



Learn More about Incarceration and Reentry

Incarceration

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

A powerful true story about the Equal Justice Initiative, the people they represent, and the importance of confronting injustice. Just Mercy is a bestselling book by Bryan Stevenson that has been adapted into a feature film. Bryan Stevenson is an American lawyer, social justice activist, law professor at New York University School of Law and the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative.

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

A stunning account of the rebirth of a caste-like system in the United States, one that has resulted in millions of African Americans locked behind bars and then relegated to a permanent second-class status – denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement.

My Time Will Come: A Memoir of Crime, Punishment, Hope, and Redemption by Ian Manuel

The inspiring story of activist and poet Ian Manuel, who at the age of fourteen was sentenced to life in prison. He survived eighteen years in solitary confinement – through his own determination and dedication to art – until he was freed as part of an incredible crusade by the Equal Justice Initiative.

Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and One Man's Story of Redemption in an American Prison by Shaka Senghor

Writing My Wrongs is a portrait of life in the shadow of poverty, violence, and fear; an unforgettable story of redemption, reminding us that our worst deeds don't define us; and a compelling witness to our country's need for rethinking its approach to crime, prison, and the men and women sent there.

Locking Up Our Own by James Forman, Jr.

Forman is a leading critic of mass incarceration and its disproportionate impact on people of color. In Locking Up Our Own, he seeks to understand the war on crime that began in the 1970s and why it was supported by many African American leaders in the nation's urban centers.

*Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the **World*** by Baz Dreisinger

Beginning in Africa and ending in Europe, Incarceration Nations is a first-person odyssey through the prison systems of the world. Professor, journalist, and founder of the Prison-to-College-Pipeline program, Dreisinger looks into the human stories of incarcerated men and women and those who imprison them, creating a jarring, poignant view of a world to which most are denied access, and a rethinking of one of America's most far-reaching global exports: the modern prison complex.

"Raised in the System / Season 6 Premiere" (Vice / YouTube)

With more than 850,000 juvenile arrests annually, the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of minors; Michael Kenneth Williams explores the young people affected and examines the solutions being enacted around the country.

"Prison State" (PBS)

This 2014 documentary takes an intimate look at the cycle of incarceration in America, and one state's effort to reverse the trend.

"The Prison Within" (Amazon)

Prisoners incarcerated for murder inside San Quentin Prison transcend the punitive prison system to unearth the root cause of their violence by working with victims of violent crime.

"13th" (Netflix / YouTube)

Filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the history of racial inequality in the United States, focusing on the fact that the nation's prisons are disproportionately filled with African-Americans.

"Time" (Amazon)

In this intimate yet epic love story filmed over two decades, indomitable matriarch Fox Rich strives to raise her six sons and keep her family together as she fights for her husband's release from the Louisiana State Penitentiary, commonly known as Angola.

"Angola for Life" (YouTube)

Louisiana's notoriously brutal Angola prison still known for mandatory life sentences adopts religious, character-based and reentry programming. "God help us. Somebody's got to be hurt, murdered, killed, before we recognize the problem we have and go back and fix it."

"Uncuffed: Voices from Behind Prison Walls" www.weareuncuffed.org/

Uncuffed is a podcast made by people behind bars in California prisons. They share intimate stories of struggles and triumphs, of the heartache and forgiveness, taking place within prison walls.

“Angola Prison Hospice: Opening the Door” (YouTube)

Half of the 5,000 inmates at the maximum-security Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola are serving life sentences, and it is estimated that 85 percent of them will grow old and die there. Edgar Barends's documentary examines one of the nation's first prison-based hospice programs, a program that notably incorporates inmate volunteers into the care of other dying inmates.

“Ear Hustle” <https://www.earhustlesq.com/>

Ear Hustle is a podcast about the daily realities of life inside prison shared by those living it, and stories from the outside, post-incarceration

- “Life Shows Up” (job preparation)
- “Kissing the Concrete” (getting out of prison)
- “The SHU” (solitary confinement)
- “Cellies” (great introduction to what prison is like)
- “Birdbaths and a Lockbox” (lockdowns)
- “Nobody Comes Back” (release during COVID-19)

Solitary Confinement

Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope by Albert Woodfox

Solitary is the unforgettable life story of a man who served more than four decades in solitary confinement – in a 6-foot by 9-foot cell, 23 hours a day, in notorious Angola prison in Louisiana – all for a crime he did not commit.

Albert Woodfox Speaks on Transformation and Hope after Four Decades in Solitary Confinement, “Democracy Now!” interview (YouTube)

“Last Days of Solitary” Frontline / PBS (YouTube)

In this 2017 documentary, Frontline goes inside one state’s ambitious attempt to decrease its use of solitary and takes a look at what happens when prisoners who have spent considerable time in isolation try to integrate back into society.

