

# Convict Criminology: Voices From Prison<sup>1</sup>

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**T**oday, more than two million men and women reside in our nation's jails and prisons. This population is disproportionately black and brown, while those who attend universities are nearly exclusively white. The drug war has devastated minority communities and has contributed to a dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration for people of color (Miller, 1996; Austin et al., 2001). In this article, we discuss the following topics: convict criminology perspective, inviting convicts to college programs, convicts as "invisible" minorities, minorities in prisons, and correctional education and recidivism. The Convict Criminology course is taught at one university and two state prisons. A ten-question survey was administered to the three classes. The respondents' replies are provided as a means for comparing university and convict students' perceptions and thoughts about the course they completed. As simply as possible, we have outlined one way that universities can help prisoners to exit prison and enter college.

## Introduction

The Convict Criminology (CC) Perspective was first organized in the late 1990s as a means for giving a voice to criminology professors who were themselves ex-convicts. Like many critical criminologists, ex-convict criminologists were frustrated that prison research has often failed to reflect the views of prisoners. The best prison studies (Sykes, 1956, 1958; Sykes and Messinger, 1960; Irwin and Cressey, 1962; Irwin 1970, 1980, 1985) were dated, decades old, and unsuccessful in predicting the "imprisonment binge" that would occur in ensuing years (Austin and Irwin, 2001). Meanwhile, due to the drug war and the mass imprisonment of millions of American, a growing

number of convicts were exiting prison, entering college, and becoming criminologists.

Over the last decade the CC group has grown as more ex-cons and non-cons have contributed to the perspective with research publications. As defined (see Richards and Ross, 2001:180; Ross and Richards, 2003:6), CC represents the work of convicts or ex-convicts who hold Ph.D.s or are completing their doctoral studies, or enlightened academics and practitioners who are contributing to a new conversation about crime and corrections. This "New Criminology" field is led by former prisoners who are now academic faculty. The CC group tends to do research that illustrates the experiences of prisoners and ex-cons; attempts to combat the misrepresentations of scholars, the media, and government; and proposes new and less costly strategies that are more humane and effective (Richards and Ross, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; Jones 2003; Newbold, 2003; Terry, 2003a, 2003b). The convict scholars are able to do what many previous researchers could not: merge their past with their present and provide a provocative approach to the academic study of their field. The convict perspective is also based on perceptions, experiences, and analytical ideas that originate with defendants and prisoners, and are then developed by critical scholars (Richards and Ross, 2001, 2003). A convict perspective is that of a person in prison. In contrast, the convict criminology perspective is that of a former prisoner who uses his or her experience to better inform the study of prisons.

The CC Perspective is now incorporated into many university courses. For example, in 2004 a CC course was offered at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (UWO), using a selection of books published by CC Group authors. Required reading included *The Felon* (1970), *The Jail* (1985), and *The Warehouse Prison* (2005) by John Irwin; *Behind Bars* (2002) and *Convict Criminology* (2003) by Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards; *The Fellas* (2003) by Charles Terry; the ASC National Policy Committee article "The Use of Incarceration in the United States" by James Austin et al., and assorted issues of *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*. The idea was to teach an entire course based on the work of convict criminologists.

At the same time, UWO Criminal Justice faculty (Chris Rose, Susan Reed, and Stephen Richards) organized the "Inviting Convicts to College Program." Today, this facility provides a free college-level CC course for both fall and spring semesters at two Wisconsin state prisons (Rose, Reed, and Richards, 2005; Richards, Rose, and Reed, 2006). The university CC course is taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels, while the prison courses have been designed as a less rigorous version for the introductory level.

In this paper we discuss the courses being taught at the university and the prisons. We then present our findings from

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*CC Course taught at the  
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The CC course at UWO is a criminal justice elective course offered once a year. The class is entirely devoted to study of the CC perspective, movement, and policy implications. Class readings and discussions focus on the experiences of defendants and prisoners. Students are required to take this course if they want to be considered for an internship that would allow them to teach the course inside the prisons.

