of replacing taxpayer-financed “welfare dependency” with “workforce attachment” and “free market” discipline leading to “self-sufficiency” and stable two-parent family formation among the urban so-called “underclass,” criminal justice policies are warehousing droves of young black men in sex-segregated holding pens and pushing hundreds of thousands of already disadvantaged and impoverished blacks further from meaningful attachment to the labor market.

The most recent version of welfare “reform” proposed by the White House and its Congressional allies adds insult to injury by claiming that *marriage is the solution to poverty*. The best way a single welfare mother can attain economic security, many federal policy makers now claim to believe, is to “find a man.” Among the many problems with this counsel is that the pool of steadily and legally employed and therefore “marriage-

Newsweek reporter Ellis Cose noted last year that prison has “become so routine” in some neighborhoods “that going in can be an opportunity for reconnecting with friends.”

able” males is woefully inadequate in urban neighborhoods where welfare caseloads are most heavily concentrated. That shortage, directly related to the exodus of manufacturing employment from the central city, is sharply exacerbated by the criminalization, incarceration, and incapacitation of marriage-age black males from the same neighborhoods.⁵⁷

Conclusion and Recommendations

Deepening Stigma and Inequality

In Chicago and Illinois as throughout the nation, the decision to criminalize and incarcerate the predominantly black urban “underclass” at the expense of more positive, proactive, and productive social expenditures and without appropriate concomitant attention to rehabilitation and reentry creates problems larger than those it set out to solve. This misguided policy choice:

- perpetuates and deepens the segregation, alienation, inequality, and exclusion that led many former prisoners and ex-felons into “criminal” activity in the first place.
 - deepens the labor market difficulty and other forms of disadvantage experienced by hundreds of thousands of minority men and women.
 - piles new stigma on old, saddling shocking numbers of young men and (increasingly) women, many convicted of minor and petty offenses, with the lifelong mark of a criminal record and the often damaging experience of incarceration.
- removes real and potential wages, purchasing power, economic development and political clout from urban and black communities to predominantly white and rural prison communities and creates profits for predominantly white-owned corporations that profit from the incarceration business.
- diverts attention and resources away from confrontation with the deep underlying social problems that brought Martin Luther King to Chicago and continue to scar black inner-city experience today.

- privileges vengeance and punishment (retribution) over forgiveness and pragmatic concern with what works to reduce crime and solve social problems.

- works against a number of key goals of the larger society: public safety, stable family formation, long-term labor market attachment, poverty reduction, equal opportunity, racial integration and harmony, civic engagement, education, and balanced community development.

“The jailing of so many young man (and increasingly of young women) at the primary age of family formation,” notes *Chicago Tribune* columnist Salim Muwakkil, “stunts the vitality of the black community and contributes to family dissolution, single-parent households, increased incidence of HIV/AIDS, reduced job prospects and political participation and other debilitating effects.”

“It is sad,” observes NAACP official Hilary Shelton, “that our states are finding it easier to contribute more to incarcerating our men and women and creating a downward spiral of poverty and destitution rather than investing through our educational

system to create an upward spiral of accomplishment and achievement.”

To be sure, we must not exaggerate either the extent to which criminal justice policies have *created* the difficult circumstances of the inner-city poor or the extent to which reform of those policies could reverse those circumstances. As Halinan notes, paraphrasing a Texas inmate, “you can’t rehabilitate a man *if he has never been habilitated in the first place*.”

And many inmates never have been.” Many ex-offenders, it is worth noting, are looking not for a second or a third chance but for *a first chance* to be productively engaged in and accepted by their society. Many come from communities that would be unstable even without the collateral damage caused by the mass incarceration state. They are in search of elementary positive social “habilitation,” something that is not provided by prison.

Still, there can be little doubt that the *criminal justice system in and of itself* is now producing severely harmful consequences for its very disproportionately black subjects. “No longer a peripheral institution,” that system has become “a dominant presence in the lives of young disadvantaged men” (Pager). It plays a pivotal role in sorting and stratifying the distribution of labor market and related forms of opportunity. It has become a key part of the sociological web that creates and perpetuates the urban ghetto and racial and related class inequality. It is with no small justice that leading sociologist Bruce

Western has recently described the American penal system as “a state intervention in the labor market that has increased race and class inequalities in earnings and employment.”⁵⁸

Hope and a Requirement for a Different and Positive Story

Certainly, Illinois would not be filling jail and prison cells with tens of thousands of African-American men if it still possessed giant steel mills, packinghouses, and railroad car assembly plants that required the living labor power of young black males. Surely the city and state's black population would experience far less criminalization and incarceration if it enjoyed full and equal access to the more job- and education-rich suburbs.

