

PRISON
POLICY INITIATIVE

2014-2015
ANNUAL REPORT

September 2015

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“PPI is one of the most imaginative research groups illuminating the dark recesses of our carceral landscape”

-Pete Brook
Prison Photography

Executive Director's letter

Dear Friends,

I'm proud to share our 2014-2015 annual report recapping the Prison Policy Initiative's most recent accomplishments during a year when criminal justice reform has increasingly been in the news.

I co-founded the Prison Policy Initiative to build justice reform campaigns that accomplish two goals: achieve real change on specific issues *and* make the larger point that the harm of mass criminalization extends far beyond the people who are locked up. We tackle complex issues like prison gerrymandering and the prison telephone industry, but also help build the movement's general infrastructure by providing long-absent data and resources.

For example, last year we published a report that provided state-by-state data on racial disparities in incarceration, filling a need that the federal government stopped meeting in 2006. And this year we produced a report on the pre-incarceration incomes of incarcerated people; this income data for men hadn't been updated since 1993, and the data for women since, well, never. I'm proud to say that part of what makes the Prison Policy Initiative unique is that we know what data gaps are preventing the criminal justice reform movement from moving forward and we have the creativity to find ways to answer the questions that seem unanswerable at first glance.

This year, while we made significant progress bringing fairness to the prison and jail telephone industry, we also learned of and confronted two new ways that companies and correctional facilities are exploiting incarcerated people and their families. First up was the video visitation industry, a technology that holds the promise to erase the significant physical distance between prison and home that makes visiting so difficult, but, as our groundbreaking report by Bernadette Rabuy found, the reality falls far short of the technology's potential. The technology doesn't work well, and worse, it is most often implemented as a step in the wrong direction: as a fee-based mandatory replacement to traditional visits. Bernadette's January report has transformed this industry, empowering families and facilities to fight back against bad contracts and shaming the

The non-profit, non-partisan Prison Policy Initiative **produces cutting edge research** to expose the **broader harm of mass incarceration**, and then **sparks advocacy campaigns** to create a more just society.



industry's leader into ending its *requirement* that the facilities that use its technology stimulate demand by banning in-person visits.

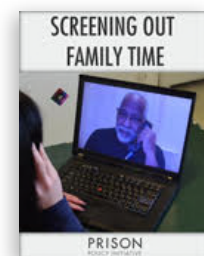
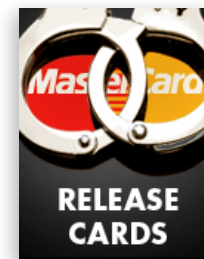
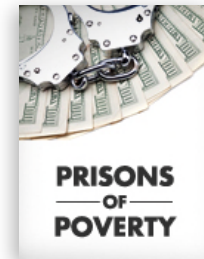
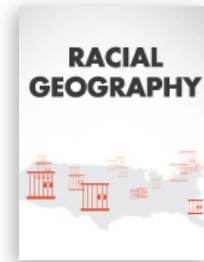
We also partnered with volunteer attorney Stephen Raheer to take on another expanding predatory industry: prepaid release cards. When someone is released from prison or jail, the facility often owes that person money for any number of reasons including because they were arrested with money in their pocket, because family sent in money or because they had a job on the inside. The new trend is to replace the old system of paying people with cash or checks with a new system of prepaid MasterCards that come with exorbitant fees. These cards charge some of the poorest people in this country fees like \$3.50/week to have the card, \$0.95 to make a purchase, and \$30 to close the account. That's just unconscionable. Stephen's research sparked press coverage of this previously hidden industry and was the core of our letter to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau calling for regulation of these abusive cards in its next regulatory update.

Stephen's work is just one example of an exciting change this year in how we work: our Young Professionals Network, which allows us to use powerful, specialized skills to advance the movement for criminal justice reform. Historically, most of our volunteer or internship opportunities have been based in our office around regular working hours. But this year, we've finally grown to the point where we can create a new network that allows less frequent but more focused contributions from working people throughout the country who want to use their skills in concert with our dedicated staff to improve our criminal justice system.

Our first project with the network was creating a series of short videos about the video visitation industry with New York City comedians who showed us that it's possible to make people laugh while raising awareness about one of the most upsetting "innovations" to hit criminal justice in years (see p. 9-10). Programmer Jacob Mitchell made it possible for us to produce the sentencing enhancement zones animation (p. 12), and data scientist Daniel Kopf made essential data accessible with our recent reports about the racial geography of mass incarceration and the low pre-incarceration incomes of incarcerated people (pp. 6 and 15).

This past year also brought accomplished new members to our board. We are thrilled that Amanda Alexander, Khalilah L. Brown-Dean and Jason Stanley have joined our team (see interviews on pages 18–20).

On the financial front, I'm thrilled to report that we've made tremendous progress at diversifying our funding, putting the organization on a much stronger footing. We've brought in new foundation partners and our individual donors have increased in both

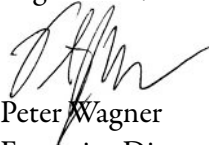


number and generosity (page 21).

While we still struggle to raise funds dedicated for our founding project focusing on the prison industry's distortion of the political process (a.k.a. prison gerrymandering, p. 5-6), we continue to be blessed with an increase in flexible support that allows us to take advantage of new opportunities presented by the rapidly changing movement against mass incarceration.

I thank you for your partnership, and for being a key part of our victories over the past year. Please celebrate with me.

In gratitude,



Peter Wagner
Executive Director
September 22, 2015

PS. Visitors to our website know that the Prison Policy Initiative is one of the most prolific reform organizations out there. To stay on top of our work, check out:

- Our email newsletters with the highlights of our campaigns and new research from our colleagues. See <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/subscribe/>
- Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. We're [@PrisonPolicy](https://twitter.com/PrisonPolicy) on Twitter.



The image shows a newspaper article titled "Phoning From Prison, at Prices Through the Roof" by David Segal. The article discusses the high cost of phone calls from prison. Below the article is a Twitter profile for Prison Policy Initiative (@PrisonPolicy). The profile includes a bio, location (Easthampton, MA), website (prisonpolicy.org), and join date (October 2009). The tweet section shows a tweet from Prison Policy Init. about Michigan allowing letters from home, retweeted by Matt Ford.

Phoning From Prison, at Prices Through the Roof
THE HAGGLER | DAVID SEGAL

The Haggler generally takes letters from consumers, but in this episode we hear from a consumer advocate. Specifically, an advocate for a narrow niche of consumers: prisoners. Is there a species of man as fond of quixotic causes, as accustomed to frustration, as inured to rejection? The Haggler submits that the answer is no. This is a line of work where the headaches must outnumber the victories by a factor of 100. So would it kill you to lend an ear to Peter Wagner, of the Prison Policy Initiative? Probably not.

PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

Prison Policy Init.
@PrisonPolicy
Challenging mass incarceration and over-criminalization through research, advocacy, and organizing. Get email updates: prisonpolicy.org/subscribe/
Easthampton, MA
prisonpolicy.org
Joined October 2009

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

Prison Policy Init. @PrisonPolicy · 4h
Jail in Michigan will once again allow letters from home. Congrats to [@prisonlegalnews](http://prisonlegalnews.com/magcombdaily.com/general-news/2...) [macombdaily.com/general-news/2 ...](http://macombdaily.com/general-news/2...)

Prison Policy Init. retweeted
Matt Ford @fordm · Sep 6
Kate's Law is a great example of the knee-jerk legislation that helped build mass incarceration. My latest: theatlantic.com/politics/archi...

