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**MASS INCARCERATION IN DETROIT: A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

by

**LABREONNA STORI-TURNER BLAND**

**THESIS**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

2016

**MAJOR: CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Approved by:

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Advisor

Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends; without their constant support and encouragement it could have never been completed. Specifically, I'd like to thank my parents, Lionel and Glynis Turner for their unwavering support as I pursued my educational goals. Additionally, I'd like to dedicate this to my siblings, Kinyata Cosby, Kealyonne Bland, and Lionel Turner Jr. I'd like to extend my deepest appreciation for their words of wisdom over the years. I'd also like to dedicate this thesis to my close girlfriends who have stuck by my side throughout this journey: Juana Lorenzo, Janelle Steib, Julie Borema, Chelsea Swank, Stephanie Buchannon, Jenni Czachowski, and Bridgett Price. The sincerity of your friendship has sustained me. Finally, I'd like to dedicate this thesis to Dion Bland Sr., Therese Bland, and Cassandra Bland; ten years ago you collectively put your resources together to assist me in transitioning into college and after three graduations and four degrees, I'm going to pursue dream of earning a PhD in Criminology.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was very complex project to complete and it could not have happened without the help of many. Dr. Marvin Zalman, the chair of my thesis committee has spent countless hours ensuring that I produce a quality product that both he and I can be proud of and build upon. Dr. Zalman has always challenged me to be a better scholar and for that I am grateful.

Dr. Jennifer Wareham, my departmental committee member has been available to assist in my writing and understanding how to synthesize and properly write my data. Her readiness to help and constant reassurance that I could complete this thesis have been instrumental in my journey to completion.

Dr. Danielle McGuire, my third committee member who provided amazing material for me to pull from during my literature review stage. I deeply appreciate your expertise as a historian throughout this process.

Dr. Brad Smith and Dr. Matt Larson, who did not serve on my committee but both collectively offered advice on navigating the thesis process and graciously attended my defense; I sincerely appreciate your input and help.

Mr. David Smydra was instrumental in the completion of this thesis as he referred contacts that would be most helpful. I offer many thanks for his time and effort. Finally, I'd like to thank Laura Rubino, who has easily become my best friend in the department. The collaboration we have formed has yielded many fruitful opportunities and she has constantly pushed me to keep going when I felt as though I could give up.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Defining Mass Incarceration**

What has taken place in the United States has been unprecedented; the criminal justice system has incarcerated the largest percentage of its population than any nation on the planet; yet it has become a normal life event for some racial groups (Justice, 2014). Mass incarceration has been at the forefront of the news lately; a simple Google search of the terms will yield 56,000 news results and well over one million web results. White House policy initiatives are even being put in place to combat the effects of mass incarceration ("A Drug Policy for the 21st Century"); this has not always been the case however. This pushback against the carceral phenomenon is a fairly recent movement. Mass incarceration has been described in many ways: a revolution, an epidemic, a collapse and a new Jim Crow (Alexander, 2010, p. 11). David Garland defined mass incarceration as a rate of imprisonment that is a historical norm for the society and produces a systematic imprisonment of a whole subgroup of the population (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Drucker goes a step further and distinguishes incarceration from mass incarceration. He defines incarceration plainly as "punishment by imprisonment" while defining mass incarceration as the "result of policies that support the large scale use of imprisonment on a sustained basis for political or social purposes that have little to do with law enforcement" (Drucker, 2013, p. 41).

### **Incarceration on a National Scale**

When compared to other countries, the differences are stark. In 2015, the World Prison Brief released the World Prison Population list which revealed that the United States imprisons and jails more than 2.2 million individuals and comes in with the second highest prison population rate in the world at 698 prisoners per 100,000 (Walmsley, 2016). As of The World Bank's total, the United States population exceeds 318 million (Population, n.d.). This rate is

second to Seychelles, a tiny island nation in the Indian Ocean, which has 799 prisoners per 100,000; Seychelles has a population just under 100,000 (Walmsley, 2016; Population, n.d.). When comparing the United States to other countries such as China or Canada, the differences are still as stark and alarming. China's prison population is at a rate of 119 per 100,000 while Canada imprisons 106 individuals per 100,000; these figures still pale in comparison to the United States (Walmsley, 2016). How did we as a nation get to this point where our prison population surpasses that of other industrial nations?

Data on the penal population in the United States revealed that between 1925 and 1973, the incarceration rates in the country were approximately 100 per 100,000, which was equal to that of our European counterparts (Western & Wildeman, 2009). In 1973, the Rockefeller Drug Laws were passed in New York after Governor Nelson Rockefeller denounced rehabilitative efforts put forth to address drug abuse (Drucker, 2013, p. 53). Before proposing the Draconian drug laws, Rockefeller championed several rehabilitative initiatives designed to tackle drug addiction; they all yielded mixed or unmeasurable results in their short tenure. The public panic surrounding the perceived drug epidemic, the sentiment that the issue was not being addressed quickly enough, and Rockefeller's presidential aspirations have been speculated as the reasons that led to the denouncement of rehabilitative policies (Kohler-Hausmann, 2010). The statutes, which later became the model for national policy, mandated that being convicted of possessing four or more ounces of cocaine or heroin be punished a minimum of 15 years to life in prison. Gov. Rockefeller's "tough on crime" agenda apparently worked politically; the policy began to spread like wildfire to other states and the effect was substantial. Subsequently, the penal population in the country began to skyrocket as a result of a turn towards more the more punitive



policies in regard to drug offenses. From 1975 to the end of 2005, the rate of incarceration through prison and jail rose from 111 to 491 per 100,000 (DeFina & Hannon, 2013).

### **Disparities in Mass Incarceration**

The African-American community has seen the brunt of the increase in the prison population; African-Americans and Hispanics now account for approximately two-thirds of the state prison population. Between 1980 and 2000, the rate of incarceration for African-Americans grew 370% while for Caucasian-Americans it grew 334% (Justice, 2014). Racial disparities in incarceration existed even before the Rockefeller Drug Laws were enacted but after the laws were enacted, minority males were incarcerated 12 to 14 times more than Caucasian-Americans (Jacobson & Chancer, 2010). Considerations for how this level of incarceration impacts the African-American community are warranted given the sheer number of individuals incarcerated and how the lion's share of those incarcerated belong to a certain demographic. If the incarceration rates remain the same, an African-American male born in 2010 has a one in three chance of being incarcerated (Jacobson & Chancer, 2010).

Imprisonment became the go-to method in "managing" a troublesome population and as data show, that population was young, low-income, minority men. These men range from 18-to-35 years old with, on average, less than eleven years of education (Western & Wildeman, 2009). With the prevalence of mass imprisonment, life-course scholars considered the idea that incarceration on a massive scale such as in the United States can signify a change in the life-pathway for young adult men. In modern times the signaling of adulthood meant progressing from school to work, then to marriage and establishing a family. Under mass incarceration, a multitude of young men are "off-track" and risk the chance of not entering into a conventional adulthood; imprisonment essentially alters the life course (Pettit & Western, 2004). Pettit and

Western (2004) found that prison becomes a common life event, like a rite of passage such as getting a license, for black non-college men.

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander argues that mass incarceration is another form of the systemic suppression of African-Americans (Alexander, 2010, p. 12). She argues that the criminal justice plays an active role in this phenomenon by acting as a gateway into a system of racial stigma by disproportionately incarcerating men of color. Like many scholars, she points to the War on Drugs as being the leading culprit in mass incarceration.

### **The War on Drugs**

A fierce media campaign aimed at providing the public with visuals of the devastation of crack cocaine began in the early 1980s (Alexander, 2010). Under the Reagan administration, the penalties for the sale and possession of drugs increased more than they had in previous years. What followed the War on Drugs was increasing support for ‘tough on crime’ politics; policy changes by the nation’s leaders that have played an integral role in the perpetuation of the carceral dilemma. During this time, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was passed which imposed mandatory minimum sentences for offenses (Alexander, 2010, p. 53-54). At a time that employment opportunities for unskilled laborers were in sharp decline, the drug trade provided a revenue stream that called for little skill and returned a profit higher than a conventional job would yield men in the 1980s; it was the urban ghetto dream. In 1994 President Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act into law. The bill allotted almost ten billion dollars for the construction of prisons and introduced the federal three-strike’s law for third-time federal felons (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Aggressive policing tactics such as undercover operations and street sweeps were underway. Poor urban communities that were filled with minority men bore the brunt of these aggressive policing tactics and punitive policies.

This perfect storm had been brewing: with the coupling of a Draconian drug policy and a lack of gainful employment we saw the exodus of minority men from urban communities and into prisons in historic numbers.

The implications of War on Drugs policies were not apparent overnight; mass incarceration was a gradual process that was supported by community members as public opinion called for more punitive sanctions to combat the “rising crime rates.” Many in the minority communities who had been victimized by crime supported tough on crime policies without fully understanding the larger impact those policies would have on their communities. As previous recorded data has shown, there was a long increase in Part I and other serious crimes in the late 1960s, a plateau in the late 1970s and 1980s, followed by a crime decline for which no one cause has been found. In 1960, violent crime rates in the United States were at 160.9 per 100,000; by 1969 violent crime rose to 328.7 per 100,000. Crime then fluctuated until its decline in the mid-1990s. According to the aggregated data presented by the Disaster Center which was pulled from the Uniform Crime Reports, in 1990 the violent crime rate per 100,000 was 731.8 but by the end of the decade, the violent crime rate declined to 506.5 per 100,000. By 2010, the reported violent crime rate had fallen to 404.5 per 100,000 (United States Crime Rates, 1960-2014).

The ‘tough on crime’ era led to harsh mandatory sentencing guidelines that were applied to non-violent low-level drug offenders. The longer sentences imposed by the drug laws kept the prisons filled longer and with the “three strikes” component, fewer inmates were being released. Another byproduct of the War on Drugs is probation; the rules of probation revocation are so trivial and plentiful that failure to comply is a constant which leads to rearrests. Parole also has perpetuated the cycle; Alexander holds that parole is the reason the population of prisons steadily

increased; 35% to 40% of all admissions to prison are due to parole violations (Alexander, 2010, p. 93; Drucker, 2013, p. 66). Drucker corroborates this argument, holding that the mechanism of parole in this country is evidence for the claim that mass incarceration may never end as it maintains the size of the carceral population (Drucker, 2013, p. 66). With such a destructive but continuous cycle, one has to wonder how the caging of millions of citizens impacts our communities.

### **National Impacts of Mass Incarceration**

The impact of mass incarceration on the family structure was not seen immediately, but the ballooning of prison population that is overwhelmingly comprised of African-American males began to have a profound effect. Imprisonment altered the life course of offenders and the fallout of that altered life course was a reduction in marriage that coincided with an increase in single parent households headed by the mothers. From 1980 to 2000, the number of children with incarcerated fathers increased six-fold from approximately 350,000 to over 2 million (Western & Wildeman, 2009). The concentration of children without a parent due to mass incarceration falls most heavily on the African-American community with 10.4% of children having a father in prison or jail as of 2000. Contrast this against Caucasian-American children who dealt with a fraction of missing fathers, 1.2% and Hispanics who felt the sting of 3.5% of fathers in incarceration (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Children who have incarcerated parents have a greater risk of experiencing mental and behavioral problems (Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Galea, 2015). It is common that they experience confusion, sadness, and social stigma among other things such as low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, and other forms of emotional issues (Petersilia, 2001). In order to measure the impact of incarceration on parents, Drucker and Barrera developed a tool called the “criminal justice calendar” that allowed

correlation of the separation of parent and child with other episodes in the child's life. They found that on average, incarcerated parents were separated from their children for 36% of their lives. That's a substantial proportion to miss and a loss of presence during the critical developmental years (Drucker, 2013, p. 149).

With ongoing deindustrialization throwing the economy in flux, labor markets were in trouble; young men who were essentially unskilled and uneducated were left to fend for themselves and their families. With the loss of jobs, those with less education were hit the hardest; especially people of color. Unemployment rates rose to 30% for young black men that were high school dropouts and for those who graduated from high school, rates rose to 20%. Social programs such as welfare were not well enough equipped to handle the massive impact of job loss at that time and could not retrain and supplement incomes for these young men fast enough. Had the unemployment and education rates not fallen during that time, the growth of prison admission rates would probably have been reduced by 25% by 2001. One of the side effects of joblessness was public idleness; this idleness turned to petty offenses, drug use and drug trade (Western & Wildeman, 2009). This domino effect helped push the African-American population from poverty to mass incarceration. The crime policies of this country ensured that once you are in the criminal justice system you are unlikely to get out. These data provide a snapshot of social dysfunction marked by the impact of deindustrialization and the movement of jobs as well as the effect of education on deviance and subsequent imprisonment in urban communities.

Tied into poverty, we find a label that prevents ex-offenders from rising out of such perils. When released, offenders are generally returned to the community from which they left and this is usually a poor, inner-city neighborhood. Released ex-offenders have spent 27 months

incarcerated on average as of 1998 with an expectation that the trend would continue. This lengthy time spent incarcerated means that those who reenter will have a more difficult time integrating back into the free community after being so distant for so long (Petersilia, 2001). When released into the free community ex-offenders face a stigma of being labeled as a criminal (or felon) and find themselves jumping through a myriad of hoops in order to secure gainful employment that will allow them to effectively support their families. Previous studies have found that there's been a reduction in prisoner participation in programs that address work and education while incarcerated. In 1991, 31% of inmates who were set to be released reported that they had participated in vocational programs and 43% had participated in educational programs. In 1997 those figures dropped to 27% participating in vocational programs and 35% participating in educational programs (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). In 2003, 29% of inmates reported participating in a vocational program but more reported being on a waiting list (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007). The lack of availability of in-prison programming could lie at the center of the problem of returning citizens being unskilled and uneducated. There are vital programs that are needed to better prepare individuals to successfully become contributing members of society once they are released, such as completing a basic high school education; in 2003, 43% of prisoners had a GED or high school diploma before entering prison, 19% completed a GED while imprisoned and 5% were in the course of completing a GED (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007).