### Inviting Convicts to College Program: The Two Wisconsin Prisons

Research (Lanier, Philliber, and Philliber, 1994; Messemer, 2003, Welsh, 2002; Tregea, 2003) clearly indicates that college prison programs can help prisoners to become law abiding citizens when they return to their communities. The passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 created Basic Education Opportunity Grants ("Pell Grants"). These grants were responsible for the creation of many associate, bachelor, and even master's degree programs in state and federal prisons. From 1965 to 1992, prison college programs flourished throughout the country. Then, despite these successes, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994, making prisoners ineligible for Pell Grants and student loans. The quality and quantity of the college educational programs quickly diminished. Today, very few prison college programs exist in the United States.

With the support and cooperation of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, we have implemented a new college education program at two Wisconsin state prisons. Members of the partnership believe that the program has been successful, and we hope that it will be adopted widely and help to return college programs to American prisons.

"Inviting Convicts to College" prepares prisoner-students to make an informed decision about enrolling in a college or university upon their release from prison. Through taking this free, noncredit "college preparatory program," incarcerated students learn the academic skills they will need to succeed in college. The course serves as a bridge from prison to university.

At UWO, we deploy pairs of undergraduate student interns to teach the prison courses. Deploying students in this fashion means that universities do not incur the expense of reassigning faculty to teach the classes. The faculty members, in turn, are free to supervise a number of internships, including the multiple placements of student interns in different prisons. The pro-

gram is *free* for prisoner-students and prisons because it utilizes students instead of professors to convene and teach the courses. Other universities may decide to use graduate students or a combination of undergraduate and graduate students as teachers. We can envision graduate students implementing this program themselves with relatively little help from faculty.

### Course Content

The prison courses use the textbook *Convict Criminology*, which is donated by the publisher (Wadsworth). The text includes chapters written by former prisoners who were or are now university professors (at Appalachian State University, Chicago State University, Marquette University, San Francisco State University, St. Louis University, University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh). The book serves to inspire the prisoner-students and introduce them to the field of convict criminology. As stated by Ross and Richards (2003, p. 6), "The emerging field of convict criminology consists primarily of essays and empirical research conducted and written by convicts or ex-convicts, on their way to completing or already in possession of a Ph.D., or by enlightened academics who critique existing literature, policies, and practices, thus contributing to a new perspective on criminology, criminal justice, corrections, and community corrections."

The courses are taught two hours a week, for fourteen weeks. The convict students are required to read the text, take two exams, and write one paper. At the midterm point, the instructors bring the students applications for college admissions and financial aid, and help the students complete the forms. The readings help the students to understand the process by

which higher education can transform their lives. The instructors use the reading to demonstrate how prisoners can exit prison to become university students.

Prisoner-students mail the admission and financial aid forms, and then receive official replies. The instructors lead discussions about the ways in which students are socialized to live and work on campus. Topics concern methods for developing good study habits, choosing a major, and becoming serious students. A number of former prisoners who completed this course, including one of the authors of this paper, have already left prison to begin their studies at several University of Wisconsin campuses.

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### Certificate of Completion

Upon finishing the courses, the prisoner-students discussed in this study received a certificate of completion from the university, signed by a university dean and prison administrators. At the time of their release from prison, they were already qual-

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ified for admission and financial aid. Their "release plan" included attending college or university; at the schools, they picked up their financial aid checks. Students showed letters notifying them of acceptance to college to their fellow convicts, and this, in turn, inspired more prisoners to take the course. Upon their arrival at the university, the student aid office deducted their tuition, room, and board fees, and gave them the remainder of their aid. The former prisoners are now university students living in dormitories, with meal tickets and tuition paid.

### Convicts as "Invisible Minorities"

The Convict Criminology movement suggests that some prisoners can be good students. "Nontraditional" (older students) now make up a growing population on many college campuses. They consist of older men and women pursuing higher education later, perhaps after a career crisis, divorce, military service, or time in prison. We have found former prisoners and parolees to be high-performing students who are committed to their studies. Like many nontraditional students, they may be serious learners and masters at overcoming adversity.

Today, university administrators talk often about affirmative action and diversity. Nonetheless, many college campuses are nearly exclusively white in their student bodies, while prison populations are disproportionately black and brown. Universities that are seriously concerned about attracting minority students should look to their nearby prisons. There they will find many minority men and women waiting for an invitation to remake their lives with the help of higher education.

We call ex-convict students "invisible minorities" because though they cannot be identified by skin color, they suffer legally prescribed discrimination. In fact, some universities openly discriminate against convicted felons, denying them admission, student aid, campus employment, and housing. Some even have questions about felonies on admission applications. Most schools of social work, medicine, nursing, law, and even business deny admission to applicants with felony convictions. Some may do the same to persons with misdemeanors.