Who we are

The non-profit, non-partisan Prison Policy Initiative **produces cutting edge research** to expose the **broader harm of mass incarceration**, and then sparks **advocacy campaigns** to create a more just society.

The Prison Policy Initiative was founded in 2001 to document and publicize how mass incarceration undermines our national welfare. Our team has grown to three dedicated staff members who, along with student interns and volunteers, shape national reform campaigns from our office in Western Massachusetts.

Staff

- Aleks Kajstura, *Legal Director*
- Bernadette Rabuy, *Policy & Communications Associate*
- Peter Wagner, *Executive Director*

Students, interns and volunteers

- Ted Alexandro, *Actor, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*
- Siobhan Beasley, *Writer & Young Professionals Network Coordinator*
- Dewey Caddell, *Crew, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*
- Catherine Cain, *Smith College Work Study*
- Luke Delahanty, *Video editor, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*
- Corey Frost, *Alternative Spring Break*
- Sarah Hertel-Fernandez, *Summer Research Associate*
- Elydah Joyce, *Research Associate*
- Yoo Eun Kim, *Smith College Work Study*
- Daniel Kopf, *Young Professionals Network*
- Haldane McFall, *Director of Photography, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*
- Jacob Mitchell, *Young Professionals Network*
- Stephen Raheer, *Young Professionals Network*
- Sophia Robohn, *RRASC Intern*
- Ben Rosen, *Actor, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*
- Leah Sakala, *Senior Policy Analyst*
- Arielle Sharma, *Alternative Spring Break*
- Phebe Szatmari, *Director, Video Visitation Comedy Videos*

Consultants:

- Bill Cooper, *GIS Consultant*
- Bob Machuga, *Graphic Design Consultant*
- Jordan Miner, *Programming Consultant*

Board of Directors*:

- Amanda Alexander, *Director Child Advocacy Law Clinic, University of Michigan Law School*
- Neelum Arya, *Director Research Director, Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy, UCLA School of Law*
- Rachel Bloom, *Director*

- Khalilah L. Brown-Dean, *Director Associate Professor of Political Science, Quinnipiac University*
- Ruth Greenwood, *Director Staff Attorney and Voting Rights Project Coordinator, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law*
- Annette Johnson, *Director Senior Vice President and Vice Dean, General Counsel, NYU Langone Medical Center*
- Drew Kukorowski, *Clerk, Attorney, Council for Children's Rights*
- Eric Lotke, *President, Author of Making Manna.*
- Michael Leo Owens, *Director Associate Professor, Emory University*
- Jason Stanley, *Director Professor of Philosophy, Yale University*
- Heather Ann Thompson, *Director Professor of History, University of Michigan*
- Sarah Walker, *Director Co-founder, Minnesota Second Chance Coalition*
- Angela Wessels, *Treasurer*

*Organizations for identification purposes only.

Advisory Board*:

- Andrew Beveridge, *Sociology, Queens College*
- Alec Ewald, *Political Science, University of Vermont*
- Barbara Fedders, *UNC School of Law*
- Alex Friedmann, *Prison Legal News*
- Barbara Graves-Poller, *The Legal Aid Society*
- Joseph "Jazz" Hayden, *plaintiff, Hayden v. Pataki*
- Dale Ho, *Director of Voting Rights Project, ACLU*
- Daniel Jenkins, *democracy activist, plaintiff, Longway v. Jefferson*
- Bruce Reilly, *Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People's Movement*
- Brigitte Sarabi, *Partnership for Safety and Justice*
- Janice Thompson, *Midwest Democracy Network*
- Brenda Wright, *Dēmos: A Network for Ideas and Action*
- Rebecca Young, *Attorney*

*Organizations for identification purposes only.

Protecting our democracy from mass incarceration by ending prison gerrymandering

<http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/>

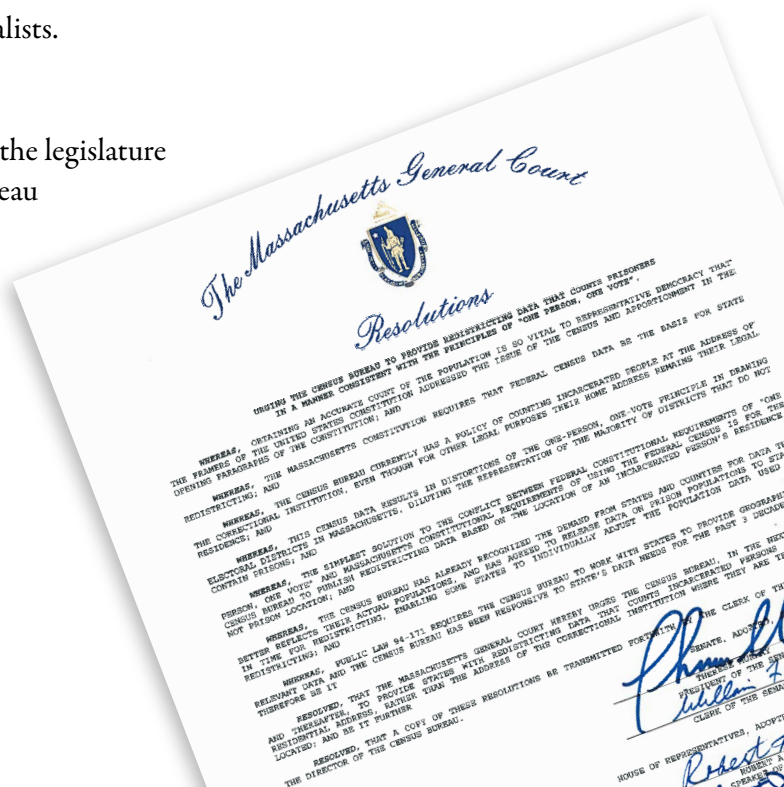
The Census Bureau's practice of counting more than two million incarcerated people where they are imprisoned awards undue political clout to the people that live near prisons at the expense of everyone else.

Before we released our first report documenting prison gerrymandering in New York just over a decade ago, no one knew that prison gerrymandering was distorting our democracy and impeding criminal justice reform. Today, our work has **sparked successful legislation** in multiple states, **won major civil rights victories** in the courts, and made the problem of prison gerrymandering a key issue for state legislators, local government officials, voting rights and civil rights advocates, researchers, and journalists.



This year marked great progress:

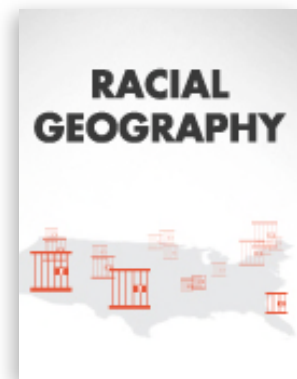
- We're winning in the states. In **Massachusetts**, the legislature sent a **bipartisan resolution** to the Census Bureau calling on the federal government to end prison gerrymandering. In two states (**Rhode Island and Minnesota**), bills to end prison gerrymandering passed the state Senate, and in **New Jersey and Illinois** the bills were passed out of House committees.