Pamphlet, *Solitary Confinement*, The Southern Poverty Law Center

https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_solitary_confinement_0.pdf

Article on solitary confinement in Florida prisons:

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida/2022/01/14/roughly-1-in-8-prisoners-is-in-florida-solitary-confinement-according-to-advocates/>

Article on solitary confinement from the Southern Poverty Law Center:

<https://www.splcenter.org/20190404/solitary-confinement-inhumane-ineffective-and-wasteful>

Restorative Justice

Changing Lenses by Howard Zehr

Howard Zehr proposes a "restorative" model which is more consistent with experience, with the past, and with the biblical tradition. Based on the needs of victims and offenders, he takes into account recent studies and biblical principles.

Wild Flowers in the Median: A Restorative Journey into Healing, Justice, and Joy by Agnes Furey and Leonard Scovens

*When Agnes Furey lost her forty-year-old daughter Pat and six-year-old grandson Christopher to homicide in 1998 at the hands of Leonard Scovens, words could not describe the hole left in her heart. Even so, rather than hate, Furey chose peace, and she reached out to Scovens in prison. *Wildflowers in the Median* tells the story of their journey of restoration.*

Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth by John Hubner

*A powerful, bracing and deeply spiritual look at intensely, troubled youth, *Last Chance in Texas* gives a stirring account of the way one remarkable prison rehabilitates its inmates.*

"How Forgiveness Can Create a More Just Legal System" TED talk by Martha Minow

Pardons, commutations, and bankruptcy laws are all tools of forgiveness within the US legal system. Are we using them frequently enough, and with fairness? Law professor Martha Minow outlines how these merciful measures can reinforce racial and economic inequality -- and makes the case for creating a system of restorative justice that focuses on accountability and reconciliation rather than punishment.

"The Redemption Project" with Van Jones / CNN

With incredible access to the US prison system, Van Jones, host of "The Redemption Project," takes viewers into the room as offenders come face-to-face with those impacted by their violent crimes as part of the restorative justice process.

What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing by Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Bruce Perry

*Our earliest experiences shape our lives far down the road, and *What Happened to You?* provides powerful scientific and emotional insights into the behavioral patterns so many of us struggle to understand.*

Criminal Justice Reform

Charged: The New Movement to Transform American Prosecution and End Mass Incarceration by Emily Bazelon

A renowned journalist and legal commentator exposes the unchecked power of the prosecutor as a driving force in America's mass incarceration crisis--and charts a way out.

“Central Park Five” (PBS online)

The story of the five Black and Latino teenagers from Harlem who were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman in New York City's Central Park in 1989.

“When They See Us” (Netflix)

This limited series spans a quarter of a century, following the “Central Park Five” from when the teens are first questioned about the incident in the spring of 1989, going through their exoneration in 2002 and ultimately the settlement reached with the city of New York in 2014.

“Vice Special Report: Fixing the System” (Vice / YouTube)

In July 2015, Barack Obama became the first sitting president to visit a federal prison. He invited VICE along to film the historic event for part of a documentary, Fixing the System, which investigated America's broken criminal justice system.

“True Justice” (<https://eji.org/projects/true-justice/>)

This HBO documentary follows Bryan Stevenson and EJI's struggle to create greater fairness in the criminal justice system.

“We Need to Talk about an Injustice” TED talk by Bryan Stevenson

In an engaging and personal talk -- with cameo appearances from his grandmother and Rosa Parks -- human rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson shares some hard truths about America's justice system, starting with a massive imbalance along racial lines: a third of the country's black male population has been incarcerated at some point in their lives. These issues, which are wrapped up in America's unexamined history, are rarely talked about with this level of candor, insight and persuasiveness.

“The Bail Project / Revolving Bail Fund” TED Radio Hour podcast

Nearly half a million Americans are jailed because they can't pay bail. In this live conversation, host Manoush Zomorodi interviews public defender Robin Steinberg, who has created a rotating bail fund to help pay cash bail for those who can't afford it.

What You Need to Know about Ending Cash Bail, Center for American Progress

Cash bail criminalizes poverty, fuels mass incarceration, and disproportionately affects communities of color. States and localities are increasingly pursuing opportunities for reform.

“How the Bail System Increased Wealth and Racial Inequalities” (USA Today/video)

There have long been calls to end money bail in the U.S. prison system. A report on what some jurisdictions are doing to reform it.

“Uneasy Peace: Why is Murder Spiking? And Can Cities Address it Without Police?” (New York Times/The Ezra Klein Show podcast)

A conversation with Patrick Sharkey, a sociologist at Princeton University and the author of “Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence” about what a progressive vision of public safety could look like. The central claim of his work is that police can be effective at reducing violence, but they aren’t the only actors capable of doing so.

