



### Our Failure to Help Ex-Convicts

As most of us already know, the American criminal justice system is extremely flawed. Incorrect and excessive convictions are all too common, and what convicts can do after serving their time is restricted as well. Not to mention the disgusting issue of police brutality and how we fail to bring it's victims justice. However, in this post I'll be focusing more so on the connection of incarceration to homelessness.

Homelessness can be both a cause and consequence of incarceration. Charges like loitering, sleeping in public, or squatting on private property can, and have, led to homeless people being incarcerated. This, when we examine the large homeless population in America, leads to the number of those incarcerated inflating at a rapid pace. Even if those charges only led to fines, homeless peoples may very well not be able to pay off said fines, leading to their incarceration. When they serve their time and leave, they are now homeless and an ex-convict, making it even harder for them to leave the situation they've been left in. The stigma against ex-convicts, specifically in America, has made it incredibly difficult for ex-convicts to find work. A lot of times, even if someone fits all the criteria, a criminal background would set them back by a milestone. It's not only absolutely ridiculous, but it only contributes to our inflating homeless population.

In another situation, let's say someone with a good life prior to incarceration had served their sentence and was now free. A lot of times, when people leave incarceration, their support system and belongings are lost due to the amount of time spent behind bars. A lot of people enter incarceration with a healthy life and leave with it in shambles. It's another reason why the homeless ex-convict population is so high.

Those that are homeless with a criminal background are actually expected to be homeless for a longer amount of time, due to stigma and legalities that bar them from certain jobs or finding stable housing. The numbers of those incarcerated aren't small either. America is failing this marginalized group, just as it's failing the homeless population in general. Ex-cons have served their time, and deserve to be treated as normal people. When we bar them from voting, allow them to be openly discriminated against, and do nothing when job opportunities are unrightfully taken away from them, we fail them. There need to be laws that protect ex-con rights, especially those that committed non-violent crimes. We need to start treating them like people. In order to solve the homelessness crisis, these marginalized groups need to be helped.

Sources:

<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-incarceration-intimately-linked-new-federal-funding-available-reduce-harm/>

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