- Our federal voting rights lawsuit challenging prison gerrymandering in **Cranston, Rhode Island** is currently before the Judge on a motion for summary judgment. We represent, along with the ACLU and Dēmos, residents whose votes were diluted by the city’s decision to give extra political influence to the city ward with the prison complex. We won a preliminary victory in September 2014 when the judge found that the incarcerated population’s “inclusion in Ward Six does nothing to advance the principle of representational equality.”
- We demonstrated additional benefits of laws to end prison gerrymandering when we used the data from Maryland’s No Representation Without Population Act to produce the first-ever detailed, statewide analysis of where incarcerated people come from. We published the data as part of a report focusing on Baltimore in partnership with the Justice Policy Institute, *The Right Investment? Corrections Spending in Baltimore City*.
- We’ve continued to make it easier for the public to understand how this methodological flaw in the Census distorts our democracy:
 - We produced a video with Board President Eric Lotke dispelling the common myth that the prison miscount impacts federal funding. As Eric explains, prison gerrymandering hurts democracy and vote equality but barely affects funding.
 - We published analyses of New York and Rhode Island showing why ending prison gerrymandering benefits 99.9% of the state, not just those from communities hardest hit by incarceration.
- We explained the racial character of prison gerrymandering in states and counties throughout the country with a new report, *The Racial Geography of Mass Incarceration*, finding that the way the Census Bureau counts incarcerated people labels counties as diverse when they are anything but.
- Executive Director Peter Wagner, Board Member Drew Kukorowski, and Legal Director Aleks Kajstura gave nine invited presentations about ending prison gerrymandering in **Connecticut, Minnesota, and North Carolina**. Peter Wagner also traveled to **Kentucky and Rhode Island** to testify on the importance of protecting our democratic process from mass incarceration.



(Left to right) Peter Wagner, Aleks Kajstura, Adam Lioz (Demos), Brenda Wright (Demos), Leah Sakala, and Sarah Hertel-Ferdandez outside the federal courthouse in Rhode Island after successful arguments opposing the City’s motion to dismiss our suit.



Bringing fairness to the prison and jail phone industry

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/>

Some children have to pay \$1/minute to talk to an incarcerated parent. Why? Because prisons and jails profit by granting monopoly telephone contracts to the company that will charge families the most.

For more than ten years, families trying to stay in touch with incarcerated loved ones had been calling on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide relief from exorbitant prison and jail telephone bills. Recognizing yet another way that mass incarceration punishes entire communities, we've made it a priority to help the FCC understand and regulate this previously hidden market.

The FCC is poised to protect more families by capping the costs of in-state calls and addressing the abusive fees that are tacked onto calls. Legal Director Aleks Kajstura was invited to present our research at the FCC's workshop in July 2014, and our research was cited five times throughout the November 2014 order requesting more feedback.

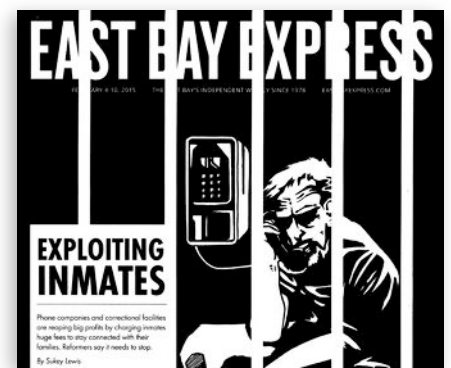
In January, we provided the FCC with six major research briefings on:

- The need for regulation of in-state calls home from prisons and jails, which make up 92% of all calls home.
- Why the prison phone industry's "compromise" proposal should be rejected because it is no better than, and in some ways worse than, the status quo.
- How the industry secretly and illegally pockets tens of millions of dollars from families when a loved one is released from prison or jail.
- How the hidden fees are continuing to, absent federal regulation, grow.
- How "Single-Call Programs" that charge \$9.99-\$14.99 for a single call are a blatant attempt to exploit panicking families and subvert existing regulations.
- The real gap that can be filled by advanced communication services like email or voice services, but how the pricing raises questions about fairness.



Aleks (center) presents on the pernicious role of fees in the prison telephone industry at the Federal Communications Commission's July 2014 workshop. At left is Darrell Baker of the Alabama Public Services Commission, and at right is Lee Petro, pro bono counsel for the Martha Wright petitioners.

Image source: Human Rights Defense Center



We're continuing to shine light on some of the most hidden corners of the prison phone industry:

- An analysis showing that prison phone company Securus's profits skyrocketed after the FCC's rate caps, meaning that Securus has managed to subvert existing regulations.
- A blog post explaining one of the industry's dirtiest tricks: "fee harvesting," where companies tack on hidden fees that double the price of a call.

We've generated a broad range of press attention for the movement for prison phone justice including articles in *Bloomberg Businessweek*, the *East Bay Express*, *International Business Times*, and *The New York Times* as well as an editorial from *The Boston Globe*.

We are expecting the FCC to rule in October 2015.

The High Cost of Calling the Imprisoned

Deals for Providing Phone Service to Inmates Have Come Under Federal Scrutiny

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

The police in Pennsylvania arrested the March for walking out of a Crest Whitestrips he mother, has spent the calls to



fees was paid to jails and prisons, and to county and local governments, according to F.C.C. The fees are legal, and the agency has spent millions of dollars on expenses within prisons. The agency is currently reviewing whether to regulate the costs of

Newsweek

TALK IS NOT CHEAP

Inside the shadowy and lucrative business of prison pay phones

When Joanne Jones learned that her son had been arrested, the last thing she wanted was her phone bill. The police in Texas, had charged him with aggravated assault when Jones tried to call him in jail. "It was going to cost her \$150 for a 15-minute conversation," Jones, 60, an occupational therapist, said. "I was racking up the cost of her son behind bars. Securus Technologies, a company that's one of the largest in the industry. The company rates, contracts with Verizon and AT&T. But leaked documents show that the company has a 1 million people in its place about \$1 million, according to a report they have no idea about. Securus is a company with the most expensive phone calls in the country. This is a scandalous and outrageous practice. This is a scandalous and outrageous practice. This is a scandalous and outrageous practice.

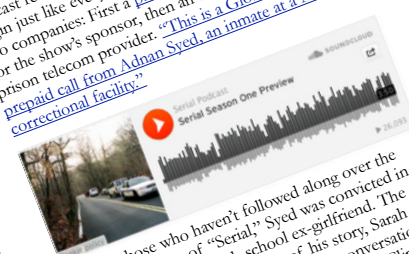


Bloomberg Businessweek

Mobile & Telecom
Serial's \$2,500 Phone Bill and the Prison-Calling Racket
By Joshua Brustein December 17, 2014



The final installment of "Serial," a cult-favorite podcast reinvestigating a 15-year-old murder case, will begin just like every other episode with the names of two companies: First a partially mispronounced plus sign, then an unpaid mention of a prison telecom provider. "This is a Global Tel-Link prepaid call from Adnan Syed, an inmate at a Maryland correctional facility."



other business. And while the prison telecom creates the backdrop for "Serial," it's at the center of a very different drama of its own. Prisoners and their families have long complained about the exorbitant rates for phone service. Now, after years of inaction, the federal government is getting serious about reform. In 2013, Take Koenig's 40 hours of taped calls with Syed, detail she mentions in the second-to-last episode of the finale makes its debut on Thursday morning. In 2013, the top rate for telephone calls to prisons in the U.S. was 89¢ per minute plus a \$3.95 per-call charge. Communications Commission. At that rate, Koenig and Syed conversations could have easily exceeded \$2,500. Representatives for "Serial" and Global Tel-Link declined to comment for this story. Here's another way to think of the price of phone rates paid by prisoners: For the price of a 15-minute call at 89¢ per minute, you can get a monthly wireless plan from Verizon (VZ) that includes unlimited voice calls and text messages as well as 1 gigabyte of data service. The market for inmate phone service is a hot one. The prisons generally sell contracts with specialized phone carriers. Competing by offering the lowest-price contracts with the best sound quality, companies such as Securus win contracts largely by offering to pay a portion of the money from inmate phone calls. Advocates for inmates and reformers pay the prisons up to 96 percent of the revenue, according to the FCC.

