

JUSTICE & UNITY FOR THE SOUTHERN TIER presents...



SUMMER 2021

JUST THE FACTS:

MASS INCARCERATION
THRIVES IN BROOME COUNTY



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Justice and Unity in the Southern Tier (JUST) is dedicated to the dismantling of racist mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex (PIC) in all their forms. We focus in particular on the most neglected part of this complex, the local jail and its adjunct institutions (probation, courts, etc). We are committed to an "all of the above" strategy, meaning we do not believe there is a silver bullet to take down mass incarceration. We need strong advocacy, street protests, inside complaints, pressure on institutions, direct support for incarcerated people and their families, more community resources for marginalized communities, and much else.

JUST believes the only way to create the conditions for human freedom and creativity to flourish is through ending mass incarceration. No one can be free under the constant threat of incarceration, debt peonage to the state, or tethered to a biomedical GPS e-shackle. We cannot achieve a more equal and humane society when police and prisons are key provisioners of medical and mental health care. Elected officials will never listen to activist demands as long as they have the ability to commit mass arrests and detentions.

End Mass Incarceration, Build a Better World



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Voices from Inside

Incarcerated people are central to any honest effort to end mass incarceration. Below are a few quotes from activists incarcerated in the Broome County Jail. These do not even detail some of the worst abuses; they reveal the mundane horror of life in BCJ. The jail is nothing more than a torture chamber, designed to disempower, rob, and demean those incarcerated. Poor medical care, abusive and uncaring guards, bugs in sinks, overuse of solitary, stained clothes, inadequate food, a limited library, and lack of any oversight are some of the most common issues in the jail

"I'm getting sicker by the day. My doctors have put in endless notes. The [for-profit medical provider in the jail] still will not even think of releasing me to have surgery. They just don't care, even about laws... Can't believe they allow this place to even run like this at all."

"Now it's almost spring. The water is gross. It's a swamp. Swamp flies and worms [crawl] in the sinks; it's gross!...Last time I was here they told me at the hospital that I had an infection from the water here in my system."

"It's such a scary place to be, we have no control over anything. We have been asking to be able to have/wear face masks [during the pandemic] but have been denied. We're not allowed to have sanitizer, only soap and water. It's very tense here amongst the inmates."

"I'm not getting my proper vitamins. My hands and feet are swollen. I have fallen 2x downstairs... They wouldn't even give me an ice pack. Then offered ibuprofen I can't have due to my [condition]. Every day is getting so much harder to even exist in this awful horrible place."

"Me and many others were put in the box [solitary confinement] without reason. They said we were under investigation without providing us without any documentation or explanation. This is unacceptable"

A Growing Jail Population

From 1997 to 2016, when the jail population peaked, Broome County's jail population increased by 38% even as the county's population stagnated. Put in a longer timeline, the jail's growth is even more stunning. In 2019, 441 people sat in jail on an average day. In 1970 there were 66. As late as 1987, fewer than half the 2019 were incarcerated.

Broome County Jail Population, 1997-2020



The 2020 drop in jail population represents a victory, of sorts, but is likely a temporary turn of events. Years of anti-mass incarceration efforts changed NYS bail laws and reduced the use of incarceration during the pandemic. However, the jail population has already grown in May 2021 back to 400 people per day.

Broome County has one of the highest incarceration rates in New York State, however you measure it

For the past decade, Broome County has consistently had one of the highest incarceration rates in the state. It was the number one jail incarcerator in the state from 2016-2019, only dropping to second with the upheavals of the pandemic in 2020.

