



Alliance For Progress

THE ADVOCACY PROJECT

BEHIND BARS

Did you know that the U.S. incarcerates more people than any other nation, roughly 750 individuals per 100,000¹. According to a published report by The Pew Center on States, this translates to 1 in 54 men 18 years of age and older and 1 in 265 women between the ages of 35 and 39².

NYS has approximately 62,000 prisoners as of January 1, 2008³. Although, the number of incarcerated individuals in NYS showed a slight decrease last year, NYS spent 5.1% (\$2.6 million)⁴ of its general fund expenditures on corrections. In addition, NY spent 73 cents⁵ on corrections for every dollar it spent on higher education. That is **13 cents above** the national average when compared to other states.

What impact does this have in the neighborhoods of the West Bronx? A grave one!

Area residents know all too well the sad reality that many young men are absent from our neighborhoods. This leaves a disproportionate number of children without a father's guidance or example. The responsibility of rearing a family is transferred to the child's mother or grandparent(s). There are a few factors that contribute to this dilemma. Such as the lack of:

1. Adequate education
2. Employment opportunities that offer a living wage
3. Communal support in the application of ethical and moral standards

All too often our children are deceived into believing that a gang or notorious individuals can provide them a sense of family. The lure of easy money, in combination with little to no education attracts young men and women to a fickle lifestyle and illegal activity which violates the penal code (the law) and poisons our community.

During the 1990's in NYC, the Giuliani administration applied a criminal science theory

called Broken Windows. This theory stated that if the state (government) stopped petty crimes, larger and perhaps heinous ones would be prevented. Today, in NYC the Bloomberg administration is applying a strategy called Impact. Both initiatives have deterred and perhaps diminished particular criminal activities but have failed to offer an alternative to our youth.

Some have stated that the NYS 1970's narcotic laws called the Rockefeller laws should be relaxed to

diminish the number of individuals that are incarcerated. This course of action would have great impact in alleviating the current imprisonment trend offering lesser penalties for some criminal activities.

Yet like an AIDS patient a multi-prescription drug (drug cocktail) would need to be prescribed to provide the necessary catalyst for authentic change. A combination of employment opportunities with a living wage, and formative education that provides true scholarship that would enable our children to obtain knowledge: both speculative and theoretical is needed.

In-it-of-itself, incarceration scars some inmates with a distinct lifestyle or worse it invigorates vices that contradict the purpose of imprisonment: reform. This leaves neighborhoods like ours defenseless and vulnerable to the waves of the time, which changes as quickly as the direction of the wind, to crime, HIV/AIDS, subversive ideologies, disenchantment/hopelessness all of which opens the door to a vicious cycle of hate and further criminal activity.

The Empire State, known for its commercial leadership, must address this issue leading the way to prison reform. NYS needs to spend more on higher education, casting a wider net for the underprivileged working families, to obtain the needed financial assistance in order to receive a sound college education.

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Hard Facts: Incarceration	
2.3 million Americans are behind bars ⁶ . This translates to:	
Men: 18 yrs & older⁷	Women: 35 – 39 yrs old⁷
▪ 1 in 106 White	▪ 1 in 355 White
▪ 1 in 36 Hispanic	▪ 1 in 297 Hispanic
▪ 1 in 15 Black	▪ 1 in 100 Black

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Mission Statement for the Advocacy Project

The mission of the AFP Advocacy Project is to influence public policy on issues that affect residents of the West Bronx: affordable housing, education, employment, immigration, job development and nutrition; at the local, state and national level. The Advocacy Project is committed to raising the awareness of legislators and the public of the diverse problems confronting the residents of the West Bronx.

This would allow our children to reach their endowed potential obtaining gainful employment becoming responsible, self-sufficient, and moral agents.

The Advocacy Project does not possess the answer or the strategy to improve this reality. We seek to foment discussion on this topic to better address and serve our residents. We suggest that you contact your NYS state representative in the Assembly and Senate with your comments on this topic. **Let your voice be heard!**

1. Cf. One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008 p. 5 ¶1
2. Ibid., p. 6
3. Ibid., p. 29
4. Ibid., p. 14 Illustration and p. 30

5. Ibid., p.16
6. Ibid., p. 5 ¶1
7. Ibid., p. 6

For more information visit:

The Pew Center on the States

•www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report_detail.aspx?id=35904

One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008

•www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/8015PCTS_Prison08_FINAL_2-1-1_FORWEB.pdf

NYS Dept. of Correctional Services • www.bop.gov/

NYS Dept. of Correctional Services • www.docs.state.ny.us/