As Alexander (2010) holds, once a person is labeled a felon they are treated as second-class citizens and legally discriminated against. Ex-offenders are released and find that they face the "invisible punishments" that keep them from voting, serving on juries, finding meaningful jobs, housing and obtaining social benefits. Unfortunately, because of the perils that they face,

persons released from prison remain uneducated, unskilled and most likely without any support. These difficulties lead to higher chances of failure to reintegrate, which undoubtedly means rearrest for many; two-thirds of all those released on parole will be rearrested within three years (Petersilia, 2001). What mass incarceration has left in its wake is a debilitating label; a label that marginalizes and locks a large group of people out of mainstream society. What I essentially equate to branding disproportionately hurts low-income, minority men as they are overrepresented in the penal population. Incarceration and the histories of personal and social misfortunes that send people to prisons continually punish the offender and their loved ones for many years beyond the prison sentence.

Scholars have undertaken the task of assessing mass incarceration's economic impact. The country has seen purported economic growth yet there is an epidemic of poverty; this "nagging social issue" has persisted for the past 30 years (DeFina & Hannon, 2013). While the country's poverty rates fell a measly 0.3 percentage points from 13% to 12.7% between 1980 and 2004, the gross domestic product actually doubled. Though scholars have pointed to factors such as globalization, de-unionization, immigration and technological changes as reasons for a slow decreasing poverty rate in the face of economic growth, they cannot collectively explain the phenomenon. What the authors propose is that the overwhelming rates of imprisonment in recent decades are the likely culprit. They propose two possible ways in which mass incarceration increases poverty.

First, mass incarceration removes individuals from society and classifies them as an "institutionalized population," which is not counted in the poverty rates when done by the U.S. Census and Current Populations Survey (CPS). The second way that mass incarceration increases poverty but masks poverty rates is through the removal of the breadwinners or heads of

the household. The families of these individuals who contribute a substantial amount to the household income are left in poverty when their loved one is imprisoned (DeFina & Hannon, 2013). Essentially, the heads of the households are either physically removed from the households that are being counted in the poverty rates or those who should be counted in the poverty rate are classified as a population that is not included in the Census count.

Mass incarceration's economic implications are not solely calculated in deficits either. Prisons, which are located in rural communities, provide an economic boost for these communities so there is little surprise that the rural communities depend on the economics of prison expansion, a byproduct of mass incarceration. These communities have a vested interest in the expansion and sustainability of prisons. In 2010, the nation spent over \$50 billion on corrections with a 52% recidivism rate that was seen over three years' time (Jacobson & Chancer, 2010). With the ineffective policies that sustain mass incarceration, the ravaging impacts of over-incarceration and the expenses associated it is important to take a closer look at what's taking place locally. This body of work localizes the focus of mass incarceration on one of the most unique cities in the country, Detroit, Michigan.

### **The Motor City**

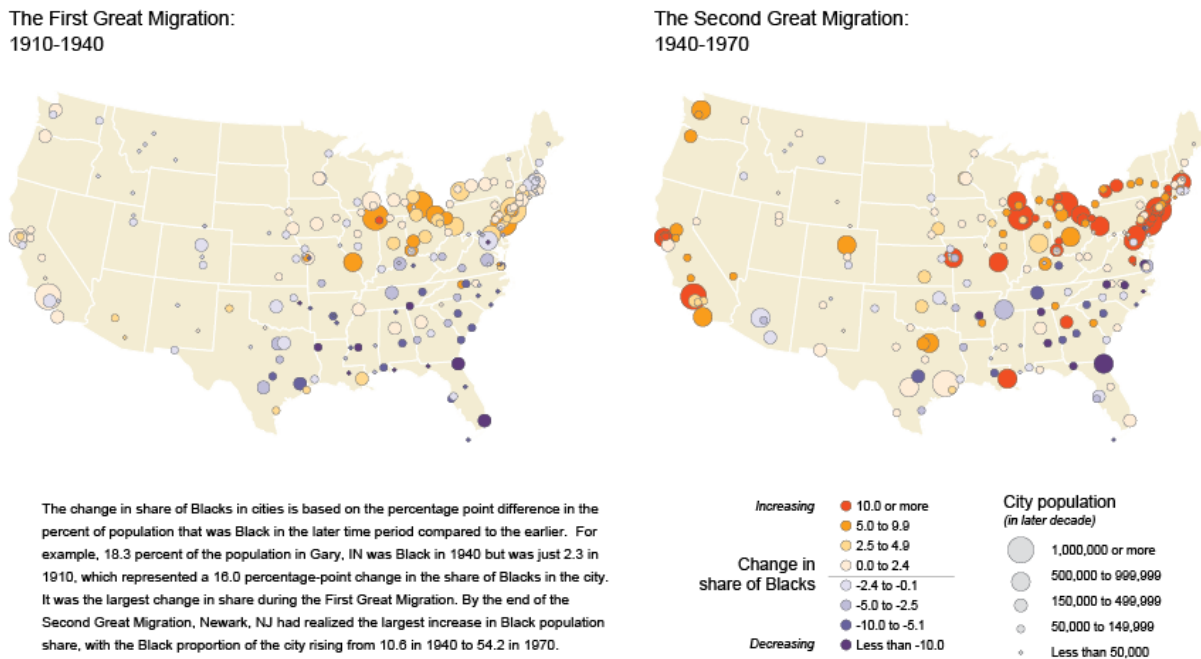
Detroit was once a booming place to live that was categorized as a prosperous melting pot; it was the center of mass automotive production that really began to explode in the 1940s (Thompson, 2013; Sugrue, 2005, p.19). This automotive boom changed the shape of Detroit racially, politically, and socially; the city was a battleground for race and space. After a period of job growth led by manufacturing, the impact of deindustrialization in the 1950s and began to hit the city along with political and social issues, which all led to the exodus of primarily white residents and white-owned businesses. Detroit is a unique city that faced the same issues as other



comparable large cities, so it is interesting to study mass incarceration and explore its attending issues on a local level. Other large urban cities have experienced what Detroit has, but not to the same degree and intensity in massive loss of tax base and residents.

In order to tell the story of Detroit and how it came to its current state, scholars point to the massive influx of African Americans from the South to the North known as the Second Great Migration. As the labor markets expanded in the north, African-Americans moved primarily after World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII). In a six-decade period from 1910 to 1970, 6.5 million African Americans moved to the north; 5.5 million of those individuals migrated after 1940.

Figure 1: Data Visualization of the The Great Migration



United States Census Bureau. (2012). Data Visualization of The Great Migration, 1910 to 1970.

With an influx of residents during the Great Migration, tensions began to rise and the politics of race came front and center for both black and white Detroiters. Initially, the issue that plagued Detroiters was the issue of public housing as the Second Great Migration began and brought a

stream of blacks from the South who needed homes and believed that integration would be an easy feat in the North (Thompson, 1999). Previous to the 1940s, communities and neighborhoods within the city had been defined by ethnic boundaries. As the population demographics changed and more African-Americans migrated into the city, ethnic communities began to disappear and the city was more defined by black and white. Sugrue notes, “Residents of Detroit’s white neighborhoods abandoned their ethnic affiliations and found a new identity in their whiteness” (Sugrue, 2005, p. 23). African-Americans had already been migrating to Detroit during World War I trying to break free of the Jim Crow oppression of the south. As they arrived in the city they settled primarily on the City’s lower east side in the neighborhoods of “Black Bottom” and “Paradise Valley.” The incoming African-Americans incited fear in Detroit’s whites who responded by refusing to sell homes and threatening violence to those trying to move out of the residential confines set for them (Sugrue, 2005, p. 24). A famous example given is the incident of Ossian Sweet, an African-American physician who shot into a crowd of irate whites who surrounded his newly purchased home in a white neighborhood in 1925; Sweet was later acquitted (Sugrue, 2005, p. 24). While the African-American community fought for housing options outside of the lower east side, the job market for minorities expanded with initiation of World War II.

### **The Manufacturing Boom**

The early 1940s saw a boom in the industrial times with a 40% increase in manufacturing employment in the city. World War II meant that there was a heavy demand for industrial goods and the automakers rose to meet such demands by producing military hardware. Unemployment in Detroit fell drastically between 1940 and 1943 with the number of unemployed workers falling from 135,000 to only 4,000 (Sugrue, 2005, p. 19). With more African-Americans on the

job force, racial tensions continually rose and came to a boil in June 1943, with a race riot taking place in Detroit which left 34 people dead of whom 25 were black, and 675 serious injuries before federal troops were called to action. In the wake of the deadly riot, the Mayor's Interracial Committee was formed and other large cities followed suit (Sugrue, 2005, p. 30). African-Americans faced barriers to gainful employment because of discriminatory hiring practices. Racial discrimination was present but Sugrue notes that there was no clear-cut way to explain the inequalities in the workplace. He contributes that racial ideology, culture, politics, labor market structures, and internal firm dynamics all helped to shape African-American employment patterns (Sugrue, 2005, p. 92). Until 1955, when Michigan passed the Fair Employment Practices Law, advertisements for job openings would designate racial preference. Sugrue provides the figures for percentage of job postings with racial preference included; in 1946, 35.1% included discriminatory clauses; the number continued to rise with 1947 seeing 44.7%, and 1948 seeing 65%. The racial restrictions on jobs availability were felt as there was a surplus of jobs being unfilled yet there was labor shortage. In 1951 there were 508 unskilled jobs, 423 semiskilled jobs, and 719 skilled jobs available through the Michigan State Employment Service (MSES) yet there were 874 unskilled, 532 semiskilled, and 148 skilled black applicants (Sugrue, 2005, p. 94). With activism, legislation, and unions the labor market gradual began to expand for African-Americans but ironically it took place at a time when the job market began to dwindle.

### **Deindustrialization in Detroit**

The 1950s was a significant period in Detroit because the impact of deindustrialization began to affect the city; indeed, Detroit's economy experienced four recessions between 1949 and 1960. When the factories in the heart of the city began to close, surrounding businesses closed with them as a significant number of them depended upon the employees who were no

longer there to spend their wages. The surrounding neighborhoods began to lose residents as plant employees no longer needed to be in close proximity to their jobs; the residents were largely white. According to Sugrue, between 1947 and 1963, the city lost 134,000 manufacturing jobs, yet the population of working men and women had increased leaving more labor shortages. To paint the picture vividly, 56% of all automobile employment in the United States was in Michigan in 1950; a decade later that number had fallen to 40%. Following the closure of automobile factories was the closure of auto-related industries which comprised 20% of Detroit-area workers and was the second largest employer in the city. The removal of factories from the city-center were corporate decisions based on anti-unionism and a power-struggle over worker control; all the while they downplayed the significant job loss the removal of factories would bring (Sugrue, 2005, p. 130).

Deindustrialization raised political questions about rights, responsibilities, power, and inequality. Unions and civil rights activists attempted to combat the effects of deindustrialization for workers. On a national level, mainstream economists touted the era as one of growth in gross domestic product, consumer buying power, and industrial output, though locally the city of Detroit did not project that picture. Some labor Democrats saw the problems of deindustrialization and proposed legislation in 1955 to deal with the depressed areas. The Area Redevelopment Acts were vetoed by President Eisenhower twice however (Sugrue, 2005, p. 155). When jobs moved out of the city, it created a spatial issue for African-Americans who were unable to travel to the rural and suburban areas for work; left behind were poor African-Americans and angry whites who grew more defensive of territory within the city in light of their inability to flee the city—the battle for space continued in the neighborhoods of the city (Sugrue, 2005, p. 177).

## **The Fight for Space**

With a massive movement of people came the need for housing, but the needs of the black population were resisted. African-Americans came in droves with applications for public housing during World War II but only 1,731 of 14,446 of black applicants were placed in housing (Sugrue, 2005, p. 58). The issue of housing persisted throughout the 1940s as the city's population increased by 220,000 between 1940 and 1950; two-thirds (150,000) of those migrants were African-Americans (Sugrue, 2005, p. 43). As of 1947 there were 545,000 housing units available yet only 47,000 were available to African-Americans, which does not account for the units that may have been out of price range for lower income families. Proposals for the construction of housing projects outside of the densely packed ghetto were staunchly opposed. African-Americans were routinely being shut out of the housing market, forced to pay more for rental units and unable to repair deteriorating properties because of the unwillingness of banks to grant loans to blacks.

White Detroiters were not alone in shutting out African-Americans trying to move to less densely packed areas; well-to-do African-American families supported restrictive covenants that kept poor black families out – classism began to form within the African-American race. In addition to being unable to afford some housing, African-Americans faced restrictive covenants that were perpetuated by public policy through federal housing policies and rating systems that marked blacks as undesirable or high-risk using actuarial measures to make these determinations (Sugrue, 2005, p. 45). Densely packed areas like Black Bottom began to overflow and residents sought housing elsewhere; the city's lower east side was 90% black (Babson, 1986). During his administration, Mayor Albert Cobo called for the demolition of buildings in black Bottom which displaced 2,000 residents; this pattern of urban renewal was repeated throughout the city to pave

the way for highways, industrial parks, and medical centers in areas previously occupied by low-and-moderate income housing for a primarily African-American population (Babson, 1986).

Even with tensions running high, black Detroiters believed that the issues surrounding integration and housing could be resolved peacefully (Thompson, 1999). This belief stemmed from the idea that the North was much different than the South and there was active civil rights leadership present in Detroit. There seemed to be some hope when in 1948 the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial covenants cannot be enforced by states in *Shelley v. Kraemer*. After the *Shelley* decision, African-Americans began to move beyond the racial borders and into predominantly white neighborhoods. Between 1940 and 1950, the number of census tracts with 500 or more African-Americans increased from 56 to 73; the number of census tracts increased from 73 to 166 from 1950 to 1960. The change in the type of housing African-Americans resided in changed; between 1948 and 1960, the number of African-Americans living in substandard buildings decreased from 29.3% to 10.3%. In addition, the number of overcrowded homes decreased from 25.3% to 17.5%; residential segregation was still prevalent, however, as class divisions began to form and become more prominent. African-Americans who could afford to, moved out of the city center away from the poverty stricken lower east side while those who could not afford to move stayed behind. The black elite were the first to leave the city center followed by the black working class. Home ownership for the working class was unsteady, however, due to the economic restructuring taking place as the manufacturing industry declined in the city (Sugrue, 2005, p. 197).

