

# INCARCERATION AND REENTRY IN AUSTIN: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

AUGUST 2022

## AUTHORS

Vanessa Beltran, MPH, RDN, LD., Tiffany N. Ricks, PhD, RN, Reentry Roundtable

## WORKS CITED

See references on the following page.

1877

### JIM CROW LAWS AND SEGREGATION

Jim Crow laws were statutes and ordinances established to separate the white and Black races in the American South, condemning Black citizens to inferior treatment and facilities. The Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) supported racial segregation for public facilities across the nation. (3)

1971

### WAR ON DRUGS

President Nixon declares a war on drugs, which leads to a spike in incarceration rates as more non-violent offenders, drug users, and drug dealers were sent to prison. Under President Reagan, drug-related mandatory minimums under the Sentencing Reform Act and Anti-Drug Abuse Act. (8,9)



1978 - 2003

### MASS INCARCERATION

Starting in the late 1970s, mass incarcerations accelerated at both the federal and state levels. In Texas, state incarceration quadrupled between 1978 and 2003. Mass incarceration has caused a breakdown in community care systems and led to the stereotyping of Black and Latine fathers as absent. (10).

2016

### ADVOCACY FELLOWSHIP CREATED

The Fellowship is an innovative program designed for formerly incarcerated persons with lived experience navigating the criminal justice system. Fellows work closely with the Roundtable Executive Committee and consultants to develop their leadership skills and become competent and professional advocates for criminal justice system-involved individuals.



### SLAVERY & THE "JUSTICE" SYSTEM

After slavery was abolished, the criminal legal system has been used to extract labor from enslaved people's descendants. Black codes criminalized activities like selling crops without permission from a white person. The convict leasing system allowed private individuals to lease incarcerated people as workers. (1,2)

### REDLINING

Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC), established in 1933 for the purpose of stabilizing the mortgage lending system in the nation, excluded Black neighborhoods from government-insured loans. Those neighborhoods were deemed "hazardous" and colored in with red on maps, a practice that came to be known as "redlining." Redlining perpetuated segregation and contributed to income disparities, poor health outcomes, and higher rates of both violent crime and police violence due to the concentrated, systemic lack of resources. (4,5)



### DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITALS

As a result of deinstitutionalization, more mentally ill individuals, who might have previously been treated in mental institutions, were being sent to prison. Exposure to violence in prisons and jails can exacerbate existing mental health disorders or even lead to the development of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Shortages in adequate community mental health care can lead to incarceration. (6,7)

### REINFORCING POLICIES LEADING TO MASS INCARCERATION

The "tough on crime" narrative led to the the Violent Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1994 under the Clinton Administration. This bill featured the largest expansion of the federal death penalty in modern times, the gutting of habeas corpus, the evisceration of the exclusionary rule, the trying of 13-year-olds as adults, and 100,000 new police officers on the streets, which led to an explosion in racial profiling. It also included the elimination of Pell educational grants for prisoners, the implementation of the federal three strikes law, and monetary incentives to states to enact "truth-in-sentencing" laws, which subsidized an astronomical rise in prison construction across the country, lengthened the amount of time to be served, and solidified a mentality of meanness. (8)

### LAUNCH OF REENTRY ROUNDTABLE



In September 2003, the Roundtable's initial Planning Council was formed, comprising of multiple city and county stakeholders. The first forum, held in April 2004, kicked off the organization with a plan to encourage reentry stakeholders to break down the silos in which they were operating.

### REENTRY ADVOCACY PROJECT (RAP) COUNCIL FORMED

RAP, a council of formerly incarcerated individuals and reentry stakeholders that informs the ongoing work of the Roundtable, was formed to ensure the voices of those with lived reentry experience are at the center of the Roundtable's work. They meet monthly to provide support and connect to resources utilizing a mutual aid self-help model.

### CITY OF AUSTIN FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE

The Fair Chance Employment ordinance, which prohibits private employers with more than 15 employees from inquiring about a job applicant's criminal history before extending an offer, was passed 8-2 by City Council in March 2016 and implemented in April 2017. Austin became the first city in Texas to "ban-the-box", requiring employers to revise their job applications, guidelines, and documentation for the hiring process. The law aims to reduce recidivism and unemployment and increase re-integration for qualified job applicants with criminal histories. Reentry Roundtable conducted outreach to employers in an effort to improve enforcement and increase awareness of the ordinance. (11)

1933

1994

2004

2011-2012

2016 - 2019

1865

1955

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