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## AMC 2012

The most pressing issue that the Network Campaign should cover is a combination of reentry and alternatives to incarceration. Although employment and voting rights are very important and popular issues, they are essentially subsidiary injustices in the food chain of mass incarceration. And in the fight against this cycle of cause and effect, prevention is our greatest weapon; focus on it and those seemingly larger predators begin to die off.

Absolute prevention requires an all-around attack that's beyond the scope of media alone. Narrowing the focus to reentry and alternatives to incarceration, however, is much more manageable. Through a better approach to these issues (such as the HOPE program in Hawaii; 180 Degree Properties in Milwaukee, the Interrupters in Chicago, and Fairshake.) we can severely reduce the prison population and strengthen communities all across the country, especially underprivileged ones. In turn, this will make it easier to address the subsidiary injustices.

The power of media has an enormous part in this. Businesses and political campaigns all over have shown how well the internet and social media can be used to spread a message. In this same way the anti-mass incarceration movement could put forth an all-out campaign against the image of offenders as reprobate and unworthy of attention.

(2)

This effort could maintain as its backbone an up-to-date, comprehensive website (possibly called [theresabetterway.com](http://theresabetterway.com)) geared towards fostering awareness of the fact that offenders do indeed change and their absence in neighborhoods and households has a deep impact that extends to even higher class communities through a type of trickle up misfortune. The site could contain relevant statistics, stories, testimonials and contact info, as well as link to relevant articles, blogs (such as [theinnervoice84.wordpress.com](http://theinnervoice84.wordpress.com)), book excerpts, and interviews. Sympathetic celebrities could even be utilized for support and publicity.

The vocal part of this campaign would involve individuals from every side of criminal justice expressing various facts and sentiments through TV and radio ads, posters and pamphlets, and social media. I imagine a commercial aimed at less-violent felonies (speaking as a class B felon, improving the way states approach violent felonies can't be done until less-violent ones are addressed) in which a survivor is shown saying something like "will sitting in prison keep the man who robbed me from robbing you when he's released?" followed by a judge, "two out of every three people I sentence are sent back to prison after their release,"

then a correctional officer, "taxpayers spend \$30,000 a year per inmate so the individuals that violated them can do absolutely nothing all day," then a mother, a wife and a little boy together "we're not just sending away those who broke the law, we're also depriving families of sons" (said by the mother), "husbands" (said by the wife), "mommies" (said by the child); then a DA "there's a reason some states spend much less on corrections yet have the same or a lower crime rate than other states," then an offender "we owe you so much more," and then everyone together, "there's a better way."

— also picture as part of this campaign a presentation designed to demonstrate the good that ex-offenders have achieved as parents, employers, volunteers, students and entrepreneurs after release.

In the field of criminal justice activism there are many battles to wage, but we must never lose sight of the enemy's heart: indifference. From my experiences (though relatively limited, at best) with numerous individuals

(4)

and organizations in this field over the past eight years of incarceration, it seems that too many of us handcuff the movement with an over-attachment to our various sub-causes and *modi operandi*. A united front on reentry and alternatives to incarceration would thaw the icy shoulder of the public thus politicians that is a primary, if not the principle, obstacle for virtually every one of these sub-causes. We can't rage against the machine's resistance to change and improve if we ourselves continue to balk at the potential, in fact the proven effectiveness, of better methods.