

The Restorative Justice Charter

A simple charter: Justice is not only about punishment. It is about repair. It is about restoration. It is about giving people, especially our youth, the chance to rebuild their lives and contribute back to their communities. This charter lays out a new vision for justice rooted in accountability and renewal.

Why It Matters

- The United States incarcerates more people than any nation on Earth.
- Nearly **two-thirds of those released from prison are rearrested within three years**, showing a cycle of failure, not safety.
- Youth of color are disproportionately targeted, detained, and denied second chances.
- Communities carry the cost — broken families, economic strain, and lost human potential.

Our belief: Justice should break cycles, not repeat them. Every system should be designed to heal individuals and communities, not perpetuate harm.

What We're Saying

This is a **charter for a new vision of justice**: one where harm is addressed through accountability, where victims are heard and supported, and where those who offend are guided toward restoration, not locked into permanent punishment.

What It Guarantees

- **Restorative Justice Pathways:** Mediation, community circles, and restitution as alternatives to jail for youth and first-time nonviolent offenses.
- **Youth Justice Reform:** End juvenile incarceration for nonviolent crimes; expand diversion and counseling.
- **Rehabilitation First:** Treatment for addiction and mental illness prioritized over incarceration.
- **Reentry with Dignity:** Education, job training, and housing support for those returning from prison.

- **Victim Support:** Services to ensure victims are central in processes of repair.

Programs You'll See

1. **Community Restorative Circles:** Victims, offenders, and community members meet to create solutions and healing agreements.
2. **Youth Diversion Councils:** Local bodies that direct young people into counseling, service, and mentorship instead of courtrooms.
3. **Treatment in Place of Jail:** Mental health and addiction treatment centers built into local justice systems.
4. **Education Inside and Out:** Prison-to-college pipelines; GED, vocational training, and apprenticeships behind and beyond bars.
5. **Reentry Navigators:** Caseworkers who connect returning citizens with jobs, housing, and community resources.

How We'll Make It Real

0–100 Days

- Fund pilot restorative justice programs in 50 high-need counties.
- End federal support for juvenile detention in nonviolent cases.

Year 1

- Launch Youth Diversion Councils nationwide.
- Begin scaling reentry navigator programs in every state.

Years 2–3

- Build mental health and addiction treatment centers in every state.
- Expand restorative circles to adult nonviolent offenders.

Years 4–5

- Cut juvenile incarceration rates in half.
- Achieve nationwide access to restorative justice options.

Accountability & Measures

- **Incarceration:** Reduction in youth and nonviolent adult incarceration rates.
- **Recidivism:** Drop in repeat offenses among participants.
- **Victim Satisfaction:** % of victims reporting healing and closure from restorative processes.
- **Reentry Success:** Housing, employment, and education rates of returning citizens.
- **Community Trust:** Measured increases in public confidence in local justice systems.

Guardrails & Values

- **Victim-Centered:** No program moves forward without victim consent and support.
- **Equity Driven:** Focused on communities disproportionately harmed by mass incarceration.
- **Safety First:** Restorative pathways apply only to nonviolent cases or where victims choose them.
- **Transparency:** Public reporting of outcomes and savings.
- **Community Voice:** Local councils co-govern programs with law enforcement and service providers.

Who This Helps (Snapshots)

- **Jordan (15):** Caught shoplifting, meets with the store owner, apologizes, and completes community service — avoids a criminal record.
- **Latasha (28):** Struggles with addiction; enters treatment instead of jail and later trains as a peer counselor.
- **Miguel (35):** Released from prison, works with a reentry navigator to secure housing and a construction job.
- **Claire (victim, 42):** Participates in a restorative circle, feels heard, and sees the offender take accountability.

What Success Looks Like

In 24 Months

- Juvenile incarceration cut by 25% in pilot regions.
- Restorative circles operating in 500 communities.

In 5 Years

- Recidivism rates among participants reduced by 50%.
- Youth diversion the norm nationwide.

In 10 Years

- A justice system where prison is the last resort, not the first response — and where restoration is the measure of success.

The Commitment

The Restorative Justice Charter is a pledge to trade cycles of harm for cycles of healing. We will build a justice system that repairs, restores, and redeems — giving every person and every community a true second chance.

Historical Reference & Value

America's justice system has long wrestled with the balance between punishment and rehabilitation. The juvenile court movement of the early 1900s was born out of a belief that young people deserved second chances, not lifelong punishment. In the 1970s, restorative justice practices began to take shape, offering community-centered alternatives to incarceration, but they remained on the margins. The 1994 Crime Bill accelerated mass incarceration, particularly harming communities of color, while failing to reduce recidivism or increase safety. More recent reforms — drug courts, diversion programs, and reentry services — have shown promising results but remain inconsistent and underfunded. The Restorative Justice Charter draws from these histories to declare restoration, not retribution, as the civic standard — embedding accountability, victim healing, and reentry into the heart of American justice.

Referenced Acts & Initiatives (Guiding Frameworks)

- **Youth Diversion Councils Act:** Establishes local bodies nationwide to direct youth into service, counseling, and mentorship instead of courts.
- **Restorative Circles Initiative:** Funds community-based mediation and healing agreements for youth and first-time nonviolent offenders.
- **Treatment in Place of Jail Act:** Creates state-level treatment centers for addiction and mental health in lieu of incarceration.
- **Reentry Navigator Program:** Federal–state partnership funding caseworkers who guide returning citizens into housing, jobs, and education.
- **Prison-to-College Pipeline Initiative:** Expands educational programs behind bars and ensures reentry into higher education and apprenticeships.
- **Victim Support Services Act:** Provides counseling, financial assistance, and legal support to victims participating in restorative processes.

Sealing Line

So it is pledged: that American justice will no longer be measured by the number incarcerated, but by the lives restored, the victims healed, and the communities made whole.