Rather than positively address such crucial underlying and intimately related societal problems, the strategy of criminal punishment and mass incarceration *exacerbates* them. It deepens black disadvantage in the job market, increases the reluctance of suburban communities to accept African-Americans and further removes disadvantaged men and women from job opportunities. Perhaps a historically inclined student of black experience in the Chicago area will one day write a study bearing the depressing title “*From Steel Mills and Stockyards to Stateville and Big Muddy: Public Policy and the Black Male in Chicago and Illinois, 1960-2000.*”

The good news, however, is that policy is subject to revision through the agency of sensitive and informed citizens and policy makers and that

“It is sad, that our states are finding it easier to contribute more to incarcerating our men and women and creating a downward spiral of poverty and destitution rather than investing through our educational system to create an upward spiral of accomplishment and achievement.”

Hilary Shelton, NAACP official

there is still time to write a different story. Also on the positive side, public perceptions in the U.S. appear to be moving away from blind support for “get tough on crime” and “lock ‘em up” policies to public strategies that “get smart on crime” and provide meaningful alternatives to mass incarceration.⁵⁹

- Surveys conducted by Belden, Russonello, and Stewart and by Peter Hart Research Associates find that the public supports changing state and federal laws to reduce the incarceration of nonviolent offenders. It believes that rehabilitation, not punishment and incapacitation should be the top priority of the criminal justice system and that community sanctions and programs like restitution, community service, drug treatment, offender education, and job-training are preferable to simple imprisonment.

- Recent polls in two high-incarceration states (California and Pennsylvania) found that citizens were more willing to cut corrections than any other state program to balance the state budget.

- The Justice Policy Institute reports that nine out of ten *prison wardens* believes that we should use more alternatives to incarceration. This sentiment is shared by IDOC Director Donald Snyder: he has asked the Illinois legislature to consider diverting nonviolent drug offenders from prison to community-based treatment programs.

- California and Arizona voters recently approved referendums that divert drug offenders from prison to treatment programs.

- In New York there has recently been discussion among top leaders, including the Governor, about rolling back the state's overly harsh (Rockefeller) drug laws.

- Illinois Governor George Ryan has successfully halted the use of death penalty in Illinois, receiving accolades for this action throughout the nation and the world. This is a step towards rolling back over-incarceration because, as Halinan notes, “the death penalty has always served as a kind of barometer of the country's appetite for vengeance.”⁶⁰

In a time of slowing economic growth, altered public priorities, and state fiscal crisis, Americans are taking a critical look at the expensive, racially disparate, and counter-

Part VII, continued

productive policy of mass incarceration. For their criticism to produce positive results, it is important that the public, employers, and policy-makers address the special difficulties that ex-offenders face in the labor market. The needs of ex-prisoners and other ex-offenders are numerous, but few are more basic in a capitalist society (defined among other things by the dependency of most working-age persons on wage or salary income) than access to decent employment. Without meaningful and remunerative attachment to the labor market, ex-offenders are likely to commit new crimes and resume their prior roles as raw materials for the prison industry.

Policy and Other Ideas to Close the Vicious Circle

With these hopes and trends and this key consideration in mind, this study concludes with a number of recommendations:⁶¹

1. Repeal mandatory sentencing laws, restore judges' discretion to determine which offenders truly deserve long prison terms and which can be safely rehabilitated in the communities where they live, establish new structures for reviewing and revising state sentencing policies and promote effective use of correctional options:
 - Replace prison time with treatment and intensive supervision for offenders convicted of drug possession and other petty drug offenses.
 - Repeal "Three Strikes" and other habitual offender legislation, permitting judges to make punishments that are commensurate to the harm done by offenders.

- Appoint a sentencing commission to review legislation and regulation that governs criminal sanctions.
 - Gather and analyze criminal justice and related social data to investigate the social consequences of criminal justice policies and the likely results of proposed reforms.
 - Conduct a prison cost savings audit to help state policymakers effectively divert resources from offender incapacitation to offender rehabilitation.
 - Create new sentencing guidelines that provide judges effective options to provide for appropriate punishment within a framework of public safety and community justice.
2. Create new prison and post-prison supports and responsibilities for prisoners and released ex-prisoners:
 - Reduce parole supervision for nonviolent offenders.
 - Use intermediate sanctions to address technical parole violations rather than returning offenders to prison.
 - Expand community drug treatment, educational, job-training and other alternatives to costly time behind bars.
 - Develop effective approaches to public safety that draw on community resources and use problem-solving techniques.
 - Tax special interests that benefit from mass incarceration to help pay for the development of rehabilitation, job-training, and reentry programs. Companies that

are vendors and, therefore, business partners with the Illinois Department of Corrections should be considered as a source for additional support and expertise in the provision of education and vocational training for prisoners and employment opportunities for ex-offenders. These companies could contribute to a pool of funds to capitalize transitional ex-offender employment programs.