What took place as a result was that the African-American population became distributed in “concentric circles” where the poorest live in the center and wealth increased as they move out from the center of the circle. As the able left, class divisions deepened and elite African-

Americans resisted lower income African-Americans moving into “their neighborhoods”; the divisions were a manifestation of the housing market, status, and class consciousness of the well-to-do blacks (Sugrue, 2005, p. 203). Whites in the city however believed that segregation was the best way to keep the peace; the push for total integration by black Detroiters was perceived as worsening racial relations.

### **Racial Perspective**

White Detroiters continued to fight for housing segregation by forming neighborhood associations; between 1943 and 1965 Detroit whites founded approximately 192 of the grassroots organizations in an effort to retain racial homogeneity. Sugrue discussed how home ownership was tied to identity of residents and was their major financial investment, making them protective of those investments. The issue of race and the issue of housing were one and the same to white Detroiters, so blacks moving into the same neighborhood were perceived as a threat to their investments. In defense of not wanting African-Americans to move into their neighborhoods, white Detroiters pointed to Paradise Valley and other predominantly black neighborhoods in the poor city center and believed that the condition in which they resided were a product of their irresponsibility and not the social and political issues that kept them confined in slum areas (Sugrue, 2005, p. 216).

Kornhauser conducted a survey that found that the two most pressing issues to whites was housing and second to that, race relations. White residents were primarily unfavorable to integration with 54% responding as so; 18% responded favorably to full access being granted to African-Americans; 68% of white Detroiters were in favor of some form of segregation (Sugrue, 2005, p. 215). These sentiments were coming from residents of a state that had passed a Civil Rights Act in 1885 (George, 1885). In 1950, Detroit’s metropolitan area had a population of

3.016 million with 61.3% of the population living in the city of Detroit. Of the black population of metropolitan Detroit, 83.8% resided in the city and made up 16.2% of the city population. Total employment of the metro Detroit area in 1950 was 1.193 million with almost half of the jobs being in manufacturing (McDonald, 2014). With a mix of black and white Detroiters now living and working together, race relations became a concern. In a survey of Detroit residents taken by the Detroit Board of Commerce in 1951, neither black nor white Detroiters saw race as an issue that could not be overcome yet recognized that race was still something to be concerned about. Of those polled, 47% of white Detroiters and 41% of black Detroiters thought that “Negro-white Relations was in the top-three issues that were most important to do something about in Detroit” (Thompson, 1999, p. 169). Further, 20% of whites and 26% of blacks felt as though race relations was the top issue that needed to be addressed in the city. While the community members, both black and white, were in sync with what issues needed to be addressed, they differed on how to bring substantial change to the city of Detroit.

When asked about the reasons race relations may not be as good as they should be at the time, 27% of whites responded that the issue lay with African-Americans moving into predominantly white neighborhoods. Approximately 22% of white Detroiters thought that African-Americans enjoyed too many rights and privileges; 14% believed that African-Americans had undesirable characteristics. Only 14% of respondents believed that racial discrimination was a reason for the lack of race relations (Sugrue, 2005, p. 14). The negative attitudes of white Detroiters regarding African-Americans were found predominantly in working-class and poor white classes; 85% reported negative perceptions while 56% middle-class whites and 42% upper-class whites reported holding negative perceptions about African-Americans (Sugrue, 2005, p. 216).



When Mayor Cobo was elected in 1950 he gave the 192 white-founded neighborhood associations prominent roles on the city commission which took part in urban development, race relations, and housing. This gave those neighborhood associations more power in the fight for space and housing. The battle for housing left a physical separation between whites and African-Americans in Detroit. This separation only perpetuated the housing inequality and access to jobs as well as reinforced the ideology whites held regarding African-Americans. The term “ghetto” became less of a physical construct as much as it became an ideological construct and racially defined. Even as African-Americans moved into predominantly white neighborhoods, white Detroiters would flee and then stake their claim in another area where the battle for housing segregation would rage on. The battle that flowed in the political arena began to spill out on the streets (Sugrue, 2005, p. 229).

White violence against African-Americans over housing was common between World War II and the 1960s. Sugrue states that there were over 200 incidents of harassment, picketing, effigy burnings, etc. against black families who dared to move into urban white neighborhoods. The attacks peaked between 1954 -1957 while the economy was restructuring; these grassroots neighborhood associations were the largest of their kind. The protective associations involved thousands of white Detroiters and impacted hundreds of black Detroiters directly who tried to expand into urban white areas. The violent resistance that blacks endured deepened the racial divide but was unsuccessful in keeping blacks out altogether. The violence was also downplayed by city officials and whites outside of the city were unaware of the reality of the backlash African-Americans faced. The racial violence in the city hardened the definitions of white and black identities and created a geography of black and white through invisible boundaries and territories in the city. This violence also further alienated blacks and deepened their distrust in

whites and white institutions. The neighborhood violence where blacks resided left them deprived of capital and politically marginalized; Sugrue stated that it was only a matter of time before retaliation was taken (Sugrue, 2005, p. 258).

### **Crime and Policing in Detroit**

Black and white Detroiters held different views on housing, education, employment and law enforcement with law enforcement creating a more profound divide in the city of Detroit. Nationally, the city of Detroit was said to have a better police force than most cities as well as an education reform record that was the gold standard (Fine, 1986). The image that the country held about Detroit however was inflated; the city had very real issues concerning employment, poverty, education, housing and police-community relations. The Detroit Police Department (DPD) was charged with restoring law and order in the city yet how they treated citizens differed by race. Many black Detroiters felt that the DPD was racially biased and as the 1950s progressed, more black residents began to feel this way; 21% of African-American residents felt as though the DPD was one of the three most pressing issues that needed attention. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) conducted an analysis of the complaints regarding police brutality by the DPD made to the Detroit Branch of the NAACP in 1957. Between January 1, 1956 to July 30, 1957, the local branch received 103 complaints, the most frequent type being “physical assault followed by racial epithets” (Thompson, 1999, p. 127).

With the growing insistence for equality, the residents of Detroit, both black and white, called for “law and order,” which led to the campaign that became known nationally as the “war on crime.” The white community essentially equated the unrest associated with the pursuit of civil rights with criminality. Thompson (2013) argues that the “war on crime” did not begin with

Richard Nixon in 1968 but in 1965 with President Lyndon Johnson and the passing of the Law Enforcement Assistance Act (LEAA) and creation of the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance (OLEA). The war on crime was announced by Johnson solidified with the LEAA that he presented to Congress on March 8, 1965. The OLEA and the LEAA gave law enforcement officers more funding all the while changing policies that led to mass incarceration. The OLEA provided funding to states throughout the nation to increase the number of police officers, purchase military grade equipment and train correctional officers. In order to receive the funding from the OLEA, cities had to demonstrate need by showing that there was a crime increase. Thompson (2013) claimed that cities such as Detroit manipulated the data to showcase a crime increase in an effort to garner more federal dollars from the OLEA. This claim was corroborated by Mayor Jerome Cavanaugh who publicly stated that “new methods of counting crime had played an important role in distorting the size of the increase” (Thompson, 2013, p. 46). This war was one that built the overwhelming criminal justice system we see today and consisted of more aggressive criminalization of urban areas that targeted people of color residing in those areas.

Public opinion and media opinion at the time held that the increase in arrest and incarceration rates were in response to rising crime rates but that was not the case. What has already been found nationwide regarding the true crime rates is similar for Detroit; the crime rates had not risen at that point and actually were at a four-year low at the time of the announcement of the war on crime going from 104,983 to 94,266 from 1961 to 1965 (Thompson, 2013).

The fear of crime that pervaded the community led to an increase in pressure on the DPD to increase policing in predominantly black neighborhoods and for harsh crackdowns on the streets. There was a dramatic jump in crime between 1965 and 1970 from 94,266 to 192,866 but

the figures have to be viewed in the context of the growing baby-boomers population then entering the peak crime-prone ages of the late teens and early 20s. Additionally, the DPD's methodology for crime reporting changed according to then police commissioner Ray Girardin; crime actually increased by only six percent. Detroit garnered the name "the murder capital of the world" by 1970 yet the homicide prosecutions had decreased in the 1960s by 32.2%.

Rising racial tensions and the scramble for housing in urban white neighborhoods all came to a head on July 23, 1967 when an early morning raid of a "blind pig" exploded into a riot that lasted for five days and could only be contained by a combination of 17,000 law enforcement officers, members of the National Guard and federal troops. In its wake, 43 were dead (30 at the hands of law enforcement) and 7,231 arrested. The damage that resulted from the riots was astounding; \$36 million in insured property which does not take into account the uninsured properties that were damaged (Sugrue, 2005, p. 259). Estimates of the damage have reported \$200 million worth of damage to the city as a whole (Bledsoe, Combs, Sigelman, & Welch, 1996).

After the riot, the number of complaints received in regard to the DPD drastically increased and the community's opposition grew; there were 477 complaints in 1971 versus 105 in 1965. The post-riot city saw the creation of militant groups that set out to combat the racial discrimination witnessed in the city's schools, housing, courtrooms, and workplaces. The post-riot city also saw more backlash from the white community in their battle to control the city politically. Roman Gibbs was elected Mayor of Detroit in 1969 to the delight of white Detroiters. With a pro-law enforcement mayor in office who had previously served as the Wayne County Sheriff and racial tensions still running high from the issues of the last 30 years, new black grassroots groups popped up to challenge the political and social inequities of the city. Black

Detroiters became even more vocal than before much to the dislike of white Detroiters (Thompson, 1999).

The persistent vocal outrage with the DPD fell on deaf ears as the police showed no interest in reform; the police in the city got more aggressive in fact with the creation of a special undercover decoy unit. With the blessing of Mayor Gibbs, the DPD formed Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets (STRESS) in January 1971 which was touted to be a tougher unit within the DPD that would target crime in the poor neighborhoods. According to Thompson (1999), “STRESS officers killed an alarming number of city blacks taken into their custody” (p. 186). In 1972, the decoy unit STRESS had a controversial incident which led to it being shut down. While searching for a suspect accused of shooting a police officer, the DPD officers attacked innocent black community members; one person was killed, others were even beaten (Bledsoe et al., 1996).

The black community at this time changed their tactics and instead of trying to prevent civil unrest, they began to draw from the deep-seated anger and frustration and rejected the political solutions brought to the city. Radical activism grew in the city and industrial plant organizations; grassroots organizations such as Parents and Students for Community Control, the black Student United Front, the local Panthers, and the Revolutionary Union Movements began to flourish in the auto plants. The spread of the grassroots organizations was met with even more resistance from white Detroiters who were even more determined to keep their political control over the city. The white community began to distance itself even more from liberalism after 1970 especially after controversial legal battles resulted in acquittals in cases where black residents were accused of killing white residents. Some of the victims were policemen or plant foremen so the law enforcement community, along with white Detroiters, was enraged. It was during these

controversial trials that black radicals found a new platform for which to air their issues against the white authority of the city; the fight for equality had moved from the streets to the courtroom.

Off the streets, Detroit residents were facing police scrutiny as well. The city schools began to see an intense wave of policing which was not prevalent in the country until after the mid-1960s. Detroit schools themselves did not see the presence of police until 1969 after black power protests at Northern High School and integration attempts at schools like Osborn (Thompson, 2013). The presence of the police in schools grew with funding from the Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. According to Thompson (2013) the number of juveniles being placed in correctional facilities rose and the retention rate in schools fell dramatically; the school to prison pipeline was underway.

The election of Mayor Coleman Young in 1973 was a result of the black community's gaining electoral power in the city. Young was a black liberal Democrat who had organized for the UAW, was elected to the Michigan Senate in 1963 and won the position of vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee as the first African American to serve on the committee (Biography.com Editors). As the first African-American mayor of Detroit, Coleman Young served for the next two decades. He had experienced the Jim Crow South, was a vocal activist in the city and politically active during his time as a Tuskegee Airmen; Young previously lived in the ghettos of Detroit which seemed to make him a key person to move Detroit forward after the devastating riots and subsequent issues the city faced (Young, 1997).

White flight had already been underway as many left when the jobs left the city center. White Detroiters relocated to suburban areas in an effort to get away from African-Americans who resided in the city. The exodus of whites from the city was propelled more once Mayor Young was elected; between 1970 and 1980, 310,000 Caucasian-Americans left the city of

Detroit and moved to the suburbs. The African-American population rose from 43.7% to 67.1%. Two years later in 1982, the city lost an additional 63,677 residents, the majority of whom were Caucasian. With the exodus of the Caucasian population, the city lost a vital part of its economic base as the Caucasian Detroiters took the majority of services and activities with them. The resulting post-white flight was a city where over 20% of the population lived below the poverty line (Thompson, 1999). Poverty flourished in the city; high poverty census tracts increased between 1970 and 1980 while the population living in those areas essentially doubled. In 1970, there were 22 high poverty census tracts in Detroit with 10.9% of the Detroit poor residing in the areas. A decade later, there were 44 high poverty census tracts in the city with 19.6% of the city's poor residing in the areas.

Once in office, Mayor Young vowed to deal with the issue of policing in the city of Detroit. He is quoted as saying that his priority as mayor would be to "take control of the city's police department because of the oppressive tactics it used towards blacks" (Young, 1997, p. 33). When Young ran for mayor, the DPD was 85% white in a city where half of the 1.2 million residents (at the time) were black. Additionally, he vowed to eliminate the STRESS unit (McGraw, 1998). During his tenure he integrated the Detroit police force and fire departments in efforts to end the disparities and discrimination African-Americans had endured for years.

