

**Excerpt from “Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters” by African-American Prisoners in Sing Sing Prison (May 1998)**

We are prepared to make the best of our time and the necessary adjustments for a successful reentry into society, but facing the parole board is like returning to court and having the judge sentence you again for the same crime...

Many of the churches and other faith communities in the Black and Latino neighborhoods from which we have come have abandoned us. The silence of Black and Latino Christian, Jewish, and Islamic congregations in urban communities makes them unwilling accomplices to the plight of prisoners.

We feel trapped and cut off by a system that seems to have no capacity for love or compassion and refuses to recognize that people can change. Increasingly politicians and the media manipulate public sentiment toward vengefulness instead of redemption, and that makes the public slow to understand the social causes of wrong behavior. Prison: easy to get in and difficult to get out—even when you are eligible for parole. Prison is a branding method tantamount to modern slavery; it totally rejects any possibility of rehabilitation...

As a measure to deter crime and to keep urban youth out of prison, adequate and effective education should be the focus point for government, churches, and recreation centers. Education builds a sound and safe society, while illiteracy contributes to the destruction of humanity, perpetuating the poverty that too easily leads to prison....

Let us “believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance” (Qur’an 103.3). Seek God’s Spirit and Righteousness with us in every endeavor. In the words of Amos, “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

SOURCE: Statement by Sing Sing Prisoners, May 1998. In *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal; An African American Anthology*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, 620-621. New York: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.