Despite the discrimination, we regard universities and prisons in many ways as parallel institutions. Most are state funded. Even private colleges and prisons depend ultimately on the goodwill of the taxpayers. Further, college campuses and prisons exist in close proximity, depend on public resources, and serve the same communities. Some prisons are located very close to universities. Even the institutional populations are in many ways the same, consisting mostly of young men and women in need of training and education.

Meanwhile, the taxpayers want state employees to discover new ways to provide services without additional taxes. With this idea in mind, it is important to note that universities and

prisons working together to reduce recidivism and helping prisoners to become productive citizens can serve the community. In addition, it costs the state less to support one college student than to return a man or woman to prison (Steurer and Smith, 2003).

Finally, prisoners make good college students. In prison they spend a lot of time catching up on their reading. They are already institutionalized, accustomed to living in dormitories, and know they have a lot to learn if they want to avoid returning to prison.

### The United States and Minorities in Prisons

The fact that minorities are overrepresented in American prisons is a sad commentary on the America penal system. The latest figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Federal clearinghouse for justice statistics, show that while blacks represent only 13 percent of the American population, they total more than 37 percent of those incarcerated in state and federal prisons. Persons of Hispanic origin, a rapidly growing cohort within the country, represent 14 percent of the American population but 20 percent of those who are incarcerated. Table 1 shows the percentage of state and federal prisoners by race and Hispanic origin compared to their percentage in the overall U.S. population for the year 2006. Table 1 here

**Table 1: Percent Racial/Ethnic Cohort in the U.S. Population and Percent Incarcerated in 2006**

Racial/Ethnic Cohort	Percent of U.S. Population	Percent of Cohort Incarcerated in 2006
White	67%	35.1%
Black	13%	37.5%
Hispanic	14%	20.5%
Other	6%	6.9%

Source: Sabol, W.J., H. Couture, and P.M. Harrison. 2007. "Prisoners in 2006." U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

A recent report by the Pew Center for the States (2008) shows that the total number of persons incarcerated has reached an all-time high in the United States. Indeed, in January 2008, a total of 1 out of every 99.1 adults in the population was serving time in state, federal, or county prisons and jails. The study also shows that the rate for incarcerated Hispanic adults is 1 out of every 36 adults, and for blacks it is 1 out of every 15. Even more dismaying, the Pew study indicates that 1 out of every 9 black males between the ages of 20–34 is behind bars. Table 2 summarizes the incarceration rates for whites, blacks, and those of Hispanic origin as of 2008.

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**Table 2: Incarceration Rates for 2008 Confined Population**

Racial/Ethnic group	Incarceration rate per 100,000 population
White	1,009
Black	6,667
Black Male (20 to 34)	11,100
Hispanic Origin	2,778

Source: One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008, The Pew Center on the States, 2008.

Although minority populations are overrepresented in the incarcerated population, in the United States they are significantly underrepresented for those persons completing high school. In 1997, 81.6% of the American population had a high school diploma or higher. A 2003 BJS report shows that for those persons entering America's state prison systems, about 31.5 percent had completed high school or an equivalent higher level of education. For those entering the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the percent jumped to 50.9 percent but was still well below the level of the general population (Table 3).

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**Table 3: Educational attainment for state and Federal prisoners and the general population, 1997**

Educational Attainment	Prison inmates		General Population
	State	Federal	
8th grade or less	14.2%	12.0%	7.2%
Some high school	25.5	14.5	11.2
GED	28.5	22.7	....
High school diploma	20.5	27.0	33.2
Postsecondary/some college	9.0	15.8	26.4
College graduate	2.4	8.1	22.0
Number	1,055,495	88,705	192,352,084

Sources: Wolf-Harlow, C. 2003. "Education and Correctional Populations." U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Table 4 shows educational attainment by race and Hispanic origin for inmates of state prisons. Again there appears to be some disparity between the educational attainments of whites versus minorities. Slightly more than 27 percent of the white inmates had not completed high school before incarceration. Of the African American inmates in state prisons, 44 percent had not completed high school; for those of Hispanic origin, the percentage increases to 52 percent.