Young was elected mayor during a trying time when the massive layoffs were taking place in the auto industry due in part to the 1973 OPEC oil squeeze; white flight was ongoing, and crime was reportedly at a record high (McGraw, 1998). He attempted to uplift the African-American community out of extreme poverty and even the playing field of opportunity. He created a "sheltered market" which opened Detroit's Purchasing Department to minority business owners which was later ruled to be unconstitutional. The sheltered market program

ensured that 30% of the city's contracts go to minorities which increased the percentage of awarded contracts that went to minority groups from 13% to 30% (Stokes, 1988).

The Detroit Planning Commission released a report that revealed the reality of the unemployment issue in Detroit for African-Americans. One neighborhood employment center reported that between January 1 and May 31, 1970, there were 1,173 applicants of which 1,139 were African-American; this leaves only 33 white applicants; overall 1,132 applicants fell below the poverty line. When the city's unemployment rate was at a fifteen-year low at 3.8% in 1978, black Detroiters in same neighborhoods experienced an unemployment rate of 15.8%. African-Americans in the 18-24 age category experienced an unemployment rate that was even higher, a whopping 38%. With this extraordinary amount of unemployment plaguing black Detroiters, one can easily understand how they were forced to turn to welfare. In that time however, the white community took the increased use of welfare as a sign that members of the black community were lazy, without recognizing how the racial biases were causing the conditions that led to increased use of welfare. Both white and black Detroiters were receiving welfare as is the case today and the aid was not sufficient enough to live on alone. According to the Detroit Charter Revision Commission (DCRC) report in 1971, people who received welfare were only given \$44 a month which was supposed to cover "food, clothing, school expenses, entertainment, bus fare, personal care, everything" (Thompson, 1999, p. 175).

Throughout his tenure as Mayor, Coleman Young faced opposition from suburban communities, other state officials and the media but found allies in President Jimmy Carter and former Governor William Milliken; their support led to increased funding for the city of Detroit. While in office, Detroit saw the building of the Joe Louis Arena, expansion of Cobo Hall, the completion of the People Mover Station Transit, and the expansion of the Detroit City Airport.



Additionally, Young's twenty years in office saw the housing developments and low-income housing built in Harbortown, Victoria Park, and Grayhaven. Young saw the plight of the community and how the lack of job opportunities led to crime in the city. "People who are hungry and unemployed commit crimes; people who have jobs and pride do not" (McGraw, 1998).

### **Incarceration in Detroit and It's Effect**

The state budget throughout the years reflect the changes to the carceral state and its impact on Detroit. According to Thompson (2013), after 1971 the spending for prisons in the state grew from 2% to 23%. The carceral state meant job loss in inner cities yet private companies hit a payload with building prisons. The largest private company, the GEO Group, was exempt from paying federal and state corporate taxes as it "derives at least 95% of its gross income from real estate sources" (Thompson, 2013, p. 56). Taken together, the expansion of prison building and moving employment opportunities as well as purchasing dollars into prisons shows how the carceral state played a significant role in the loss of jobs in the city of Detroit (Thompson, 2013). The late 1970s saw federal and state legislation moving towards means of generating more profits from prisons by removing laws that regulated inmate labor in the nation. Federally, a series of laws were passed in 1979 that weakened the restrictions placed on sale of prison-made goods and use of prison labor (Thompson, 2013).

Between 1985 and 1992, the state of Michigan built 23 prisons and six years later there were 41 prisons and 15 prison camps. With the growth of the carceral state, it became more profitable for companies to pull jobs from inner cities. The incentive of building prisons to house the masses being incarcerated took precedent over building factories, which shifted federal and state dollars from cities like Detroit to rural areas in the state (Thompson, 2013). The onset of the

War on Drugs in the 1980s meant that inner cities like Detroit were going to be the most criminalized with regard to selling and use of drugs. Drug laws across the country were becoming more punitive and Michigan followed suit with its now reformed “650-Lifer Law” — the most Draconian drug law in the nation— which called for anyone caught with over 650 grams of heroin or cocaine to be sentenced to an automatic life-without-parole sentence. Harsh mandatory minimums were established for lesser amounts of drugs as well. Disproportionately, these individuals were likely to be a Detroit resident (Thompson, 2013). The “650-Lifer Law” was enacted in 1978 and signed into law by former Governor William G. Milliken were overwhelmingly punitive in nature; the controversial act was finally eliminated in 2003 (Affholter & Wicksall, 2002). These punitive laws left a deep impact on the city of Detroit; in 1980 there had been 3,746 drug arrests but in 1988 there were 9,618. According to Thompson (2013), 68% of men and over 81% of women arrested in 1988 were drug users. During that year, the Narcotics Division of the DPD required an operating budget of 11.7 million which was an 83% increase of what was needed four years earlier. In addition to the “650-lifer law,” the state of Michigan’s mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines led to the second highest number of adults and children serving life without parole sentences by 2011. In comparison to other states, Michigan correctional facilities have the longest length of stay in the nation due to such sentencing guidelines (Thompson, 2013).

A direct indicator of the impact of mass incarceration can be seen from the increase of single-parent families with children in the city. The percentage of single-parent families with children in the city increased from 23% in 1970 to 61% in 1990. There was a massive explosion of the number of people who lived in high-poverty census tracts in the city; the numbers increased to 120,000 in 1980 to 419,000 in 1990. Detroit began to see some signs of progress in

the 1990s as with the poverty rate, murder rate, and the population living in high poverty areas declined. As the decade progressed, the poverty rate fell from 32.6% to 26.1% and the murder rate fell from 57 to 41 per 100,000 residents (McDonald, 2014). Locally, the city saw drops in poverty, murder, and population as upwardly mobile African-American began to leave the city as whites did; but nationally, the criminal justice system moved towards more punitive policies in addressing crime and this national trend impacted Detroit.

It was during the 1990s that the incarceration rate increased more than in any previous decade. The state of Washington passed the nation's first "Three Strikes and You're Out" law in 1993 and the following year the federal government enacted the law. To paint a clear picture of the massive impact of incarceration: there were approximately as many people incarcerated during the 1990s as there were in the nation's penal history up to the 1990s. While the politicians during the 1990s claimed that the Three Strikes mandate would take career criminals off the street thereby causing crime to decline and deter potential criminals, those claims were unfounded based on a consensus of national research findings. Nationally, crime had actually been on the decline from 1990 to 1998 but media coverage of crime in the nation had increased by 473% during those years. In 1994, 70% of the public thought that crime was increasing while only 4% thought that crime was decreasing. Five years later, the public began to catch on to the reality as 38% of respondents thought that crime was on the rise while 26% thought that crime was on the decline. As the 1990s ended the percentage of Americans favoring mandatory sentencing such as the Three Strikes Law declined from 55% to 38% by the year 2001 (Schiraldi, Colburn, & Lotke, 2004).

The phenomenon of mass incarceration had a profoundly negative effect on Detroit and caused neighborhoods to collapse in devastating ways as inmates were being placed back into

these areas. For instance, 80% of the prisoners released to Wayne County returned to the city of Detroit and over half of those (41%) returned to areas that are characterized as “devastated zip codes.” The East side of Detroit has seen the concentration of the incarcerated; 1 in 22 adults in the East area of the city have been under some form of correctional control. Brewer Park on the East side of the city has 1 in 16 adults under some form of correctional control (Thompson, 2013). Once released into these devastated areas, Detroiters still needed to make a living and rebuild their lives, but obtaining employment was difficult due to the stigma of being a former offender.

In 1998, the Truth-in-Sentencing guideline was passed in the state which held that prisoners had to serve 100% of their sentences without the possibility of parole (Truth in Sentencing Information, n.d.). With this legislation, the parole rate in the state decreased. By 2009, prisoners in Michigan correctional facilities were serving approximately 17 months more than the national average; they were serving sentences 79% longer than what was being served for the same crimes in 1990. From 1995-2000, private companies in 36 states across the nation were given free reign to utilize prison inmates instead of workers from free communities. Private companies were able to place jobs in prisons and profit off of cheap labor versus placing jobs in the cities where they would have to at least pay minimum wage and possibly provide benefits to employees (Thompson, 2013).

Following the punitive period of the 1990s, crime dropped to historic lows but the federal Three Strikes law has not been credited as a cause. What has been touted as reasons for the crime decline is the aging of the baby boom generation from the crime-prone twenties and thirties, economic growth, and stabilization of the crack trade in the country. Zimring discussed that at best, 50% of the total crime decline can be accounted for due to three factors: incarceration,

economic expansion, and demography. The levels of incarceration in the 1970s and 1980s revealed little effect on crime. Zimring is generous with his estimate as scholars have allocated up to 27% of the crime decline due to incapacitation (Zimring, 2007, p. 52). In addition, public opinion has shifted regarding crime and punishment with more support being given to more rehabilitative approaches over punitive approaches (Schiraldi, Colburn, & Lotke, 2004).

The 2000s were a different story for the city with regard to employment and population. The city experienced a population loss unlike the previous losses in preceding decades at a rate of 24.9%; the black population accounted for 76.8% of this loss as they had begun abandoning the city like whites had before. Employment took a drastic decline from 2000 to 2010 with city jobs declining 32.9% and jobs in metropolitan Detroit declining 21.2%. Total employment from 2000 to 2007 declined by 14.3%, then the financial crisis of 2008 hit along with the recession that followed. By 2010, total employment in Detroit was down an additional 11.5%. The murder rate began to increase again in the 2000s going from 41 to 43 per 100,000 residents. The poverty rate in the city was 26.1% in 2000 and by 2010 the rate had increased to 36.2% while the median income had fallen to \$31,017 in 2009. Additionally, the percentage of single-parent families with children increased from 63.1% to 70.8% (McDonald, 2014).

With the expansion of the criminal justice system, Department of Corrections jobs were created. The increase of jobs in the correctional system did little for Detroit residents as the prisons being built were mainly in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, which incentivized more criminal justice action to incarcerate people. While the creation of jobs for the state could be seen as a plus, the placement of prisons in more rural areas meant that the areas that needed jobs most suffered. These suffering areas undoubtedly saw crime as a result of lack of jobs; the placement of prisons incentivized crime. Placing jobs in scarcely populated areas (unlike the urban

areas that actually need the employment opportunities), the prison expansion has grown so much that one out of every three State employee's works for the correctional system. Additionally, with the prisons being built in rural areas, the residents who live in Detroit but are incarcerated elsewhere are credited in the Census as residents of the county where they are imprisoned (Editorial Board, 2016). This shrinks the number of people that the city of Detroit can count for the Census which then causes the city to lose the resources that the rural counties receive as they house the prisons. The city of Detroit's population in 1970 was 1,514,063 but forty years later the population declined dramatically to 713,777 (Thompson, 2013).

The voting power of minorities in this country has been substantially weakened while Caucasian voting power has increased as a result of such policies. Legislation was the main culprit that disenfranchised African-American voting power. In the State of Michigan, one can lose their right to vote if they are actually incarcerated for a misdemeanor or placed under house arrest, on tether, or in a work-release program. Although parolees and probationers can vote, in fact they are discouraged from doing so. Disenfranchisement laws exist in 48 out of 50 states, with different effects (Thompson, 2013).

Formerly incarcerated individuals really felt the impact of unemployment; previous to being incarcerated two-thirds of inmates were employed and half of those inmates were the primary providers. Once released, the former inmates worked less and took home 40% less a year. In Michigan, between 50% and 70% of parolees were unemployed. Unfortunately, the welfare system is unable to fully support the wide-scale poverty that exists post-incarceration with reforms that blocked aid to those with felony convictions or violations of parole and probation. The growth of the prison population has hurt cities like Detroit. Michigan's carceral population has increased 538%; in the 1970s the state's prison population was 7,834 and by 2011

the total was 42,490. The number of individuals under the supervision of the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) is staggering; as of 2003, the MDOC was supervising a total of 117,700 individuals across prisons, prison camps, tethering, half-way houses and other agencies (Thompson, 2013).

Bledsoe et al. (1996) contend that race is the most distinctive feature of social and political life in urban areas like Detroit. Race can truly impact where a person lives, their perception of themselves and those around them, as well as their judgments. The racial landscape of Detroit has changed drastically since the 1967 Detroit Riots; the city was primarily white and now it is predominantly African-American. Back then, the city was controlled politically by whites and now the city is governed predominantly by African-Americans. Unfortunately, the economic and social conditions have not really changed for black Detroiters since the 1960s. Unemployment, poverty, and single-parent families are more common for African-Americans who remained in Detroit than for whites (Bledsoe et al., 1996).

In a study that compared racial attitudes of Detroit area residents from 1968-1969 to attitudes in 1992, Bledsoe et al. (1996) revealed some interesting results regarding perception of housing discrimination, job discrimination, and attitudes towards the other race (in surveying whites and blacks). While in 1969 more than half of whites felt as though blacks were discriminated against heavily in housing, only 1 in 10 felt this way in the 1992 survey; there was a substantial decline in white perceptions of housing discrimination as it relates to blacks. African-Americans felt completely different however, with the percentage of blacks believing that discrimination has persisted going from 69% in 1968 to 70% in 1992. When it came to job discrimination, blacks actually felt as though their victimization had increased since the 1960s. In 1968, 36% of blacks responded as having been victim of job discrimination based on their

race and in 1992 46% of blacks responded affirmatively to being victimized. Once again, there was a distinct difference in perceptions of whites and blacks. Both in 1969 and 1992, only one in ten whites believed that African-Americans are generally discriminated against in jobs.

In assessing racial attitudes, Bledsoe, et al. (1996) found that in 1969 up to 64% of whites feared blacks moving into their neighborhood but in 1992 61% saw no issue with sharing a neighborhood with blacks. Blacks seem to have changed their views of whites also; in 1968 almost half or 47% of blacks felt as though whites wanted African-Americans to see better times but in 1992 that number had fallen to 22% (Bledsoe, et al., 1996).

