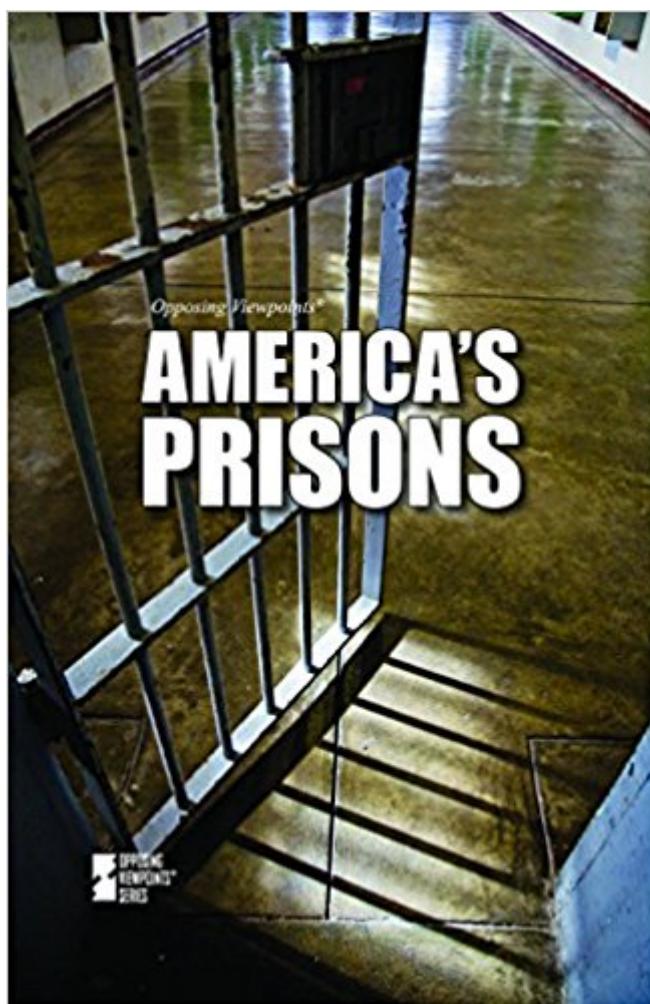


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# Americas Prisons (Opposing Viewpoints)



## **Synopsis**

Opposing Viewpoints Series For over 25 years, the Greenhaven Press Opposing Viewpoints Series has developed and set the standard for current-issue studies. With more than 90 volumes covering nearly every controversial contemporary topic, Opposing Viewpoints is the leading source for libraries and classrooms in need of current-issue materials. Each title explores a specific issue by placing expert opinions in a unique pro/con format. The viewpoints are selected from a wide range of highly respected and often hard-to-find sources and publications. By choosing from such diverse sources and including both popular and unpopular views, the Opposing Viewpoints editorial team has adhered to its commitment to editorial objectivity. Readers are exposed to many sides of a debate, which promotes issue awareness as well as critical thinking. In short, Opposing Viewpoints is the best research and learning tool for exploring the issues that continually shape and define our turbulent and changing world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Both in raw numbers and by percentage of the population (700/100,000 population - 5X that of Britain and Spain), the U.S. has the most prisoners of any developed country in the world - and it has the largest total prison population of any nation." Our prison population increased sevenfold in less than 30 years, from about 300,000 to over 2 million. The 'war on drugs' is the single greatest contributor to mass incarceration in the U.S. Drug convictions accounted for about two-thirds of the increase in the federal prison system and more than half of the increase in the state prison system between 1985 and 2000. The increase cannot be accounted for by rooting out violent offenders or

drug kingpins. In 2005, for example, four out of five drug arrests were for possession, while only one out of five were for sales, and over half of all people in federal prisons in 2010 were there for drug crimes. The drug war has been waged almost exclusively in poor communities of color, despite the fact that studies consistently indicate that people of all races use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates. Yet, in 2000, African-Americans made up 80-90% of imprisoned drug offenders in some states. On the other hand, data also show that just a handful of criminal law doctrines (eg. three strikes laws and mandatory minimums for simple drug possession, drive sentences substantially higher than the average citizen believes is just. Eliminating those overly harsh doctrines would go a long way toward solving the problem of exploding prison populations. Others also contend it might be wise to abolish probation or severely limit it, along with sending more to jails and prisons and jails but for much shorter durations. Current felon-disenfranchisement laws bar 13% of African American men from casting a vote, thus making mass incarceration an effective tool of voter suppression. Employers routinely discriminate against an applicant based on criminal history, as do landlords. In most states, it is also legal to make ex-drug offenders ineligible for food stamps. In some major urban areas, more than half of working-age African American men have criminal records and are thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives. In Chicago, for example, nearly 80% of working-age African American men had criminal records in 2002. Private prison companies now house about half of our prisoners, up from about 10% a decade ago. These companies have spent at least \$45 million over the last decade - much of which has been aimed at making money through harsh policies and longer sentences. Prison guard unions also lobby to stop reforms that would allow for more early release eligibility. Correction Corporation of America, one of the three largest private prison operators, charged inmates \$5/minute for phone calls at one of its facilities. Today, blacks are about 13% of the population and, between 1976 and 2005, committed over half of all murders in the U.S. Every study of crime using official data show blacks to be overrepresented among persons arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for street crimes. Some of the most violent cities in the U.S. today are run by blacks. The problem is primarily cultural - self-destructive behaviors and attitudes stemming from the breakdown of the black family. Liberals want to talk about what others should do for blacks instead of what blacks should do for themselves. How can you even begin to fix something that almost no one wants to talk about honestly?

The debates in this book are about the major issues, mass incarceration, race, private prisons, women, juveniles, solitary confinement, disenfranchisement, drug courts, electronic monitoring,

public shaming. There is a short bibliography that is good. It is a useful book, short articles that make good points. An excellent recent book is *Unusually Cruel* by Marc Morf Howard. We won't solve our prison problems until we solve our social problems in general, inequality, discrimination, injustice. We have a long way to go. Midwest Independent Research, educational websites. Law, mwir-law.blogspot. There is information and a book list on criminal justice here.

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