Advocates for inmates and reformers pay the prisons up to 96 percent of the revenue, according to the FCC.

Protecting family visits from the exploitative video visitation industry

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/visitation/>

County jails and private companies work together to replace traditional in-person visits with expensive video chats and grainy computer images.

Video visitation, a technology that should make it easier for families to stay in touch, is actually being used to eliminate human contact and punish families. Our research provided the first comprehensive national survey of the industry and held the video visitation industry's promised benefits up to the harsh realities faced by families. In its first year, our campaign to protect in-person visits has had a number of victories including:

- We released *Screening Out Family Time: The for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails*, which found that over 500 correctional facilities have adopted video visitation and that most county jails implement video visitation in the worst way possible: as a replacement to in-person visits.
- We helped activists convince the **Dallas County, Texas** government to reject a contract for video visitation that would have banned in-person family visits. This was the first time that such a contract was ever rejected. This experience and the range of supportive editorials from throughout Texas have become a central part of the national story to protect in-person visitation from the profit motive.
- Our report, combined with investigative reporting by **Portland, Oregon's Street Roots**, led the Multnomah County Sheriff to announce that he would amend the county's Securus video visitation contract to bring back in-person visits. This was the first time that a video visitation contract was ever amended to bring back in-person visits.
- We collaborated with comedians to produce four hilarious short videos that take on the video visitation industry's offensive claim that expensive, glitchy video visitation is just like Skype.



- We shamed the largest provider of video visitation, Securus, into changing its policy of explicitly requiring, right in its contracts, that correctional facilities using its service ban in-person visitation. Because Securus has shifted responsibility for this repugnant decision to elected sheriffs, we now have more political leverage to encourage the use of video visitation as a supplement to in-person visitation and never as a replacement.
- Thanks in part to our research and advocacy, a new law in Texas recognizes that virtual visits are not the same as in-person visits and mandates that each county jail provide a minimum of two in-person visits each week.

It's a bad idea to limit jail inmate visits to video



Bob Ray Sanders
 bobray@theatlantic.com

The concept, considered in Dallas County, is just another way to prey on inmates.

Dallas County came very close last week to making a huge mistake that would have put a major burden on county jail inmates and their families.

What sounded initially like a money-saving convenience for "visiting" family members and greater security within jail, the scheme proved to be a money-sucking scheme on the backs of inmates. County officials had to be convinced to provide video visits to inmates. Those wanting to see and talk to their loved ones from their homes are charged a cost of 50 cents a minute (a 20-minute visit).

Securus Technologies, a Dallas-based company that provides video visitation services to jails, is the only provider of such services in the state. Securus Technologies, a Dallas-based company that provides video visitation services to jails, is the only provider of such services in the state.

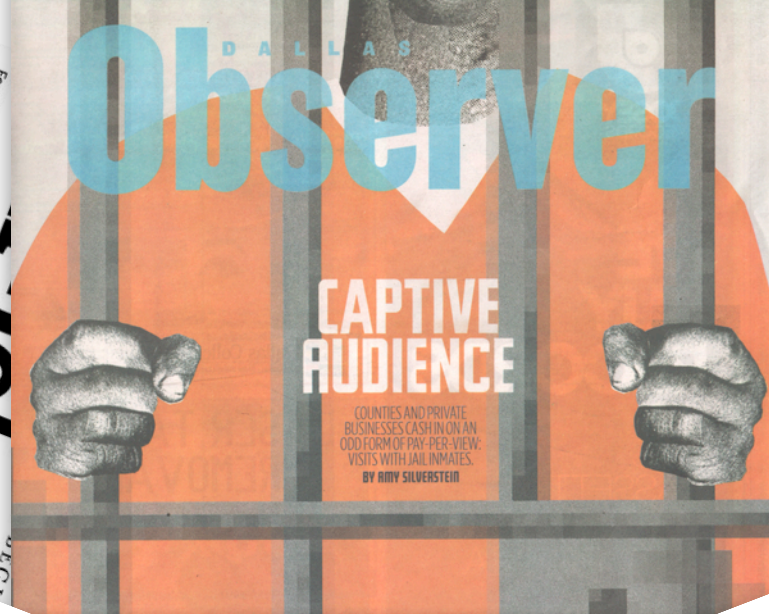
The Dallas Morning News

Dallas, Texas, Tuesday, November 5, 2014

Phoning in the Punishment

County must not allow onerous jail call charges

DECEMBER 27-DECEMBER 1, 2014 | VOLUME 54 | NUMBER 48



For Worth, Texas

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2014

COUNTIES AND PRIVATE BUSINESSES CASH IN ON AN OLD FORM OF PAY-PER-VIEW: VISITS WITH JAIL INMATES.

BY AMY SILVERSTEIN

County Jail Judge Jenkins plans to compromise Tuesday calling for a \$5 per 20-minute call, reduced from \$2 transaction fee, reduced from \$3 investment in first year of operation subsequent years.

County commissioners have al system in the county jail. We are already weigh the pros and cons of such modifications offered by Securus. Jenkins said that will come up in his meeting Tuesday.

Securus warns that contractors like Securus who follow to ban face-to-face jailhouse visits such video systems, he says, rules old have eliminated in-person jail visits, and generating a proposal in September that ers rejected a proposal to eliminate in-person jail visits, and not part of Tuesday's proposal.

Some service providers have found a loophole, persuading jail operators to require those visiting in person to use a video link at the visitation facility. It's critical that commissioners not agree to any plan that would halt face-to-face visits. The county should not be in the business of exploiting prisoners and their families to balance the budget.

Securus' original proposal offered video phone calls to inmates at "to use, plus a per-call "to County commissioners Jenkins plans to lower the rate to \$3 transaction fee of \$3 Jenkins' proposal to recoup Securus to recoup the significant decline in significant revenue. This news comes as the state's prison system faces a budget crisis. Securus' charges have been a major factor in the state's budget deficit.

Austin American-Statesman

Friday, November 14, 2014

WE SAY COUNTY JAIL SYSTEMS

Make in-person jail visits an option

Breaking news at state

For many inmates in county jails, the days are long, lonely and stressful. For them, visiting with family is their only connection to the outside world. It is a connection that needs as much protection as operating the jail.

And yet, the trend to do away with in-person visitation in order to make come all too popular. It is a move that needs to cease in Central Texas.

County jail inmates in Central Texas are being deprived of a critical resource to make bail and do not only stay a few days or weeks in behind bars for months, but also lose their families and friends. These individuals are often of high fees intended to pay for local county lock-ups that come all too popular. It is a move that needs to cease in Central Texas.

County jail inmates in Central Texas are being deprived of a critical resource to make bail and do not only stay a few days or weeks in behind bars for months, but also lose their families and friends. These individuals are often of high fees intended to pay for local county lock-ups that come all too popular. It is a move that needs to cease in Central Texas.

"YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF INTIMACY,"

deducted from her account regardless. She has tried about the problem, but the telecommunication company she called, she put her cell phone on her own phones. "I can never get through," she said. "He doesn't understand how she gave up."