- Downstate communities that enjoy job development, economic growth and related increases in political clout and public revenue because of prison expansion should also be considered as a source to fund more proactive, just, and efficient criminal justice and social policy in Illinois.
 - Target funds saved by the rollback of incarceration to promote economic development, public health, violence reduction, and ex-offender rehabilitation in the highly disadvantaged urban neighborhoods that generate and receive a hugely disproportionate share of the state's rising army of offenders and ex-offenders.
3. End racial profiling in traffic and pedestrian stop-and-search and surveillance and cease racially disparate practices in the prosecution and sentencing of drug and other offenders.
 4. Create a new policy focus and government agency to coordinate the transition from prison to work. With the number of prisoners now nearly equivalent to the number of welfare households in the state and nation, the time has come to

give that transition at least some of the concentrated policy attention received by the transition from welfare to work. Specifically, as Festen and Fischer (2002) argue, the state should:⁶²

- Improve programs for offenders within correctional facilities to respond to real labor market opportunities and employer requirements.
 - Hold IDOC and ex-offender vocational and job-training programs to the same accountability standards as other programs funded by the state's workforce development system.
 - Learn from successful workforce preparation and employment programs focused on ex-offenders and conduct additional research on best practices in other states.
 - Improve the capacity of standard workforce development and employment programs to work with ex-offenders.
5. Eliminate inappropriate barriers to, and create new possibilities and incentives for, the appropriate employment of ex-offenders:
- Repeal bans on hiring or retention of employees with past drug convictions in the public sector.
 - Follow the lead of several states by enacting legislation that expands Fair Employment regulations to protect people with criminal records from employment discrimination. Under this legislation, employers are told that crimes may only be considered if they closely relate to the specific duties of the job.

“The jailing of so many young men (and increasingly of young women) at the primary age of family formation, stunts the vitality of the black community and contributes to family dissolution, single-parent households, increased incidence of HIV/AIDS, reduced job prospects and political participation and other debilitating effects.”

Salim Muwakkil
Chicago Tribune columnist

- Mitigate the stigma and some of the legal barriers associated with criminal histories by allowing certain categories of ex-offenders to seal or expunge their criminal records.
- Offer certificates of rehabilitation and/or good standing to ex-offenders who either have minimal criminal histories or who have remained out of the criminal justice system for specified periods of time.
- Currently, the state offers a waiver granting permission for certain ex-offenders to work in certain entry-level positions (CNAs for example) within the health care field. This waiver option should be expanded to other occupations.
- Reduce employment-related barriers to education, public assistance, and affordable housing for ex-offenders by eliminating bans on

federal college student aid, TANF, and public housing for people with past drug convictions.

- Pass the “*Public Safety and Ex-Offender Self-Sufficiency Act*,” sponsored by Congressman Davis. This bill would amend the IRS code to create an ex-offender low-income housing credit to encourage the provision of transitional housing, job-training, and other essential services to ex-offenders in a structured living environment designed to assist ex-offenders on the path to long-term reintegration.
- Work with potential employers to allay their fears regarding ex-offenders, provide stronger tax and other incentives for the hiring, retention and advancement of ex-offenders, and more effectively market currently existing but woefully under-utilized incentives like the federal bonding program (offering \$5,000 of coverage at no cost per ex-offender employee to cover loss or damages for the first six months of employment). At the same time, ex-offenders should be included as a targeted group for workforce development programs.
- Educate media and the public about the fact that most ex-offenders were convicted of nonviolent crimes and pose minimal risk to co-workers, customers, and the public at large,⁶³ especially when they are given a chance, *often in fact their first (not their second or third)* real chance to be included as productive and truly “free” citizens in the community.

