

## **#SecondLookMI information and follow-up organizing events**

**WHO:** A coalition of Michigan community members, organizations, activists, advocates, loved ones of people in prison, people in prison, people of faith, survivors of harm, prosecutors, and public defenders who have come together to advocate for a Second Look.

**CONCERN:** Both nationally and locally, before and throughout the COVID pandemic, it has become abundantly apparent that long imprisonment is morally irresponsible. There are over 200,000 people in the United States serving life sentences. In Michigan, approximately 13,000 of our 35,000 incarcerated people are serving life or long sentences (over 15 years or more). According to The Sentencing Project, Michigan ranks fourth in the US for the number of women serving life without parole (173 women). Michigan has not addressed our sentencing guidelines since 1999.

Over the last 30 years, Michigan has taken a punishment focused approach to the harms present in our communities. Rather than address the root causes of violence, the state of Michigan has collectively decided that mass incarceration and extreme punishment are the answers. Three decades later we know that these “solutions” actually create worse outcomes, and we live with the great fiscal and human cost.

This movement for healing and decarceration proclaims that we want something better for Michigan. Scientific research shows us that people change. They mature. They age out of criminality and grow out of the mistakes of youth that lead many people to prison. They cultivate new tools for dealing with conflict, even while living in an often violent place, prison. The majority of people serving life and long sentences are [statistically proven](#) to not be a threat to public safety. Rather, these same people will either be elderly neighbors dedicated to growing old in peace, or these individuals can serve as positive influences whose lived experience can guide our communities in a better and more peaceful direction.

In Michigan, our prisons are designed to warehouse and control people. There is virtually no state-run programming for people unless they are within two years of their release dates, leaving incarcerated individuals who better themselves without guidance, which they succeed in admirably considering these factors. They participate in volunteer-run programs and enroll in college education programs when possible. This coalition's extensive experience with long serving people has shown us that these persons are self-educated, creative, productive, and accountable people. Their stories of being whole humans with the capacity to love and change like all of us can be found at [www.letmetellyoumi.org](http://www.letmetellyoumi.org)

**WHY:** Second look and parole board reforms are necessary to move more long-serving people out of prison and back into our communities:

- **All research points to people aging out of crime. Further, research indicates that 10 years is enough time in prison.** “Aging out of crime is a key reason why people who have been imprisoned for violent crimes—who generally serve longer sentences—are the least likely to recidivate when released from prison.” Sentencing Project page 10
- **Long prison sentences are costly and unhealthy.** Michigan spends nearly \$47,000 per person for one year of housing. Our health care contract is \$590 million dollars over 5 years. Most of the more than 140 people who died in MI’s prisons during COVID were elderly lifers. Prisons are unhealthy habitats. They are overcrowded and isolationist in nature. The food is highly processed and of poor quality. The stress of living among so many people, cut off from loved ones and intimacy, is traumatic and unhealthy. People sleep on steel beds with thin mattresses and walk around on concrete for years and years. Every year served in prison takes 2 years off of a person’s life expectancy (Christopher Wildeman, Incarceration and Population Health in Wealthy Democracies, Criminology, April 26, 2016.) Further, new research shows that free people with just one incarcerated loved one have a 2.6 year reduction in life expectancy (see: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2780438>).
- **Keeping people locked up for a long time does not stop violence in our communities or deter crime.** According to a Department of Justice fact sheet, 'prison sentences (particularly long sentences) are unlikely to deter future crime,' and 'Laws and policies designed to deter crime by focusing mainly on increasing the severity of punishment are ineffective partly because criminals know little about the sanctions for specific crimes.'
- **Historically, survivors of crime have had a strong voice at the table, which creates a false binary.** Victims' & survivors' voices are often over simplified & under-inclusive which impedes healing for all. Many people incarcerated are also survivors. 90% of incarcerated women have experienced sexual abuse and/or physical abuse in their lives. [A 2017 survey by Alliance for Safety and Justice found that 73% of victims surveyed supported a focus on rehabilitation over punishment.](#) Further, various studies demonstrate: “Victims of violence and the perpetrators of violent offenses share a similar demographic profile in that they both tend to young, black men living in urban areas. Similar to the age-distribution of violent offending, the risk of serious violent victimization is concentrated among those 18 to 24 years of age” (Thinking About Emerging Adults and Violent Crime, Bersani, Laub, and Western, May 2019).
- **There are racial disparities throughout our criminal justice system and particularly within the context of long sentences.**
- **Michigan needs to radically address the root causes of violence and harms in our communities:** Addressing root causes of violence and harm is a more effective and lasting way to end those cycles in our communities. The money wasted on long sentences

that don't deter crime could be better invested in our communities through quality education and job training programs, mental health and substance misuse treatment, quality housing, and more.