**Table 4: Educational attainment of state prison inmates by race and Hispanic origin, 1997.**

Educational Attainment	State Prison inmates		
	White	Black	Hispanic Origin
8th grade or less	10.9%	11.7%	27.9%
Some high school	16.3	32.4	25.1
High school diploma	22.8	21.0	14.9
Postsecondary/some college	11.4	8.4	5.5
College graduate	3.5	1.6	1.9

Source: BJS, Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 1997.

Once incarcerated, it appears that blacks and persons of Hispanic origin are more likely to take advantage of educational programs than are their white counterparts. The BJS report states that in 1997 about 48.8 percent of white inmates in state facilities participated in some form of correctional education program once incarcerated. For those of Hispanic origin the percentage increased to 52.6 percent, and for blacks it was 53.8 percent. These statistics may reflect the fact that most prisons no longer offer college programs, or are limited to correspondence or occasional courses provided by colleges that have limited term funding. The result is that most prisons only offer ABE (eighth grade), GED (twelfth grade), and/or HSED (high school) programs. Table 5 shows the type of education program and its use by race and Hispanic origin for state prison inmates in 1997:

**Table 5: Educational programs after admission to state correctional institutions, by race and Hispanic origin**

Educational Attainment	State Prison inmates		
	White	Black	Hispanic Origin
Basic	2.1%	3.3%	4.8%
GED/high school	18.7	26.1	25.4
College	12.4	9.0	7.1
English as a second language	0.1	0.1	6.4
Vocational	32.0	33.7	29.1
Other	3.0	2.5	1.8

Source: BJS, Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 1997.

## Correctional Education and Recidivism

The early research on the benefits of education for reducing recidivism was far from conclusive; it often showed mixed and, at times, contradictory results (c.f. Martinson, 1974; Palmer, 1976). However, these early studies helped to shape the debate on correctional education by raising issues about the utility of such programs. More recent research on the utility of correctional education programs has consistently shown reductions in recidivism or in the length of time for recidivism for those completing a correctional education program while incarcerated. For example, the Correctional Education Association conducted a three-state (Maryland, Ohio, and Minnesota) study examining the recidivism rate of a release cohort of more than 3,100 inmates over a three-year period. The study divided the group into those who participated in a correctional education program while incarcerated and those who did not take advantage of it. Their findings show a 29 percent overall reduction in the recidivism rate for the group participating in correctional education in comparison to those not participating.

Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox, and Wilcox (2005) used a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of different correctional education programs on recidivism. Using a cohort of inmates released from prison between 1989 and 1992 in Ohio, they disaggregated their cohort into two main groups: those who participated in correctional education and those who did not. They further subdivided the participating group into the four different correctional education programs offered within the institution—GED, high school, vocational, and college. They then followed this cohort of inmates through 2003, nearly thirteen years after their initial release, to determine first if the former inmates recidivated for any reason (new offense, revocation of parole) and the length of time from release to recidivism.

Incorporating an event-history analysis, the authors calculated a “recidivism hazard” rate, essentially defining the odds ratio of recidivism. Their results indicate that compared to the nonparticipating cohort, there was a 62 percent reduction in the recidivism hazard rate (i.e., the likelihood) for those who participated in a college-level correctional education program.

### *The Two Prisons*

We have been teaching the Inviting Convicts to College Program inside Wisconsin state prisons for four years, each fall and spring semester. The courses are taught at two state prisons, a men’s (Oshkosh Correctional Institution; OCI) and a women’s (Taycheedah Correctional Institution; TCI) facility. OCI is a medium security prison for men, with a rated bed capacity of 1,494 and an inmate count that exceeds 2,000. This institution has no college prison program. TCI is a maximum and medium security facility for women, with an inmate count of

nearly 700; it is the primary women’s prison in Wisconsin, and it, too, does not offer a college program. OCI is located five miles from the university campus, while TCI is twenty miles away.

*The Three Surveys*

The purpose of our research is primarily exploratory. We offered a survey with ten general questions on the value of the course, and the quality and usefulness of the information provided. In addition, several open-ended attitudinal questions were used to assess the students’ response to the Convict Criminology Perspective. The survey was distributed to each of the students upon completion of the program at the university and two prisons. The sample is one of convenience and therefore should in no way be used for making inferences to a wider population. Table 6 shows the number of responses from each of the three institutions as well as the average age and age range for each class. Also included for the students from the two correctional institutions are the average sentence and sentence range.