1. He would be disturbed to learn that, as the *Chicago Tribune* recently noted, the rising economic tide of the 1990s "lifted more yachts than rowboats" in Chicago. He would be displeased to learn that nearly 30 percent of the city's blacks, 20 percent of its Latinos, 18 percent of its Asians and eight percent of its whites lived in poverty in 1999 and that poverty remains as entrenched as ever in many predominantly black neighborhoods on the South and West Sides. He would be sad to learn that black Chicago remains very much both separate and unequal, with more than three-fourths of the city's residents living in neighborhoods that are 90 percent African-American and very disproportionately plagued by poverty and unemployment. See "Rich '90s Failed To Lift All Boats," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 August, 2002, p.1; Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Roosevelt University and Office for Social Policy, Northern Illinois University, *Race and Residence in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1980 to 2000* (2002); "Ethnic Diversity Grows, Neighborhood Integration Lags," Lewis Mumford Center, SUNY-Albany, April 3, 2001; Paul Street, "Still Separate and Unequal: Race and Class in Chicago at the Turn of the Millennium," *The Black World Today* (2002), at <http://athena.tbwt.com/content/article.asp?articleid=1339>; Leonard Rubinowitz and James Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* (Chicago, 2000); Chicago Metropolitan 2020, *The 2002 Metropolitan Index* (Chicago, 2002)
2. Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: the Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James M. Washington (San Francisco CA: Harper, 1986), 396.
3. Established in 1916, the mission of the League is to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation and to work for the achievement of equal opportunity and parity for African-Americans, other minorities and the poor in every phase of American life. Today, as in the past, the League's work is focused in three primary areas: education, economic development and community empowerment.
4. United Kingdom Home Office, Research, Development, and Statistics Directorate, *World Prison Population* at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/1166.pdf; Vince Beiser, "How We Got to Two Million," *Mother Jones*, July 10, 2001; Michael Tonry and John Petersilia, "American Prisons at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century," in Tonry and Petersilia, eds., *Prisons*, volume 26 of *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Aaron Chambers, "Crime is Dropping But the Prison Population Isn't," *Illinois Issues* (November 2001); Office of U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis, 7th Congressional District "Executive Summary: 'Public Safety Ex-Offender Self-Sufficiency Act,'" (2001); The Sentencing Project, "Facts About Prisons and Prisoners," at www.sentencing-project.org; Jan Chaiken, "Crunching Numbers: Crime and Incarceration at the End of the Millennium," *National Institute of Justice Journal* (January 2000); Naftali Bendavid, "One in 32 Adults in Criminal Justice System," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 August 2001.
5. Justice Policy Institute and *Mother Jones*, "Debt to Society: The Real Price of Prisons" (2001) at www.motherjones.com/prisons; Justice Policy Institute, *Cell Blocks or Classrooms? The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African American Men* (2002); John Hagan and Ronit Dinovitzer, "Collateral Consequences of Imprisonment for Children, Communities, and Prisoners," 1999 in Tonry and Petersilia, eds., *Prisons*; Beiser, "How We Got to Two Million."
6. Chaiken, "Crunching Numbers;" Prison Policy Initiative, "Incarceration is Not an Equal Opportunity Punishment" (2002) at www.prisonpolicy.org; *Mother Jones* and JPI, "Debt to Society;" Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2002: United States* www.hrw.org/wr2k2/us.html; Human Rights Watch, *Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs* (2000); Human Rights Watch, "Race and Incarceration in the United States," February 27, 2002; "Nearly Two Thirds of U.S. Prison Population Are Blacks and Latinos," *Pure-News USA*, March 2002.
7. A simple regression analysis indicates that states with higher proportionate minority populations have significantly higher incarceration rates. In addition, states with above-average black populations have significantly higher incarceration rates compared to those with less than average black populations. Both assertions hold true when controlling for other factors including the poverty level. Chicago Urban League, Department of Research and Planning (August 2002).
8. Paul Street, "Our Brothers' Keeper: The Thoroughly Dismal Science of Prison Economics," *Equal Opportunity Journal* (July 2002): 48-52; Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown, *By The Color of Our Skin: The Illusion of Integration and the Reality of Race* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2000).
9. Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (New York, NY: New Press, 1999); Beiser, "How We Got to Two Million;" Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record," Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison (May 2002), 2; Bendavid, "One in 32 Adults;" Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (New York, NY: Verso, 1999); Chambers, "Crime is Dropping;" "The Stigma That Never Fades," *The Economist*, August 10, 2002; U.S. Rep. Danny K. Davis, "Helping Men Return to Society From Prison," *Chicago Tribune*, 11 March 2002; Justice Policy Institute, *Cell Blocks or Classrooms?; Human Rights Watch, No Escape: Male Rape in U.S. Prisons* (2001). In the most comprehensive analysis to date, Alfred Blumstein of Carnegie Mellon University and Allen Beck, Chief of Corrections Statistics at the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics determined that more than half (51.4%) of the rise in the number of U.S. inmates between 1980 and 1996 was explained by increased likelihood of a prison sentence on arrest. More than one-third (36.6%) of that increase was explained by an increase in time served in prison, and just one ninth (11.5%) was explained by higher offense rates. Blumstein and Beck are cited in Maurer, 1999, p.34.