Home Made: A Story of Grief, Groceries, Showing Up - and What We Make When We Make Dinner by Liz Hauck

Liz Hauck and her father had a plan to start a weekly cooking program in a residential home for teenage boys in state care. When her father died before they had a chance to get the project started, Liz decided she would try it without him. She didn’t know what to expect from volunteering with court-involved youth, but as a high school teacher she knew that teenagers are drawn to food-related activities. This is the story of what happened around the table, and how one dinner became 100 dinners.

Start Here: A Road Map to Reducing Mass Incarceration by Greg Berman and Julian Adler

What can be done right now to reduce the number of people sent to jail and prison? This essential book offers a concrete roadmap for both professionals and general readers who want to move from analysis to action. In this forward-looking, next-generation criminal justice reform book, Greg Berman and Julian Adler of the Center for Court Innovation highlight the key lessons from these programs – engaging the public in preventing crime, treating all defendants with dignity and respect, and linking people to effective community-based interventions rather than locking them up. Along the way, they tell a series of gripping stories, highlighting gang members who have gotten their lives back on track, judges who are transforming their courtrooms, and reformers around the country who are rethinking what justice looks like.

Reentry

Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Aftermath of Mass Incarceration by Reuben Jonathan Miller

Each year more than half a million Americans are released from prison and join a population of twenty million people who live with a felony record. Reuben Miller, a chaplain at the Cook County Jail in Chicago and now a sociologist studying mass incarceration, spent years alongside prisoners, ex-prisoners, their friends, and their families to understand the lifelong burden that even a single arrest can entail.

A Second Chance by Catherine Hoak

What if you were only known for the worst thing you've ever done? A Second Chance is about new starts, forgiveness, shame, and the power of possibility. It's about one woman's vision and her relentless effort to make it real – but it's also about building a community that makes a difference.

“Life on Parole” (PBS / Frontline)

With unique access, go inside an effort in Connecticut to change the way parole works and reduce the number of people returning to prison. In collaboration with The New York Times, the film follows four former prisoners as they navigate the challenges of their first year on parole.

“Searching for Justice” (Reentry mini-series) (PBS / Frontline)

Every year, more than 600,000 people leave state and federal prisons in the United States and millions more cycle in and out of jails. Many of those individuals find that even though they have served their time, they still are not free, often facing barriers to housing, food, employment and more. Their criminal histories follow them long into the future, making staying out of jail or prison difficult.

“Life on the Outside” podcast

Life on the Outside is a podcast that shares stories about returning to society after decades of incarceration.

The Third Law by Tamra Ryan

In The Third Law, the CEO of the Women's Bean Project, Tamra Ryan, introduces readers to women who have been involved in the criminal justice system but are not the sum of their addictions, crimes, or poor judgment. Most are victims of poverty, abuse, and neglect who have been further victimized by drug sentencing laws, cultural prejudices, and the human services system designed to protect them. The Third Law explores what is required for chronically unemployed and impoverished women to create new lives for themselves. The book argues for a compassionate view of recovering addicts, convicted felons, and victims of domestic abuse.

ACLU Back to Business: How Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Job Seekers Benefits Your Company

BBARC Employer Guide to Hiring a Formerly Incarcerated Person

Organizations

The Equal Justice Initiative <https://eji.org/>

Founded in 1989 by Bryan Stevenson, a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer and author of Just Mercy, EJI provides legal representation to people who have been illegally convicted, unfairly sentenced, or abused in state jails and prisons. EJI produces ground-breaking reports, an award-winning calendar, and short films that explore our nation's history of racial injustice. They opened the "Legacy Museum" and the "National Memorial for Peace and Justice" as part of their national effort to create spaces, markers, and memorials that address the legacy of slavery, lynching, and racial segregation which shapes many issues today.

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition <https://floridarrc.com/>

The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition is a grassroots membership organization run by returning citizens who are dedicated to ending the voting restrictions, disenfranchisement, and discrimination against people with convictions.

Sentencing Project <https://www.sentencingproject.org/>

The Sentencing Project advocates for effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice

The Marshall Project <https://www.themarshallproject.org/>

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. They impact the system through journalism, rendering it more fair, effective, transparent, and humane.

Vera Institute of Justice <https://www.vera.org/>

Founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City, Vera is now a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government leaders to advocate for just, antiracist solutions so that money doesn't determine freedom; fewer people are in jails, prisons, and immigration detention; and everyone in the system is treated with dignity.

The Prison Policy Initiative <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/>

The non-profit, non-partisan Prison Policy Initiative produces cutting edge research to expose the broader harm of mass criminalization, and then sparks advocacy campaigns to create a more just society. Because essential national and state level data is often completely inaccessible, the Prison Policy Initiative's insightful data analysis and powerful graphics help fill these gaps to bring in new supporters and help other movement leaders achieve their goals.