The city of Detroit is unique in its own right. The city was once a glamorous melting pot to outsiders but the residents on the inside were engaged in a battle for space, recognition, politics, and jobs for decades that left a permanent mark on the attitudes of natives and newcomers. Scholars are careful to point out that the phenomenon of white flight alone was not the sole cause of the disappearance of a vital Detroit in the 1970s and 1980s but was a definite contributor to an action that added to the devastation of the city. Sugrue contends that Mayor Coleman Young and the 1967 riot were not to blame for white flight, but that racial animosity and economic decay had been fostering long before that period and that no one elected official could take the blame (Sugrue, 2005, p. 270).

It is important to look at what's happened in Detroit in order to incorporate the following narratives from those who experienced the past few decades. Elite interviews with key citizens of Detroit will provide a subjective narrative that will tell the story of Detroit from various perspectives. The present study was born out of a need to explore how local actors grappled with mass incarceration. Collectively, individuals have worked within the criminal justice system in some capacity whether it be legislative, enforcement, social services, or judicially. It is important



to discuss the racial attitudes in the city as we will speak to the role race played in policy implications related to crime in Detroit and how racialized control was prevalent.

This study set out to explore mass incarceration on a local level in Detroit, Michigan. Detroit's history of contentious battles for space, racial violence and political controversies warrants an exploration of how a national phenomenon impacted the residents of a large but ravaged city. With intense revitalization efforts taking place in downtown Detroit, it's natural to question what has taken place and how those who were present for the last four decades witnessed the structural, political and racial changes in the city. Further, this exploration attempts to gain various perspectives that can narrate what the empirical data has shown about Detroit and how mass incarceration aided the historical changes in the Motor City.

## **Methods**

To explore the localized impact of mass incarceration, I set out to conduct between seven and ten elite interviews with various individuals who work or worked within the criminal justice system throughout the state and in Detroit, Michigan. Primary data gathered for the study comes from eight in-depth interviews conducted in 2016 in Detroit and Lansing, Michigan. Secondary data was gathered from the Uniform Crime Report for the state and city to show trends in violent and property crime rates. City data were also obtained from the Bureau of Justice Statistics to show trends in the total number of jailed inmates in Wayne County, which is the county where Detroit resides. Comparisons of the Michigan prison population contrasted with the national prison population are provided to show the population progression throughout the years. Finally, population data specific to the city of Detroit was gathered from the decennial Census and American Community Survey to show the changes in age, housing, racial composition of the city, employment rates, and education and marriages from 1970 through 2010. As published

studies have found, the targeted population in mass incarceration is young, black men; the data pulled from the census only focused on males aged 16-25 in Detroit.

The study witnesses were selected using a non-probability referred sampling design where witnesses were identified through conversations with two key informants, the thesis advisor, Marvin Zalman, Ph.D. and Mr. David Smydra. The bulk of witnesses were recommended by Mr. Smydra whose history in Detroit involves consulting in a variety of areas with a focus on fund development and organizational development assistance to non-profit organizations. Mr. Smydra served on the executive team to former Mayor Dennis Archer, lectured at Wayne State University, and has credentials in the criminal justice field. The goal was to recruit individuals who may have worked for the city in law enforcement capacities and/or served as an advocate for minority groups, clergy members, community activists, scholars, or political officials of the city. By targeting a population special to the city and even the state, the perspectives regarding the intricacies of post-World War II Detroit in the context of mass incarceration could be better captured. The witnesses were not limited in age, race, ethnicity, or occupation. Possible witnesses were contacted primarily through email and follow-up methods were primarily through telephone. Overall, there were sixteen suggested individuals who were contacted regarding the study; two declined citing they had very little to contribute regarding the subject of mass incarceration in Detroit, five failed to respond to inquiries, nine interviews were scheduled and eight interviews were completed.

The witnesses who completed the interview worked in various areas: former wardens, researchers, a sheriff, a former Supreme Court Justice, and non-profit executives. The interviews were semi-structured interviews where the witnesses were asked a range of questions about their professional experiences within the system, professional views on the effects of mass

incarceration, personal feelings about the state of incarceration and its impact on the city of Detroit, and their contributions to persistence or desistence of incarceration in the scope of their previous or current positions. Following is a description of each of the completed witnesses (n=8).

Bill Kime, a Caucasian male, is a former Deputy Director in research and planning at the Michigan Department of Corrections where he worked mainly with Director Perry Johnson. Kime assisted in creating a prison classification system for the state as well as conducting population projections which accurately predicted that the prison population would increase. Kime spent the last five years of his career finding sites for prisons, holding community meetings, writing environmental impact statements, meeting with legislatures; all things associated with the expansion of prisons.

Pamela Withrow, a Caucasian female, was the first female warden to preside over a male prison in the history of Michigan prisons and was appointed by Director Perry Johnson to oversee the Michigan Dunes Correctional facility. She was named warden of the Michigan Reformatory and she retired in 2001 as one of the longest serving wardens after many years of service.

Denise Quarles, an African-American female, also worked under Perry Johnson and was the first female Regional Prison Administrator in the state of Michigan. She is originally from Detroit, Michigan but her career took her across the state of Michigan. She was one of the few women handpicked by Michigan Department of Corrections Director Perry Johnson and put on the fast track. Ms. Quarles retired as Regional Prison Director in 2002.

Benny Napoleon, an African-American male, is a lifelong Detroiter who has risen through the ranks of law enforcement and has witnessed the structural, political, and racial

changes in the city of Detroit. He began his career as a rookie police officer after Mayor Coleman Young was elected to office and rose to chief from 1998 to 2001 under Mayor Dennis Archer. He later served as Assistant County Executive. He is the current Sherriff of Wayne County.

Saul Green, an African-American male, is a lifelong Detroiter who was the state's first appointed African-American United States Attorney. He worked as the Chief Counsel for the Department of Housing and Development for the state and then worked as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. Mr. Green served as Deputy Mayor of Detroit and then transitioned back into practice at a local law firm.

Cindy Eggleton, a Native-American female, is another lifelong Detroiter who has witness the changing structure of the city. She co-founded Brilliant Detroit which aims to create successful neighborhoods for Detroit kids. She has worked in various areas focusing on communication designs with a heavy emphasis on community issues. She also currently works as the Chief Strategy Officer at the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries.

Marilyn Kelly, a Caucasian female, is a retired Michigan Supreme Court Justice who practiced law throughout Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties from the mid-1970s until her election to the Court of Appeals in 1988-1996. She then served on the Michigan Supreme Court for 16 years before retiring in 2012.

Dennis Nordmoe, a Caucasian male, arrived in Detroit in 1967 after finishing divinity school to serve as a pastor in a local church. He moved into a career as a substance abuse and alcoholism counselor for 26 years and wrote various strategic plans for the city regarding prevention. He went on to work for the Detroit Housing Commission and retired early to engage

in neighborhood development, which is what he currently does with the Urban Neighborhood Initiative.

Together the eight witnesses represented four females, four males, three different races: Caucasian (n=4), African-American (n=3), and Native-American (n=1). The witnesses were asked about their perspectives on the impacts of mass incarceration in Detroit as it relates to policing, families, schools, politics, racial attitudes, and prisoner re-entry in the city of Detroit. The questions were intentionally broad to encourage the respondents to freely talk and develop their responses based on their Detroit expertise and experience. Each question was asked in the context of post-World War II Detroit in the era of mass incarceration. Questions pertained to the impact of reintegration of men coming home from prison and if needed, respondents were asked to elaborate by giving some examples. Another question asked respondents to speak to the economic impact of mass incarceration in Detroit along with examples. The respondents were asked to speak to the impact mass incarceration had on families in Detroit. Finally, witnesses were asked if they had any other information they wanted to discuss if they wished to go into depth on issues that were not really addressed in the questions.

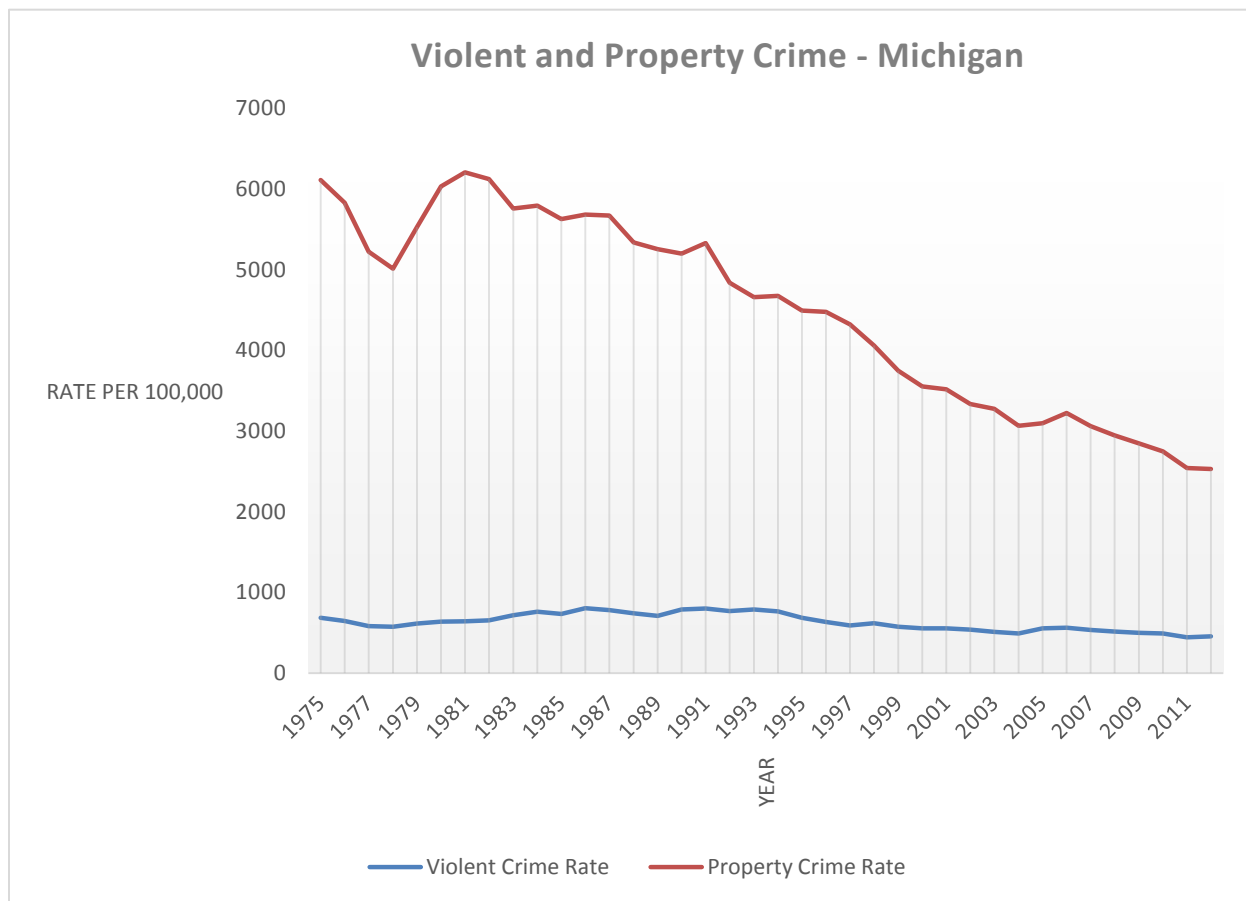
One interview resulted in the suggestion of another possible witness who agreed to take part in the study. With the consent of each witness, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; the transcription was done manually within 24 hours of each interview. The data were collected in various settings as I allowed the witness to meet me in a location of their choosing. Interviews took place in the back of coffee shops, law offices, the sheriff's office, and finally in the homes of the witness. All witness agreed to disclose their identities and consented to their names and occupation or relevant occupational history being published.

The number of elite interviews was limited to seven to ten for sake of the thesis project. In qualitative research, sampling is typically continued until the sample reaches a level of saturation where no new relevant data is provided by additional respondents (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995). Saturation allows the researcher to have better confidence in making cross-case generalizations. However, like all non-probability sampling designs, it is impossible to estimate how the sample differs from the population. I manually searched for patterns and themes throughout the eight interviews. The methodology offers both strengths and weaknesses. The witnesses were selected based on their connection to the city and criminal justice system which ensured they offered substantive information in the interviews. As the interviews are qualitative, the researcher recognizes that the nature of retrospective information may be diluted with memory issues, distortion or dishonesty. The aspect of combining various perspectives however provides a unique level of understanding to the experiences of system actors during a tumultuous time in local and national history that has had a profound impact on a city that was once regarded as a model city. Offenders and ex-offenders were purposely not contacted as they are a vulnerable population and time did not permit for navigating through the approval process of the Institutional Review Board. Further, the topic of mass incarceration from the offender and ex-offender's perspective is something I hope to explore for my doctoral dissertation.

In order to discuss mass incarceration in Detroit further, there is a need to examine crime data, incarceration data, and population data locally. The data gathered will help shape the narratives provided by the witnesses and will provide insight to the what took place from the 1970s until 2010.

