

The Families of the Incarcerated

The families of incarcerated people suffer as well, both financially and psychologically.

Here are some of the ways in which imprisonment affects families:

- The loss of an income strains the family's finances.

- Mental health and child development suffer. Boys whose fathers are imprisoned become more physically aggressive. Spouses of incarcerated people become more susceptible to depression.⁴¹⁴

- The physical health of the community may deteriorate. Epidemiologists have connected higher incarceration rates with more common STD infections, including HIV, and teen pregnancy. One explanation is that more men are incarcerated, leaving a gender imbalance in society; as a result, women may have less leverage to convince their partners to be monogamous or practice safe sex.⁴¹⁵

- Poverty nationwide may have increased because of America's experiment with mass incarceration. One pair of

researchers estimates that the poverty rate would have been 20% lower in America were it not for mass incarceration. This research looks both at the lost wages and human capital as well as the government money spent on incarceration rather than other social programs.⁴¹⁶

Social conservatives love to blame poor communities and communities of color for the number of single-parent families, but the carceral system has much to do with creating those conditions.⁴¹⁷

Conversely, tackling income inequality may be impossible without reducing mass incarceration, which one researcher

calls "the greatest contribution our state makes to income inequality."⁴¹⁸

Eicha Chapter 5

- 1 Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; behold, and see our disgrace.**
- 2 Our heritage has passed to aliens, our homes to strangers.**
- 3 We have become orphans, fatherless, our mothers are like widows.**
- 4 We must pay to drink our own water, obtain our own kindling at a price.**
- 5 We are hotly pursued; exhausted, we are given no rest.**
- 6 We hold out a hand to Egypt, to Assyria, for our fill of bread.**
- 7 Our fathers sinned and are no more; and we must bear their guilt.**

Breshit Rabbah 100:7

A community and a family are like a stone archway. If you remove one stone, the whole collapses.

414 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/19/science/long-prison-terms-eyed-as-contributing-to-poverty.html>

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416 eFina, Robert H. and Hannon, Lance, The Impact of Mass Incarceration on Poverty (February 23, 2009). Crime and Delinquency, February 12, 2009. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1348049>

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