- **Current developmental brain science supports the release of incarcerated individuals:** The United States Supreme Court made a crucial determination in *Miller v. Alabama* back in 2012 where the Court stated that individuals cannot be mandatorily sentenced to life without parole before their 18th birthday. This determination came after expert testimony from Prof. Lawrence Steinberg providing developmental brain science data related to juvenile development. Now, in 2021, the American Psychological Association and other neurological experts assert that the human brain is not fully developed until after 25.

**WHAT WE WANT:** Between 2022-2023 we seek to pass Second Look legislation in Michigan. This policy allows all people serving prison sentences to be reviewed by their sentencing judge after 10 years of their sentence is served and if the commission of their offense took place before the age of 26, and a review after 15 years for those whose offense took place over the age of 26. There will also be a 10 year review for people who are 55 and older.

Second Look Legislation is being introduced all over the country. It has passed and is being used in Washington DC and campaigns are taking place in Virginia and Alabama.

These reviews will be prioritized based on a set of criteria. We also want a parole board that is accountable to the community it serves. This includes: making the board less political; creating a mechanism for appeals of decisions; transforming the culture of the parole board to focus on who people are today, not who they were 20 years ago.

**Long punishment is not the answer. Rather, people who have been long-punished HAVE MANY ANSWERS and SOLUTIONS for us.**

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Citizens for Prison Reform (CPR), Citizens for Racial Equity in Washtenaw, Episcopal Church of the Incarnation (ECI), Friends of Restorative Justice of Washtenaw County (FORJ), Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ), Humanity for Prisoners (HFP), League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI), Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES), Michigan Center for Youth Justice (MCYJ), Michigan Citizens for Justice, Michigan Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (MI-CURE), Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI), Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, Michigan Justice Advocacy (MJA), Michigan Liberation, Nation Outside (NO), National Lifers of America, Inc. (NLA), National Organization of Exonerees, New ERA in Criminal Justice, Northridge Church, Notes from the Village, Open MI Door, Power in Passion, Restorative Justice at First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, Rise Up Michigan, Safe & Just Michigan (SJM), State Appellate Defenders Office (SADO), Steps to Life, Inc., The Adolescent Redemption Project (TARP), The Sentencing Project, Voice of Detroit, Voting Access for All Coalition (VAAC)

Creating the movement for healing and decarceration #SecondLookMI

FOLLOW UP TRAININGS and WAYS TO PLUG IN

ZOOM-October 27 from 2:00 to 4:00

Join us for a training over ZOOM on how to identify and communicate #SecondLookMI messaging and advocacy with key partners (or potential partners) on ZOOM:

<https://bit.ly/secondlookmessaging>



Let Me Tell You: A Teach In about Prison, People, and How We Get Free

Saturday, October 30, 12:00-3:00

Prospect Park, Ypsilanti

Porta Potties available

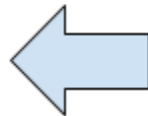
Warm Blankets

Snacks and hot beverages provided

[www.letmetellyoumi.org](http://www.letmetellyoumi.org)

More info: [nholbrook@afsc.org](mailto:nholbrook@afsc.org)

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Use this QR code to find your legislator and their contact information. If you need help call AFSC at 734.761.8283

A promotional graphic with a blue header containing the text "IT'S A MOVEMENT, NOT A MOMENT STAY INVOLVED!". Below the header, on the left, is a silhouette of a bird in flight. To the right of the bird, the text reads "Text 'SECONDLOOK' to 66866". Further right is a QR code. At the bottom right, there is a blue box containing the hashtag "#SecondLookMI". The background of the graphic is a light, hazy landscape.