COMMUNITIES NOT CAGES

Eliminate Mandatory Minimums • Grant a Second Look • Support Transformation
We must end mass incarceration in New York.

Every day, over 30,000 New Yorkers languish in state prisons. 75% are Black or brown.

New York’s commitment to mass incarceration helps fuel America’s shameful standing as the largest cager of human life in the world, with more than two million people detained in prisons, jails, and immigrant detention facilities throughout the country.

Mass incarceration does not deliver justice, safety, or healing.

It tears at the fabric of families and communities who lose loved ones, breadwinners, and caretakers to New York State prisons.

New York’s sentencing laws are fundamentally racist and harmful.

The Rockefeller Drug Laws—which introduced mandatory minimum sentences and dramatically increased prison sentences—were driven by a wave of anti-Black racism that New York exported across the country.

Much of this system remains today. New York continues to incarcerate people at a rate more than double that of the mid 1970s.

A system of coerced plea deals has replaced the constitutional right to trial.

Prosecutors use the threat of outrageously long mandatory minimums to coerce people into taking guilty pleas. 98% of convictions in our state are the result of guilty pleas—not trials—in large part due to New York’s draconian sentencing laws.

This undermines fundamental fairness and our basic constitutional rights.

Mass incarceration is ineffective—and costly.

It costs nearly $70,000 per year to cage a person in state prison. The result is that New York spends over $3 billion every year on a cruel, counterproductive prison system—billions that could instead be spent on education, housing, healthcare, community-based anti-violence and restorative justice programs.
Communities Not Cages is a statewide campaign building the power of people and families impacted by mass incarceration to overhaul New York’s racist and draconian sentencing laws.

Together, we call on New York to:

- **Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences.**
  Mandatory minimum sentences drive mass incarceration, strip judges of discretion, and grant outsized power to prosecutors to coerce guilty pleas.

- **Allow judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences.**
  New York has the third largest number of people serving life sentences in the country. Thousands of people are currently serving sentences of a decade or more.

  Under current sentencing laws, most incarcerated people have no opportunity to demonstrate to a judge that they have changed or to ask for excessive or extreme sentences to be reconsidered to account for new laws and norms.

- **Support transformation and bring our loved ones home.**
  Following the federal 1994 Crime Bill, New York State slashed programs for incarcerated people and dramatically limited the time people could earn time off their sentences.

  New York must strengthen “good time” and “merit time” laws to support personal transformation in prison and reunite families.
Mandatory minimum sentences drive mass incarceration, strip judges of discretion, and grant outsized power to prosecutors to coerce guilty pleas.

A vestige of the 1970’s era Rockefeller Drug Laws, New York’s mandatory minimum sentencing laws contribute to mass incarceration and unjust case outcomes.

- Right now, over 30,000 people are incarcerated in New York’s prisons. Nearly 75% are Black or brown.

- In 2019 alone, over 9,000 people were subjected to a two- or three-strikes law. Three-quarters were people of color, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.

- More than 105,000 children have a parent serving time in a New York jail or prison, which devastates families, and increases the likelihood of a child’s future incarceration.

- It costs nearly $70,000 per year to incarcerate a person in state prison with an annual prison system price tag of $3 billion. These are billions of dollars New York State could spend on education, housing, healthcare, community-based anti-violence and restorative justice programs -- all of which help to create real community safety.

- Survivors overwhelmingly prefer investments in the community to lengthy prison sentences, by a factor of 15 to 1.

- Mandatory minimums contribute to the coercion of plea deals. Right now in New York State, 98% of convictions come through guilty plea, undermining the constitutional right to trial.

Mandatory minimums result in serious miscarriages of justice.

For example, a 60-year-old New York woman is currently serving a five-year prison sentence for robbery in the second degree where money was taken from an open cash register, and there was no physical harm. She is HIV positive, has battled cancer, and has a litany of serious health conditions.

At trial, the presiding judge said that she wished that she could give a non-incarceratory sentence, but her hands were tied because of the mandatory minimum.
A system of coerced plea deals has replaced the constitutional right to trial.