10. Human Rights Watch, *Punishment and Prejudice*; Human Rights Watch, "Race and Incarceration;" Marc Crispin Miller, *The Bush Dyslexicon: Reflections on a National Disorder* (New York, NY: Norton, 2001) 229.
11. Toni Locy, "Record Number of Ex-Convicts Released," *USA Today*, 26 December 2000; "The Stigma That Never Fades," *The Economist*, August 10, 2002; Jeremy Travis, Amy Solomon, and Michelle Waul, *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Reentry* (New York, NY: Urban Institute, 2001); Devah Pager, "Criminal Careers: the Consequences of Incarceration for Occupational Attainment," paper delivered at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, 2001; Peter Kilborn, "Flood of Ex-Convicts Finds Job Market Tight," *New York Times*, 15 March, 2001; Davis, "Helping Men Return;" Sasha Abramsky, "When They Get Out," *Atlantic Monthly* (June 1999); Jennifer Gonnerman, "Life Without Parole?," *New York Times Magazine*, May 19th, 2002. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, "over 47 million Americans – and probably many more – have a criminal history on file with state or federal governments. That means that 25 percent of the nation's adult population live a substantial part of their lives having a criminal record." U.S. Department of Labor, *From Hard Time to Full Time* (Washington D.C., 2001)
12. Illinois Department of Corrections, Departmental Data; Illinois Department of Human Services, TANF Statistics for August 2002 at www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/tanf.htm; Lloyd Degrane, "This Ain't Your Momma's House: Life in the Small City of Cook County Jail, Pop. 13,700," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, August 26, 2001; Administration for Families and Children, ACF Data and Statistics at www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/stats/tanf.htm; Chambers, "Crime is Dropping;" JPI and *Mother Jones*, "Debt to Society;" *Peoria Journal-Star*, 25 July 2001; Paul Street and Dennis Kass, *The Color of Prison Growth in Illinois* (Chicago Urban League, 2001);
13. Hagan and Dinovitzer, "Collateral Consequences."
14. Heartland Alliance, *Report on Illinois Poverty* (Chicago, 2001); The Lewin Group, "An Assessment of the Hospital Medicaid Payment Plan in Illinois" at www.ihatoday.org; Safer Foundation and Council of Advisers to Reduce Recidivism Through Employment (C.A.R.R.E.), *Illinois Facts* (February 2002).
15. "Cook County Men in the Criminal Justice System," www.ChicagoReporter.com.
16. "Few Blacks in County Nursing Homes," *Peoria Journal-Star*, 25 July, 2001; Illinois Board of Education, IBHE Data Book at www.ibhe.state.il.us; Illinois Department of Correction, 2001 Departmental Data at www.idoc.state.il.us; For comparison with New York, see Robert Gangi, Vincent Shiraldi, and Jason Ziedanberg, *New York State of Mind? Higher Education vs. Prison Funding in the Empire State, 1988-1998* (New York, NY: Correctional Association of New York, 1998).
17. Daniel Dighton, "Rehabilitation Competes With Security Issues in Crowded Prisons," Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA), *The Compiler* (Fall 1999): 7-8; ICJIA, "A Generation of Change: 30 Years of Criminal Justice in Illinois," *The Compiler* (Fall 1999); Chambers, "Crime is Dropping;" Human Rights Watch, *Punishment and Prejudice*; Human Rights Watch, "Race and Incarceration."
18. Human Rights Watch, "Race and Incarceration in the United States," February 27, 2002; Human Rights Watch, *Punishment and Prejudice*; JPI and *Mother Jones*, "Debt to Society."
19. Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 99.
20. Building Blocks for Youth, *Drugs and Disparity: The Racial Impact of Illinois' Practice of Transferring Young Drug Offenders to Adult Court* (April 2001).
21. Building Blocks for Youth, *Drugs and Disparity*.
22. "Teens Trek to City for Heroin," *Chicago Tribune*, 13 August 2001; "Cops Warn Suburban Teens About Drug Buys," *Chicago Tribune*, 14 June 2002; "City Targets Heroin Buyers From the Suburbs," *Chicago Sun Times*, 13 June 2002. See also "Study Finds Drug Sentence Bias," *Chicago Sun Times*, 19 December 2001, which reports *Chicago Reporter* reporter Alden Loudry's finding that blacks and Hispanics convicted of possessing or selling narcotics were given much harsher sentences than whites convicted of the same crime between 1995 and 2000. Seventy percent of the white offenders were given probation as opposed to 45 percent of the black offenders.
23. This ratio is higher for blacks than for the total population because blacks are more likely than whites to get prison over probation.
24. Higher than the black percentage of the prison population probably in part because black prisoners are especially over-represented among incarcerated drug offenders and drug offenders tend to serve shorter terms than the general prison population.
25. Christopher Uggen, Jeff Manza, and Melissa Thompson, "Crime, Class, and Reintegration: The Scope and Distribution of America's Criminal Class," paper presented to the American Society of Criminology (2001). To attain a copy of this paper, containing a precise statement of the methodology whereby the authors calculate the number of ex-prisoners and ex-felons in individual states and the U.S. as a whole, contact the Chicago Urban League Department of Research and Planning at pstreet@cul-chicago.org.
26. Paul Street, "The Color of Community: Race and Residence in the Chicago Area at the Turn of the Millennium," *Chicago Urban League* (Spring 2002) at www.cul-chicago.org
27. Alternative Schools Network, *Labor Market Conditions Among 16- to 24-Year Old Adults in the U.S., Illinois, and the Chicago Area at the End of the 1990s* (Chicago, 2001); Paul Street and Dennis Kass, *The Color of Job and Prison Sprawl in Chicago and Illinois* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Urban League, 2001); "Executive Summary: 'Public Safety and Ex-Offender Self-Sufficiency Act,'" p. 2; North Lawndale Employment Network, "The Going Hope Initiative" (2002), p. 2; Ex-Offender Employability Task Force, *Report to the Illinois Workforce Investment Board* (July 2002), 3; Davis, "Helping Men Return;" Marcia K Festen and Sunny Fischer, *Navigating Reentry: the Experience and Perceptions of Ex-Offenders Seeking Work* (Chicago Urban League, 2002).

