PHI 815-22: History of the Integration of Religion & Society

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

**LaKeisha, this was a wonderful Developmental Reading Assignment. It was a pleasure to read and it was well done. You are a good writer!**

**Your sources and Quote/Paraphrases are well chosen for what looks like preparation for an essay dealing with mentoring. You even had sources that addressed mentoring youth in your context of the criminal justice system. Good detective work. Although you did not hve any dissertation sources, I feel sure ther must have been research done in your area before. If you find any, this is the generic format for Dissertations: [Type of Dissertation or Thesis, Awarding Institution].**

**You did a good job identifying the Essential Elements each reading related to which was excellent. This connection to essential elements of each course is what enables students to pick their own readings, while being guided by the distinctive focus of each course. There are method-oriented courses and there are content-oriented courses and some have both, so PHI 815 is teaching content of the dozen or so areas where Christianity has changed the world over and over again across the centuries. But PHI 815 is also teaching the methodology of historical perspective- what difference does it make to understand the historical context of ideas and events: what led up to them? What did the ideas or events cause later in the history of an issue?**

**Your Additive/Variant Analyses demonstrated critical thinking. You demonstrated faith-learning integration with insightful observations where religion and faith can contribute to mentoring youth in your professional context. Well done.**

**I loved this Contextualization: "We must be open to questioning our views, especially those shaped by politics, traditions, or religion, because our perspectives can easily be distorted. Without intentional reflection, we may not see how our judgments are clouded. This reflection is important for Christians because it helps us seek wisdom from God’s Word, renewing our minds and guiding us toward humility." What a wonderful personal contextualization. Being reflective enough to beware of our potential for distortion is the fist step to countering bias.**

**APA Formatting tips: Hanging indents are difficult sometimes. I have experienced similar problems before.**

**Article titles are not italicized: Kurnia, R. P. (2021). A case for Mezirow’s transformative learning.**

**Article titles are to be in sentence case: Hurd, N. M. (2024). Promoting positive development among racially and ethnically marginalized youth: Advancing a novel model of natural mentoring.**

**Overall, excellent work, LaKeisha! Dr. Ward Grade: A**

**Source One:**Ward, D. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. JIS, V26, (1-2), 29-56. [Seminal] [Proquest - Use OGS Login]

**Comment 1:**(from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:**“*Virtues to be cultivated in learning to frame good questions include curiosity, wonder, and empathy*” (p.33).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Christianity’s Influence on Society

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**This comment is additive to my understanding of how the influence of Christianity on society requires a response to juvenile offenders that motivates more empathy and insists on redemption; they are viewed as changeable rather than a lost cause. My spiritual belief is that forgiveness and reconciliation allow one to experience transformation, especially within the justice system. Therefore, Christianity informs the orientation of a restorative rather than punitive policy focus in a biblical way, leading to a healing justice system for both offenders and victims.

**Contextualization:** I do not take for granted serving as a juvenile justice administrator, and in doing so for the past twelve years, I have been influenced by curiosity, wonder, and empathy when dealing with the lives of youthful detainees. By taking time to ask questions and understanding the nature of their struggles, I can try to help reveal the root causes, like abuse, neglect, societal pressures, etc., that often lead to incarceration. From the Judeo-Christian perspective, the youth are offered a solid foundation focusing on empathy, redemption, and total transformation. Biblical revelations shine a light on justice that is not solely punitive but restorative. This shows mercy and the potential for change. After all, there is hope for every person. That is my Christian view that every individual, regardless of past decisions, is loved by God and has an open door to redemption.

In the Bible, Joseph's brothers lied to him and sold him into slavery, where he lost all the freedom he had. He, however, found faith through restoration and gained personal growth. Many justice-involved youths have faced so many struggles leading to problematic behavior. As a leader, I choose to be empathetic and not judgmental, for most of these kids are healing from the inside. By being sympathetic to theirs and arising to some level of healing, training, and personal growth on their behalf, I create an environment in which they can live and learn, renamed not by the errors of their past.

**Source Two:** Brewer, J. (2022). Fatherlessness and its effects on American society. *American*

*First Policy Institute*, 1-8

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Another unfortunate reality is that America’s prisons are full of fathers separated from their children. Of America’s roughly 2 million prisoners, over 800,000 are parents—and 92% of those are fathers. There are just about 2.7 million children that have a parent in prison (Barnes-Proby et al., 2022). In 2016, the average age of a minor child with parents in federal prison was 10 years old, and nine years old for minors with a parent in a state prison (Department of Justice, 2021)”* (p.3).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Social Reform

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my belief that the issue of mass incarceration is not only a legal or social justice matter but also one that affects our world, morally and spiritually. Thus, it is necessary that, as Christians, there is engagement in social reform. Beginning in the early 1980s with the “War on Drugs,” for many years, there has been a historical inclination of imprisonment amongst the number of African American men, thus shining the light on systemic inequalities, racial discrimination, and a focus on punitive measures rather than restorative justice. As the body of Christ, we are encouraged to call out the wrongs and to seek fairness, reconciliation, and care for families, even though they might not be directly connected to us.