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Table 6: Demographics for survey respondents

	Oshkosh Correctional Institution	Taycheedah Correctional Institution	University of Wisconsin- Oshkosh
Number of responses	8	6	16
Average age of respondents	29.25	24.25	22.125
Age range of respondents	23–45	16–30	20–27
Average sentence (in months)	60.625	82.8	N/A
Sentence range (in months)	15–150	48–144	N/A

**The Students’ Responses**

The three classes produced very different responses, which we have organized by theme. Clearly, the university students used the course to think their way “in” to the study of prison. By contrast, the prisoners used the course to plan their way “out” into the free world. While the groups approached the subject matter from different perspectives (outside or inside prison), they understood that Convict Criminology was about transformation, about planning a journey that would take them out of prison and into college.

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*The UWO Students*

The university students report that the Convict Criminology course was different from typical college courses. Remarks included the following: "I appreciate a different way of looking at the criminal justice system and those individuals under managerial jurisdiction" (27-year-old male UWO student). "[The course] is a great learning tool that offers a different viewpoint normally not discussed within criminal justice courses" (21-year-old male UWO student). "This course breaks the monotony of our normal one-sided courses" (22-year-old male UWO student). "For the most part, the readings were written with a lot of emotion and integrity that you don't find many places. It was a pleasant change from the mindless drawl usually found in criminal justice textbooks" (21-year-old male UWO student).

The university students learned to view prisons and prisons from a new perspective: "[The course] opened my eyes to the harmful effects felt by convicts while imprisoned and after release that are perpetuated by the system" (21-year-old male UWO student). "I felt that Convict Criminology was a very valuable class for me. I felt that the books I read had a very different take on the correctional system. It was good to have another side of the story. I think that a person who wants to study the criminal justice system would be selling themselves short if the only information they were given was from the outside. I felt that this class gave me another view of the system. I feel that I have a more complete understanding of the system than I did before this class." (22-year-old female UWO student). "[The course] is a great learning tool that offers a different viewpoint normally not discussed within criminal justice courses" (21-year-old male UWO student).

The university students also reported that the course changed their views of prisons and corrections: "The course reminded me not to be so quick to judge and that there *are* a multitude of ways a person can end up behind bars" (27-year-old male UWO student). "It [the Convict Criminology course] has caused me to give more thought toward a career in corrections" (27-year-old male UWO student). "I think this course was very valuable for me in many different ways. For example, it gave prisoners a voice and humanized them in a way that I have never encountered. For those naïve students who view prisoners as vile monsters, their opinions must have changed also. Finally, it helped me empathize with prisoners' situations" (21-year-old male UWO student).

Students also learned about ex-convicts who became professors: "I enjoyed reading about the struggles faced by ex-convicts in trying to secure a place of employment within academic settings. I know Dr. Richards [UWO ex-convict criminal justice professor, and internship supervisor] and Dr. Jones [ex-convict Marquette University criminology professor, and guest speak-

er] discussed it, and it really gave life to the struggle of ex-cons" (21-year-old male UWO student). "The class was interesting because this is a subject within the criminal justice system that is typically not addressed. The idea of ex-convicts becoming instructors and professors following lengthy prison sentences is absolutely amazing. It is as if they [Convict Criminologists] are the light at the end of the tunnel" (22-year-old male UWO student). "No one except the Convict Criminologists would be able to provide us valid information about being a convicted felon. Therefore, their input is the most accurate one can receive" (22-year-old male UWO student).

They learned, as well, from reading stories about real people: "One thing I learned from the course is that we need to find alternatives to locking nonviolent offenders up. They pose no threat to society in a harmful way. Our resources would be better used if redirected elsewhere" (23-year-old male UWO student). "I think that the interesting content of this course is something that the vast majority of people don't have a clue about. I think that more people should be exposed to this in-

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stories really worked well" (22-year-old male UWO student). "I felt this class opened our eyes to a new side of criminology. This course strays from the conventional views of what criminology is limited to. When we can study every aspect of the science, we can truly understand it" (22-year-old male UWO student).

The university students reported that they want the courses to continue: "I believe the course gives great insight to people outside the system to what goes on inside. Also what the class is doing for people inside [prison] is great" (22-year-old female UWO student). "This class needs to continue for students and prisoners. This may be one of few chances to help people succeed in a system that focuses on failure" (22-year-old male UWO student).

