



Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Corrections Section

Reaching a verdict on the era of mass incarceration

Charles Lane—Editorial Writer - Washington Post (reprinted from May 7, 2014)

Though the U.S. prison population of 1.5 million in 2012 was far larger than that of any other country, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of population, the era of ever-increasing “mass incarceration” is ending.

The number of state and federal inmates peaked in 2009 and has shrunk consistently thereafter, according to the Justice Department. New prison admissions have fallen annually since 2005. The inmate population is still disproportionately African American — 38 percent vs. 13 percent for the general population — but the incarceration rate for black men fell 9.8 percent between 2000 and 2009, according to the Sentencing Project.

This is not, however, the impression one would get from a new 464-page report from the prestigious National Research Council, which, like other think-tank output and media coverage of late, downplays recent progress in favor of a scarier but outdated narrative.

The report opens by observing that the prison population “more than quadrupled during the last four decades” and goes on to condemn this as a racially tainted episode that badly damaged, and continues to damage, minority communities but did little to reduce crime.

The study’s authors are right that the disproportionate presence of minorities in prison is a tragic reality, rooted at least partly in the post-1960s politics of white backlash. Today’s big prison population reflects the impact of mandatory minimums and longer sentences, which probably do yield diminish-

ing returns in terms of crime reduction, especially for nonviolent drug offenses.

Summarizing a relative handful of studies, the NRC report implies that we can have safe streets without the cost, financial and moral, of locking up so many criminals — since it’s “unlikely” that increased incarceration had a “large” positive impact on crime rates.

It would be nice if there were no trade-off between crime and punishment, but common sense says it’s not so. An analysis by the Brookings Institution’s Hamilton Project, similar in both tone and timing to the NRC report, acknowledges that increasing incarceration can reduce crime and that this effect is greatest when the overall rate of incarceration is low.

Ergo, increasing the incarceration rate now would do little to reduce crime, but the crime-fighting benefits were probably substantial back in the high-crime, low-incarceration days when tougher sentencing was initially imposed.

It’s easy to pass judgment on the policymakers of that violent era, when the homicide rate was double what it is today and crime regularly topped pollsters’ lists of voter concerns.

That had a racial component, but minorities were, and are, disproportionately *victims* of

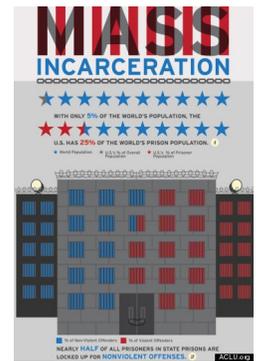
crime, too. The NRC report extensively discusses the negative effect on communities of incarcerating criminals, but it has comparatively little to say about the social impact of unchecked victimization.

Buried within the report is the fact that, in 1981, the average time served for murder was just five years; by 2000, it had risen to 16.9 years. The numbers for rape were 3.4 and 6.6 years, respectively. Insofar as “mass incarceration” reflects those changes — and the majority of state prisoners are in for violent crimes — it’s a positive development.

In an oft-quoted but empty phrase, the NRC report declares the growth of incarceration in the United States “historically unprecedented and internationally unique.”

The same might be said for the United States itself. This is the only nation on earth with more than 100 million people, effective, democratically accountable law enforcement and a lot of crime.

If we released all drug offenders, the incarceration rate would still be much higher than that of Europe. Ditto if we released all minorities. Nor are U.S. racial disparities unique. Canadian statistics show that, for unknown reasons, the black



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Spring 2014 Newsletter

Message from the Chair



Brandon Applegate, Ph.D., keynote speaker

With the unexpected passing of Dr. Kelly Cheeseman, I was asked to lead the Corrections Section and our Board into the Philadelphia meetings with little time to plan. Fortunately, the Section has an excellent slate of board members, who leapt into action to help get everything ready and I owe them immense thanks. With the assistance of current and past board members, I am happy to say the 2014 section meeting was well attended and provided time to catch up with colleagues, remember those who passed, and celebrate the

accomplishments of select members. In addition, the Board renamed the student travel award in honor of Kelly Cheeseman, in recognition of her service to the section and her student-oriented focus. I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank Cheryl Swanson for all her assistance with the annual breakfast and meeting.

I know everyone is looking forward to the upcoming 2015 meeting in Orlando and once again the Section will have a number of events for members,

including panels of interest, the annual breakfast/business meeting, and another excellent featured speaker. We will also be calling on section members for assistance with our annual t-shirt sales, and we will be soliciting nominations for one upcoming position on the Executive Board, so stay tuned to your email accounts over the next few months. On behalf of the Executive Board, best wishes to everyone as the spring semester ends and we look forward to seeing everyone in Orlando next year.

~ Jeff

ACJS Annual Conference—Philadelphia, PA



Wes Johnson, Ph.D., & Amy Powers, Kelly Cheeseman's sister

Philadelphia welcomed the masses to the 51st annual conference of ACJS at the end of February. Thirty panels and roundtables were identified as Section events of interest, and included areas of community corrections, reentry, international issues, and special populations.

