

People of Color and the Prison Industrial Complex

Facts and Figures at a Glance

- ☞ African Americans represent 12.7% of the US population, 15% of US drug users (72% of all users are white), 36.8% of those arrested for a drug-related crime, 48.2% of American adults in state, and federal prisons and local jails and 42.5% of prisoners under sentence of death. *Statistical Abstract of the United States (1999), Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, (1998), National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (1998) and Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999.*
- ☞ African American women (with an incarceration rate of 205 per 100,000) are more than three times as likely as Latinas (60 per 100,000) and six times more likely than white women (34 per 100,000) to face imprisonment. *Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2000 (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, August 2001).*
- ☞ The United States imprisons African American men at a rate four times greater than the rate of incarceration for Black men in South Africa. *Craig Haney, Ph.D., and Phillip Zimbardo, Ph.D., "The Past and Future of U.S. Prison Policy: Twenty-five Years After the Stanford Prison Experiment," American Psychologist, Vol. 53, No. 7 (July 1998), p. 714.*
- ☞ In 1986, before mandatory minimums for crack offenses went into effect, the average sentence for an African American convicted of a drug-related crime involving crack was 11% higher than for whites. In 1990, four years after the implementation of harsher federal drug laws, the average increased to 49%. *Meierhoefer, B. S., The General Effect of Mandatory Minimum Prison Terms: A Longitudinal Study of Federal Sentences Imposed (Washington DC: Federal Judicial Center, 1992), p. 20.*
- ☞ Due to felony convictions, 1.46 million African American men out of a total voting population of 10.4 million have lost their right to vote. *Thomas, P., "Study Suggests Black Male Prison Rate Impinges on Political Process," The Washington Post (January 30, 1997), p. A3.*
- ☞ One in three black men between the ages of 20 and 29 live under some form of correctional supervision or control. *Maurer, M. & Hurling, T., "Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later (Washington DC: The Sentencing Project, 1995).*
- ☞ Latinos represent 11.1% of the US population, 10% of US drug users (72% of all users are white), 22.5% of sentenced state prisoners convicted of a drug-related crime, and 18.6% of American adults in state or federal prisons and local jails. *Statistical Abstract of the United States (1999), Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, (1998), National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (1998) and Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999.*
- ☞ African American children (7.0%) were nearly nine times more likely to have an incarcerated parent in prison than white children (0.8%). Similarly, Latino children (2.6%) were three times as likely as white children to have a parent in prison. *Bureau of Justice Statistics, Incarcerated Parents and Their Children (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, August 2000).*
- ☞ Native Americans represent less than 1% of the US population. Over 4% of Native Americans are under correctional supervision (compared to 2% of whites). Native Americans are the victims of violent crimes at twice the rate of the general population and 60% of these victims describe the offender as white. *American Indians and Crime, Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999), Statistical Abstract of the United States (1999), Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (1998) and Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999.*