



# catalyst

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*Disproportionate minority contact/confinement (DMC) impacts communities in Illinois and throughout the United States.*

## Criminal justice professionals work to address issue of disproportionate minority contact

Disproportionate minority contact/confinement (DMC) refers to the overrepresentation of minorities in the criminal justice system. The issue received national attention in 1988 when the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (formerly known as the National Coalition of State Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups) published its annual report, *A Delicate Balance*. The report was a culmination of data collected in the 1980s and concluded that DMC existed at every decision point in the juvenile justice system. The term originally referred to disproportionate minority confinement within the juvenile justice system but has since been expanded to include contact and general representation within the entire criminal justice system.

One of the most glaring examples of racial disparity in the criminal justice system is evident in regards to drug offenses. Five years ago, TASC Illinois commissioned a disproportionate justice impact study. The findings indicated that in Illinois, Class 4 possession of controlled substance accounts for the greatest racial disparity in drug arrests, prosecutions, and incarcerations. Nearly 70 percent of formal drug charges filed in Illinois are for Class 4 possession charges. However, despite the fact that nonwhites are no more likely to use illegal substances than their white counterparts, 70 percent of those entering the Cook County court system for drug charges in 2005 were black. Blacks were also five times more likely than whites to be sent to prison for a Class 4 possession charge.

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## From the President's Desk



As a front-line social service provider for people with criminal records, Safer Foundation is an integral part of the corrections landscape. In order to best serve our clients, we keep track of any developments within the corrections industry and are proud members of the American Correctional

Association (ACA).

This issue of *Catalyst* coincides with ACA's 140th Congress of Correction, held this year in Chicago. This event provides an excellent opportunity to gather with corrections professionals, researchers, and others involved with the criminal justice system. Together, we can pool our expertise and resources to develop best-practice solutions to issues throughout each facet of America's justice system.

Safer is proud to participate in this year's Congress of Correction by leading a symposium on disproportionate minority contact/confinement (DMC). As Chair of the American Correctional Association DMC Task Force, I know that ACA is interested in addressing DMC. Through the DMC Task Force, there have been a number of workshops and presentations on DMC at ACA conferences around the country.

The DMC issue is especially relevant for an organization like Safer. Each year, over 75 percent of our clients are African-American. Furthermore, we've seen a marked increase in Latino clients in the past decade. This is indicative of the



demographic makeup throughout the corrections arena, as minorities at just about every level are more likely to advance through the criminal justice system.

**“Safer Foundation is proud to participate in this year's Congress of Correction by leading a symposium on disproportionate minority contact/confinement (DMC)”**

The DMC Symposium at this year's Congress of Correction will provide another opportunity to make progress on this issue. Experts from around the country will participate in generating recommendations based on research, experience and best-practice models. This can provide a guidebook for corrections and community-based organizations on how they can

tackle DMC. For more information on DMC and media reports on the issue, please visit our website.

Sincerely,

B. Diane Williams

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## Safer Foundation's 21st Annual Golf Outing, Ruffled Feathers Golf Club



Allen Kanter (second from left), Chairman of Safer Foundation's Board of Directors, enjoys an outing with his team at the 21st Annual Golf Invitational.



Safer Foundation board member Bob Carlson (second from left) poses with his team and Safer President/CEO Diane Williams.



Safer Foundation board member John Hooker and his team out on the links at Ruffled Feathers Golf Club in Lemont.



The winning team from First Nonprofit Insurance. Rich Dacey, Jeff Pavlik, Paul Person, and John Starczynskilla finished with a score of 56.



UIC men's basketball coach Jimmy Collins spoke during the post-round dinner.

## After career as engineer, Lord helps PACE students understand math

Since 2002, Jack Lord has been a dedicated volunteer at Safer Foundation. He is a retired engineer, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University and a degree in Electrical Engineering. After 40 years of working in his profession, Jack decided he wanted to volunteer, specifically, he wanted to teach math skills. He has been a math tutor at PACE Institute inside the Cook County Jail ever since.

"I looked online and found Safer and PACE," he said. "I started coming in once a week ever since, teaching math to clients who wanted to get their GED."