28. Jeff Epton, "From Jails to Neighborhoods: Prisoners Come Home," *Neighborhoods* (Chicago Area Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, June/July 2001);
29. See "Ionia Finds Stability in Prisons" in the *Detroit News* 15 July, 2001. This story reported that "upstate" Ionia Michigan became one of the state's fastest growing and "most improved" cities thanks to its five thriving penitentiaries, whose 1,584 workers collectively make \$102 million a year. "The state's urban centers dump their felons," the *News* reported, "in prison towns and forget about them. Suburbs balk at housing felons, envisioning escapees trampling through their gardens and hiding out in their tool sheds." But "Ionia," the paper noted, "sees things from the other end of the spectrum. The prisons bring, of all things, security."
30. See "Rural Towns Turn to Prisons to Re-ignite Their Economies," *New York Times*, 1 August, 2001, A1, which reported that many rural towns in America were relying like never before on prison construction for jobs and economic development: they used to rely on agriculture, manufacturing, and/or resource extraction; now they rely on mass incarceration. The article reported that 250 new prisons went up in rural America during the 1990s. It quoted a city official whose Oklahoma town recently opened a new maximum-security lockdown. "There's no more recession-proof form of economic development," this official said, than incarceration because "nothing's going to stop crime."
31. David Ladipo, "The Rise of America's Prison-Industrial Complex," *New Left Review* 7 (January-February 2001)
32. Todd Clear, "Backfire: When Incarceration Increases Crime," and Demetra Smith Nightingale and Harold Watts, "Adding It Up: The Economic Impact of Incarceration on Individuals, Families, and Communities," in The Vera Institute of Justice, *The Unintended Consequences of Incarceration* (New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice, January 1996).
33. Joseph T. Halinan, *Going Up The River: Travels in a Prison Nation* (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 216; Street, "Our Brothers' Keeper;" Paul Street, "Color Bind: Prisons and the New American Racism," *Dissent* (Summer 2001); Vernon Jarrett, "Prison Boom for White Towns," *Chicago Defender*, 11 August, 2001; John Biewen, "Corporate-Sponsored Crime Laws" (2002) at www.americanradioworks.org.
34. "Towns Put Dreams in Prisons," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 March, 2001, 2C1; "Prison Town's Future in Doubt," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 February, 2002. See also "Prison Delay Seems Like Life Sentence to Tiny Town," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 March 2002.
35. Illinois Department of Corrections, Departmental Data for 2001; telephone communication with IDOC budget officer, September 25, 2002.
36. The same exact omission is evident in the newspaper articles cited in notes 29 and 30.
37. Street and Kass, *Color of Job and Prison Sprawl*; U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000*
38. Street, "Color Bind."
39. Fox Butterfield, "Often, Parole Is One Stop on the Way Back to Prison," *New York Times*, 29 November, 2001, A1. See also
- Sasha Abramsky, "Breeding Violence: Locking People Up Is supposed to Make Our Streets Safer, But It May Be Doing The Opposite," *Mother Jones*, July 10, 2001.
40. Richard Freeman, "Crime and the Employment of Disadvantaged Youths," Working Paper no. 3875, National Bureau of Economic Research.
41. Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, "Incarceration And Racial Inequality In Men's Employment," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54 (October, 2000): 3-16; Bruce Western, Jeffrey Kling, and David Weiman, "The Labor Market Consequences of Incarceration," *Crime and Delinquency*, 47 (July 2001): 410-27; Bruce Western, "The Impact of Incarceration on Earnings," paper delivered at the 2000 annual meetings of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (London); Pager, "Criminal Careers;"
42. Western, Kling, and Weiman, "The Labor Market Consequences of Incarceration."
43. Western, Kling, and Weiman, "The Labor Market Consequences of Incarceration."
