

OPINION

Ohio Proves Youth Prison Reform Works

Making the case for rehabilitation

BY JOHN KARIAKOU

You might not guess it from the Republican governor or GOP-dominated legislature, but Ohio is proving itself the most progressive state in the union when it comes to youth prison reform.

The Buckeye State has shifted away from punishing kids who get ensnared in the juvenile justice system to rehabilitating them, and it's saved money doing so.

"What we've done in the past is treat the children who are incarcerated like mini adults," explained Linda Janes, the deputy director of Ohio's Department of Youth Services. "We know better now through research and through



all kinds of evidence that that's a mistake. Children have to be treated like children."

That conclusion is good for youth offenders and good for society.

Guards in the Ohio juvenile system are now called "youth specialists," and school uniforms have replaced prison khakis. Offenders spend their days in a school setting and earn their high school diplomas.

Boys spend their spare time raising vegetables in greenhouses and tilapia in large tanks. The vegetables are donated to food banks for the poor, while the boys use the fish to learn cooking skills. (No girls are incarcerated in Ohio. They're sent to "alternative venues," akin to halfway houses.)

The move from punishment to rehabilitation came as a result of a 2004 lawsuit alleging that guards in the state's youth detention cen-

ters used excessive force. The state also faced accusations that it was failing to adequately train staff, educate incarcerated children, and provide enough health services. A federal judge oversaw the complete revamping of the state system.

The result is a national model for youth rehabilitation.

Where 1,800 children were incarcerated at the time of the lawsuit, there are now fewer than 500 locked up. Meanwhile, recidivism rates have declined steadily. This has been a boon for the state, for reformers, and for Ohio's taxpayers.

The research and policy organization In the Public Interest estimates that rehabilitation costs much less than incarceration. In Ohio, the tab for keeping people behind bars tops \$25,000 per prisoner annually.

By contrast, community-based

services for arrested teenagers cost just \$1,000 a year, a bargain by comparison. So, in addition to other positive outcomes, the state can also point now to the \$58 million it's saving on youth services.

How did Ohio succeed?

First, it put politics aside and invited a group of nationally recognized experts on juvenile prison reform to offer advice. Meanwhile, the federal judge who oversaw the process pushed both sides in the state legislature to work together and to keep progress on track.

Second, both former Democratic Gov. Ted Strickland and his Republican successor John Kasich invested in community corrections, which is more effective at targeting at-risk youth. And they insisted that local authorities keep the offenders' families involved in the process.

Powerful Symbols of What We Value as a Nation

The new faces coming to our treasury bills

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Every day I wear a pair of medallions around my neck with portraits of two of my role models: Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. As a child I read books about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. She and the indomitable and eloquent slave woman Sojourner Truth represent countless thousands of anonymous slave women whose bodies and minds were abused and whose voices were muted by slavery, Jim Crow, segregation and confining gender roles throughout our nation's history.



also honor Sojourner Truth and other great women and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who never stopped demanding and working to assure that America lives up to its declared creed of freedom, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness and equality for all.

Kudos to the Treasury Department which has announced that Harriet Tubman's face will grace the front of the redesigned \$20 bill, making her the first

75,000 in 1939 after the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to let her sing at Constitution Hall because she was not white. Mrs. Roosevelt and Dr. King will grace the back of the \$5 bill rounding out the inspiring group of determined moral warriors who expanded the civil and human rights of women, people of color and all of us.

Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said he had an 'aha' moment after recognizing the groundswell of

become. The new bills also will powerfully remind all Americans and teach our children and grandchildren that black history and women's history are American history. They will take us a giant step forward towards healing our nation's profoundly crippling birth defects of slavery, Native American genocide, and exclusion of all women and nonpropertied men of all races from our electoral process and ensuring full participation in our nation's life.

It is so important to make sure all of our children can see their ancestors pictured on something as basic as the money used every day by countless millions and this will deepen the meaning of how we define success in America.

And to black children who remain the poorest group in America, I hope Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth become anchor reminders of their great heritage of strength, courage, faith and belief in the equality of women and people of every color. None of us must ever give up fighting for freedom and equality and human dignity however tough the road. I hope all of our children and all of us will be inspired anew by our diverse and rich heritages and cultures as Americans and renew our determination to build a level playing field in our nation for every child and help our nation shine a brighter beacon of hope in a world hungering for moral example.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

For too long and for too many money has been the most powerful symbol of what we value as a nation.

Although Harriet Tubman could not read books, she could read the stars to find her way north to freedom. And she freed not only herself from slavery, but returned to slave country again and again through forests and streams and across mountains to lead other slaves to freedom at great personal danger. She was tough. She was determined. She was fearless. She was shrewd and she trusted God completely to deliver her, and other fleeing slaves, from pursuing captors who had placed a bounty on her life.

Now the entire nation will pay public homage to Harriet Tubman's devotion to freedom, and

woman in more than a century and first African American ever to be represented on the face of an American paper note.

And it's wonderful that she will not be alone. Sojourner Truth and women suffragette activists and leaders will be featured on the back of the \$10 bill. Great contralto and opera singer Marian Anderson, for whom I was named and about whom great conductor Arturo Toscanini said "yours is a voice such as one hears once in a hundred years," will be featured on the back of the \$5 bill. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt arranged for Marian Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial before

public response to his announcement that the Treasury Department was considering changing the design of the \$10 bill. To so many people these new treasury bills will be much more than pieces of paper.

For too long and for too many money has been the most powerful symbol of what we value as a nation. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Marian Anderson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Alice Paul, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Martin Luther King, Jr. — their faces on American currency will send powerful messages about what — and who — we Americans are, value and strive to



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