In New York State, 98% of convictions are the result of plea deals. Mandatory minimums are a significant part of what has created this system of pleas whereby New Yorkers forfeit their constitutional right to trial and most people are convicted without a chance to mount a meaningful defense.

Prosecutors use the threat of long mandatory minimum sentences to skirt due process and extract guilty pleas.

By requiring a judge to hand down a minimum prison sentence based on the charges levied by a prosecutor, mandatory sentences transfer sentencing power from judges to prosecutors and give them unfair and overwhelming leverage in plea negotiations. Prosecutors frequently threaten to bring charges carrying long mandatory minimum sentences to scare the accused person into pleading guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence.

The Solution: The Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act

This legislation would eliminate mandatory minimum sentences, allowing judges to consider the individual factors and mitigating circumstances in a case. In doing so, the Eliminate Mandatory Minimums Act will finally undo the harm of the Rockefeller Drug Law era. This legislation would also create a presumption against incarceration, requiring a hearing before any period of incarceration can be imposed and re-orienting the system towards healing and accountability and away from purely punitive prison sentences.

Key Provisions:

• Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for prison, jail, and probation.
• Eliminate mandatory minimums based on New York’s two- and three- strike laws which require lengthy periods of incarceration based on prior convictions.
• Eliminate plea deal restrictions that prohibit particular sentences based solely on the prosecutor’s charging decisions.

For more information, contact:
Katie Schaffer
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Despite clear research that longer prison sentences increase rather than reduce recidivism, New York has shifted focus from rehabilitation to simply warehousing people in prison...

- Good time and merit time programs support personal transformation by encouraging participation in education, employment, and other rehabilitative programs.

- However, during the 1990s, New York State slashed programs for incarcerated people and dramatically limited the time people could earn off their sentences. This included eliminating financial aid for incarcerated college students, decimating college-in-prison programs.

- New York also restricted access to merit time based on conviction type, eliminating key opportunities for rehabilitative programming and earned time for thousands of New Yorkers each year.

- Research shows that longer prison sentences increase rather than decrease recidivism. For example, a 2016 study in four states—Michigan, Missouri, New York, and Utah—found that longer length of stays produces higher recidivism rates. A study in Texas found that each additional year that a person serves time behind bars makes them 4 to 7% more likely to recidivate within three months after release.

- Research also shows that earned time opportunities help to prepare incarcerated people for reintegration, reducing recidivism rates and correctional costs.

- New York is substantially behind other states—including traditionally conservative states—on allowing incarcerated people to earn time off their sentences. For example, Alabama, Nebraska, and Oklahoma all permit incarcerated people to earn over 50% earned time.

Current state law fails to provide incarcerated people with meaningful opportunities to earn release and gives DOCCS unlimited discretion to deny earned good time and merit time credits—even after years of good conduct.
The Solution: The Earned Time Act

Earned time helps to prepare incarcerated people for reintegration and to restore them to their families and communities. The Earned Time Act will strengthen and expand “good time” and “merit time” laws to encourage personal transformation in prison and reunite families.

Key Provisions

- Allow all incarcerated people to earn good time and merit time, so that all incarcerated people—regardless of conviction—have the opportunity and encouragement to engage in personal transformation.

- Increase good time and merit time to encourage rehabilitation and reunite families.

- Create procedural protections.

- Expand opportunities for earning merit time and incentivize individual prisons to offer the strongest rehabilitative programs.

For more information, contact:
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Over the past 50 years, New York’s laws have resulted in increasingly harsh sentences — with no opportunity for sentencing judges to review and reconsider individual cases.

- Decades-long prison terms have become the norm in New York. Every year, nearly 1,000 people are sentenced to 10 or more years in prison, and over 5,000 people — more than 10% of people in prison — have been there for 15 years or longer.

- New York State has the third-largest population of people serving terms of life imprisonment in the country. Nearly 9,000 New Yorkers are currently serving life sentences.

