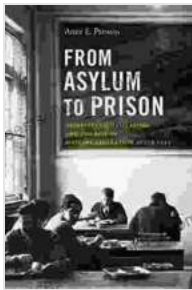


# Deinstitutionalization and the Rise of Mass Incarceration: A History

After the Second World War, the United States experienced a profound shift in its approach to mental health care. A process known as deinstitutionalization began, leading to the closure of large-scale psychiatric hospitals and a dramatic decline in the number of people living in these institutions. This transition marked a significant departure from the prevailing practices of the past century and had far-reaching consequences for both mental health care and the criminal justice system.



## From Asylum to Prison: Deinstitutionalization and the Rise of Mass Incarceration after 1945 (Justice, Power, and Politics) by Donald Keene

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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File size : 4503 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 235 pages



This article explores the complex history of deinstitutionalization and its impact on the rise of mass incarceration in the United States after 1945. We will examine the causes and consequences of this transformative period, as well as the ongoing debates surrounding its legacy.

## **The Causes of Deinstitutionalization**

There were several factors that contributed to the deinstitutionalization movement in the United States. One was the advent of new psychiatric drugs, such as chlorpromazine (Thorazine), which made it possible to treat mental illness outside of hospital settings. Another factor was the growing influence of the community mental health movement, which advocated for a shift from institutional care to community-based services.

Social and economic changes also played a role in deinstitutionalization. The post-war economic boom led to increased prosperity and a decline in the stigma associated with mental illness. This made it more feasible for people with mental illness to live outside of institutions and to access community-based services.

## **The Consequences of Deinstitutionalization**

Deinstitutionalization had a profound impact on the lives of people with mental illness. For many, it meant a greater degree of freedom and autonomy. They were able to live in their own homes, hold jobs, and participate in community life. However, deinstitutionalization also had some negative consequences.

One of the most significant consequences of deinstitutionalization was the increase in homelessness among people with mental illness. Many people who were released from psychiatric hospitals had difficulty adjusting to life in the community. They often lacked the necessary skills to live independently and had difficulty accessing affordable housing and mental health care. As a result, many ended up living on the streets or in shelters.

Another consequence of deinstitutionalization was the increase in crime among people with mental illness. Studies have shown that people with mental illness are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than people without mental illness. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that people with mental illness are often more likely to be involved in disruptive or aggressive behavior. They are also more likely to be victims of crime, which can lead to retaliatory behavior.

## **The Rise of Mass Incarceration**

The rise of mass incarceration in the United States began in the 1970s and has continued unabated since then. The United States now has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with over 2 million people behind bars. This increase in incarceration has been driven by a number of factors, including the "war on drugs," the increased use of mandatory minimum sentences, and the erosion of parole and other forms of early release.

Deinstitutionalization has been cited as one of the contributing factors to the rise of mass incarceration. The closure of psychiatric hospitals and the lack of affordable housing and community-based services for people with mental illness has led to an increase in homelessness and crime among this population. This, in turn, has led to increased arrests and incarcerations.

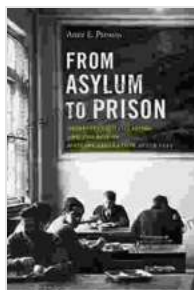
## **The Ongoing Debates**

The debate over deinstitutionalization and mass incarceration is ongoing. Some argue that deinstitutionalization was a necessary step that has led to greater freedom and autonomy for people with mental illness. Others argue that deinstitutionalization has been a disaster, leading to increased homelessness, crime, and incarceration.

There is no easy answer to this complex issue. Deinstitutionalization has had both positive and negative consequences, and the debate over its legacy is likely to continue for years to come.

Deinstitutionalization and the rise of mass incarceration are two of the most significant social policy changes of the past century. These changes have had a profound impact on the lives of people with mental illness, as well as on the criminal justice system. The ongoing debates over these issues highlight the need for a thoughtful and compassionate approach to mental health care and criminal justice.

By understanding the history of deinstitutionalization and mass incarceration, we can work to create a better future for people with mental illness and for society as a whole.



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