44. Harry Holzer, Steven Raphael, and Michael Stoll, "Perceived Criminality, Criminal Background Checks and the Racial Hiring Practices of Employers," paper delivered at Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, May 5th, 2001. For qualitative evidence from Chicago, see Kari Lydersen, "Ex-Cons Face Unemployment, Homelessness After Serving Sentence," *Streetwise* (June 9- June 22, 1998); Festen and Fischer, *Navigating Reentry*; Kevin Lynch, "New Criminal Justice Panel Urged," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 August 2002.
45. Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal. Record."
46. Curtis Lawrence, "CHA Tenants May Get the Boot," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 March 2002; Chicago Park District Code Criminal Background Section, [70 ILCS 1605/162-5\(c\)](http://www.ilcs.com/162-5(c);); Ex-Offender Employability Task Force, Report; Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, *Unlocking Options for Women: A Survey of Women in Cook County Jail* (April 2002); "Experts Say Study Confirms Prison's New Role as Mental Hospital," *New York Times*, 12 July 1999; Maria Buck, *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders* (Philadelphia, Public/Private Ventures, Fall 2000); "Davis Seeks to Repeal Ban on 56 Jobs," *Chicago Defender*, 14 February, 2002; Svenja Heinrich, *Reducing Recidivism Through Work: Barriers and Opportunities for Employment of Ex-Offenders* (University of Illinois at Chicago: Great Cities Institute, September 2000); Legal Action Center, "Employment Laws Affecting Individuals With Criminal Convictions" (New York, NY: Legal Action Center, 2001); Gonnerman, "Life Without Parole?;" U.S. Department of Labor, *From Hard Time to Full Time*; Walter King, "Perpetuating the Cycle - Recidivism and a Catch-22," Policy Research Action Group, Loyola-Chicago University, *PRAGmatics* (Spring 2002); Dighton, "Rehabilitation Competes With Security;" Lydersen, "Ex-Cons Face Unemployment;" Travis et al., *From Prison to Home*; Abramsky, "When They Get Out;" Butterfield, "One Step;" Chicago Jobs Council, "Serving and Employing Ex-Offenders," *CJC At Work* volume 2, issue 1 (Spring 2001): 6.
47. Travis quoted in Epton, "From Jails to Neighborhoods;" Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, *The Compiler* (February 1999); Travis, "But They All Come Back: Rethinking Prison Reentry," U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute for Justice, *Sentencing and Corrections Issues for the 21st Century* (May 2000); Walter Shapiro, "Prison Nation Turns Its Back on Released Convicts," *USA Today*, 31 May 2001; "Prison Cuts in Education of Inmates A Problem," *Southern Illinoisian*, 15 December 2001. Even before cuts announced and partially restored in 2002, no more than 3,500 prisoners used IDOC's educational programs. It is indicative of inmate education's priority level in IDOC that Corrections Department spokesperson Brian Fairchild was unable to tell the Southern Illinoisian how many state prisoners took classes after IDOC announced cuts. First-person testimony from ex-prisoners is scathingly critical of the extent to which educational resources are available in Illinois prisons. See Festen and Fischer, *Navigating Reentry*; Lydersen, "Ex-Convicts."
48. Epton, "From Jails to Neighborhoods;" Travis et al., *From Prison to Home*; Errol T. Lewis, "The Inner City and the Culture of Incarceration," *Equal Opportunity Journal* (July 2001); Abramsky, "Breeding Violence."
49. See the comments of ex-prisoners in Lydersen, "Ex-Cons Face Unemployment," including one who told Lydersen: "They say you're paying your debt in prison, but the debt doesn't really even start until you get out."
50. Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, "How Unregulated is the U.S. Labor Market? The Penal System as a Labor Market Institution," *American Journal of Sociology*, 104 (January 1999): 1030-1060; Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, "Incarceration and Racial Inequality in Men's Employment," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54 (October 2000): 3-16; Pager, "Criminal Careers."
51. U.S. Census Bureau, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings* (July 2002).
52. U.S. Census Bureau; IDOC, Parole Population for the City of Chicago by Zip Code.