BC Jail Incarceration Compared to Non-NYC NY Counties (per 100,000 residents)

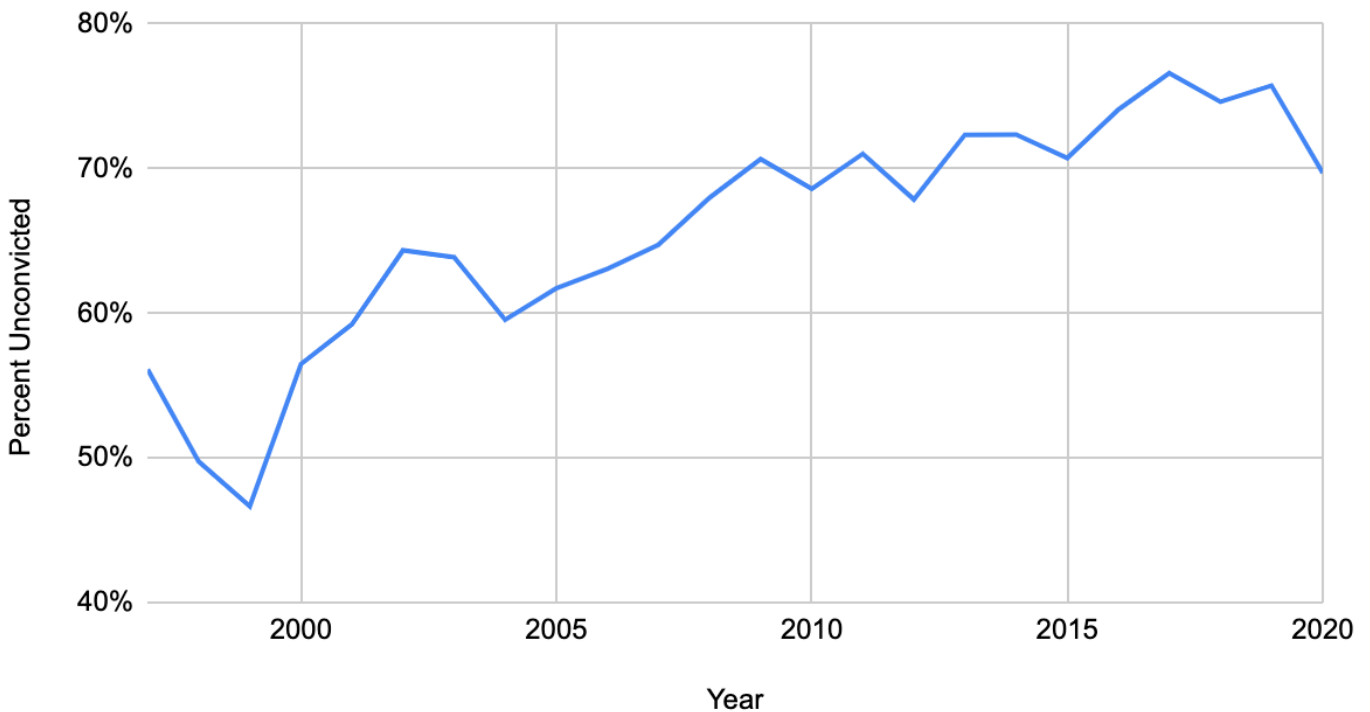


Broome County's incarceration rate is now 2.4 times that of the Non-NYC New York State average and five times that of neighboring Tompkins County, a place that has shifted money away from jail and police spending toward reentry and other critical social infrastructure.

70% of People Incarcerated in the BCJ are held pretrial

Broome County Jail's *entire* population growth is explainable by the number of people held pre-trial. Significant changes to New York State bail laws pushed down the number of people held pretrial on a daily average in Broome County in 2020, but the percent of people held before trial has barely changed. There were about 100 fewer people held pre-trial on any given day in 2020 than 2019, but 70% of people held in the Broome County Jail were still held pretrial. By comparison, about half of all people held in jail outside NYC are unconvicted people.