- Prisons have become inadequate hospitals and long-term care facilities for thousands of sick and aging people. There are over 8,000 people today over the age of 50 in New York prisons and 44% of New Yorkers in state prison struggle with a chronic health condition.

- Nationally, the amount of time people are serving in prison has increased dramatically. Between 1994 and 2014, the number of people in prison who had served more than 15 years increased 526%. This growth was most dramatic for people serving the longest sentences. The number of people in prison for 25 years or longer increased from 26 people in 1994 to 1,330 in 2014 (over 5,000% growth).

- This increase in sentence length stems primarily from the “tough-on-crime” laws passed in the 1970s and 1990s, which disproportionately targeted Black and brown communities.

- Those who are serving lengthy sentences have no opportunity to demonstrate to a judge that they have changed after years or decades in prison or that, given changed laws and norms, the sentence is no longer appropriate.
Under current law, sentencing judges do not have an opportunity to review and reconsider excessive sentences.

Judges have spoken out about their inability to address sentences that are extreme or unjust. For example, in 2016, Chief United States District Judge Stefan Underhill wrote in the New York Times that a 18-year sentence he had handed down was too harsh and lamenting that he was unable to modify it. It is time for a second look.

The Solution: The Second Look Act

The Second Look Act allows incarcerated people to petition for resentencing and permits judges to revisit and reduce sentences, giving New Yorkers the opportunity to return to their families and communities, and to rebuild their lives.

Nationally, second look bills are gaining momentum with legislation passed in four states— Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Oregon—and the District of Columbia, and proposed in an additional 22 states. Federally, U.S. Senator Cory Booker has proposed second look legislation in Congress.

Key Provisions

- Allow judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences. Cases will be heard by a different judge than the initial sentencing judge.
- Allow incarcerated people to apply for a resentencing hearing after they have served 10 years or half of their sentence (if the sentence is over a decade). If a person is otherwise ineligible, the prosecutor can consent to their resentencing application.
- Create a presumption that resentencing will be granted if the person is over 55 years old at the time of the resentencing hearing, or was under 25 years old at the time the crime occurred. This provision reflects the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) assessment of aging in prison and neurological research on young adults and developing brains.
- The right to counsel is guaranteed at every stage of second look proceedings.
1971 A NEW ERA OF TARGETED CRIMINALIZATION

Nixon declares the War on Drugs, escalating the mass incarceration crisis. His chief domestic advisor, John Ehrlichman, would famously later explain that this approach targeted Black communities and the anti-war left.

By “criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities,” he confessed,

“We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news.”

1973-78 ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS

In 1973, New York passes the “Rockefeller Drug Laws”, nicknamed for the governor who pushes them through.

These unprecedentedly harsh laws relentlessly funnel Black, Brown and poor New Yorkers into cages.

Lengthy mandatory minimums strip judges of their discretion when determining sentencing and serve as prosecutorial leverage in coercing plea deals.

Two-strike laws further lengthen the sentence of an individual with a prior conviction, and three-strike laws condemn people to life in prison.

Other states follow suit.

New York’s commitment to mass incarceration helps fuel America’s shameful standing as the largest cager of human life in the world.

1980s-90s POLITICIANS + MEDIA INCITE CRIME PANIC

Politicians in the 80s and 90s, notably Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, champion so-called “tough on crime” and “law and order” policies.

They reproduce racist and classist stereotypes related to violence and drug use, and champion extreme policing and prison responses.

Mass media and entertainment increasingly depict Black, Brown and poor people as violent criminals. White and middle class people are represented as victims, and white police officers as saviors.

Journalists use terms like “superpredator” to create fear of Black boys and to amplify salacious and racist narratives. Politicians adopt the term gleefully, including Democrats, who compete with Republicans to be seen as equally “tough on crime”.

1994 FEDS INCENTIVIZE GROWTH OF STATE PRISONS

Despite a decrease in the national crime rate and a rise in mass incarceration, President Bill Clinton signs a dramatic new crime bill.