Jack is a very soft spoken man, but his contribution to Safer Foundation is anything but subtle. His connection with the clients has helped them not only inside the classroom, but



Jack Lord

outside of it as well.

"I feel I have helped them academically to get their GED," he said. "But I also serve as a mentor and father figure."

When asked what he has gained from his experience as a volunteer, he said, "just the satisfaction of helping someone and gaining insight into their lives and problems."

In addition to serving at Safer, Jack has also been a math tutor at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls since 2001. Some of his other hobbies include building guitars and making stained glass lamp shades.

## Lack of treatment leads many veterans to prison

Since the beginning of the Second Gulf War in 2003, thousands of men and women have returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan, some after repeated stints in the Middle East. They join the over 20 million veterans currently living in the United States. Even though, thankfully, the more overt danger may be over for those that return home, these soldiers are still left with the psychological and physical scars of war. Unfortunately, despite laying their lives on the line to protect our country, many veterans face mounting debt from healthcare costs and especially steep unemployment rates compared to the general population. Additionally, mental health care services for our vets remain woefully inadequate. Sadly, we see the effects of that more and more as we look at disturbing trends in criminal justice.

An estimated 140,000 veterans are held in state and federal prisons in the United States, with tens of thousands more housed in county jails. The fastest growing numbers of veterans are soldiers that served in Afghanistan and Iraq. As they return from longer and repeated redeployments, the number of incarcerated vets is expected to increase drastically. Almost 60 percent of veterans in state and federal correctional facilities are serving time for violent offenses, significantly higher than nonveterans. In particular, veterans are twice as likely as nonveterans to have been sentenced for sexual assaults, and almost twice as likely for violence against minors. Here at Safer, we are seeing an increased number of young vets seeking our services. Since 2005, we've seen



**An estimated 140,000 veterans are held in state and federal prisons in the United States. . . . Since 2005, we've seen close to 2,000 vets at Safer.**

close to 2,000.

A disproportionate number of vets coming through the criminal justice system nationally and at Safer are minorities, and the overwhelming majority of them display clinically meaningful symptoms of mental illness. Research shows that Hispanic and non-Hispanic black American vets have significantly higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression compared to non-Hispanic whites. Factors such as greater peritraumatic dissociation, self-blame coping, lower social support, and greater perceived racism have been found to play a role in elevated PTSD symptoms and depression. Often, the trauma of

their experiences combined with the lack of satisfactory psychiatric intervention and medical care leads them to act out in particularly violent ways and self-medicate through prescription, illegal drug, and alcohol abuse. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, incarcerated vets with PTSD report more serious legal problems, higher instances of substance abuse, and poorer overall health than those without PTSD. Research further shows that incarcerated veterans face a level of suicide that is much higher than that attributable to either veteran status or incarceration singularly.

For all of our clients, and particularly veterans, identification and treatment of mental illness, during incarceration and post-reentry, has a profound impact

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### Disproportionate Minority Contact / Confinement (DMC) Symposium

Sponsored by the American Correctional Association's DMC Task Force

Navy Pier, Downtown Chicago

August 1, 2010

1 to 4:30 p.m.

#### Five Breakout Sessions

- Arrest – Conviction
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Community Corrections
- Confinement
- Policy/Research
- Corrections Workforce Training/Cultural Diversity

DMC, from page 1

At Safer, most clients are minorities. On average, 75 percent or more of our clients are blacks, while Latinos represent the fastest growing demographic. The average client has been convicted of a Class 4 drug charge.

However, disparate racial treatment goes beyond the confines of the criminal justice system. Dr. Devah Pager conducted a seminal research study on the intersecting issues of race, employment and a criminal record. Using white males without a criminal record as her baseline for comparison, Dr. Pager found that 34 percent of whites without a criminal record were likely to receive call backs for a job interview versus 17 percent of whites with a criminal record. On the other hand, 14 percent of black males without a criminal record were likely to receive a callback for a job interview versus 5 percent of black males with a criminal record.

This study was controlled for factors such as age, generic physical appearance and self presentation, educational attainment, and nature of work experience. The conclusion was that race appeared to have a higher negative impact on job prospects compared to a criminal record, and that opportunities for employment are particularly bleak for black males with



*The majority of people seeking Safer Foundation's services are minorities. Blacks have consistently been the majority while Latinos represent the fastest growing demographic.*

a criminal record. This study has been duplicated across the country and has yielded similar results. Anecdotal stories from our clients support what was found in the Pager studies.