There is another option to call the face of Donald Rahn shortly after his arrest in August 2013. The phone call cost her \$100.

street roots

only \$1 WEEKLY JAN. 30-FEB 5, 2015 STREETROOTS.ORG

Sheriff reverses course on plan to end in-person visits

Plan drew negative feedback from the public, county officials

BY EMILY GREEN

Multnomah County Sheriff Dan Stanton will not move forward with plans to eliminate in-person visitation at county jails, according to a news release sent from his office Tuesday.

Stanton's decision comes after Street Roots broke the news about his plan to eliminate in-person visitation by the end of the year ("Captive Consumers," Street Roots, Jan. 2) and subsequent stories in other media drew angry complaints from readers.

The news also prompted Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kalofry and Commissioner Loretta Smith to approach Stanton on the matter, urging him to

Conditions behind bars

Screening visitors

Prisons profit by stopping family visits

It's known that my son is moving and talking on the other side of the screen, but when the conversation all over again," one mother says. She is in Rhode Island; he is almost 2,000 miles away in Hays County, Texas.

grainy and I can never see how he really is," she explains. "But these sessions are a lot because I'm so far away."

A new study by the Prison Policy Initiative finds that families across America are in a similarly bleak situation. Some 386 jails about 29% of the total—offer "video visits," Peter Wagner, one of the study's authors, calls the spread of these services a "scandal" that remains "totally off the radar."

The option of a video visit might be useful for loved ones who live far away, so long as in-person visits are also allowed. But many prisons, arguing that prisoners do not need the latter since they can have the former, what is more, kiosks for calls are in public spaces, meaning that inmates

A captive market

Curbing the exploitation of people released from custody

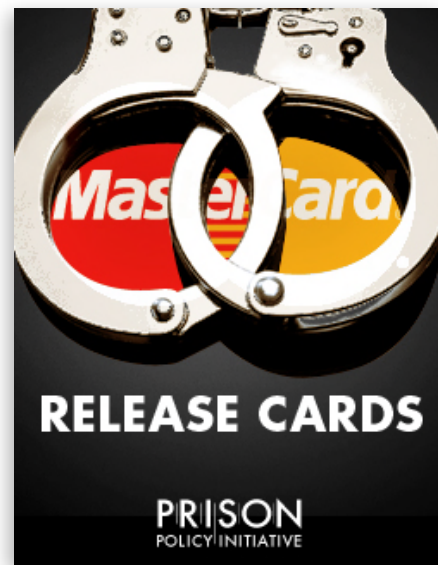
<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/releasecards/>

Charging poor people to access their own money is never a good idea.

Correctional facilities are increasingly using high-fee debit cards to repay people they release — money that was in their possession when initially arrested, money earned working in the facility, or money sent by friends and relatives. Until recently, people were given cash or a check. Now, they are instead given their own money on a mandatory prepaid card, which comes with high fees that eat into their balance.

With the help of volunteer attorney Stephen Raheer of our Young Professionals Network, we researched this little-known but highly exploitative market and submitted a comment to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau urging regulation of these predatory cards.

The Bureau has not yet ruled, but our filing generated a lot of press attention including articles from *NBC News*, *Al Jazeera America* and *The Center for Public Integrity*, putting the hidden exploitation of formerly incarcerated people into the public light.



Profiting from Prisoners

Lack of choice on high-fee inmate debit cards draws widespread criticism

Dozens of groups ask regulators to protect released inmates from mandatory card use

By Daniel Wagner 5:00 am, March 25, 2015 Updated: 5:00 am, March 25, 2015

196 views 87 tweets 2 comments Email Print

Dozens of groups are calling on federal regulators to protect released prison inmates from steep fees they must pay to access their own money via prison-issued payment

Prisoners often receive their

cards on

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aimed at protect
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e submitted or signed comments calling on the b
forcing released inmates to use a particular card.

Don't miss another investigation
Sign up for the Center for Public Integrity's Watch

Progress



Inmates Charged Fee After Leaving Jail

BY HERB WEISBAUM

After paying their debt to society, released inmates are finding themselves dinged by a hidden fee.
Prisoners are often given money when they leave jail. It could be the cash they came in with, money they earned at a prison job or funds deposited by friends and relatives. Recently, prepaid debit cards have replaced cash and checks as the way to return these funds to prisoners. Private companies market these cards as a cheaper, more convenient and secure way than checks for the institution to provide funds upon release.
But these cards can come with a cost — one paid by the inmate.
... could go to jail overnight with a \$20 bill in your pocket and be released the next day, you're given a \$10 monthly fee," said Alicks
... Rapid Fund Solutions, which

- Balance inquiry fees from 50 cents to \$1.50 at and as much as \$3.95 by phone
- Cash withdrawal at an ATM fees of \$2 to \$3
- Fees to close the account and refund all the card that range from \$9.95 to \$30
- By banning fees and providing alternative help prisoners prepare themselves to re-enter a greater level of control over the often meager resources to which they have access." "In their petitions to the CFPB, where it is an "involuntary market" where former prisoner — has no choice about prepaid card and no way to shop around terms and fees.
- NBC News contacted four of these debit cards to prison system Keesee Commissary, Numi Financial Solutions. We heard back from Rapid Fund Solutions, which



'Release cards' turn inmates and their families into profit stream

... consumer debit cards, prison-issued cards
... 2015 5:00AM ET
... du Diallo @amadry

Fighting against overreaching and ineffective geography-based penalties

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/zones.html>

Turning large portions of cities, counties, or states into increased penalty zones may sound good on the campaign trail, but this rhetoric doesn't work in practice. When a legislature decides to treat everywhere as special, nowhere is special.

Since 2006, we've been working to reform one of the worst ideas to come out of the war on drugs — large sentencing enhancement zones around schools. We've produced three reports demonstrating how increased penalties in school zones fail to protect children and worsen racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Our work led **Massachusetts** to roll back these zones in 2013, and this year we won a major victory in Connecticut:

- In July 2015, armed with our research, Connecticut removed the mandatory minimum within the state's 1,500-foot sentencing enhancement zones. Media outlets such as Fox used the maps from our report, *Reaching too far: How Connecticut's large sentencing enhancement zones miss the mark*, in order to show how these zones simply can't work when they blanket entire urban areas.



Aleks discusses Hartford's zones with Connecticut Representative Brandon McGee in 2014.



- So how large is 1,500 feet? That distance isn't just a number; it's taller than the Eiffel Tower, longer than 5 football fields, and it's more than enough to blanket all of Connecticut's urban areas in overlapping sentencing enhancement zones. With the help of two of our interns, Elydah Joyce and Arielle Sharma, and a member of our Young Professionals Network, Jacob Mitchell, we produced an animation illustrating just how large 1,500 feet is that we expect will help other states follow Connecticut's lead in rolling back the worst laws passed at the height of the anti-drug hysteria of the 1980s.