The federal government offers large grants to states to build or expand prisons and jails in exchange for increasing the amount of time that people spend incarcerated. 28 states, including New York, comply.
Every day, over 30,000 New Yorkers languish in state prisons. 75% are Black or brown. This is how we got here.

### 1973-78 ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS

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The federal government offers large grants to states to build or expand prisons and jails in exchange for increasing the amount of time that people spend incarcerated. The New York legislature passes a partial repeal of the Rockefeller Drug laws, including eliminating mandatory minimums in lower-level drug cases and reducing mandatory minimum penalties in other drug cases. The legislation, however, leaves other mandatory minimum sentences and the two- and three-strikes laws in place.

### 1991-95 FEDS INCENTIVIZE GROWTH OF STATE PRISONS

In response to Clinton’s 1994 crime bill, New York reinstates the death penalty and creates the sentence of “life imprisonment without parole” in 1995. Initially, the sentence was optional and could be imposed only in the case of murder in the first degree; legislation passed in 2004 made the sentence mandatory in certain categories of cases. Though the New York death penalty was declared unconstitutional by the Court of Appeals, the sentence remains.

New York adopts extreme sentencing laws in 1995. The ability of incarcerated people to earn time off their sentences is drastically reduced. Over the next two years, New York receives more than $50 million for jail and prison construction from the federal government.

This legislation expands in 1998, resulting in longer sentences, increased mandatory minimums, increased life sentences without the possibility of parole, and other heightened carceral penalties, all billed triumphantly as the “toughest crime laws in a generation.”

Laws are passed to require that sentences for some crimes be served consecutively rather than concurrently. At the same time, rehabilitative programs such as vocational training, college education, and GED diploma programs are severely reduced, or eliminated completely. Following the 1994 elimination of federal Pell grants for incarcerated college students, New York eliminates state financial aid, wiping out college access in prisons across the state.

### 2004-09 PARTIAL REPEAL OF ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS

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### 2019 SENTENCING RELIEF FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

After a decade-long campaign, New York State enacts the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA) to allow judges to sentence below mandatory minimums in cases where a crime was committed by a survivor in direct relationship to their abuse.

### 2021 COMMUNITIES NOT CAGES

Families, formerly incarcerated people, and advocates launch the Communities Not Cages campaign to decarcerate prisons and overhaul New York’s racist and draconian sentencing laws.
The past few years have put into stark relief our inability to predict the future. Virologists, epidemiologists, and related medical professionals repeatedly reevaluate their views regarding COVID-19 and its variants. Economists daily revise their opinions about inflation, interest rate hikes, and the likelihood of a recession. Political pundits and pollsters are scurrying to explain why their election prognostications were off the mark. No one can gainsay the limited ability of meteorologists to accurately forecast the weather beyond a few days.

And yet in our criminal courts, judges act as if they have the power to see into the future. It is commonplace for judges to hand down maximum sentences as they emphatically proclaim that the person in front of them is irredeemable and will forever be a threat to society.

In apparent recognition of and response to this judicial hubris, the American Bar Association’s House of Delegates approved a resolution that encourages legislation to provide for judicial “second look” review of all criminal sentences. Such legislation would mandate a reevaluation of sentences where individuals have been incarcerated for ten years, regardless of original sentence or crime of conviction. Notably, the resolution received the unanimous support of the ABA’s Criminal Justice Section Council, a group comprised of judges, prosecutors, and academics, as well as defense attorneys.

The resolution is a recognition that people, including those convicted of serious and often violent crimes, can and do change. Public attitudes about crime also change as evidenced, for example, by the movement to legalize marijuana. Our understanding of behavior evolves as neuroscience now reveals that brain development and the corresponding ability to control impulses and consider consequences continues into our twenties. It is also appropriate, if not imperative, to re-examine sentences simply because it is illogical to think that a sentence once imposed remains just, necessary, and appropriate in perpetuity.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that not all victims or family members of a victim demand lengthy prison terms for the person who caused harm. The restorative justice movement is shining light on innovative approaches to harm and trauma and the needs and desires of those who have been harmed by violence. “Second look” reviews can amplify the burgeoning restorative justice movement by promoting conversation about alternatives to relentless punishment.

