

#LessIsMoreNY

MEMBER PROFILE: YAMI VASQUEZ



New York reincarcerates more people for noncriminal technical violations of parole—like being late for curfew or testing positive for alcohol use—than every other state in the country. Approximately 35,000 people are on parole in New York and they are all daily subject to re-incarceration for technical violations. Today, thousands of people are currently incarcerated in New York State prisons and local jails for technical violations of parole. The vast majority of those re-incarcerated for technical violations of parole are Black and Latino. The #LessIsMoreNY Act will fix this problem once it is fully implemented.

Thousands of New Yorkers have been harmed by the problems in parole. Now they are sharing their stories.

Yami Vazquez, 45, is a mother with roots in the Bronx. After her incarceration, she was on parole in New York, but her family was living in Connecticut. Yami requested to be transferred so she could live with her family during her reentry process, but her request was denied. Without a place of her own to stay in New York, she was forced to sleep on friends' couches as she worked in New York City—away from her husband and daughter. If Yami returned to her family, it would have resulted in a technical parole violation, and she would have been re-incarcerated. Parole separated her from family, making the re-entry process much harder.

Yami still carries the emotional burden of her parole sentence to this day, resulting in major anxiety. "I still deal with the sleepless nights, I still have anxiety anytime the clock turns to 7:00 pm because that was the time I had curfew and checked in. So now, even after coming off of parole, I find myself reacting to the time of day. The overwhelming fear I felt every time I had to go into the parole office, has not left my body or my mind."

Yami's story is unfortunately not unique. New York imprisons more people for non-criminal "technical" violations of parole like missing an appointment with a parole officer, being late for curfew, or testing positive for alcohol and other drugs than any state in the country. In 2019, 40% of people admitted to state prisons were locked up not for a new

felony conviction but for a non-criminal technical violation of parole. The entire process is marked by stark racial disparities, with Black and Latinx people far more likely than white people to be reincarcerated for a technical violation.

The nature of the parole system affects people's mental and physical health long after their supervision ends. This is why Yami is passionate about changing the parole policies that she had to endure. Today, Yami is a member of the Katal Center for Equity, Health and Justice and currently works at Center for Employment Opportunities, where she is able to give back to her community by connecting those in need with employment resources and services.

Now that the #LessIsMoreNY Act was passed and signed into law, Yami has been working to make sure this transformative reform is implemented immediately and properly. "The power of PO's needs to be checked. Too many of these parole officers are not looking out for the best interest of people on parole. Sometimes they are more concerned about scaring you and controlling you, which isn't right." The current DOCCS practices hamper peoples re-entry and she knows that there are too many people who are still being arrested for noncriminal technical violations. Yami is fighting for the thousands of people on parole and their families who be positively impacted by the implementation of #LessIsMoreNY.

More details about the #LessIsMoreNY Act

Developed by people on parole, people currently incarcerated, family members, and community and legal groups, the #LessIsMoreNY Act will:

- Restrict the use of incarceration for technical violations of parole
- Bolster due process
- Provide speedy hearings when someone is charged with an alleged violation of parole
- Provide earned time credits to most people on parole so they get off parole faster

#LessIsMoreNY brings sensible reform to parole practices, advancing justice, supporting people in reentry and strengthening public safety. That's why it's supported by more than 300 community, legal, and faith groups, law enforcement leaders, city councils, the NY State Association of Counties, survivor groups, and more. For a full list of supporters, please see the #LessIsMoreNY Support Letter.

For more information, please contact
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