

# **CONSEQUENCES OF IMPRISONMENT FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND SOCIETY –**

OUTLINE - PRESENTATION AT CORNWALL CTR, APRIL 10, 2006

RECIPROCAL NATURE OF SOCIAL EVENTS.  
INTERACTION AND BETWEEN IMPRISONMENT AND SOCIETAL, COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL ISSUES.  
MULTI-DIRECTIONAL IMPACTS - EACH INFLUENCES AND IS AFFECTED BY OTHERS.

IMPRISONMENT INCREASED 600+% SINCE 1970'S. ALL CATEGORIES, MEN, WOMEN, JUVENILES.  
TARGETTED –POOR, INNERCITY AND MINORITY – AFRICAN AMERICAN.

CAUSES: CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH AGAINST SOCIAL CHANGE, INCLUDING EMPOWERMENT OF MINORITIES AND THE POOR IN GUISE OF “GETTING TOUGH ON CRIME,” “WAR ON DRUGS,” OUTSOURCING OF SEMI-SKILLED INDUSTRIAL LABOR, DEVELOPING PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, PRIVATIZATION PRISONS OR INTERNAL SERVICES (HEALTH, FOOD, SOCIAL SERVICES) – BIG AND GROWING BUSINESS WITH LOBBYISTS AND VESTED INTEREST IN IMPRISONMENT AMONG OTHER.

PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS IN PRISONS HAVE BEEN REDUCTION OR REMOVAL OF “REHABILITATIVE” PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, HEALTH CARE, LONGER SENTENCES, INCREASE IN PRISONS, CROWDING.

CONSEQUENCES: LIMITED RESEARCH FINDINGS OR SUPPORT IMPAIRS KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY TO RESPOND.

1. SOCIETAL - FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL COST, DESTRUCTION OF COMMUNITIES, STRESS ON COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS, DISENFRANCHISEMENT, DIVERSION OF "LIMITED" FUNDS FROM SOCIAL PROGRAMS, HEALTH AND EDUCATION. PRISONS AS CATCH-ALLS, HOMELESS, MENTALLY ILL, ETC.
2. COMMUNITIES – WEAKENING OF COMMUNITY TIES, REMOVAL PRIMARILY OF YOUNG MEN, FURTHER IMPOVERISHMENT, SCHOOLS
3. FAMILIES – ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL BURDEN ON POOR FAMILIES, LOSS OF INCOME, LOSS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.
4. PARENTS – GUILT, POSSIBLY CHILD CARE AND RAISING, SHAME, LACK OF SUPPORT NETWORK,
5. CHILDREN – OF PRISONERS. SEPARATION FROM PARENT(S) OR SIBLINGS, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AND DAMAGE, DESTINY, FEAR, ANGER,
6. CHILDREN AS PRISONERS: MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, SEPARATION, NEGATIVE EDUCATION. SOMETIMES USED WHILE WAITING FOR FOSTER PLACEMENTS.
7. ADULT PRISONERS: MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, EDUCATION, STIGMA, DIFFICULTY OF RETURNING TO SOCIETY AND DEVELOPING A POSITIVE SOCIAL ROLE.

## REMEDIES:

1. UNIVERSAL - REVERSAL OF POLICIES LEADING TO IMPR. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEGITIMATE LIFE STYLES ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT. VICTIMLESS CRIMES, IN MOST INSTANCES, SHOULD BE DECRIMINALIZED. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, HUMANISTIC INCARCERATION. (SCANDANAVIA)
2. REMEDIES: RESIDUAL – IMROVEMENT OF SERVICES AND FOCUS FROM PUNITIVE TO EDUCATIONAL AND HABILITATION WITHIN PRISONS,
3. NASW - “THE CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS MAY REQUIRE A NETWORK OF SERVICES THAT ADDRESS THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES AND SYSTEMS THAT SERVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SHOULD WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO MAXIMIZE THEIR RESOURCES AND EFFECTIVENESS... SUCH A COLLABORATIVE NETWORK WOULD INCLUDE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES, COURTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, MEDICAL PROVIDERS, EDUCATORS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS.” (MCFALL, 2005) SAME FOR ALL CATEGORIES.
4. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION NECESSARY TO MAKE NEEDED CHANGES IN SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS, GAIN RESOURCES AND THE WILL TO PROVIDE THEM.