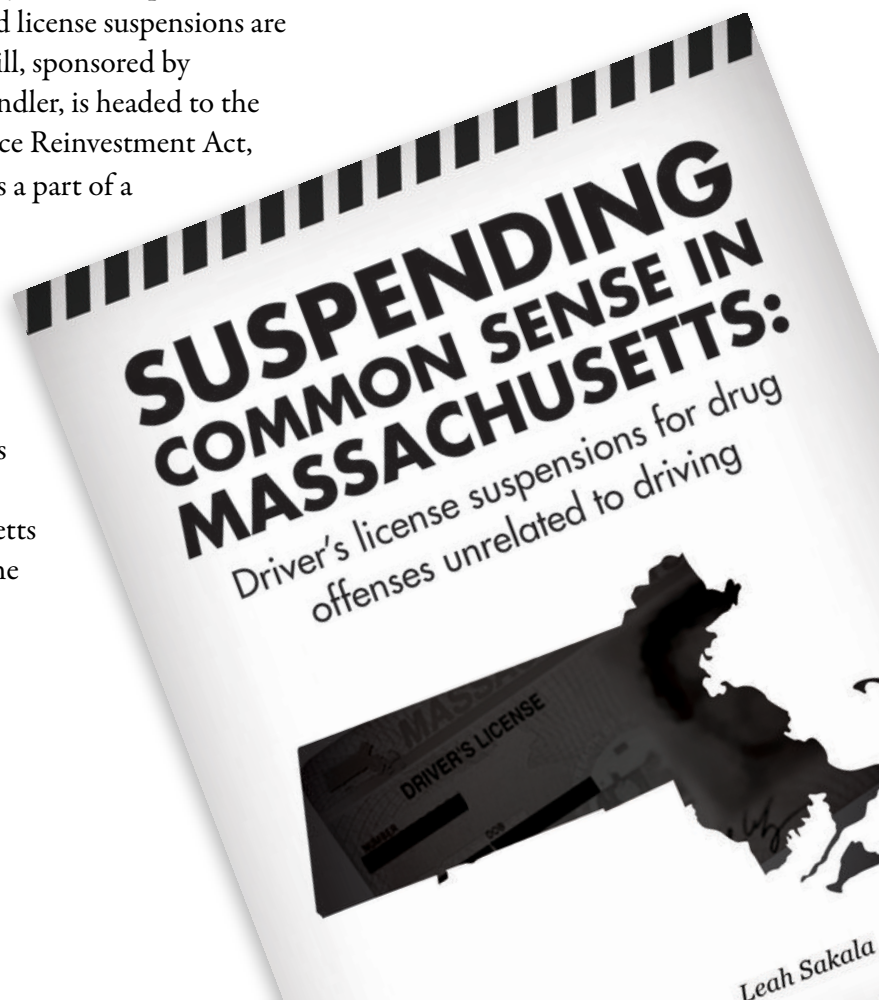


Working to end driver's license suspensions for drug offenses unrelated to driving

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/driving/>

Every year, Massachusetts law needlessly suspends the driver's licenses of thousands of state residents because of drug convictions, even if the offense has nothing to do with operating a vehicle or road safety.

- Our May 2014 report, *Suspending Common Sense in Massachusetts: Driver's license suspensions for drug offenses unrelated to driving*, was the first to document why license suspensions make zero sense. Report author Leah Sakala gave an invited presentation on her research at a legislative briefing session earlier this year, explaining how this practice makes roads more dangerous, wastes taxpayer and law enforcement resources, and prevents people with previous involvement in the criminal justice system from fulfilling personal, familial, and legal responsibilities that require driving.
- Armed with our research, our friends at EPOCA are leading an effort that might finally end unnecessary license suspensions in Massachusetts. Two bills that could end license suspensions are moving through the legislature: One bill, sponsored by Representative Malia and Senator Chandler, is headed to the floor of the Senate, and EPOCA's Justice Reinvestment Act, which would end license suspensions as a part of a larger criminal justice reform bill, has a hearing scheduled for October 2015.
- Later this year, we will be launching a movement to end driver's license suspensions in the 15 states beyond Massachusetts that still suspend driver's licenses for drug offenses unrelated to driving. We plan to use our Massachusetts research and advocacy as a model for the other states.



Protecting letters from home in local jails

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/postcards/>

A number of sheriffs are experimenting with a counterproductive idea: banning letters from loved ones. For the past two years, we've been pushing back.

Controversial Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio began a misguided trend in 2007 when he banned families from sending letters to loved ones in jail, requiring personal correspondence to take place on postcards instead. Social science research and basic common sense say that incarcerated people must be able to maintain ties to family and friends in order to succeed upon release. With this harmful idea spreading to other jails at an alarming rate, the Prison Policy Initiative stepped up to the plate to do research and advocacy to protect letters from home. Fortunately, supported by our research, advocates around the country have successfully stopped a growing number of letter bans:

- Our report, *Return to Sender: Postcard-Only Mail Policies in Jails*, played a key role in supporting a successful campaign against a letter ban in Santa Barbara County, California. In September 2014, the jail announced that incarcerated people would once again be allowed to receive letters from loved ones.
- The momentum for ending letter bans is growing as these harmful policies have been challenged in court. This year, jails in the following counties were forced to reverse their bans after they were declared unconstitutional: Wyandotte County, Kansas, San Diego County, California, and Livingston County, Michigan.
- Newspapers such as the *Ionia Sentinel-Standard* in Michigan and the *Cecil Whig* in Maryland published our letters to the editor urging local sheriffs to cancel their plans to ban letters from home.



**POSTCARD-ONLY
MAIL POLICIES IN JAIL**
Leah Sakala

Pulling back the curtain on mass incarceration

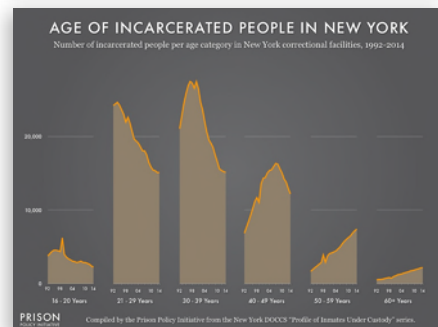
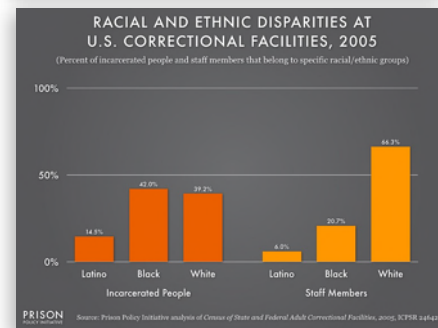
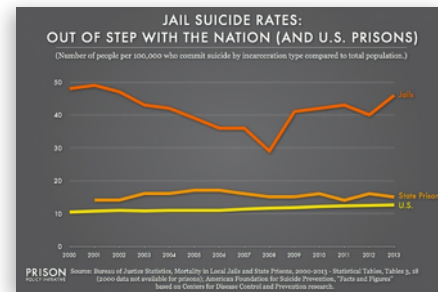
We develop powerful ways to help the public understand that mass incarceration is both unprecedented and counterproductive.

This year, we filled major data gaps that had been holding back the movement for criminal justice reform:

- Are poor people disproportionately impacted by incarceration? Our new report, *Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the pre-incarceration incomes of the imprisoned*, uses federal government data to definitively show that incarcerated people are shut out of the economy even before they are incarcerated. While some of this data has existed before in decades-old form, our report was the first to also provide national data on the pre-incarceration incomes of women in prison.
- Where do incarcerated people come from? We used data from Maryland's law ending prison gerrymandering to produce the first-ever statewide analysis of where incarcerated people come from. In partnership with the Justice Policy Institute, we released a report about the community level impact of Maryland's decision to use incarceration as the primary means of addressing social ills. Our finding in *The Right Investment?: Corrections Spending in Baltimore City* that the state spends \$17 million each year to incarcerate the residents of the Sandtown neighborhood was frequently cited in the press after neighborhood resident Freddie Gray died in police custody after an illegal arrest.
- **What's changing in crime and incarceration?** In September 2014, we issued two rapid-responses analyzing the latest data on crime and incarceration from the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Most recently, we analyzed BJS data finding there is a national crisis of suicide in local jails, a problem far more prevalent in jails than in state prisons or the U.S. We took the government's dry reports and translated them into useful analyses that advocates and reformers find informative and accessible.