#### *The Oshkosh Correctional Institution's Male Prisoners*

The course gave the prisoners hope that they could still become "somebody" one day: "This course made me realize that being a convicted felon doesn't mean that you can't succeed" (29-year-old male prisoner). "I would recommend this class to anyone doing some time. It gives you feelings of accomplish-

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ing something. It might kick start some others to look at furthering their education" (45-year-old male prisoner). "It would be terrible to stop offering this class. This class gives the hopeless individuals some hope. Nobody cares about our future and this class is offering some hope" (45-year-old male prisoner).

Taking the course inspired prisoners to plan a new future through higher education: "I've seen and understand I'm not alone and the struggles I've faced are similar to others in the *Convict Criminology* text. I'm inspired to see that others became successful after serving time in prison" (30-year-old male prisoner). "This course has been very valuable not only because it has shown me what a college course is like, it has also taught me lot about criminology which has become very interesting to me" (31-year-old male prisoner). "The course inspired me to go to college" (23-year-old male prisoner, now enrolled at UWO for Fall of 2008).

### *Taycheedah Correctional Institution Female Prisoners*

The women prisoners expressed their views: "So many people know of the corruption and yet so little is being done to help" (27-year-old female prisoner). "The course let me know that at least someone was looking at the real prison system. And the actual truth behind how they are really run. Nobody really hears how it really is behind razor wire, only what political heads want them to" (28-year-old female prisoner). "This course was very valuable because a lot of things I felt were confirmed. I sometimes felt that the concerns I had involving politics, the government, the D.O.C. system as well as police officials, and federal agents were probably a case of paranoia due to the race issues and the discrimination towards convicts" (30-year-old female prisoner).

The course inspired the women to continue their formal education: "I would absolutely recommend this course to a friend, especially be it the women I've met in prison" (30-year-old female prisoner). "The course is very inspiring to a lot of people" (16-year-old female prisoner). "The class has proven to me that even though I am a felon and am in prison, that when I get released, I can still go to college and become successful" (24-year-old female prisoner). "The reading material was more easy to get into because it's a topic that all of us on the inside can relate to, which really makes it almost absolute that we would all be interested" (28-year-old female prisoner). "The interest level is very high on my part because I'm here, and people very close to me are in prison as well, so this subject hits the bull's-eye when it comes to present day life" (28-year-old female prisoner). "I was also enlightened on a lot of history and motivated by this course (I was never

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even aware of its existence) to pursue my education further. I am already seeking further education.

"But to know that I can become more than I expected as an ex-con is very encouraging" (30-year-old female prisoner). "I am very excited to know that there is a whole world of successful ex-cons who are willing to help me be all that I can in the event of striving to excel and that they will allow me to stand with them to make a change for those who are and have been incarcerated" (30-year-old female prisoner). "I plan to be a part of this criminology movement and maybe become a professor or some kind of researcher" (30-year-old female prisoner). "I wish the findings throughout this course could be used to help make a stand and statement to the rest of the world about how bad the criminal justice system really is. Because those of us on the inside have voices that could prove very valuable, and we need to be heard" (28-year-old female prisoner).

## Conclusion

We have discussed the following topics: the convict criminology perspective, inviting convicts to college program, convicts as "invisible" minorities, minorities in prisons, correctional education and recidivism, and the two prisons. In addition, we have reported the responses of students at the university and prisons.

Today, more than two million men and women reside in our nation's jails and prisons. This population is disproportionately black and brown, while universities are nearly exclusively white. The war of drugs has devastated minority communities and has contributed to a dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration for people of color (Miller, 1996; Austin & Irwin, 2001; Austin et al., 2001). Meanwhile, despite the considerable effort devoted to minority recruitment, university campuses appear more like private country clubs reserved for middle-class whites with resources.

As simply as possible, we have outlined one way that universities can help prisoners to exit prison and enter college. We are prepared to help if you decide to begin your own program. Prisons warehouse men and women who desperately need higher education to remake their shattered lives, to overcome the legal discrimination they face. They need our invitation and support.

## Endnotes

1. Paper originally presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Conference, Cincinnati, March 2008. Direct correspondence to Stephen C. Richards at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Department of Public Affairs, Criminal Justice Program, Clow Faculty 407, 800 Algoma Blvd., Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901-8601, richarsc@uwosh.edu.

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