## **Results and Discussion**

Figure 2: Violent and Property Crime in Michigan

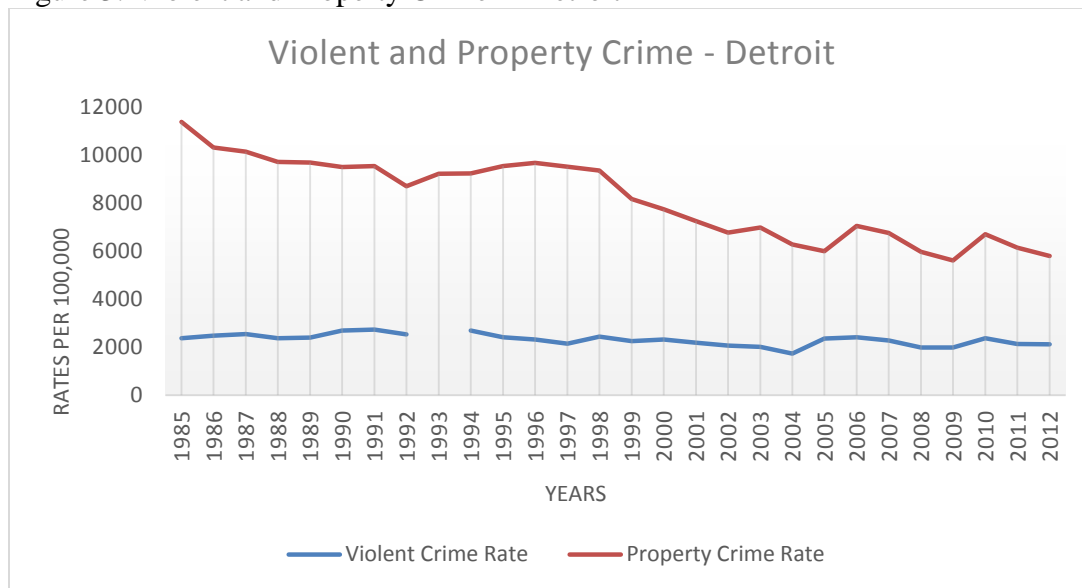


Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data

The above figure from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) for the State of Michigan shows the crime statistics from law enforcement agencies as annual rates of violent crime (murder, aggravated assault, rape, and robbery) and property crime (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) aggregated and published from 1975 to 2012. From the data we can see that the rates of violent crime were consistently lower than that of property crime. In 1975, the rate of violent crime in the state was 685.7 per 100,000 residents. Violent crimes fluctuated and then were generally on the rise until 1991 when they hit a high rate of 803.1 per 100,000. Michigan saw a drop in violent crime throughout the 1990s; rates fell from 803.1 per 100,000 to 574.9 per 100,000 in 1999. Violent crime in the state was at a reported low of 454.5 per 100,000 in 2012 (Uniform Crime Report, n.d.). Property crime in Michigan followed a trend similar to violent

crime in the state. In 1975, property crime is shown to be 6,114.6 per 100,000 in 1975 which fluctuated until the 1990s where the crime drop occurs. Beginning in 1991, property crime rates in the state declined from 5335 per 100,000 to 3750 per 100,000 in 1999. Michigan's property crime rate in 2012 is reported to be 2350.5 per 100,000 (Uniform Crime Report, n.d.). The data falls in line with what scholars have discussed as the crime drop when crime in the 1990s fell to historic lows. While property crime increased at the end of the 1970s, from the 1980s there was a steady decline of property crime incidence in Michigan.

Figure 3: Violent and Property Crime in Detroit



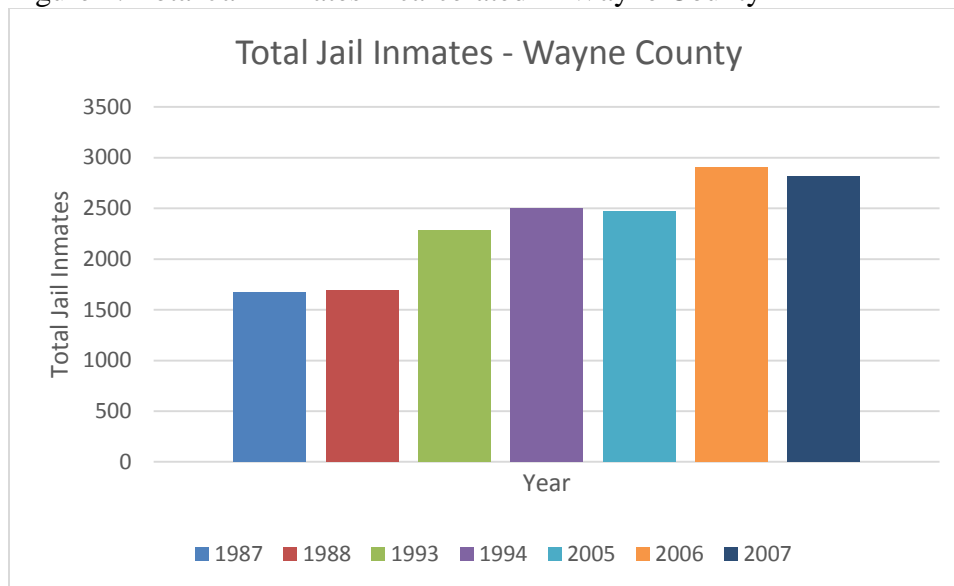
Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data

The UCR crime data for Detroit in Figure 3 shows the annual violent crime rate and property crime rates from 1985 to 2012 excluding 1993 due to reporting changes. In 1985, violent crime was on a steady but not dramatic rise moving from 2375.2 per 100,000 to 2727.3 per 100,000 in 1991; from there we see a crime decline through 1997 where violent crime rates in the city were reported at 2151.2 per 100,000. As of 2012, violent crime rates in Detroit were 2122.9 per 100,000 (Uniform Crime Report, n.d.). Property crime fluctuated in the city with a steady decline from 1985 at a rate of 11,374.7 per 100,000 to 8,696.2 per 100,000 in 1992.



Detroit's property crimes increased again into the late 1990s; the steady decline of property crime began in 1996 when crime was at a high for the decade at 9726.7 per 100,000. As of 2012 the property crime rate in the city was 5792.1 per 100,000 (Uniform Crime Report, n.d.). The end of the 1990s saw decreases of property crimes until 2006 and 2010 when there were increases. The crime trends fall in line with previous research and it is acknowledged that the exclusions of other crimes, such as misdemeanor and drug crimes that fall outside of violent and property offenses are a weakness of the data.

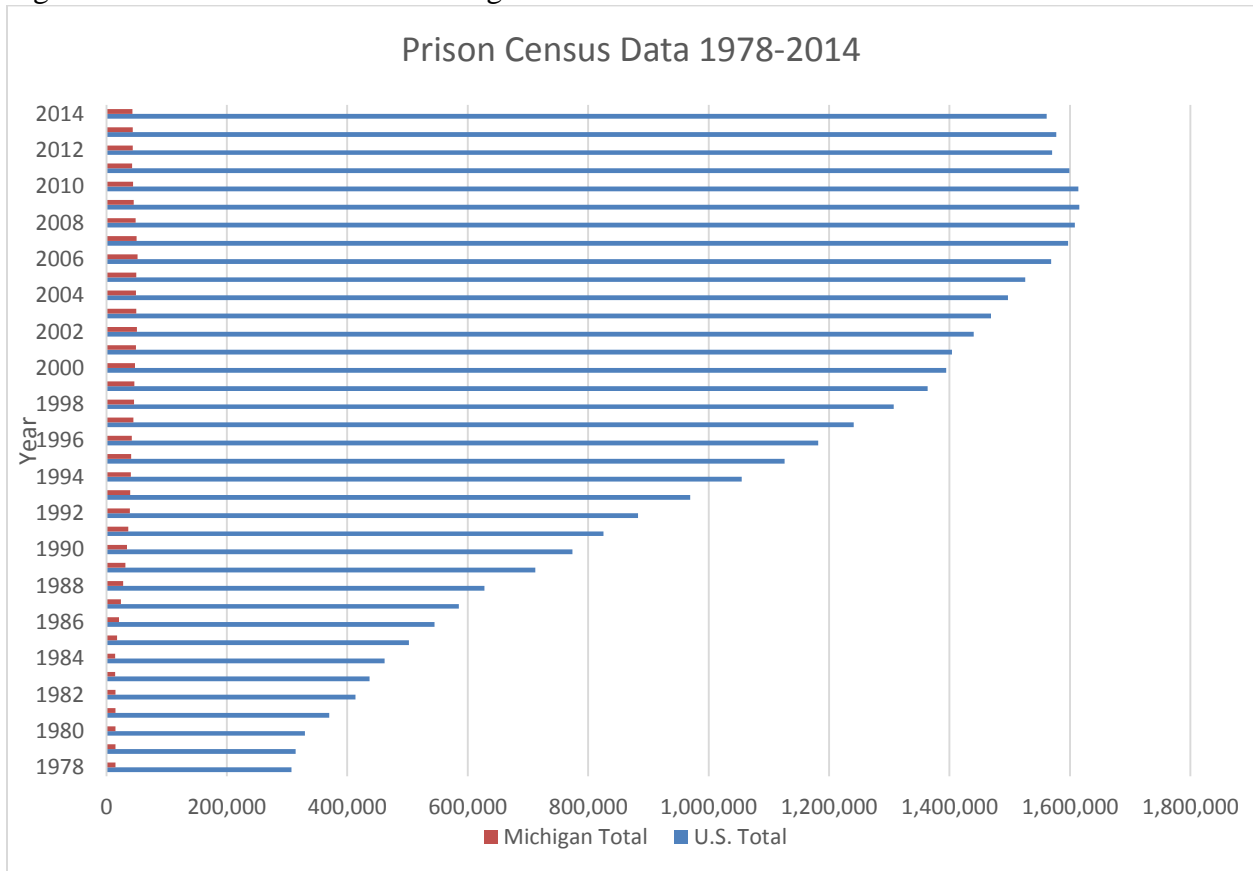
Figure 4: Total Jail Inmates Incarcerated in Wayne County



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

When we look at the total number of inmates jailed, the most consistent data comes from the Bureau of Justice Statistics regarding the Wayne County Jail with the earliest year being 1987. As shown in Figure 4, the late 1980s saw well over 1,500 people incarcerated in Wayne County jails which then increased rolling into the 1990s with approximately 2,500 people being incarcerated in 1994. The total number of inmates further increased into the 2000s with almost 3,000 being jailed in 2006; then the data shows a slight decline the following year.

Figure 5: National and State of Michigan Prison Census Data



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics prepared by National Prisoner Statistics

When Prison Census data is examined we see in Figure 5 that from 1978 until 2009 there was a progressive increase in the number of individuals incarcerated in the United States. In 1978 the prison population was 307,276 and by 1994 we see that the total increased to over one million incarcerated. The prison population peaked in 2009 with 1,615,487 individuals being incarcerated in the nation and this was followed by declining totals through 2014. For the State of Michigan, the pattern is essentially the same concerning the prison population. In 1978 the state prison population was 14,944 and increased each year until 2002 when the state prison population reached 50,591. The early 2000s saw a decline in the number of state prisoners and the late 2000s saw an increase again with the total hitting a high of 51,577 prisoners residing in

state facilities. From 2007 through 2014, however, there has been a steady decline of the prison population.

Population data gathered from the decennial Census and ACS sample show the struggle Detroit has faced in housing, racial composition, employment, education, and marriage. The rate of home non-ownership (i.e. renters) only increased over the decades going from 22.5% in 1970 to 46.8% in 2010. As the city deteriorated between 1970 and 2010, the rate of residents who were non-homeowners climbed. The racial composition of the city has drastically changed with the rates of African-Americans residing in the city going from 17.85% in 1970 to 83.90% in 2010. From 1970 to 1980, the rates of blacks living in the city jumped drastically from 17.85% to 63.04%. While the population in Detroit decreased, the rate of males in the population drastically decreased as time progressed. Males age 16-25 were 56% of the population in 1970 and they drastically declined to 16.20% of the population after the 1980 Census. This drastic decrease would fall in line with the introduction of the War on Drugs and harsh sentencing that took place. The rate of males age 16-25 continually decreased and as of 2010, the rate was 9.5% of the population. Marriage has seen a decline amongst Detroit residents; the rate of divorce was a low 2.86% in 1970 and jumped to 7.29% in 1980; by 2010 the rate of divorce was approximately ten percent (9.92%). This finding falls in line with the literature review of the decrease in marriages. Further, Detroit has seen a steady decline of residents who have attained a high school diploma. The rates of educational attainment were over 50% in 1970 (54.4%) and have fallen to 32.7% as of the 2010 Census. The city's unemployment rates show some fluctuations with a jump from 3.2% in 1970 to 10.7% in 1990, followed by a decline in the early 2000s to 8%; as of the 2010 Census, the unemployment rate had risen again to 17%, its highest in the years of data collection (Ruggles, Genadek, Goeken, Grover, & Sobek, 2015). Prior to 1990 there was a lack of

consistent data as far as availability and measurements so data points vary depending on the source. For instance, the Wayne County jail inmate data's earliest collection year was 1987 while the state and national prison census information is available for the late 1970s. The interviews revealed several emerging themes; the connections to the city, the political side aspect of mass incarceration, leading forces, the economics, returning citizens and the feeling of overreaction of the system.

### **Connection to Detroit**

Half of the respondents (n=4) were either lifelong Detroiters or had lived and worked in Detroit for at least fifty years. These respondents were witnesses to the structural, political, racial, and economical changes the city experienced in the last half century. Sheriff Napoleon talks about growing up in Detroit during tumultuous times:

First I think that it's an important to note that I'm a lifelong Detroit. I've been here since 1955 when I was born. I was almost 12 years old when the riots in 1967 occurred, so I remember them vividly. I lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> precinct where the riots started. I was right at the epicenter of the riot when it started. I had many encounters with the Detroit police department as a young man growing up in that environment.

Growing up in Detroit as a Native American, Cindy Eggleton hails from a family that experienced the poverty of Detroit.

I'm a lifelong Detroit, a Native American, and first generation college graduate. My mother was in a foster home because of poverty; I can play a variety of roles. I have worked in just about every type of areas: social issues, care, and concern.

Dr. Dennis Nordmoe moved to Detroit in 1967 to serve as a youth pastor and subsequently began to work with vulnerable populations in the city.

