

BEAR WITNESS!

LIFE IN THE AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION

Black History Month, February 2013

February 1, 2013—Join us as we launch a month of Bearing Witness to the horrors mass incarceration inflicts on millions and millions of people in this country. And join us as we close Black History Month 2013 with a week of Bearing Witness and manifesting resistance to mass incarceration and all its consequences....

Over 2.2 million people held in prisons across the US—more than any other country on earth! 60% of those in prison are Black or Latino!

- One in 10 Black men are in prison on any given day!
- Blacks and whites use illegal drugs at similar rates, yet Blacks are 10 times more likely than whites to be put behind bars for using illegal drugs!
- There are more women in prison in the US than in any other country, and women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population!



Pelican Bay State Prison, CA

- Tens of thousands of those in US prison are held in long-term solitary confinement, facing conditions that fit the international definition of torture!
- More than 5 million former prisoners face open discrimination - discriminated against when seeking jobs, banned from public housing, barred from receiving government loans for education, and in many states unable to vote.
- In 2011, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) held a record-breaking 429,000 immigrants in over 250 facilities across the country with 30,000 to 35,000 people in immigration detention on any given day.

The lives of tens of millions of people are enmeshed in the criminal “injustice” system of this country. Mass incarceration is a horrific injustice THAT MUST BE STOPPED! The Stop Mass Incarceration Network is working to stop this injustice, and as part of doing that is launching the **BEAR WITNESS PROJECT**.

The Stop Mass Incarceration Network has set out to break the silence, and to build the much needed missing ingredient of mass resistance to the slow grinding genocide of mass incarceration. **Bearing**

Witness, putting a human face on the criminalized generations and tearing away at the badge of shame and dishonor that prisoners, former prisoners, and their loved ones are forced to wear, is a necessary and powerful part of accomplishing this.

Bear Witness will gather statements in video, audio and written format that will challenge the bogus justifications for mass incarceration and show it to be in fact a *New Jim Crow* - a modern caste system of racial discrimination that is on a deadly trajectory. It will do this with facts, truth and human emotion.

What difference will this make? Bear Witness will be a vehicle for mass participation. Way too many people accept mass incarceration as a collection of policies that combat crime and that are administered in a "color blind" way. Forging a massive movement of determined resistance to this injustice has to include as a key part jolting society awake to the ugly reality of this injustice and moving them to change how they view it. Just like the Freedom Riders and other activists of the 1960's changed the way people viewed "Jim Crow" segregation in the South.



Harlem, New York: Cornel West, Carl Dix from the RCP, and Rev Phelps from Riverside Church challenge NYPD's "Stop and Frisk" racial profiling

As part of this project, students and student organizations, former prisoners and families of those in prison, filmmakers, church and neighborhood groups, civil and human rights advocates and everyday people will spread throughout society and interview those under the gun of racial profiling, police abuse and mass incarceration. These stories will be made accessible on line and in a variety of ways.

Gathering these stories will let those who live the reality of mass incarceration know that they are not alone. And it will bring to light for many who are sheltered from this horrific reality what is being done in their name to so many people. **Imagine how different this society would be if millions and millions more people knew the truth of mass incarceration, and we're acting on that truth!** Those targeted by it would feel they had right on their side when they stood up and called it out, and many more people would join with them when they did. Join us in launching this historic project.

Bear Witness Project
c/o Stop Mass Incarceration Network
www.bearwitnessproject.tumblr.com
347-979-SMIN (7646)
stopmassincarceration@gmail.com
www.stopmassincarceration.org
Facebook: [stopmassincarcerationnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/stopmassincarcerationnetwork)
Twitter: @StopMassIncNet

In Southern Cal: 213-840-5348
stopmassincarcerationsocal@yahoo.com

In Northern Cal: 510-926-5207
StopMassIncarcerationBayArea@gmail.com

BEAR WITNESS!

Pick up a video, an iPhone or iPad, or a tape recorder. Bear Witness interviews can be done in the schools, outside prisons or jails (where families visit loved ones who are incarcerated), in neighborhoods of oppressed people, in the homes of people whose family members have been targeted by mass incarceration, and in many other spots and locations.

Upload your interviews at bearwitnessproject.tumblr.com/ -- a national website which will act as a visual and documentary archive of testimony from hundreds of people about mass incarceration.

**MASS INCARCERATION + SILENCE = GENOCIDE!
BREAK THE SILENCE!**