Percent of BC Jail Population Unconvicted, 1997-2016

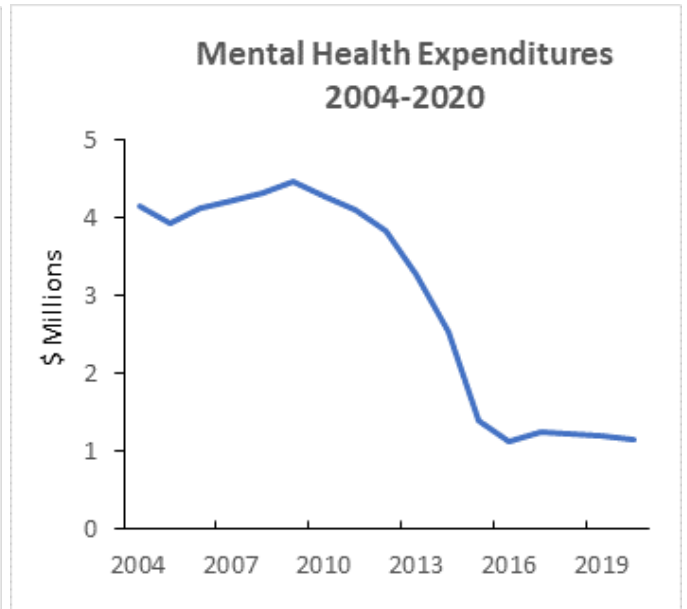
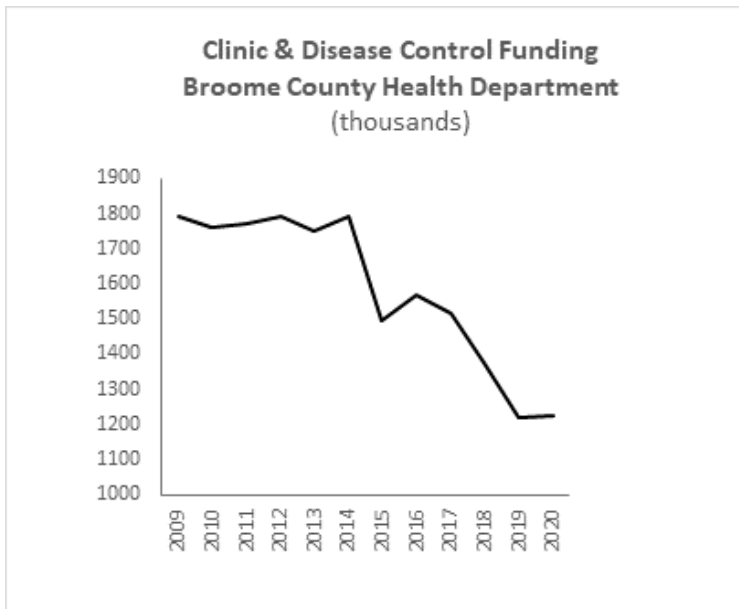
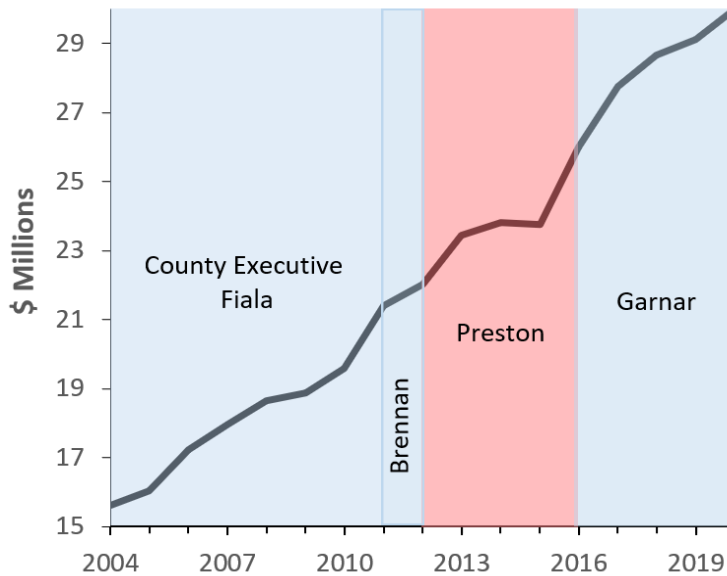


Prior to the change in bail laws, most people were held because they couldn't afford bail. Upstate New York is known to have much higher bail amounts than NYC. Judges continue to offer unaffordable bail (illegally), but have also found it easy to get around the bail laws by remanding people to custody on so-called "persistent felon" provisions, added at the insistence of NYS Sheriffs and other reactionary forces.