53. Festen and Fischer, *Navigating Reentry*; Lydersen, "Ex-Cons Face Unemployment;" Dighton, "Rehabilitation Competes With Security."
54. Street, "Color Bind."
55. Jeffrey Fagan and Richard B. Freeman, "Crime and Work," in *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Volume 25, edited by Michael Tonry (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
56. Ellis Cose, "The Prison Paradox," *Newsweek* (November 13, 2000); Joan Moore, "Bearing the Burden: How Incarceration Weakens Inner-City Communities" (1996), www.doc.state.ok.us/DOCS/OCJRC/OCJrc96/OCJrc43.htm; Lewis, "The Inner City and the Culture of Incarceration;" Abramsky, "When They Get Out;" Kathryn Edin, Timothy Nelson, and Rechelle Paranal, "Fatherhood and Incarceration As Potential Turning Points in the Criminal Careers of Unskilled Men," paper delivered at the Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, May 5, 2001; "Study Shows Building Prisons Did
- Not Prevent Repeat Crimes," *New York Times*, 3 June 2003; Abramsky, "Breeding Violence;" Nell Bernstein, "Left Behind," *Mother Jones*, July 10, 2001.
57. Paul Street, "Marriage as the Solution to Poverty: Welfare Moms and the White House Agenda," *Z Magazine* (April 2002): 33-39; William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1996)
58. Halinan, *Going Up The River*, 216; Salim Muwakkil, "Why is Prison the Norm for Black Males?," *Chicago Tribune*, 2 September 2002; Pager (2002), 32; Western, "The Impact of Incarceration on Earnings."
59. Justice Policy Institute, *Cutting Correctly: New Prison Policies for a Time of Fiscal Crisis* (February 7, 2002).
60. JPI, *Cutting Correctly*; "With Prisons Jammed, Governor Seeks Reform of State Drug Laws," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 January 2001; "States Rethink 3-Strike Laws," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 March, 2002; Chambers, "Crime is Dropping;" Halinan, 217; Fox Butterfield, "States Easing Stringent Laws on Prison Time," *New York Times*, 2 September 2001; Peter D. Hart Research Associates, "Changing Public Attitudes Toward the Criminal Justice System" (Washington D.C.: Open Society Institute, 2002);
61. In what follows, we rely significantly on recommendations made by various organizations that specialize in criminal justice reform and related civil rights and social justice advocacy. These organizations include The Justice Policy Institute (see especially JPI's *Cutting Correctly*), The Sentencing Project, The Legal Action Center, and (locally), The Safer Foundation, The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS) and The Council of Advisers for the Reduction of Recidivism Through Employment (C.A.R.R.E.). On CANS, see Lynch, "New Criminal Justice Panel Urged."
62. Festen and Fischer, *Navigating Reentry*. For more detailed recommendations regarding community-based ex-offender employment strategies, see the Ex-Offender Employability Task Force, Report to the Illinois Workforce Investment Board.
63. For an example of influential thinking that could use some revision, see an article that appeared in giant boldface on page one of the *Chicago Sun Times* last winter: "NURSING HOME HIRED CRIMINALS: Center on South Side Had Killer, Several Other Felons On Its Staff," *Chicago Sun Times*, 4 March, 2002. This spectacular news item accurately reported that a South Side nursing home had hired both a violent offender, guilty of murder and battery, and a convicted check forger, suspected of stealing from a 94-year-old patient. What about the "several" (three) other "criminals?" It noted that one of them was merely "a man convicted of possession of a controlled substance." By insensitively lumping the heinous crime of homicide with the relatively minor offense of narcotics possession under the chilling word "Felons" in a story on hiring, the city's second leading newspaper added to the debilitating labor market penalty experienced by the city's massive and very disproportionately black population of ex-offenders with minor drug-related and other small offenses.



CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE

4510 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60653
773.285.5800
Fax: 773.285.7772
e-mail: info@cul-chicago.org
www.cul-chicago.org