- How do Americans regard the police?**
 We produced an analysis based on Gallup's public opinion surveys showing that American confidence in police has reached a 22-year low and that Black Americans consistently report having less confidence than Whites in the police.
- Are the racial disparities behind the Attica rebellion a national problem?** Back in 1971, a shocking racial and ethnic disparity between the incarcerated and the correctional staff at New York State's Attica Correctional Facility spurred a four-day prison rebellion. We dove into current employment data to conclude that within Attica and in prisons nationwide, Blacks and Latinos are more likely to serve sentences while Whites are more likely to get the jobs.
- Why is the number of elderly behind bars in New York State rising?**
 We produced an analysis of how New York State's sentencing laws and parole policies — in a state that is otherwise a leader in criminal justice reform — are quite literally leaving the elderly prison population behind. While our analysis focused on New York, this is a national problem.
- What should legislators be talking about, but aren't?**
 At the start of the 2015 legislative session, we put together a briefing on what we see as under-discussed but winnable criminal justice reforms and shared this with reform-minded state legislators throughout the country. The reforms include requiring racial impact statements for criminal justice bills, repealing "Truth in Sentencing," and reducing pretrial detention.



Winnable criminal justice reforms
A Prison Policy Initiative briefing on promising state reform issues for 2015

Ending prison gerrymandering
Problem: The Census Bureau's practice of tabulating incarcerated people at correctional facility location home addresses, leads state and local governments to draw skewed electoral districts that grant voters who live near large prisons and dilute the votes cast everywhere else.
Solution: States can pass legislation to count incarcerated people at home for redistricting purposes. Maryland, and New York have done. States can also follow the lead of Massachusetts by implementing a national solution by tabulating incarcerated people at home.
Model bill: <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/models/example.html>
More information: Prison Gerrymandering Project website <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

Lowering the cost of a call home from prison or jail
Problem: The prison and jail telephone industry gives correctional facilities hefty kickbacks charging the families of incarcerated people up to \$17 for a single 15-minute call.
Solution: The Federal Communications Commission has begun to regulate this industry in New Mexico, New York, Michigan, Missouri, Rhode Island, and South Carolina by requiring the industry to take action on their own.
Example bill: New York Corrections Law § 623 bans commissions and requires that the industry pay for the cost of calls to consumers. (Note: this New York law only applies to contracts with both state prison and local jail contracts.)
More information: "Regulating the prison phone industry" <http://www.prisonersofthecensus.org>

Ending or reforming ineffective and harmful laws
 Some states have laws that are intended to keep children safe but that have the unintended consequence of increasing the number of children in foster care. These laws are often based on outdated research and exacerbate harmful outcomes. States should repeal these laws and work to prevent future laws that have similar unintended consequences.

Research Clearinghouse & Legal Resources for Incarcerated People

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/research.html> &
<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/resources/legal/>

Beyond producing original research, the Prison Policy Initiative edits several databases to empower activists, journalists and policy makers to shape effective criminal justice policy.

Our searchable **Research Clearinghouse** contains more than 2,100 entries with empirically rigorous research on criminal justice issues ranging from policing, to the death penalty, to drug policy.

- In the last year, we've added 225 new entries with the most recent cutting-edge research on justice reform issues. You can get the newest additions delivered right to your email inbox by signing up for our Research Clearinghouse updates newsletter at <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/subscribe/>.



- Our **Legal Resource Guide for Incarcerated People** also continues to grow in popularity. We work with legal services providers to update their entries in our guide each year so that we can assure the incarcerated people who write to us, their loved ones on the outside, or the staff of other policy and legal organizations that the referrals on our list are all accurate.



Getting to know new PPI board member Amanda Alexander

Amanda Alexander is a Soros Justice Fellow and attorney in the University of Michigan Law School Child Advocacy Law Clinic. She directs the U of M Law School Prison & Family Justice Project, which serves families divided by incarceration and the foster care system using a combination of direct representation, know-your-rights education, targeted litigation, and advocacy.

What does your work focus on?

Amanda Alexander: As a lawyer and advocate, my work focuses on helping families thrive by fighting for change in our criminal justice system. Two years ago I moved home to Michigan to start the Prison & Family Justice Project, which serves families impacted by incarceration. A single arrest can trigger all sorts of consequences for a family—it might cause a mother to lose her job or housing, or cause children to enter foster care. The Prison & Family Justice Project represents incarcerated parents who may be at risk of losing their parental rights, and offers family law workshops in jails, prisons, and re-entry centers to help parents maintain ties with their children and provide for their care. The project also trains Department of Human Services workers and other child welfare professionals on how to engage incarcerated parents. My work also involves systemic advocacy around several of the issues PPI tackles, such as removing barriers to communication and visitation for families with incarcerated loved ones.

Why did you decide to join the PPI board?

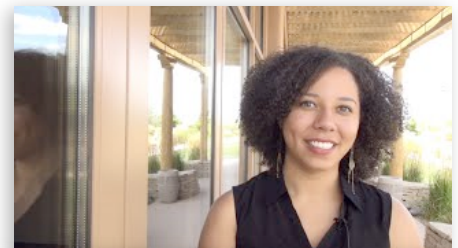
I admire PPI's work. Whenever they put out a new report, I'm eager to read it and share it with friends and colleagues who I know will find it useful in their own work. Spreading the word about PPI comes naturally, so I'm honored to support its work as a board member.

What do you think is most unique about the Prison Policy Initiative and the projects it takes on?

PPI is about results. It takes on very targeted projects, does excellent research, and puts out a bold message—the result is often concrete policy change within a short period of time. PPI shaped the conversation about prison gerrymandering, and won victories in Maryland and New York that it's now replicating around the country. PPI's role in the Prison Phone Justice campaign can't be overstated—they played a key role in capping the cost of inter-state prison phone calls. Now they have their sights set on capping the cost of in-state calls, which will be a huge victory for families. PPI takes on ambitious fights — and wins.

What's something that you wish more people knew about the Prison Policy Initiative?

It's amazing to me that Peter and the PPI staff are so clued in to what's happening at the federal level and at very local levels. They manage to stay on top of what's happening in county jails around the country, and to support local partners in struggles at the city level. I wish more people knew the breadth of PPI's network, and what a great partner it is to organizations at the local and



See an interview with Amanda about joining the Prison Policy Initiative board at <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2015/01/20/amanda-alexander/>

"PPI is about results. It takes on very targeted projects, does excellent research, and puts out a bold message."

Amanda Alexander

Getting to know new PPI board member Khalilah L. Brown-Dean

Khalilah L. Brown-Dean is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Quinnipiac University.

Why did you decide to join the PPI board?

Academics tend to work in silos. We focus in on a particular problem or set of problems and are rarely in conversation with those beyond our discipline. Joining the PPI Board provides a meaningful opportunity to learn from and work with others who are committed to dismantling our reliance on punishment. I envision my role as helping to bridge the gap between scholars, activists, philanthropists, and legislators.

What does your work focus on? And what's the connection between that work and the Prison Policy Initiative?

My work is driven by a central question: How can we make the democratic experience more meaningful? I address this question through the lens of American Politics with a particular emphasis on mass political behavior, public policy, and law. I recently co-authored a report for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies on the contemporary status of voting rights in the United States entitled "Fifty Years of the Voting Rights Act: The State of Race in Politics." I had the opportunity to present the key findings during the 50th Anniversary of the Bloody Sunday March in Selma, Alabama. Our research addressed how issues such as disenfranchisement, gerrymandering, and hyperincarceration pose monumental

challenges to sustaining voting rights and representation. It's a perfect fit with the work of PPI.