More than 75 Section members attended the annual breakfast and business meeting to see colleagues awarded and remembered for contributions to the field (see below). Wes Johnson fondly remembered Kelly Cheeseman with her sister in attendance. The PA Prison Society was granted a donation from the Section to assist in its mis-

sion "to advocate for a humane, just and restorative correctional system, and to promote a rational approach to criminal justice issues."

The new E-board was announced and plans were discussed to further explore a peer-reviewed online publication.

2014 Section Awardees



The John Howard Award, which recognizes an individual who has made significant and sustained contributions to the practice of corrections was given to Dr. Todd Clear. Per Dr. Natasha Frost, "From his early work on the practice of probation, to his ongoing work advocating for reducing the harm that our correctional system imposes on the individuals, families, and communities both directly and indirectly affected by it, Todd Clear

has shown a sustained commitment to the practice of corrections."

The Outstanding Section Member was awarded to Dr. Jeanne Stinchcomb. With "an extensive career doing research, teaching, advising, and service in the field of corrections, particular in the management and administration of corrections agencies ...Her participation in the Corrections Section has been strong and consistent."



Both Todd and Jeanne are founding members of the Corrections Section!! Thank you for your service to the field and ACJS!

Reaching A Verdict...continued

share of Canada's prison population is three times that of the general population — the same as in the United States.

Instead of ignoring recent positive trends, researchers should try to understand them. The decline in incarceration may represent the delayed effect of falling crime and the diminished flow of new offenders it necessarily entails.

Sentencing reform, too, is taking hold, based on changing public attitudes. The percentage of

Americans who say criminals are not punished harshly enough has fallen nearly 23 points since 1994 — when the crime wave peaked — according to data compiled by Arizona State University professor Mark Ramirez.

After erring on the side of leniency in the 1960s, then swinging the opposite way in the 1980s and 1990s, the United States may be nearing a happy medium.

But this probably would not be possible if 48 percent of Ameri-

cans felt unsafe walking at night within a mile of their homes, as the Gallup poll found in 1982.

To sustain moderate public opinion we must keep the streets safe, and to do that we must learn the right lessons from the recent past.



A donation to the Pennsylvania Prison Society was given at the annual breakfast and business meeting.



2015 Section Awards and Scholarships

Nominations for the 2015 awards and scholarships are being accepted now through **October 1, 2014**. Nominations can be sent to ACJS_Corrections@yahoo.com. Please check the Corrections Section website for further information.

John Howard Award

The nominee **MUST** have made significant contributions to practice, but also

can have made significant contributions in scholarship, teaching, policy, or service.

Outstanding Section Member

Requires membership in and preferably contribution to the ACJS Corrections Section; and significant research and/or scholarship in the field of corrections. Self nominations are allowed and encouraged.

Dr. Kelly Cheeseman Student Paper Travel Scholarship

Students presenting papers at the ACJS annual conference are encouraged to submit their papers to the Awards committee for consideration for receipt of the travel scholarship. A letter of recommendation/support from a faculty advisor is advised.

Nominations and Elections Information

Nominations for the position of executive counselor (term 2015-2018) are being accepted through **October 1, 2014**. Nominations, including self nominations, can be sent to ACJS_Corrections@yahoo.com.

Those holding the position of executive counselor plan, direct, coordinate or assist in activities designed to create or maintain a favorable public image or raise

issue awareness for the Section. Individuals in this position will serve on at least one of the standing committees within the Section (program, membership, constitution/by-laws, and nominations/elections).

This position is ideal for those interested in becoming involved and it is hoped would continue to serve in various capacities with the Section!!

All members are welcome to apply!!



2014 Annual breakfast and general business meeting



Members enjoying a tour of Eastern State Pen!



Corrections Section Mission Statement

The purpose of the Corrections Section is to bring together academy members who have a particular interest in corrections, to facilitate and encourage research and theory development related to corrections, to encourage appropriate and effective teaching techniques and practices for corrections courses, to serve as a resource network for and encourage interaction among academic, research, practitioner and policy-making sectors in order to further knowledge about corrections, and to encourage the organization of corrections-related conference activities.



David May, Vice-Chair, Brandon Applegate, Todd Clear, and Jeff Bouffard, Chair



Death row exonerees' panel



Students presenting on perceptions of wrongful convictions



Wes Johnson remembering Kelly Cheeseman

See you in Orlando!!!!

The 52nd annual meeting of ACJS will be held March 3-7, 2015, at the Caribe Royale All-Suite Hotel and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. Submissions are due September 19, 2014.

The Section encourages faculty, students and professionals in the field to submit a paper or poster presentation.

If you know of a corrections-related charitable organization in the Orlando area, please inform the E-Board via email (ACJS_Corrections@yahoo.com) for consideration of a donation



made on behalf of the Section.

T-shirt ideas are welcome too! Historic Orlando-area jails and prisons will be considered!

Solicitations for op-eds or research items are welcome for the next edition of the newsletter!! Email us!