

FOREWORD:
CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS:
ENDING THE CYCLE OF TRAUMA

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An estimated 94,000 children in Louisiana have a parent who has experienced jail time.¹ Nationally, the number of children with an incarcerated parent grew from 500,000 in 1980 to 2.5 million in 2012.² The incredible growth in these figures runs parallel to the growth of mass imprisonment in the United States, which has had the highest incarceration rate in the world for over a decade.³ Children with incarcerated parents are at high risk of a number of negative outcomes such as poverty, mental health and behavioral problems, engagement with the foster care system, homelessness, and, often, their own incarceration.⁴ Parental incarceration touches the lives of far too many individuals throughout Louisiana, including myself. Not all children with an incarcerated parent face the same outcomes, but all of us experience the trauma of an absent parent. And with that, too many children enter the cycle of incarceration.

In January 2017, Richard A. Webster and Jonathan Bullington, journalists for NOLA.com | *The Times-Picayune*, sought to highlight this epidemic that many often ignore. They wrote “Family Sentence,” a four-part series that chronicled the lives of many young people, and their families, whose parents were incarcerated in New Orleans. This series was the

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1. Richard A. Webster & Jonathan Bullington, *When Parents Go to Prison, Children Pay*, NOLA.COM (Jan. 9, 2017), http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2017/2017/01/new_orleans_parental_incarcera.html.

2. See SARAH WAKEFIELD & CHRISTOPHER WILDEMAN, CHILDREN OF THE PRISON BOOM: MASS INCARCERATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN INEQUALITY 4 (2014).

3. *Id.* at 13.

4. *Id.* at 5–6.

inspiration for Loyola Law Review's annual symposium. In October 2017, the Law Review hosted "Children of Incarcerated Parents: Ending the Cycle of Trauma." The symposium included conversations between formerly incarcerated individuals, young people whose parents are currently or were previously incarcerated, mental health professionals who work with those young people, journalists, and lawmakers. They discussed the impact parental incarceration has on families and how we can mitigate those adverse effects in the future.

Additionally, it was an honor to welcome Governor John Bel Edwards as the symposium's keynote speaker. He discussed the implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Package and his dedication to ensuring its success. Earlier this year, the Louisiana Legislature passed the Justice Reinvestment Package, which is projected to reduce the state's prison population by 10% and save \$262 million over the next decade.⁵ An estimated \$184 million will be reinvested into programs and policies that will reduce recidivism and support victims of crime.⁶ The package is a positive step in the right direction for Louisiana; however, some questions remain as to how these savings could be reinvested to help reduce the negative impact of incarceration on children.

As the son of an incarcerated parent, I believe the symposium sparked a pertinent discussion for lawmakers, attorneys, future attorneys, and our community about how to include families and children in our criminal justice reform efforts. We hope we captured the essence of the symposium and the important perspectives brought to light in this issue of *Loyola Law Review*. It includes Governor Edwards's keynote address and a piece by psychologists who explain the psychological, emotional, and developmental impact that trauma has on children. This issue also contains essays written by two individuals with first-hand accounts of the criminal justice

5. Act 280, S.B. 139, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 281, S.B. 220, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 282, S.B. 221, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 260, H.B. 249, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 261, H.B. 489, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 277, S.B. 16, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 258, H.B. 116, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 262, H.B. 519, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 264, H.B. 680, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017); Act 265, H.B. 681, 2017 La. Sess. Law Serv., Reg. Sess. (La. 2017).

6. Julie O'Donoghue, *Louisiana Criminal Justice Reform Passed by Legislature*, NOLA.COM (June 8, 2017), http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/06/louisiana_criminal_justice_ove.html.

system in Louisiana. The first is written by Corey Ladd, a panelist from the symposium. He details the anguish of being separated from his infant daughter while incarcerated and his difficult journey through the Louisiana criminal justice system. The second essay is written by Dominique Jones who shared her personal story with the governor during his address. Ms. Jones explains the struggle of growing up with a father who is incarcerated and how that has affected her journey into adulthood.

We hope the symposium and this publication will continue the important dialogue started by “Family Sentence” and that our country and state remain diligently focused on ending the cycle of trauma for children of incarcerated parents.