I'm currently completing a project that centers the experiences of African Americans and murder victims' families within the death penalty repeal movement; two groups disproportionately affected yet grossly underrepresented within this policy space. I advance a concept called "authentic power" to explain how those detrimentally impacted by a policy can get policymakers and other government officials to change the policy in question to their benefit. The work grows out of my experience advocating on behalf of victims' families whose needs often go overlooked in the realm of criminal justice reform. I also serve on the Board of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. This year we launched two major funding initiatives to support community-based re-entry and immigration.

What do you think is most unique about the Prison Policy Initiative and the projects it takes on?

My Graduate School mentor, Dr. William E. Nelson, Jr., once told me that research is only meaningful if it helps address a deceptively simple question, "So what?" PPI's work directly addresses that question by using data to tell a complex story about the myriad ways punishment policies widen the gap between the principle and the practice of American democracy. I greatly admire PPI's ability to make its work timely,



relevant, and accessible to multiple audiences.

What's something that you wish more people knew about the Prison Policy Initiative?

I wish people knew that PPI is a small organization with a big mission and an even bigger commitment to advancing the cause of justice. Before I joined the Board I assumed PPI had a massive staff with unlimited resources given the many cutting-edge and widely-cited reports it produces. I was wrong!

*"I greatly admire PPI's ability to make its work **timely, relevant, and accessible** to multiple audiences."*

Khalilah
Brown-Dean

Getting to know new PPI board member Jason Stanley

Jason Stanley is a Professor of Philosophy at Yale and an author of four books. The royalties from his fourth book, How Propaganda Works, are being donated to the Prison Policy Initiative.

Why did you decide to join the Prison Policy Initiative board?

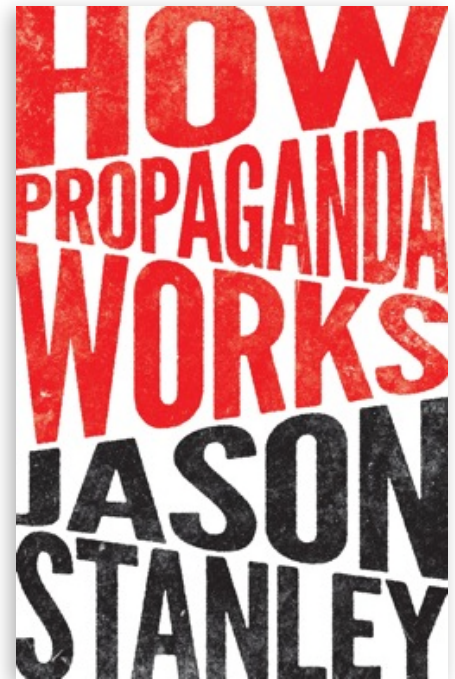
During my research for my book over the past several years, I was astonished at the number of complicated ways in which mass incarceration is embedded into the moral, political, and economic life of our country. I decided I wanted to get involved, and went looking for an effective organization that untied the complex knots for me. I started from scratch, looking at a number of organizations, local and national. I chose PPI for many reasons.

My research suggested that they are the organization that does the most with the least; they are incredibly effective, and they need funders.

I had no personal connections with them, but I reached out and asked how I could help. There has been a 500% increase in my lifetime in the US prison population. My view is that this is an issue where my generation has some moral responsibility in causing the problem, and maybe we can get together and contribute to trying to solve it. I've done the research to find this organization — I really started with a lot of potential ones, and ended up with PPI. This is a great organization that really puts donations to effective use.

What do you think is most unique about the Prison Policy Initiative and the projects it takes on?

First, as academics can appreciate, they are drawn to the complexities of mass incarceration, rather than the obvious stuff that draws funding. For example, PPI is the nation's leader on prison gerrymandering, which incentivizes rural communities with few residents to bid for prisons and push for harsher sentencing; they regularly uncover and litigate the most devious ways in which the impoverished prison population is used as source of cash for the unscrupulous; and they have become perhaps the central source for online information about mass incarceration. Second, because they are drawn to the ignored complexities, they are unafraid to go after wildly popular policies, such as school drug zone laws, that in fact function as mechanisms to allow prosecutors to indiscriminately sentence residents of dense urban centers with extremely harsh sentences (I have heard that every place in New Haven except for somewhere on the Yale Golf course is in a school zone, defined here as 'within 1500 feet of a school').



"The Prison Policy Initiative is drawn to the complexities of mass incarceration, rather than the obvious stuff that draws funding."

Jason Stanley

Supporting our work

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/donate/>

The generous support of visionary foundations and individual donors has allowed the Prison Policy Initiative to grow from the idea of three enterprising students in 2001 into an innovative and efficient policy shop at the forefront of the criminal justice reform movement in 2015.

Thank you to our 2014-2015 grantmaking partners*:

- American Constitution Society David Carliner Award
- Beveridge Family Foundation
- craigslist Charitable Fund
- Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation
- Joyce Foundation
- Kindling Fund
- Leaves of Grass Fund
- Moses and Susan Feldman Philanthropic Fund
- Returning Home Foundation
- Public Welfare Foundation

In addition, we are also enormously grateful to the small network of generous individuals who sustain our work and allow us to seize timely new opportunities like our work to protect in-person family visits from the predatory video visitation industry (p 9–10) and to stay one step ahead of private companies ready to exploit incarcerated people and their families such as our work exposing the release card industry that quietly takes advantage of people when they are released from prisons and jails (p. 11).

If you would like to join these donors, you can donate online or send a paper check to PO Box 127 Northampton, MA 01061.

If you are a current supporter of our work, we ask you to allow us to count on your support in the future by becoming a monthly sustainer. Just go to <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/donate/>, select an amount and then how often you'd like it to repeat.

And if you ever have any questions about how to support our work or how your gift is being used, please don't hesitate to contact Peter, Aleks and Bernadette at (413) 527-0845.

We thank you for making our work – and our successes – possible.

*We're also deeply indebted to the support of family foundations and others who wish to remain anonymous. If in the future your wishes regarding public acknowledgment ever change, please don't hesitate to let us know so we can properly credit you for your partnership.

Prison Policy Initiative budget report for 2014-2015 year

Income

Large foundations	\$125,000
Individual donors	\$71,867
Small foundations	\$54,363
Consulting	\$34,229
Honoraria	\$12,100
Interest	\$1,757
Total	\$299,316

Expenses

Salaries, benefits, employment taxes for 3.2 FTE staff	\$231,993
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Consultants

Graphic Design	\$1,000
GIS/Mapping	\$300
Video editing	\$450
Work study students	\$424
Subtotal consultants	\$2,174

Other expenses

Travel	\$2,809
Postage	\$1,865
Printing	\$30
Website & newsletter hosting	\$2,623
Rent & Utilities	\$10,815
Telephone & Fax & Internet access	\$2,333
Computer Equipment	\$6,149
Insurance	\$2,194
Research tools/data	\$607
Supplies	\$3,398
Legal/Accounting Services	\$1,761
Staff development	\$818
Promotion and Conference fees	\$2,328
Subtotal, other expenses	\$37,731

Total	\$271,898
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“My donations go a long way with PPI. I like knowing that I am helping a small organization do big things.”

Ruth
Greenwood