

PRISON VISITATION PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

We change policy and the public's perception of the criminal justice system by creating avenues for lawmakers, business leaders, and everyday Americans to becoming proximate with the humanity of incarcerated people. Formally launched in 2020, the Frederick Douglass Project for Justice embodies the values and legacy of the great 19th century champion of education, through our focus on emancipation, equality, and justice.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM



We facilitate structured meetings and respectful conversations between members of free society and prisoners, so that they can learn from each other, **form powerful human connections**, and transform both their own lives and society at large. We believe that these unique encounters will spur understanding and empathy—for both visitors and prisoners—that will, in turn, drive meaningful personal and systemic change.

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THEORY OF CHANGE

CURRENT SITUATION

- **95% of incarcerated people will eventually return to society**
- Public perceptions perpetuate stigma and undermine opportunity and stability upon release
- Human impacts are not prioritized in sentencing, confinement, and release policy
- Hopelessness is pervasive among the justice-involved, undermining behaviors and choices—both before and after release

STRATEGIES

- Leverage prison visits and face-to-face meetings with diverse groups of people to **build hopefulness, promote pro-social behaviors, and foster self-awareness**
- Bring together a broad set of people who would otherwise never encounter one another
- Foster **open dialogue** and conversations that encourage human connections and mutual understanding
- Model positive and respectful interactions and engagement

TACTICS

- Facilitate **in-person visits** and conversations between outside visitors and incarcerated people
- Highlight the shared humanity among the diverse groups of participants
- Provide **opportunities** for prisoners to develop and deepen social, public speaking, and self-advocacy skills
- Provide **support** for outside visitors to utilize their newfound understanding within their professional and personal spheres

OUTCOMES

- **Decreased recidivism**
- More stable families and safer communities
- Fewer disciplinary infractions and lower prison violence
- Increased understanding and greater empathy among external participants for those impacted by the justice system
- **Justice reform** that reflects the realities of who goes to prison, what happens to them while they are there, and the challenges of reentry