Further, second looks are not just about beneficence or mercy. There is much talent that is wasted behind bars. People languish on the inside when they could contribute on the outside as mentors to young people who might end up making the same mistakes that they did at similar ages. They could help repair families and communities that have been devastated by the draconian sentencing of the past several decades. More directly, second look sentencing can return fathers and mothers to support their sons and daughters, and restore sons and daughters to act as caregivers to aging parents. Returning citizens can and do revitalize communities and promote public safety.

To be clear, the American Bar Association resolution does not call for automatic resentencing. It is not a guarantee that anyone will be released. Rather, the potential for resentencing will provide hope for those serving long sentences that they are not necessarily consigned to die in prison. Second looks provide a powerful incentive for incarcerated people to take whatever steps they can to grow and improve, and to confront and address the confluence of factors that led them to where they are, the harm they caused, and what they can do to try and atone.

The ABA resolution is by no means an outlier. Senator Cory Booker and Representative Karen Bass introduced the Second Look Act in 2019 to permit people who have served ten years in federal prison to petition a court for resentencing. In the meantime,
federal court judges are using the First Step Act and compassionate release to find compelling reasons to resentence people given long sentences. Some states have taken steps to rectify past decades of massive sentences that were often motivated by racist tropes like “super predator,” “wolfpack,” and “wilding,” by passing legislation authorizing the right to seek resentencing for those convicted when they were young.

New York is among the states that presently do not provide any mechanism for sentencing review beyond the immediate direct appeal. A bill, the Second Look Act, addresses that omission by allowing judges to review and reconsider excessive sentences. It is long overdue as there are more than 7,500 people serving life and very long-term sentences in New York prisons.

Consider just one example. When Bryon was a young man, he and friends made the rash decision to rob some local drug dealers in upstate New York. In the ensuing chaos, one person was shot in the leg. At sentencing, the judge expressed his view that Bryon was irredeemable, stating, “You should be locked up for a very long period of time to protect other God-fearing, law-abiding citizens . . . you should be kept under lock and key for the absolute maximum period of imprisonment of the time they can keep you there.” Bryon was ultimately sentenced to 50 years.

The passage of time has proven the judge wrong – 21 years later, Bryon has grown into a mature, thoughtful, and accomplished adult. He has not received a single disciplinary ticket for violent conduct. He serves as a GED tutor and is taking college classes. He facilitates alternatives to violence and related programs. He has written apology letters to his victims to take full responsibility for his actions and to express his heartfelt remorse. Recently, he and his wife organized a bookbag giveaway as an effort to try and repair the harm he caused to his community. Without the Second Look Act, Bryon will remain behind bars for decades to come.

Many are familiar with the sentiment expressed by Sister Helen Prejean and civil rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson that no one should be judged by the worst thing they ever did. It seems appropriate to amend the statement – no one should be judged in perpetuity for the worst thing they ever did. It is exactly the “in perpetuity” that forecloses the recognition of redemption and mandates the need for second looks.

_Steven Zeidman is a professor of law at CUNY School of Law_
There is no other way to put it: In my nearly two decades on the federal bench, I presided over a system of mass incarceration.

While I strove to do justice, too often mandatory-minimum sentencing laws transformed my role from judge to a cog in the wheel, requiring prison terms that were unfair, unjust and disproportionate.

I sentenced young people to mandatory minimums without regard to the substance abuse I saw, the mental health treatment they needed, the trauma they had almost universally suffered, and the impact on their families and communities of disappearing them into cages for years or decades.

While on the bench, my colleagues and I did what we could to address America's failed experiment in mass incarceration, but it was not enough. We expressed our objections in articles and open court. In U.S. v. Vasquez, my colleague Judge John Gleeson was especially direct: “As a result of the ... five-year mandatory minimum, there was no judging going on at Vasquez's sentencing. ... [T]he prosecutor's refusal to permit consideration of a lesser sentence ended the matter, rendering irrelevant all the other factors that should have been considered to arrive at a just sentence.”

