

## Reforms Lower Black Inmate Incarceration

By Roz Edward  
Special to the NNPA  
from the Atlanta Daily  
World

The number of Georgia's black prison inmates has significantly lowered since Gov. Nathan Deal instituted sweeping criminal justice reforms, a study finds.

20 percent, according to a report in Sunday's Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"What has declined sharply has been the number of blacks entering prison. But what hasn't declined much at all, only a few percent, is the number of blacks in prison on a specific date — also called 'standing population' or

are being locked up in Georgia, is a remarkable and historic change in a state that has long packed its prisons with disproportionate numbers of black offenders."

"Since taking office, I have spearheaded legislation to overhaul Georgia's adult and juvenile criminal justice systems because we

'The fact that substantially fewer African Americans are being locked up in Georgia, is a remarkable and historic change'

Deal's sweeping reforms aimed at rehabilitating non-violent offenders and tackling the inflating costs of incarceration has reduced the black prison intake by

"stock," explains one expert for the Georgia Department of Corrections and a participant in the study.

The fact that substantially fewer African Americans

simply could not afford the continually increasing costs of incarceration," Deal said of his approach to criminal justice reform. "Accountability court funding and improved rules for probation detention centers have successfully addressed the large jail backlog and high costs paid to counties housing state offenders. By identifying low-risk, nonviolent offenders and more effective ways to rehabilitate them, we are steering these offenders away from a life of crime and reserving our expensive prison beds for the violent offenders who pose a public safety risk."

Georgia's African-American prison population have dropped by 20 percent and links this "unmistakable"



PHOTO CREDIT NNPA

Gov. Nathan Deal's sweeping reforms aimed at rehabilitating nonviolent offenders and tackling the inflating costs of incarceration has reduced the black prison intake by 20 percent, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

downward trend to the governor's boost in accountability courts funding.

"Since 2007 alone, more than three dozen [accountability] courts have opened their doors across Georgia,"

chance to turn around their lives and return to society as productive, taxpaying citizens.

"The change reflects a new philosophy on sentencing in Georgia, which led the nation in criminal pun-

grams included in recently passed Georgia legislation are cost-effective strategies that will allow a larger number of former offenders to return to the workforce and support their families, Neal says.

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Frederick Charles  
"Big Pappa" Caldwell



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and mother

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to be forgotten

~ AUG 10, 1972 - FEB 18, 2012 ~

'By identifying low-risk, nonviolent offenders and more effective ways to rehabilitate them, we are steering these offenders away from a life of crime'

the AJC reports. "In the first quarter of 2014, more than 4,100 offenders were enrolled in the state's 105 accountability courts, and many of these participants would likely be in prison without this alternative."

Last year, Deal gave prisoners who have earned money toward college in the form of a HOPE G-E-D Voucher the ability to use that money up to two years after their release. This opportunity grants nonviolent offenders a greater

ishment as recently as 2009, but is now bent on saving money and changing lives," the AJC reports. "Hundreds of nonviolent offenders who might otherwise be wasting their lives in prison are instead receiving opportunities to get off drugs and take responsibility for themselves."

What else is on the governor's wish list? The removal of barriers to employment, housing and education for rehabilitated offenders. Incentives and re-entry pro-

Deal requests the assistance of religious organizations to join the fight for recidivism rates and aid in re-entry efforts.

"We are revolutionizing Georgia's criminal justice system and we need a statewide network of volunteers and mentors to welcome, assist, provide and make sure that those who are willing to change the directions of their lives will find a helping hand," Deal said.

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