I arrived on July 16, 1967, just one week before the riots. I lived in an area that was transitioning to becoming predominantly African-American; it was a mixed church and I lived nearby. I worked three years full-time, one as a youth pastor in development work, [at] the local child care center. I got a job with the city of Detroit as an alcoholism counselor and then later as a program developer in substance abuse. I did that for the next 26 years; during that time I started prevention of substance abuse. I wrote various

strategic plans for the city and prevention. I went from there to work with the Detroit housing commission in the employment and training department in the city. I retired early to take up a high risk, low income opportunity to do neighborhood development. I really felt that we needed to develop healthy neighborhoods to surround the developing child with rich, stabilizing, positive influences.

Saul Green has served his community for decades in a variety of roles from the United States Attorney to Deputy Mayor.

I'm a lifelong Detroit resident and in 1994 I was appointed as the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. When Kwame Kilpatrick stepped down as mayor, under the charter the president of the city council takes over, Ken Cockrel asked me to serve as Deputy Mayor for six months. When he was beat in the election, I was asked to stay on and I did that until 2011.

### **Politics of Mass Incarceration**

Politically, what took place nationally, also took place at home and some in the Detroit law enforcement field were in support of the policies. Sheriff Napoleon admits his support which he rallied for on Capitol Hill although he admits to changing his position:

I was in favor of the crime bill at the time; I was police chief, I went to Capitol Hill... One of the things that I argued vehemently for; crime preventative dollars and education dollars. I agreed that we needed to put bad people in jail but let's do something to keep them out of jail. I can tell you unequivocally as a person that was on the hill talking to legislators at the time, they all had the same response. They wanted that get tough on crime stuff; they didn't want to spend money on fluff stuff or anything that was perceived as being soft on crime. We tried, we just couldn't sell it!

System actors fell on the side of a bipartisan or conservative blame for the policies being promoted and driven. Sheriff Napoleon pointed towards the Clinton Administration which is responsible for passing some of the most damaging crime policies in this country:

I think it was both sides, look at the Clinton crime bill. There were some good things in that bill that we wanted and we didn't end up getting.

Cindy Eggleton agrees with Sheriff Napoleon that politically, the fault could not be placed with just one party; within the political arena, the popular platform was crime and candidates were sure to speak to the public's fears.

I think in general with politics, it's another whole issue together. I think that there was a much more centrist, populist idea that drove the policies. There's one thing to be prejudice[d], have power dynamics, and have fear. It's another thing for policy to be informed by that because that exists and it's based on electability. So I think that in some sense it became a way to become more centrist and use that as a platform without thinking about the repercussions. The travesty is that I don't think these policies of being tough on crime did nothing for crime.

Some witnesses believed that the Republican party had a heavy foothold in mass incarceration with the conservative policies coming down and parole boards being comprised of more conservative members. Bill Kime mentions local conservative politicians:

I would say that the policies were more bipartisan but the heavier contribution was more on the Republican side. But, Governor Blanchard, a Democratic, got rid of the corrections committee. William Milliken was a Republican and one of the most progressive thinkers in the corrections area that we have had in this state. Blanchard catered to the fear.

Dr. Nordmoe, while in agreement that the policies were driven by both political parties, viewed the bipartisanship a little differently than the other respondents.

I would say bipartisan because we have a crime problem and the simplistic way of addressing the problem is to say, well, we need to get this under control, it's hurting everyone. The homicide rate in Detroit was out of control. One year when I was monitoring it, the number of children murdered was over one hundred. That was a time when we really had a wake-up call to what was going on. The policies seemed common sense because it seemed like black people were suffering the most. It just wasn't thought through enough. Had they recognized the role education plays in this, they would have insisted that they go to school while in prison. I'm part of that bipartisan consensus in that I thought we needed to clamp down. On the other hand, I recognized that it wasn't primary prevention so I was also outlining that it was a pipeline to this problem. So I saw that these kids weren't getting addicted they were getting into the selling of the drugs because that's the only thing they are qualified to do. So the point of intervention needs to be about employment and about lifestyle and values that will propel them into working for gratification. That was my professional opinion, but on the side I remember thinking there's got to be some crime control. There were so many break-ins and shooting in my neighborhood.

Like Sheriff Napoleon, Saul Green discussed the Clinton administration in his response that the policies of mass incarceration were bipartisan.

The Democrats were on board with what has resulted in mass incarceration. If you look at some of the policies and positions President Clinton took on, criminal justice policies clearly was one of the biggest contributors to mass incarceration – was our drug laws I believe.

### **Forces of Legislation**

Fear of crime was the prevailing force said to have driven the legislation that led to mass incarceration. System actors recognized that there was a fear of crime in the city, state, and nation that was a determinant of what legislation was enacted. Witnesses were attuned to the climate in the state and city during the onset of mass incarceration, and the ensuing explosion of incarceration that followed was what I believe was a perfect storm of forces that aided legislation in corrections. Sheriff Napoleon states,

No question, it's all these get tough on crime initiatives, mandatory sentencing, War on Drugs. It's all these things that sound like we are getting tough on crime but it didn't work. All it did was explode the prison population. One of the main things I talk about is this alleged War on Drugs we've been fighting since the 1960s. We do the same things here in Detroit that we've done from a narcotics stand point since I was a rookie. But they don't want to hear that, the rhetoric that the average citizen wants to hear is that I'm cracking down on crime.

So elected officials were catering to their constituents despite their knowledge that crime was not as rampant as the average citizen thought and the tactics being used were ineffective. The public's fear of crime was consistently mentioned in the interviews. Cindy Eggleton recognized that fear coupled with other factors of marginalization of minorities to aid in passing legislation,

There's been a real prejudice against people of color and people who didn't have a lot. I think fear and prejudice...I really think that it's fear, prejudice and power dynamics.

Bill Kime pointed towards fear of crime that stemmed from isolated incidents that were turned into anecdotes to scare the public,

There was a fear of crime and politicians. So you get an incident, one escape and someone being injured can reestablish fear; politicians used that. So laws passed irrationally because you play on fear of crime, fear of blacks.

Bill spoke to the sentencing locally and its impact,

Michigan has some of the longest sentences in the country, I'm not sure. The long sentences are anti-productive, they don't protect the public and they just cost a lot of money and they destroy people.

In agreement with Bill Kime, Denise Quarles pointed to among other things, the mandatory sentencing and drugs as forces. She discussed the legislatures pitch of cracking down on drug kingpins when in reality they were getting low-level dealers and addicts,

I think it was political first of all. There was the push to get tough on drugs; a lot of people got pulled into the system off of small amounts of drugs. These people were getting big years! Most of these people were not real dangers to the community. Legislature they sold it as "we're going to get the king pins." But they weren't getting the king pins. They didn't get the people that were having it flown in from wherever they were getting the nickel and dimers. We had prisons full of people who were drug addicts who became mules to fuel their habit.

Dennis Nordmoe pointed to the drug laws, the subsequent appearance of crack cocaine, and the Detroit riot of 1967 as the forces that increased incarceration to massive levels. He claims that following the riots, crime was rampant and called for more enforcement.

I'm aware that a lot of this was a change in laws around drugs. The belief was that we just have to get so strict that people would just stop selling drugs. Then crack came along and it was viewed to be so terrible and a terrible escalation so the notion was to make the penalties even more strict. So that strict penalties would protect more. Another thing that was going on was a huge explosion after the riot and I saw it firsthand. A church that I served in over by Livernois and Chicago was broken into 15 times in five years. A 75-year old shoemaker was beaten to death in his shop. A nun in the Catholic church two blocks from us was murdered. A college girl, a Wayne State Student who lived near the church was killed in a fire bombing of her room. A child was killed and a young man was throwing a brick at the child's mother and I knew the young man who I did it. Then around my house, in 1968 we had a couple of Plymouths, the Plymouths were stolen a few times. The people next door to us were always fighting and shoving and saying awful things to each other. Two weeks after they moved out, one killed the other on the front lawn. What upset me was that people were acting like there was no problem and it really was the same everywhere and that the newspapers were just making it seem as if things were bad.

Saul Green credited fear and the targeting of African-Americans but noted that mass incarceration is one of the worst components of the system.



I think that fear drove the legislation. I think there has always, and always meaning throughout the history of this country African-Americans have always been associated with crime and violence and illegitimacy. When I say illegitimacy I mean that in a very broad sense. So through our history there's been an effort to control and to use black people as a justification by saying they're dangerous, oversexed and corrupt. It's just that there came a time when that perspective took a significant turn for the worst in terms of using the criminal justice system. The mass incarceration is the worst component of the use of the criminal justice system in terms of its impact on African-Americans. It's all sorts of stages up to incarceration that are also a part of this process that have had a devastating impact on African-Americans for the last 30 or 40 years. Maybe even longer. It drove law enforcement tactics that I think ended up having a devastating impact on our communities.

Justice Kelly spoke to the public fear and the suggestion of racism within the system.

It certainly was a period, and I don't think it's true now, when most members of the public listed fear of crime as one of their top concerns. For example, when I was running in 1992 and 1994, I know that surveys done by media people tended to show that to be true. So certainly we know that people being elected in the state knew that and were reacting to it. So it's reasonable to assume that many that were elected were concerned that the people who put them in office would want to know what they had done to curb crime or be tough on crime. I just say that it was probably part of it. And there's been racism, everyone knows it. I think that some people who have been in public office have shared that racism and it's motivated some of their decisions.

### **Economics of Incarceration in Detroit**

Economically, incarceration is regarded as a business. Sheriff Napoleon discusses how economical mass incarceration. He indicates mass incarceration is profitable and suggests other social arenas get far less focus because they cannot generate profit the same way.

There's a whole economic benefit to the prison industrial complex. You know how many people are getting money off of the incarceration business. Someone's making money off of providing food for all of these people, somebody's building these prisons, it's employment for a lot of people, so it's a whole economic engine that's self-perpetuating. So I believe there's no resolve or real will to encourage the same kind of commitment to education.

Moving away from the profit of prison, Cindy Eggleton couples incarceration, foreclosures, and education as a triangulation of the crippling economic downside to mass incarceration:

It's devastating. Statistics speak for themselves. It's really a tale of two cities. When you look at the statistics of people who have been incarcerated, cannot get jobs, living at the poverty level - it's massive. It's crippled the city. You take that, foreclosures, and this god awful education system that makes it hard to get out of are the issues.

Dr. Nordmoe focused on the expenditures that are used to incarcerate and contrasted those to what we could do with the funds repurposed for education.

It's costing us something like \$50,000 as a state to do this per person. If we're trying to fund our public education and be cheap at \$7,500 per person, we should be spending that money on youth employment programs that are also linked to education. It's the wrong strategy, we need to recognize how much we're spending, and how much crime is costing and put that into education in our schools. Spend the same amount of money and get better results. By recognizing not only that we have crime, we need to punish the criminals; we should look at how much we are going to spend on the punishment part and how much are we going to spend on the human development part.

Saul Green spoke to the burden communities face after losing a citizen then having that citizen be replaced with no skill, education, and fewer freedoms than other community members as economic repercussions of the mass incarceration.

I think that mass incarceration has had an absolutely devastating impact on our communities in a myriad of ways but the economic development is one. Yes, I believe that when you remove people from a concentrated predictable area it removes a significant economical part of that community. People who go to prison leave. Normally they are going to return to the communities where they were extracted from. So first you have the removal and you have the impact on families and then you have people returning to that community disabled because they're told all of the things they can't do from voting, the stigma, etc. So then they become a weight and they will because of issues related to employment often return to crime. I think that mass incarceration has had a tremendous impact on Detroit and other urban cities, the Flints, the Pontiacs.

### **Returning Citizens to Detroit**

The issue of reintegration that perils every large city is no different in Detroit; the issue however, may be considered worse. What plagues the city is the returning of uneducated and untrained citizens to a city that offers nothing to the uneducated and unskilled. Wayne County Sheriff Napoleon states,

The easiest way to make a person employable is to give them a skill or a talent. Even if I am not going to go to law school, medical school, get my PhD, get my master's, whatever; teach me how to be a plumber, an electrician, or a roofer. Which is education of a different form; you're still learning how to do something that will make you employable. As opposed to learning how to do nothing and become under-employed. These people are ill prepared to re-enter the public. There's a mindset to being incarcerated. They become even more unemployable because of recidivism due to lack of opportunity. We need to understand that when people come out and they have nothing, they are going to go back in.

Returning to the community means that there needs to be a consideration for what takes place while offenders are incarcerated especially given how massive the corrections system is.

Pamela Withrow discussed the cognitive-based programming she implemented during her career.

In terms of the cognitive programming, that is now department wide and I am kind of proud of that because we started about ten years before the department got on board with it. It's evidenced based; it's the sort of thing that professional corrections ought to be. You figure out what works with guys and then you deliver and those that want it and use will go on and live happily ever after and those that don't won't - but at least they have a choice.

Denise Quarles discusses the hypocrisy offenders face when they return to their community and find that they cannot find the very things that we demand of them due to stigma.

It's always troubled me that oftentimes people who are out on parole, the community doesn't want to accept them. They don't want to give them a job, they don't want to give them a chance; but it's the same community that complains about recidivism. You can't have it both ways. You have to pick, and what's the most positive way to do it? It's to reintegrate these people back in. You also can't complain about the programs that are offered in prison and also complain about recidivism. Because I ran a halfway house and I was a parole agent, I had some experience with people getting out and trying to get reintegrated and it was hard. Most of the time the jobs they could get were low paying jobs; they were not jobs you wouldn't want to make a career out of. Like car wash, cutting grass, landscaping type of thing. They certainly weren't making a lot of money.

Saul Green, while acknowledging that the language has changed, also acknowledges that there is much more work to be done in reintegration of citizens.

First there has to be resources available over a long enough of period of to allow people to acclimate to being free again and also to obtain the skills. The skills even mean basic life skills – get up in the morning and go. They talk about the number of jobs in this country that are actually available right now because we can't find people who are qualified to hold these positions. We've moved from a society that was very labor intensive to one where technology is incumbent in almost everything and anything you do. So on the most basic level we've prevented these large number of people from having these skills. So between life skills and technical job skills there's nothing going on. I'm sorry but there's some people doing great work but to bring that to scale to address the magnitude of this issue – as far as I'm concerned overall we're just playing around.