Fewer incarcerated people, cuts to county health funding, but more \$ for incarceration?

In the past 15 years Republican and Democratic administrations have dramatically increased funding for incarceration. The jail budget has grown by \$7 million even during covid times, stealing funds from health funding:

Funding Broome County Jail 2004-2020



The county has added 25 new correctional officers. In 2020 it cost \$88,000 to jail a single person for a year. And even as the jail population fell during the pandemic, the Sheriff has been spending \$2 million or more a year on overtime.

This is a brutal funding regime: cut mental health, infectious disease, and disability assistance to fund an uncontrollable jail complex? Is this really “public safety”?

A Racist Criminal Legal Justice System

For at least the last decade, every analysis of the Broome County Jail has found incredible racial disproportionately. Black people are overrepresented in jail admissions by almost 5 times, with 29% of jail admissions being Black people, while only 6% of the county population is Black as of 2019. A Vera Institute of Justice analysis found that Broome County's jail incarceration rate for Black people is 2,080 per every 100,000 Black residents aged 15-64, over 7 times the incarceration rate of white people.

Racism in Broome County Incarceration by the Numbers

	White	Black	Disparity
% Broome County Population	86%	6%	14x more white people
% Jail Admissions (2019)	68%	29%	5x County Pop
Incarceration rate (per 100K, 15-64) (2018)	292	2,080	7x white rate
% State Prison (2020)	45%	40%	6.5x County Pop

The racial injustice continues into the prison system. In 2020, 40% of the 711 people serving time in state prison from Broome County were Black. Evidencing the racist precision and the persistent harm caused by the war on drugs on Black Broome County, 38% of Black people serving time in state prison were for drug charges, while only 14% of white people were. Black people consistently describe how they are denied access to non-carceral treatment programs and targeted in the media as “drug dealers.” White and Black people sell and use drugs at similar rates, according to research.

Where Mass Incarceration Starts: Broome County's *School-to-Jail-Pipeline*



For Black students, New York State has long been the *most* segregated state in the nation, and the *second most* segregated for Latinx students. Broome County plays its role in this grim story: the county has highly unequal school systems, with Black, Latinx, and poor students contained in schools with the highest dropout and poverty rates, and the fewest opportunities. There are almost no Black students in Vestal's schools (2%) and over 26% Black students in the Binghamton School District. But the real differences are within the schools, particularly Binghamton's. Residents of the city might:

Ask the School Board:

- Why are black students in the Binghamton school district suspended 2½ times more than white students?
- Why do we have a 26% drop rate for Black students at Binghamton High School?
- Why is the Black dropout rate 50% higher than the white rate?
- Why are there so many police in schools and so few counselors?

Ask County and City Officials: Black youth are 10% of the county youth. Why are they:

- over 40 percent of those cast aside as Juvenile Offenders?
- over 40% of the youth captured by family court?
- almost 50 % of the youth put on probation?

Where does the pipeline end? *In the Broome County Jail.*

- The county incarceration rate for Black residents is over 2,000 per 100,000 (vs. 290 for whites).

Where should schooling end? For many, at college. But not at SUNY-Binghamton Black students are 26% of Binghamton High School (and 26% of New York public schools too). But only 5% of SUNY-Binghamton students. Even worse: Black SUNY-B students are over-arrested by 300% in relation to the proportion of the student body. Meanwhile SUNY-B's big new police force makes the campus a no-go zone and is now empowered to patrol residents of Johnson City and Binghamton off campus as well.

A Jail Stay Should Not be a Death Sentence

“The guards are going to kill me. You gotta get me outta here.”

--Salladin Barton, 2015; shortly before he died

11 people have died in the Broome County jail in a 9 year stretch from 2011-2019. The mortality rate is over double the average rate for a jail the size of the Broome County Jail. Even worse, the Sheriff- with complicity of local courts- has sought to hide jail deaths by having incarcerated people released prior to being declared dead. Two of the recent cases on this list were discovered by activists and never investigated by the state. Everyone who dies in jail is killed by incarceration.

