

## DAY 14: Injustice in Our “Justice” System

*“In no area of American society are the legacies of slavery and racism more evident than in the criminal legal system. Despite making up only 12 percent of the U.S. population, Black people make up 50 percent of the country’s prison population.”- Multifaith Movement to End Mass Incarceration*

**Criminal legal reform** addresses structural issues in criminal legal systems such as racial profiling, police brutality, overcriminalization, mass incarceration, and recidivism. These structural issues result in Black and brown people, people with low incomes, and people with mental illness being incarcerated at higher rates as compared to the general population. *Note: we are using the term [“criminal legal”](#) instead of [“criminal justice”](#) to describe policing, prosecution, courts, and corrections in the United States because these systems do not, by and large, deliver justice, nor have they ever.*

Why criminal legal reform? The United States incarcerates its citizens more than any other country ([source](#)). Today, nearly 10 million Americans—including millions of children—have an immediate family member in jail or prison. More than 4.5 million Americans can’t vote because of a past conviction. And each year, we lose \$87 billion in GDP due to mass incarceration.

In Washtenaw County, those numbers are smaller, but the impact on opportunity and life potential is real. According to recently available data, [over 1,000 people are incarcerated in our local prison](#); these individuals are predominantly Black and brown. While Black and Latinx people make up 12% and 6% of our population, respectively, they are (in addition to people with low incomes and disabilities) overrepresented in our County’s jail population according to data from the [Prison Policy Initiative](#). So too are Black youth, who are incarcerated at higher rates than white counterparts. [Sisters United Resilient and Empowered \(SURE\) is a peer local support group for mothers of youth within the juvenile justice system in Washtenaw County](#) which serves as a vehicle for family engagement and feedback to the justice system.

**Did You Know?** Up until the end of 2021, [pregnant individuals who were incarcerated in Michigan were restrained during labor; and did not allow a “support person,”](#) such as a family member or friend, to be at the hospital when the parent in prison gives birth.



**UWWC Equity Challenge: Community Conversations**

**Sessions:**

- January 24 @ 12 PM
- January 31 @ 8 AM

**Click here to sign up for a FREE and VIRTUAL session!**

**Share your reflections** on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) or [#uwwcequitychallenge](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).

## Today's Challenge:

### Listen:

- [Listen to this episode of Washtenaw United on WEMU, where Dr. Lisa Jackson discusses the work of Coalition for Re-Envisioning our Safety](#), which is advocating for a different approach to policing and public safety in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County.
- [Listen to this episode of Washtenaw United on WEMU, where Adam Grant of A Brighter Way shares how they are working to give former inmates hope in reentering society.](#)
- Listen to this piece from NPR detailing how [America's 3 largest psychiatric facilities are jails.](#)

### Read:

- Read about a [pilot program in Ypsilanti that makes it easier for both law enforcement and community mental health to provide an appropriate response](#) to a high volume of mental health-related calls.
- The existence of racial disparity in the criminal justice system has a ripple effect on nearly every other social system. [Read this article and infographic to learn about some solutions that chip away at those racial disparities.](#)
- In most of the U.S. if you cannot make bail you must wait in jail for your pretrial hearing. The practice of requiring cash bail has recently been abolished by Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit, making our county the first to do so in Michigan. [Read more about this reform to our criminal justice system here.](#)

### Watch:

- [Watch this video about the work of local nonprofit We the People Opportunity Farm](#) and their efforts to change the trajectories of people returning home from incarceration.
- [Watch criminal justice reformer Nick Turner break down the ways the US criminal legal system perpetuates centuries-old racial and economic inequality](#) via this TED salon discussion.
- [Watch this panel discussion from the Dispute Resolution Center and Friends of Restorative Justice in Washtenaw County about the intersectionality of mental disorders, incarceration, and restorative justice](#) featuring Derrick Jackson of the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office and State Rep. Felicia Brabec.



**UWWC Equity Challenge: Community Conversations**

**Sessions:**

- January 24 @ 12 PM
- January 31 @ 8 AM

**Click here to sign up for a FREE and VIRTUAL session!**

**Share your reflections** on today's topic on social media using the hashtag **#unitedforequity** or **#uwwcequitychallenge** and tag **@uwwashtenaw**.

## Act:

- Volunteer with local groups working for criminal legal reform: [A Brighter Way](#), [Survivors Speak](#), [The Michigan Prison Doula Initiative](#), and [We the People Opportunity Farm](#).
- Journal, reflect and share:
  - Write about a time in which you had a run in with the law. It may have been something as simple as being pulled over or something...a bit more serious. Talk about your experience from beginning to end and detail your emotions throughout.
  - Imagine that you have been accused of a crime that you didn't commit. Talk about how the experience might change your life. Go into extreme detail.
  - If you could change one law that you think is unfair or just plain silly, what would it be and why? How would the world change for you and in general if this law was changed for the better (in your opinion)?



**Discrimination?  
Injustice?  
Racial Inequities?**

**YES.**

**Click here to learn more  
and join the  
21-Day Equity  
Challenge: 2023 Edition**

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) or [#uwwcequitychallenge](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).