We were not able to consider the facts before us. We were just clerks, signing our names on the dotted line. Our horror stories could continue. One of the men I sentenced lost his parents to prison and drugs. At 14 he lived on the street and dealt drugs to purchase school supplies for his siblings. By the time he reached adulthood, he had a record that triggered a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years – and there was nothing I could do about it. That is why I support the passage of three bills that aim to address injustices in New York’s sentencing laws: the Eliminating Mandatory Minimums Act, the Second Look Act and the Earned Time Act.

The cornerstone of our criminal legal system is the right to a fair trial. But in New York, 98 percent of cases are resolved by guilty plea. The reason for this is as disturbing as it is simple. Mandatory minimums serve to coerce defendants, innocent and guilty alike, to take plea deals rather than risk severe sentences for exercising a basic right assured to them by the Constitution. Put simply, our current laws punish people who exercise their right to trial.

The Eliminating Mandatory Minimums Act is a critical step toward ending the coercion of plea deals and allowing judges to make individualized determinations based on facts of the case at hand. This legislation would allow judges to consider mitigating circumstances and vest sentencing power with judges – not prosecutors.

The Second Look Act would allow incarcerated people to petition for resentencing. Judges could revisit overly long sentences where appropriate. In so doing, we could address decades of unjust sentencing that devastated families and communities.

Finally, the Earned Time Act encourages incarcerated people to seek out education, employment, and rehabilitative programs while serving their sentences. This bill rewards incarcerated people who are actively working to become contributing members of society by allowing them to earn good-time and merit-time credit. Incentivizing participation in programs is an essential step toward building a world where people come out of prison better prepared to be assets to our community than when they were sentenced.

I was appointed to the bench in 1994, the same year that the notorious '94 crime bill was passed, dramatically reducing access to earned time, ballooning prison populations, and eliminating college access for incarcerated students. Nearly three decades later, even President Joe Biden, the bill's chief architect, has called for change, including the elimination of mandatory minimums and the expansion of earned-credit programs.

Passing the Eliminating Mandatory Minimums Act, the Second Look Act, and the Earned Time Act are critical steps toward realizing a fairer and more just legal system.

Nancy Gertner is a former judge and a senior lecturer on law at Harvard University.
Our Coalition