These are just a couple examples of DMC. This issue has received more attention in the past decade as researchers in the areas of urban development and corrections have started to look more at the impact of recidivism on destabilizing communities. By confronting DMC now, communities can overcome the incarceration epidemic that fractures families and hinders entire generations.

VETERANS, from page 4

on chances for success post-incarceration. The unique needs of the veteran population require expansive and multi-pronged therapy and other interventions. While Sheridan Correctional Center has a veterans support group, our challenge at Safer is to evaluate how to tailor our services to meet the needs of all of our veteran clients. Unemployment rates among those classified as mentally ill is extremely high (as much as 90 percent for severe cases). Lower retention rates are also tied to mental illness. Unemployment, inability to make wages to support families, and increased frustration contributes to a cyclical pattern of incarceration. Throwing in the effects of war further exacerbates the problem. All of these intersecting issues cannot be effectively tackled singularly.

Criminalizing and incarcerating veterans that are dealing with serious and unique problems is not the answer. Illinois has become one of the first states to create specialty veteran courts. Veteran courts are patterned after the specialty drug courts and are designed to reroute those facing low-level, drug-related charges into treatment and community-based programs as opposed to sending them to prison. Though these courts are less than a year old and have no published research studies to date, it is our hope that the government and judiciary will partner with community-based organizations to meet the needs of our veterans and connect them to the care and resources they need. As our troops return home from war, we owe it to them to do a better job of focusing on their well-being, their families, and their respective communities.

## Chicago Loop Alliance unveils Art Loop 2010 with *Eye and Cardinal* exhibit

The Chicago Loop Alliance, whose partnership with Safer Foundation helped form the State Street Ambassadors work crew program, kicked off its inaugural Art Loop 2010 with an exhibit they hope will generate a lot of attention. The featured attraction, Tony Tasset's *Eye and Cardinal* exhibit, showcases a 35-foot eyeball and a number of banners depicting a cardinal in flight.

"This is part of a program that uses art as a means of engaging its audience and enhancing our everyday life," said Lou Rankin, Chairman of the Chicago Loop Alliance.

On hand at the unveiling were members

of the State Street Ambassadors work crew. This group of Safer clients helps keep one of Chicago's most famous corridors free from debris and graffiti.

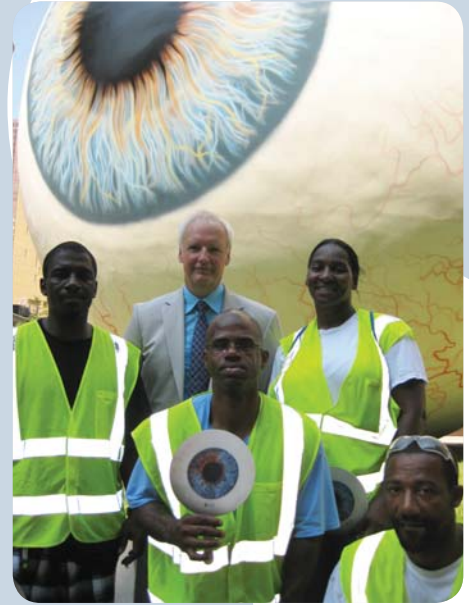
"I believe it's a great idea and it brings a lot of attention to the Loop," said William Samuels, a member of the crew. "It'll be a good attraction for the tours that come through here to absorb what we see."

Samuels went on to relate the sculpture to his own life and his desire to move on from past mistakes.

"Without our eyes, we wouldn't be able to look forward," he said.

*"It's a brilliant piece of art. It shows the public that Chicago is a great place."*

— Roger Thomas, Safer client



Safer Foundation clients (l to r) William Samuels, Craig Key, Geraldine Roberts, and Roger Thomas pose with artist Tony Tasset in front of the EYE sculpture on State Street in Chicago.



Catalyst is published four times a year by Safer Foundation. Questions or comments regarding this publication may be addressed to: info@saferfoundation.org

(312) 922-2200  
www.saferfoundation.org

571 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60661-5701

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