Poverty to Prison Pipeline

Tishawna Jones

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.shu.edu/petersheim-exposition

Part of the Criminology Commons, Policy Design, Analysis, and Evaluation Commons, Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons, and the Social Policy Commons
POVERTY TO PRISON PIPELINE
Tishawna Jones, Seton Hall University

**Understanding the Cash Bail System**

**BAIL (n.):** Money given to the court by someone arrested for a crime. If paid, it allows the person to leave the custody of police until their court date.

**But if you can’t afford bail, you stay in jail.**

Crime offers a way for impoverished people to obtain material goods they cannot attain through legitimate means. They are drawn to commit drug offenses and robbery to make up for the lack of income.

**Effects of Incarceration:**

- **Employment:** Unemployment rate is 5x greater for former inmates.
- **Housing:** Almost 50,000 people exit enter homeless shelters upon release from jail or prison.
- **Education:** 60% of colleges screen applicants for criminal records.

**Recommendations:**

- **Eliminate** prison sentences for non-violent crimes
- **Eliminate** the cash bail system
- **Invest** more money into prison alternatives (drug treatment & job training programs)

The U.S. economy more than doubled in the three decades prior to the Great Recession, but the **poverty rate remained** largely unchanged. At the same time, incarceration rates increased rapidly by 342%, from 111 to 491 for every 100,000 citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incarcerated people (prior to incarceration)</th>
<th>Non-incarcerated people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>$19,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>$17,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$19,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$21,975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Median annual incomes for incarcerated people prior to incarceration and non-incarcerated people ages 27-42, in 2014 dollars, by race/ethnicity and gender.*