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# Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History

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As the twentieth century came to a close and the twenty-first began,

something occurred in the United States that was without international parallel or historical precedent. Between 1970 and 2010 more people were incarcerated in the United States than were imprisoned in any other country, and at no other point in its past had the nation's economic, social, and political institutions become so bound up with the practice of punishment. By 2006 more than 7.3 million Americans had become entangled in the criminal justice system. The American prison population had by that year increased more rapidly than had the resident population as a whole, and one in every thirty-one U.S. residents was under some form of correctional supervision, such as in prison or jail, or on probation or parole. As importantly, the incarcerated and supervised population of the United States was, overwhelmingly,...

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