- #HALTsolitary Campaign
- A Little Piece Of Light
- ALAA - UAW 2325
- Albany Social Justice Center
- Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS)
- Appellate Advocates
- Artistic Noise
- Attica Improvement and Memorial Project
- Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Long Island
- Black Lives Matter (BLM) - Hudson Valley
- Bronx Defenders
- Brooklyn Defender Services
- Brooklyn Law School
- Criminal Defense & Advocacy Clinic
- Call BlackLine
- Capital Area Against Mass Incarceration
- Capitol Area Relief & Liberation
- Center for Appellate Litigation
- Center for Community Alternatives
- Center for Employment Opportunities
- Center for Family Representation
- Center for Justice at Columbia University
- Center for Law and Justice
- Children's Defense Fund-New York
- Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
- Churches United for Fair Housing
- Citizen Action of New York
- Clemency Coalition of New York
- Clemency Coalition of New York
- College & Community Fellowship
- Color Of Change
- Common Justice
- Community Service Society of New York
- Community Voices Heard/Community Voices Heard Power
- Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
- CORE Recovery Center
- CUNY Law School Defenders Clinic
- District Council 37
- Drug Policy Alliance
- Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance (DCPAA)
- Elias Foundation
- Embrace Recovery & Rehabilitation Services
- Empowerment Collaborative of Long Island (ECLI)
- EndQINY
- ENJAN Poughkeepsie
- Envision Freedom Fund (formerly Brooklyn Community Bail Fund)
- Equitable Future, Inc.
- Evergreen Health Services
- Exodus Transitional Community
- For the Many
- Fordham Law School's Criminal Defense Clinic
- Fortune Society
- Free the People WNY
- Freedom Agenda
- fwd.us
- Gender Equality New York, Inc.
- GOSO – Getting Out & Staying Out
- Health and Incarceration Connection / URMC
- Hour Children
- Housing Works
- Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison
- Human Rights Watch
- Human Rights Watch
- Immigrant Defense Project
- Incarcerated Nation Network, Inc.
- Ithaca Prisoner Justice Network
- Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
- Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
- John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity
- Judson Memorial Church
- Laborers Local 79
- LatinoJustice PRLDEF
- Layleen's Nurturing Nest
- Legal Action Center
- Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc.
- Legal Aid Society
- LIFE Progressive Services Group Inc
- Long Island Progressive Coalition
- Long Island Social Justice Action Network
- Main Street Legal Services of CUNY Law School
- Mason Tenders District Council
- Men Talk
- Monroe County Public Defender's Office
- Mothers On the Inside
- National Action Network
- National Action Network (NAN) - Syracuse
- National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee
- National Alliance on Mental Illness - Queens
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Rockland County
- National Alliance on Mental...
Illness of Rockland County, Inc.
• National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Huntington
• National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) - NYS Criminal Justice
• National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) - Orange County
• Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
• New Hour for Women & Children - LI
• New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services
• New York Civil Liberties Union
• New York Communities for Change
• New York County Defender Services
• New York Immigration Coalition
• New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NYSACDL)
• New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault
• Newburgh LGBTQAI+ Center
• NY Returning Citizens Empowerment Political Club
• Office of the Appellate Defender
• OGS Against Gun Violence
• Partnership for the Public Good
• Prisoners Are People Too
• REJI Organizing Coalition
• Release Aging People in Prison
• Restorative Action Alliance
• Rise And Resist NYC
• Rise Up Kingston
• Rochester Decarceration Research Initiative

• S.T.O.P. - The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
• S.T.R.O.N.G. Youth, Inc.
• Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) NYC
• Survivors Justice Project
• T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
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• The Correctional Association of New York
• The EQI Project
• The Gathering for Justice
• The Peacekeepers
• The Sentencing Project
• Troy for Black Lives
• Turning Points Resource Center
• United Christian Leadership Ministry
• United Voices of Cortland
• UnLocal
• Uptown Progressive Action
• VOCAL-NY
• VOICE Buffalo
• Wayne County Public Defender
• We Got Us Now
• WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
• Westchester for Change
• Women & Justice Project
• Women’s Community Justice Association
• Working Families Party - New York
• Youth Anti Prison Project
• Youth Represent
Why Incarcerated Leaders Fight For COMMUNITIES NOT CAGES

Tracy received an unjust and extreme sentence of 11 years.

“Passage of the #CommunitiesNotCages bills would have a phenomenal ripple effect, healing the criminal justice-system.”

David received an unjust and extreme sentence of 14 years.

“There are men and women serving time who have dedicated their lives to change and would do more good for their communities and families by coming home rather than deteriorating in prison.”

New York’s sentencing laws are racist and unjust.
Bryon received an unjust and extreme sentence of \( \text{years} \). 

"Communities Not Cages would be vital in moving New York out of a punitive mode of incarceration, to an incentive-based model that will add value not only to people and their families, but their communities.

Zach received an unjust and extreme sentence of \( \text{years} \). 

"I can’t change what I did but I am NOT that person anymore. All I want is the chance to prove who I truly am.

Brenda received an unjust and extreme sentence of \( \text{to life} \). 

"People with long and harsh sentences never receive the change to show we are rehabilitated because we are held in prisons for life.

Shawn received an unjust and extreme sentence of \( \text{years} \). 

"Communities Not Cages sets a certain degree of faith that we all have the ability to change. It would allow new ways for us to think and act with one another."
RIGHT NOW over 30,000 people are incarcerated in New York’s prisons. 75% are black or brown.

CommunitiesNotCagesNY.org