



OUR MISSION

We aim to eliminate the influence of commercial interests on our criminal legal system and end the exploitation of those it touches.

THE PROBLEM

As a nation, we spend more than \$80 billion annually to incarcerate 2.2 million people in facilities whose deplorable conditions, subpar treatment services, and ineffective programs engender recidivism. Still, communities spend yet another \$3 billion to support them. But the social costs of our failing criminal legal system, such as the harm done to people, families, and communities, are far higher. And these costs are not distributed evenly—their burden is carried largely by those we already detrimentally marginalize: low-income and minority communities.

However, this injustice has produced windfalls for some. Over the past few decades, private, public, and illicit actors have found various ways to financially exploit our criminal legal system and those it touches, victims and prisoners alike. From bail to reentry, these actors have commercialized each segment of our punishment continuum and built an economy that depends on stripping people of their freedom. In doing so, they have converted the justice-involved and their communities into cash machines, capitalizing on crime to create a legal form of human trafficking that targets those our social structures have failed.

Our system is now laden with public, private, and illicit actors whose financial incentives conflict with

the criminal justice goals of reducing crime and incarceration. Whether it's private prison executives cutting service quality to pad their profit margins or labor unions fighting prison closures to protect rural jobs, in the end lives are being destroyed, families torn apart, and communities decimated for financial gain. Motivated to help expand the criminal legal system and increase government spending rather than contract the system and cut their share of the payouts, these actors purchase power through legislative lobbying and campaign financing and wield it to protect the legal structures that support their growth.

These structures have become an invisible, but fortified barrier to building a criminal legal system that is truly rooted in justice. In fact, the intentional obfuscation of the power these actors wield allows for the legitimization of the legal, political, and social frameworks they shape that artificially celebrate incremental criminal justice reform to avoid radical change. Thus, while well-meaning reformers collect small wins in their struggle to decriminalize drugs, promote alternatives to incarceration, or reduce sentences, their efforts are thwarted by the oft-ignored imbalance of economic and political power between affected communities and those who profit from their victimization, criminalization, and incarceration.

Based out of the non-partisan, non-profit, Urban Justice Center, the Corrections Accountability Project is an innovative initiative dedicated to tearing down the commercial wall that blocks criminal justice reform and clearing the road for lasting transformational change.

OUR STRATEGY

We work to expose and reduce the harms caused by the commercialization of justice and return resources to affected communities.

ADVOCACY

We develop tools that range from course-changing narratives to actionable financial analyses for public education, political engagement, and corporate activism.

RESPONSIBLE CONTRACTING

We set performance expectations for prison services and use litigation to enforce them, pushing out exploitative actors while improving conditions of confinement.

IMPACT LITIGATION

We pursue complex litigation, focusing on commercial claims against private players, to end abusive practices and return resources to the exploited.

While there is an egregious number of financially exploitative practices to tackle, our current efforts focus on the private outsourcing of ancillary prison services, which has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry over the past few decades with little oversight. Yet, as we expand our work to cover other financially exploitative practices in bail, probation, incarceration, and parole, we also expect to revisit, adjust, and expand our suite of strategies.

LEADERSHIP

Bianca Tylek is the Director of the Corrections Accountability Project. She combines expertise in both criminal justice and financial services with her relationships in the corrections industry and reform space to combat the financial exploitation of the criminal legal system.

Bianca has worked with various state and local corrections agencies and leading criminal justice organizations. She also co-founded College Pathways at Rikers Island, an academic program for prisoners pursuing higher education. Prior to law school, Bianca worked as a financial analyst at Citigroup and Morgan Stanley.

Bianca is also an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by Ropes & Gray. In the past, she has been a Harvard Presidential Public Service Fellow, Ford Foundation Public Interest Fellow, and Paul & Daisy Soros New American Fellow. Bianca holds a B.A. from Columbia University and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

SUPPORT

Pro Bono: Our supporting law firms commit pro bono attorneys to our work. We have a team of pro bono attorneys from Ropes & Gray that support our responsible contracting work.

Volunteer Staff: We have three law school interns and three volunteers. The following law schools have also agreed to support students interested in working with the Corrections Accountability Project by offering course and clinical credits and/or summer funding: Brooklyn Law School, Columbia Law School, Harvard Law School, Pace Law School.

Partners: We also partner with other organizations in the criminal justice space, including In the Public Interest, Human Rights Defense Center, and Justice Catalyst.

We are grateful for the support of all our volunteers and partners.