



AFRIKAN AMERICANS FREEDOM UNION

"Beginning with a prison population of just under 200,000 in 1972, the number of inmates in U.S. prisons has increased by more than 1 million, rising to 1.4 million by 2003. along with 700,000 inmates in local jails either awaiting trial or serving short sentences, a remarkable total of 2.4 million Americans are now behind bars." - Race To Incarcerate by Marc Mauer

THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

The 13th Amendment is known for formally ending chattel slavery and involuntary servitude following the Civil War. However, the Amendment contains an exception clause allowing slavery "as a punishment for crime," which has been exploited to perpetuate forced labor in prisons.

1994 CRIME BILL

The 1994 Crime Bill helped explode mass incarceration. It included a federal "three strikes" law, expanded the death penalty, created the sex offense registry, and allowed children as young as 13 to be tried and imprisoned as adults. It also eliminated funding for prison education, required states to spend more on policing and prisons, and reduced standards of care in federal prisons.

TRUTH IN SENTENCING

The Truth in Sentencing Act was part of the 1994 Crime Bill. Through so-called "truth in sentencing," the bill encouraged states to pass laws requiring people convicted of violent crimes to serve a minimum of 85% of their sentence before becoming eligible for parole. Through this provision, the federal government gave states money for prison expansion while reducing opportunities for early release.

“Black men have no rights that white men are bound to respect by law.”
- Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney

PRISON LITIGATION REFORM ACT

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Prison Litigation Reform Act, or PLRA. The PLRA makes it harder for people in prisons to file lawsuits in federal courts, and makes it harder for those courts to change prison conditions. It also requires that people in prison "exhaust" all other avenues for grievances before filing a lawsuit, and makes them pay filing fees to do so.

"The United States is home to 5% of the world's population, but 25% of the world's prisoners."
- Former President Barack Obama

THE "BLACK CODES"

Following the Civil War, many Southern States enacted so-called "Black Codes." The Codes were a set of laws that created a regime governing the behavior of recently freed African Americans. The Black Codes represented a continuation of formal white supremacy and a continuation of the social control of chattel slavery.

SENTENCING REFORM ACT OF 1984

The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 created new sentencing policies for people found guilty of federal crimes. It abolished federal parole and many rehabilitation programs, required courts to impose new and longer prison terms, and reduced good time. Additionally, several mandatory minimum sentencing provisions were enacted in 1986, 1988, and 1990.

ANTI DRUG ABUSE ACT OF 1986

The Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988 were part of the federal government's 'War On Drugs.' These laws reinstated use of the death penalty, increased sentences for lower-level drug crimes, and instituted racially discriminatory sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine.

ANTI-TERRORISM AND EFFECTIVE DEATH PENALTY ACT

In 1996, President Clinton signed the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. Contrary to its name, the bill is not only about "terrorist" acts or the death penalty. Instead, it rolled back the writ of habeas corpus, which allows people to raise issues related to their conviction in federal court. As a result, people who were falsely convicted or who had serious issues in their trial have a harder time getting relief in court.



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"There are more Afrikan Americans under correctional control today, in prison or jail, on probation or parole, than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began!" - Michelle Alexander



Richard Nixon

John Ehrlichman, Nixon's former domestic policy advisor, stated in 1994: "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."



Ronald Reagan

In 1981, just before Reagan assumed the presidency, his campaign strategist Lee Atwater was caught on tape explaining the southern strategy: "You start out in 1964 saying 'nigger, nigger, nigger', by 1968 you can't say it, it hurts, it backfires, so you say stuff like forced busing, states rights, and all that stuff, you're getting so abstract now you're talking about cutting taxes and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and the byproduct of them is blacks get hurt worst than whites...."



George H. W. Bush

"You want to go back to the days of military weakness, caring more about criminals than victims? We can't risk that! I'd like your vote on Tuesday."



Bill Clinton

"I can be nicked a lot, but no one can say I'm soft on crime."



George W. Bush

"It's always been normal, when a child turns into a criminal, to say it's our fault--society's fault. Well, under George W. Bush, it's your fault. You're going to get locked up because we aren't going to have any more guilt-ridden thought that says we are somehow responsible."

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"I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever."

-- George Wallace

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"Under Republican leadership, crime and drug abuse became linked in the public imagination with civil rights, failed social programs, and especially with urban blacks. Law and order advocates successfully convinced a majority of Americans that individual responsibility rather than social inequality breeds crime; that the government was going "too easily" on criminals; and that old fashioned punishment rather than "squishy soft" programs would better keep the country safe. In short, after following a southern strategy to the White House, Republicans began making American criminal justice a lot more southern."

- Robert Perkinson, *Texas Tough: The Rise of the American Prison Empire*

"Our country is moving towards two nations, one black and one white, separate and unequal."
-Kerner Commission Report



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