

The Reality of Reentry

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The Issue:

Reentry and the corresponding programming are largely inadequate to address the problems formerly incarcerated individuals face.

These problems include finding a job and stable housing, as well as reconnecting with family members. It encapsulates the struggle of ex-offenders to reintegrate back into a society that has decided they are no longer wanted.

These individuals must also face issues in terms of parole and probation and worries about rearrest.

The Current Situation:

Voting rights regarding those currently and formerly incarcerated is an ongoing campaign for reentry officials.

Mass incarceration has seen the US incarcerate 25% of the world's incarcerated population, while we have only 5% of its total population. Our current mentality and support of the system of mass incarceration has provided ongoing negative effects for incarcerated individuals and their families. Many arguments have been made, especially by author Michelle Alexander, that mass incarceration is the New Jim Crow, or form of discrimination.

COVID-19 has dramatically affected the way we view our society and approach incarceration. Mass incarceration and jails stuffed full to bursting doesn't work well in our new reality of six feet of distance and mask wearing. The result of this is mass release of prisoners in an effort to create appropriate and safe health conditions in jails. This has resulted in the positive effect of decarceration, but the negative effect of sending these individuals into society without the resources they need. Reentry programs that were inadequate before COVID-19, find themselves entirely overwhelmed, leaving offenders in a position to fend for themselves.

What I'm Doing:

I am conducting research in the form of participant observation on the Milwaukee Reentry Council. This is a body composed of various organizations that provide reentry services. I am interested in exploring how the purpose of this organization has shifted since the start of the pandemic and how the adaptability of the organizations has helped or hindered individuals seeking reentry resources.

Local Resources to Access to Learn More:

Project Return: <https://www.projectreturnmilwaukee.org/>

Milwaukee Reentry Council: <https://www.milwaukee.gov/EN/MCJC/Committees/Reentry-Council>

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/covid-19/covid-19-resource-guide>