A Cycle of Injustice: How Mass Incarceration Impacts Our Youth

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AYPF’S Mission

AYPF’s mission is to educate, engage, and inform policymakers and practitioners about education, youth, and workforce policies to improve the lives and outcomes of traditionally underserved youth. We carry out this mission by providing research-based information and resources, first-hand learning experiences, convenings, and peer-to-peer networking exchanges to policymakers and youth-serving leaders at the national, state, and local levels.
Three lessons that are critical to promoting pathways to postsecondary education, training, and careers for systems-involved youth:

- Leveraging authentic youth voice
- Providing youth with a diversity of comprehensive supports and transitional services
- Strategically aligning youth-serving systems and policies
We Have Also Learned…

That it is impossible to work towards improving education and workforce outcomes for youth without addressing mass incarceration.
“Criminal justice policy must be viewed as education policy since mass incarceration is a contributing factor to the racial achievement gap.”

-Economic Policy Institute
Video Clip: Mass Incarceration Visualized
Introductions & Icebreaker

In pairs, introduce yourself and answer the following question:

-How does mass incarceration impact you and/or the work that you do?
Impact on Society

- 4.7 million felons – or 2.3 percent of the voting-age population – are disenfranchised. [2]
- Laws denying felons the right to vote have altered the outcomes of two presidential elections and seven U.S. Senate races. [18]

- Greater rates of incarceration do not correspond with reduced rates of crime: [10]
  - Incarceration rate: 65% in 1984, 47% in 1998
  - Crime rate: 17% in 1984, 22% in 1998

- Between 1987 and 2007, state spending on corrections grew 6x faster than spending on higher education: [11]
  - Higher education: 21%
  - Corrections: 127%
How Mass Incarceration Destroys Families

MASS INCARCERATION IS A FAMILY ISSUE

45% have had an immediate family member incarcerated for black Americans, that percentage is 63%.

1 in 5 Americans have had a parent incarcerated.

64% of Americans have had a family member incarcerated, that's around 113 million people.

Nearly 2/3 of families are unable to meet basic needs while their family member was incarcerated.

While all Americans are impacted by mass incarceration, black adults are:
50% more likely than white adults to have immediate family members incarcerated.
3x more likely to see a loved one imprisoned for longer than one year.

Mass incarceration does more than destroy lives, it destroys entire families.
Video Clip: The Human Stories Behind Mass Incarceration
Reflection Questions

1. Given the large number of young people impacted by incarceration, why do you think this group of youth are often ignored?

2. What can we do to elevate more conversations about the families and children of incarcerated men and women?
TRANSITION

Emerging Adults (ages 18-24) Involved in the Criminal Justice System
A choose-your-own-adventure game designed to put participants in the position of young people trying to graduate from high school.

Play Rigged
Reflection Questions

In small groups of 2-3 people discuss what it was like to play the Rigged Game?

-You may refer to the guided questions in the handout
Which area should we be investing more resources into?

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If you have come to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson