

Eric Blackmon

HMRT 24205 (Spring 2020) Narrating Social Change

SENTENCING REPORT – This report will encompass an overview of the statutes and policies that have led to the prison boom in America. I will use the Illinois criminal justice system as the focal point of my research, to examine how these policies have been abused, and have led to astronomical prison sentences and populations. The human and financial costs of mass incarceration will be used to gauge the success and failures of the system.

The sentencing scheme(s) of the past will be explained and used to give the readers a little history of how things were prior to the massive prison boom in the 80's and 90's. Some of the laws that led to the increase will be identified and explained in great detail, and in such a way that anyone could grasp. How the new laws affected the sentences of people convicted of crimes will be explained and graphs and charts will be used to show and relate the information. The present state of the system will also be broken down as well as the projections for the future, if the powers that be continue down this grim path.

The specific laws and policies that I intend to take a look at are: (1) Truth in Sentencing, which is a group of laws and policies that were enacted to get offenders, or “violent offenders”, to spend more of their actual sentences behind bars, (2) Sentence Enhancements, which makes the penalty for a crime more severe, and (3) Firearm Enhancement, which is a sentence enhancement that involves adding decades onto a person's sentence if the crime was committed, or alleged to have been committed, with a firearm.

Lastly, I will close out with some reforms that others states have enacted to correct the course of their criminal justice systems. Other laws that have been enacted or repealed will also be highlighted, just as well as any new policies that other states or municipalities have adopted that have lessened their prison populations.