Edward Knox 3/11/1982 • S Baker Jeffrey 6/18/1984 •
Gary Hammond 2/10/1985 • Gaveda Holmes 7/12/1986 •
Shirly Smith 6/1/1987 • Charles White 7/16/1991 •
William Kosta 10/2/1992 • Michael Fowler 1/27/1994 •
Thomas Whiting 8/11/1994 • Matthew Crandall 5/6/2000 •
Keith Murray 1/21/2002 • Robert Moxley 9/16/2002 •
Scott Sickles 10/18/2002 • John Leonard 12/24/2002 •



**CELEBRATE THEIR LIVES
REMEMBER THEIR NAMES**

Alvin Rios 07/20/2011 • John Murray 06/27/2013 •
Douglas Hassinger 09/21/2013 •
Salladin Prince Barton 01/14/2015 •
Leann Fabes 9/20/2015 • Vachon Denis 11/01/2015 •
Kevin Andre Carroll 09/30/2016 •
Kenneth Richard Gumroe 10/22/2016 • Erford Ellis 1/25/2018
• Robert Card 1/22/2019 • Thomas Husar 11/6/2019



**PERISHED IN
BROOME COUNTY JAILS**

What do we need to do? A list of necessary--but not sufficient--demands

1. Cut the jail population by 70% **NOW**. Decommission excess pods starting with the dormitories.
2. Reduce the jail budget in the coming three years by 50%.
3. Remove Sherriff Harder. He is the greatest obstacle to ending mass incarceration.
4. End the use of punitive solitary and isolated confinement.
5. Terminate the for-profit medical contractor.
6. Launch an independent, public investigation of the medical and physical abuses into the Broome County Jail, including unequal treatment by race, gender, and disability.
7. Create an independent, empowered, oversight body for the jail.
8. Separate community service agencies and programs from police/court control.
9. Re-open visitation and implement weekend visitation.
10. End all profit-driven practices exploiting incarcerated individuals.
11. End the practice of importing into the jail incarcerated persons from neighboring counties and the Federal system.
12. Provide all voting-eligible individuals held in the facility access to voter registration and absentee ballots.
13. Ensure humane, medically-assisted detox and recovery treatment.



Get Involved with JUST

Jail Visiting and Video Call Project. JUST's video call project was established in the summer of 2020 as a response to the lack of in-person visitation during COVID. The video call project relies on the support of volunteers to speak with contacts inside the jail on a weekly basis. Volunteers support incarcerated people by providing them an outlet to speak about their experience and can assist with logistical problems such as contacting lawyers. This contact also reveals important information about conditions inside Broome County Jail, which are vastly underreported on and more volatile than the public is led to believe. If you are interested in volunteering to speak with an incarcerated individual, please contact the Video Call Project Coordinator, Mairead McCarran, at justvideocalls@gmail.com.

Book of the Month Club for incarcerated people. BCJ's "library" is little more than 4 shelves with ancient books. JUST collects donations and purchases books for incarcerated individuals through on-line sellers (these are some of the only things allowed from outside the facility).

Support **Walk With Me**, the area's only jail reentry program providing critical services to those leaving Broome County Jail. Cash and item donations needed! Run by formerly incarcerated and directly impacted people. Walk with Me provides Peer advocacy and mentoring, Transportation assistance, Local social services advice, Immediate clothing and related needs, Obtaining valid identification, Assistance with securing employment, and whatever else pops up. Rozann Greco, Reentry Specialist at 607-723-8313 or rgreco@familyenrichment.org. Mail: Walk with Me, Family Enrichment Network, 24 Cherry St., Johnson City NY 13790.

Jail voting rights project. In the 2020 elections we sent in registration and absentee ballot materials. As one person inside wrote us after the elections, "I would like to start this letter by saying thank you. I was able to vote because you sent me an application for an absentee ballot..."

Research and documentation on abuse and deaths in the jail. We are always looking for people to assist with research!

Become a member! \$5-\$25 per year to support JUST's efforts to end mass incarceration in BC. Head over to www.justicest.com, membership tab