

## NAACP

### Criminal Justice Fact Sheet

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#### Incarceration Trends in America

- From 1980 to 2008, the number of people incarcerated in America quadrupled—from roughly 500,000 to 2.3 million people
- Today, the US is 5% of the World population and has 25% of world prisoners.
- Combining the number of people in prison and jail with those under parole or probation supervision, 1 in every 31 adults, or 3.2 percent of the population is under some form of correctional control

#### Racial Disparities in Incarceration

- African Americans now constitute nearly 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated population
- African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites
- Together, African American and Hispanics comprised 58% of all prisoners in 2008, even though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately one quarter of the US population
- According to Unlocking America, if African American and Hispanics were incarcerated at the same rates of whites, today's prison and jail populations would decline by approximately 50%
- One in six black men had been incarcerated as of 2001. If current trends continue, one in three black males born today can expect to spend time in prison during his lifetime
- 1 in 100 African American women are in prison
- Nationwide, African-Americans represent 26% of juvenile arrests, 44% of youth who are detained, 46% of the youth who are judicially waived to criminal court, and 58% of the youth admitted to state prisons (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice).

#### Drug Sentencing Disparities

- About 14 million Whites and 2.6 million African Americans report using an illicit drug
- 5 times as many Whites are using drugs as African Americans, yet African Americans are sent to prison for drug offenses at 10 times the rate of Whites
- African Americans represent 12% of the total population of drug users, but 38% of those arrested for drug offenses, and 59% of those in state prison for a drug offense.
- African Americans serve virtually as much time in prison for a drug offense (58.7 months) as whites do for a violent offense (61.7 months). (Sentencing Project)

#### Contributing Factors

- Inner city crime prompted by social and economic isolation
- Crime/drug arrest rates: African Americans represent 12% of monthly drug users, but comprise 32% of persons arrested for drug possession
- "Get tough on crime" and "war on drugs" policies
- Mandatory minimum sentencing, especially disparities in sentencing for crack and powder cocaine possession
- In 2002, blacks constituted more than 80% of the people sentenced under the federal crack cocaine laws and served substantially more time in prison for drug offenses than did whites, despite that fact that more than 2/3 of crack cocaine users in the U.S. are white or Hispanic
- "Three Strikes"/habitual offender policies
- Zero Tolerance policies as a result of perceived problems of school violence; adverse affect on black children.
- 35% of black children grades 7-12 have been suspended or expelled at some point in their school careers compared to 20% of Hispanics and 15% of whites

#### Effects of Incarceration

- Jail reduces work time of young people over the next decade by 25-30 percent when compared with arrested youths who were not incarcerated

- Jails and prisons are recognized as settings where society's infectious diseases are highly concentrated
- Prison has not been proven as a rehabilitation for behavior, as two-thirds of prisoners will reoffend

**Exorbitant Cost of Incarceration: Is it Worth It?**

- About \$70 billion dollars are spent on corrections yearly
- Prisons and jails consume a growing portion of the nearly \$200 billion we spend annually on public safety