

Reentry Following Incarceration Episode Guide

Focus: In this podcast we hear Flores Forbes' story of his incarceration and reentry experiences. Forbes discusses the importance of investment in reentry and the sheds light on the practicalities involved in closing the Rikers Island Prison Complex and problems with the proposed plan.

Presenter: Flores Forbes, MPA

Key Findings

- The punishment clause in the 13th amendment of the U.S. constitution facilitated the transition from slavery to increased incarceration
 - Prior to 1865, most prisoners were debtors
- Incarceration makes it difficult to obtain a job after reentry and traumatizing having to disclose that information due to the stigma of incarceration
- There are severe psychological impacts of incarceration, both from being inside prison and trying to transition back into society
- Three things you need as an individual reentering and navigating the system:
 1. Education and skills (professional, trade, etc.)
 2. Social networks
 3. Removal of the stigma of incarceration (internal and external)
 - a. Checking yes on the box that asks if you have been convicted of a crime (external)
 - b. Recognizing (self awareness) and working to address trauma through therapy or other methods (internal)
- The United States is not close to dealing with the stigma of checking the box because the incentive is to recidivate
- Close Rikers Campaign
 - “Closing down a prison is a great thing, but if you don’t change the actual criminal justice system, you’re just moving one issue to another location because the same conditions are going to exist.”

- Most of the individuals on Rikers Island are still waiting for trial and cannot make bail; we need to shift our focus to reducing the prison population

Key Recommendations

- Invest in reentry services for formerly incarcerated individuals
 - Give the money that goes to reentry programs directly to the people who are reentering following incarceration, as well as access to services (housing, cash assistance, SNAP, etc.)
 - Reentry programs are dependent on people re-entering
 - Often, the money does not go to the people
 - The state will get this money back because eventually formerly incarcerated folks will be paying taxes back into the state
- Amend the punishment clause within the 13th Amendment
- Conduct a feasibility study on how to dismantle this system as a whole

Resources

- Forbes, F. (2016). *Invisible men: A contemporary slave narrative in the era of mass incarceration*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.
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