### **The Overreaction of the System**

There was a unanimous consensus that the criminal justice system began an overreaction in the 1970s which resulted in incarceration, prison expansion, decimated communities, persistent minority marginalization, and the accompanying damages of systemic incarceration of a targeted race in Detroit. Cindy Eggleton points the lack of meaningful solutions;

I think the system definitely overreacted. It's more than overreaction though. I think the system typecast and I think they looked for a quick silver bullet solution and that's not the way. I don't think the policies put in place looked at system as a whole and ask: "What does this really mean?" I think that was both politics and policies and a lack of depth that went into things.

The overreaction meant that the increase in arrests would require space for offenders. Bill Kime discusses the prison growth and how legislation aimed at containing the prison population was discarded due to fear of crime.

The legislature didn't want to appropriate the money to build new prisons. So we passed the Prison Overcrowding and Emergency Powers Act. The act provided that once the prison population exceeded the capacity and the commission certified that the population was over the capacity, 90 days would be removed from the minimum sentence for everyone having a minimum sentence. We would have had to add a 500 bed prison every six weeks to keep up with the growth and we were only getting about halfway so we had overcrowding. In 1984 one of the early parolees who got out early killed a housewife and a policeman in East Lansing, three miles from the capital. The OEP act was trashed; we tanked it. That's why the population in the late 1980s took off. When that was gone, we really had to build prisons everywhere.

Saul Green saw the overreaction in the sense that he knew the system was not responding in an effective way.

I didn't believe that the issues that we faced as it related to crime, particularly violent crime -that we could ever prosecute our way out of that. That we could never investigate, prosecute, convict and imprison our way to a safer community. It was important for me to make sure that everybody understood my perspective as US Attorney. So it was important for me to say from the outset that we would vigorously prosecute those that hurt other people but this is not the answer. So I always aspired the public health perspective; a combination of factors that had to be used to deal with violent crime – prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry. I knew that we couldn't accomplish public safety simply by putting people in jail. I knew that it was wasteful, it was ineffective, it was unfair when you looked at the demographics of who was incarcerated. I knew there were high levels of recidivism so prison wasn't accomplishing anything except recycling. When it first hit me it was 1990 and I was a US Attorney and it was announced via media coverage that we had hit 1 million people in the USA that were in jail. At no point in this country had we ever incarcerated this many people. You'd have to be asleep not to be impacted by that.

Saul is cautious about what lies ahead of such an overreaction.

That's what you see and you feel now. Everybody's now trying to figure out what to do about what was intentionally created. From liberals to conservatives to libertarians all hugging saying "We got to do something about it." The issue for me is "What do you do" because you don't just open up the doors and let people out, that takes a process and then let them out to what, to what resources, to what conditions? So I'm glad that people's attitudes have changed regarding this issue 30 years after the fact. I have no idea what these well-intentioned folk have in mind.

Justice Kelly discussed the system's reaction being understandable yet not justifiable.

Oh sure, definitely. There was a prejudicial effect on the black community and poor people. You can say that the system reacted in ways that are understandable but that doesn't mean they are justifiable.

## **Looking Ahead**

What's made Detroit an interesting place to study is the uniqueness of its devastation. The city endured restructuring at every level for well over half of a century. Sheriff Napoleon discusses the unique but impactful situation Detroit faces:

I think that the interesting thing that most people can't wrap their head around is that this was a city of two million people in it and now there are maybe 700,000. So it's a completely different community. It was the only city in America that's lost what would be a major top ten city population wise if all those people had left and went to one city. Detroit is probably one of the biggest cities in America but it lost 1.3 million people, so it's a very interesting thing when you look at the devastation from a blight standpoint. How do you lose more than half your population and not see an impact?

Those tied to the city, its history and future see an existing solution to the problem of incarceration in the city, education. Placing a focus on education was a recurring theme in the interviews. Cindy Eggleton, who has worked as a strategist and is co-founder of Brilliant Detroit which aims to create healthy and happy neighborhoods for kids, plainly puts it,

I think that education is the way out. We do have generations and we are trying to change those dynamics for generations and it's not easy. For me, education is the best breaker of mass incarceration. The schools I've worked with are some of the worst in the city and really how do you not turn your back on people but actually create strategy's to help.

Sheriff Napoleon also discussed the opportunity education provides.

Those of us who went to college and have our degrees are doing better personally than those of us who just graduated from high school. Those of us who graduated from high school are doing better to some degree than most of us who are not.

Special attention to early childhood education and reducing the risk of delinquent behavior early through education was offered as a popular solution. Sheriff Napoleon states,

My take on it is to focus on early childhood education and really focusing on giving our children an opportunity. I always say in speeches that we'd rather send them to prison than send them to Princeton.

So if we know the value of education and we really want to tackle the problem of over incarceration, why wouldn't we focus our time, effort, energy, and money on getting our children educated especially in Pre-K up until the fourth or fifth grade? We know that if you can read, write, add, subtract, multiply, and divide by fourth grade, your chances of graduating from high school and potentially going to college increases. But if you miss the boat by third grade, there's a good chance you won't get on that boat. So we know all of this, so why aren't we doing something about it? Because as a community we'd rather build prisons than to build colleges and universities up. It's easy to sell to people to put these bad people away then it is to say save a poor young black or brown child that has

the opportunity to do well if given the right resources. Give them the right tools and they can succeed. It's clearly demonstrated. It's an easy sell to say put them in prison.

Dr. Nordmoe believed that instead of the overreaction of incarceration, the solution should be to fix the educational system in the city and get the parents involved in understanding why it's important that their children be in school and engaged.

One of the issues should have been: We have got to make our education system work. We have to pay attention to where it's failing and get on right way, there's no time to waste. The battle there was not how to get it to work but how to get control. This last Wednesday, the Department of Education released a report indicating that Detroit has the worst attendance rate in the country. 58% of Detroit kids are chronically absent. Everybody knows finally that our economy is becoming knowledge base; jobs in IT, Finance, Engineering. Detroit schools are not producing that kind of kid, of the kids that are even staying in school. So they in turn feel like they're not getting theirs and they engage in high risk activity like drug selling. We need to help the parents understand that they have to be in school every day. You cannot learn algebra going every other day. How do you explain that to parents who don't know what algebra is, they don't understand why it's important? They still may want their kids to succeed.

## **Discussion**

Historically, Detroit has been plagued with issues that are deeply rooted in race and can be traced back to a time of pivotal changes that forced the city and its residents to confront their political, racial, economic, and social differences. As the literature reveals, Detroit began to racially divide in the early twentieth century with the arrival of the first African-American immigrants. The city's uniqueness is found in its devastating loss of population and its attempts to recover from such a blow. The criminal justice system's presence in the city has been controversial at times and hotly debated, yet the need for public safety makes it a vital part of the city. This study took a look at the history of mass incarceration in the United States, the history of Detroit, and mass incarceration in Detroit historically to frame the subsequent elite interviews with eight system actors. The witnesses either were lifelong Detroiters who worked within the criminal justice system or alongside it; others were system actors who had knowledge and

expertise of incarceration and its impact. Common themes found throughout the interviews were the belief in bipartisan responsibility for mass incarceration, the contributing factors that drove legislation, the economic implications, and reintegration of mass incarceration. Additional themes found throughout the transcripts of interviews were the consensus of a systemic overreaction to crime and solutions for ending mass incarceration's impact in Detroit.

As evidenced by the interviews, respondents believed that the political climate during the origins of mass incarceration were mostly rooted in politicians on both sides of the aisle running on get tough on crime policies, proposing harsher legislation than their predecessors, and opponents with more influence falling on the conservative side. Fear of crime was overwhelmingly mentioned in interviews when discussing the forces that drove legislation. Respondents also pointed to other factors like existing racial biases, mandatory sentencing, and bad policies in addition to mandatory sentencing. How Detroit's racial makeup drastically changed with the Second Great Migration is testament to the racial biases. The history of racial struggles spilling over into the streets seems to be present today and I felt it was noteworthy that the impact of race arising in interviews was disclosed. The economic implications of mass incarceration in the city of Detroit were frequently referred to in terms of the burdens and deficits. Respondents spoke to the devastation of the removal of citizens and the subsequent return of citizens who were returned unskilled and uneducated. Reentry issues were addressed with witnesses calling upon the system to better prepare those returning to the community while incarcerated for employment and sustainability. The cognitive programming that Pamela Withrow started in her tenure as warden at the Michigan Reformatory stands out as evidenced-based practice that can lead to improvement in post-release for offenders. Outside of cognitive programming, witnesses spoke to the failure of reintegration success and the need for



improvement. All witnesses felt as though there was a systemic overreaction that led to large scale incarceration which left Detroit more ravaged than before.

The population data depicts the decline of education in the city and that was expanded upon in the interviews with respondents looking ahead to education as a key to turning around the situation in Detroit. Respondents saw education as a way out of the hole left by mass incarceration and felt particular focus should be placed on early childhood education. With more emphasis on childhood education, what I found was that those who have spent their life in Detroit believe that preventive efforts such as education can deter residents from crime. The Detroit Public School system must rise to meet this challenge given the problems it has recently faced, but there is hope for the future (Mull, 2016).

The use of in-depth interviews requires the consideration of dishonesty, distortion, and memory in discussing retrospective events and information. Biases may exist given the racial composition of the witnesses involved in the project and may cloud their interviews. What's valuable about the information provided is the variety of perspectives given on localized mass incarceration and its impact. Having first-hand accounts from those who have witnessed the changing system and city is invaluable. In order to expand on this project, one could take the research a step further and interview current offenders who are from Detroit, Michigan or ex-offenders who are from the city and have been released back.

This research offers a system-based perspective of what's taken place in the city of Detroit and touches upon what should take place moving forward. If we take the census data that shows the decline in general population in the city with the decrease in males aged 16 to 25 in that population, it is clear that Detroit is suffering. The once glamorous melting pot that was viewed as a city of everlasting opportunity has dealt with similar issues as other large cities but

to a degree more severe than any in the United States. To combat the lack of education, employment, and over-incarceration, revitalization efforts are underway. There are many, but those that were discussed during the course of interviews are attempting to tackle the underlying conditions that either contribute to mass incarceration or form as a result of issues such as mass incarceration. Programs with efforts targeted at Detroit residents exist; some focus on preventative programming while others offer support for those locked inside the system or just being released to the community.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is an anti-crime organization that uses research to form training for police academy recruits and in-service officers in attempts to improve police and youth interactions. The organization which is made up of police chiefs, sheriffs (including Sheriff Benny Napoleon), prosecutors and violence survivors devised a four-part plan to cut crime and violence (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, n.d.). Brilliant Detroit, which was co-founded by Cindy Eggleton aims to create kid success neighborhoods that attempts to support families in the Detroit communities that need it most by opening a home in every community that residents can visit for support (Brilliant Detroit, n.d.). Other efforts in the city are attempting to remove the label that mass incarceration has left such as Project Clean Slate which is an initiative to clear Detroit residents criminal records and aide them in finding better employment opportunities (Project Clean Slate, n.d.). The U.S. Department of Labor awarded Detroit a \$5 million dollar grant that will be geared towards returning citizens and training them for jobs as well as placing them in readily available positions (Helms, 2015). What lies ahead for Detroit is unclear, but recent revitalization efforts of the 140 square miles should undoubtedly continue to address the impacts that localized mass incarceration has left on the city of Detroit.

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**ABSTRACT****MASS INCARCERATION IN DETROIT: A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

by

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Mass incarceration has pervaded throughout the country and in its wake, the United States is looked to as the country that imprisons the largest percentage of its population than any other place in the world. The phenomenon of mass incarceration continues to be deconstructed by scholars in an attempt to turn the tide and understand the various intricacies that lie at the center of our carceral state. This paper attempts to explore those intricacies on a local level by looking at Detroit, Michigan. The city of Detroit has been constantly restructured economically, politically, racially, and socially throughout the years as the influx of African-Americans arrived in the city looking to escape the perils of the Deep South. Years of struggles for housing, jobs, and basic civil rights marked the city and created racial divide. The removal of the majority of automobile manufacturing from the city center saw the removal of population as white Detroiters fled the city. The local police department once predominantly white and distrusted in the black community due to police brutality or indifference underwent change with the election of Mayor Coleman Young. The city could not escape the impact of mass incarceration however as national and state crime policies began to hit Detroit communities and the minority community saw the loss of young, black men to prison because of low-level drug charges who were subsequently returned unskilled and uneducated. The economy fluctuations, crime policies, residual racial

tensions, and fear of crime among other issues led to a city that constantly struggles. This paper explores the issues Detroit has faced and continues to face and through the use of in-depth elite interviews attempts to narrate what empirical data has shown; Detroit has seen significant population change and the mass incarceration has contributed to the city's decline. Results and implications of the semi-structured interviews, crime data, and population data are discussed.



## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

### **LABREONNA STORI-TURNER BLAND**

LaBreonna Stori-Turner Bland is originally from Saginaw, Michigan but spent most of her adolescent life in Flint, Michigan. She graduated from Flint Schools of Choice in 2006 and went on to obtain three undergraduate degrees. She attended Ferris State University and graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Health Care Systems Administration and an Associates of Applied Science in Legal Studies. In 2013, she received her second Bachelor of Science from the University of Michigan – Flint in Research Psychology while working for the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor as a Follow-Up Coordinator. From 2012 until 2014, LaBreonna worked with underrepresented population in Genesee County and decided to pursue a graduate degree in Criminology/Criminal Justice. In the fall of 2014, she began the Masters program in Criminal Justice at Wayne State University. LaBreonna has been accepted into the University of California – Irvine’s Criminology, Law, and Society doctoral program to continue her academic journey in the fall of 2016.