**Contextualization:** Another unfortunate reality is that many of our nation's prisons are packed with fathers who have been separated from their children, and this tragic cycle plays out in our juvenile detention centers as well. Currently, I have 15 boys and one girl in my facility, all but one of whom are Black. Of these, four are fathers, and their current state impacts their families. Separation anxiety weighs heavy on them and their children. It is heartbreaking, mainly because their children are so young. Both groups are left with feelings of abandonment and confusion, which only deepens their struggles and keeps them trapped in a cycle of incarceration. Confinement in a world without their children, and on the other hand, the children are left with no present father.

**It is sad to say, but the majority of the detainees in my detention center right now are products of families where their fathers are in prison. I strongly advocate for my kids and work very closely with the youth court judge and probation officers to find alternatives to detention in an effort to break the cycle. Such alternatives we incorporate are house arrest, community service hours, mentorship programs, restorative justice circles, and family therapy. Our focus is always on offering resources for accountability, hope, healing, and reconnection with their families. Consequences do not always have to be punitive. Restoration and rehabilitation are key.**

**Source Three:** Koper, N., van der Heijden, R. M., Donk, S., Kieu, T., Creemers, H. E., van Dam, L., … Stams,

G. J. J. M. (2024). The effectiveness of interventions for youth that activate the social network: **A** meta-analytic study. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2024.2317714

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Support is thought to enhance resilience, or the ability to recover from adversity (Ungar, 2011) by acting as a protective factor during times of crisis (Ozbay et al., 2007; Southwick et al.,2006; Ungar, 2011)*”(p.2).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Religion & Society Integration Models

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of how important it is to offer support to justice-involved persons so that they can learn from their past, heal, and grow. God changes the world through cultural mandates by raising leaders and movements—like restorative justice—focusing on healing and reconciliation, encouraging society to embrace the kingdom values of forgiveness, redemption, and second chances for all.

**Contextualization: Support will often take one a long way in life. Seeing the need to help combat youth confinement, almost four months ago, I took on a significant task: mentoring. As a result, these three boys and one girl who had been in trouble with the law have not committed any further known offenses since I began mentoring them. Praise God! I have taken them under my wing by supporting them in academics; two of them are now on the honor roll. I help them by ensuring they complete their required community service hours for probation. I take them out to eat twice a month and have open-ended talks—no judgment of them. We talk about everything. Every Sunday, I pick them up for church service, where a positive and faith-filled environment surrounds them. Just as God raised leaders and movements in history to bring societal change—like the work of figures such as William Wilberforce, who fought to end slavery through his Christian faith—God uses the support of people to provide change in the lives of those in need. By providing guidance, mentorship, and the love of Christ, we see how God changes the world through cultural mandates and how His kingdom's values of compassion, justice, and mercy can impact lives. Knowing they have the support of me and fellow court staff is making a powerful difference in their lives, and I am hopeful that this guidance will continue to help them and other youth.**

**Source Four:** Hurd, N. M. (2024). Promoting Positive Development Among Racially and Ethnically

Marginalized Youth: Advancing a Novel Model of Natural Mentoring. *Annual Review of Clinical*

*Psychology*, *20*.

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Critical reflection is specific to gaining a more complex and nuanced understanding of the sociohistorical context and factors that both create and sustain oppression and inequality. Critical reflection facilitates the ability to morally reject injustice and to attribute inequities to structural rather than individual factors*”(p.263).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential elements of Christianity’s Influence on Society and Historical Methodologies

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of how critical reflection helps to expand our awareness of more in depth sociohistorical factors that contribute to oppression and inequality. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing that these inequities are shaped by structural systems, rather than individual actions alone. This insight strengthens my ability to reject injustice on a moral level and shifts the focus from personal blame to understanding systemic causes.

**Contextualization:** Critical reflection is one of the best weapons we can use, as it allows us to see what others who are not like us see. When we critically reflect, our eyes are open to factors such as marginalizations along the racial and poverty lines, allowing us to see the deficits in resources provided for all persons. From the context of incarcerated youth, for example, there are many justice-involved youth hailing from areas lacking positive father figures and mentorship programs. Both these are vital and impact kids’ opportunities and outlook on life. As a law enforcement officer, I will always strive to stand for what is right. From racial biases in policing and educational disadvantages in the educational system, today’s youths often face barriers that exceed personal failings, such as those that are shaped by long-standing societal structures. As followers of Christ, we have a job to do to better the world. Christianity’s influence on society, mainly through the work of the church, community, and civic groups, can open the door for roads to redemption and transformation. Celebrating Black History Month this month, I reflect on the impact made by great leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He pushed to unite everyone and integrated faith with activism. His message was love and justice along all racial lines, showing how God’s calling to love one’s neighbor could catalyze social change.

I always advocate for mentorship programs as they offer hope, faith, love, resources, and accountability to those seeking it. These programs give the youth guidance and emotional support. For years, faith-based groups have played a key role in providing mentorship to better the lives of youth. As believers, we know we were called to be followers of Christ and influence our world. Critical reflection allows us to participate in kingdom movements, like Dr. King, to bring about change, even for the least of them, according to society.

**Source Five:** Hegeman, D. B. (2007). Plowing in hope- Toward a biblical theology of culture, 2nd. Ed.

Canon Press. https://www.exodusbooks.com/samples/Canon/30623sample.pdf.

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Since the fall of Adam we have rebelled against our Creator and our divine image has been distorted (but not destroyed)*”(p.12).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Historical Methodologies

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding, showing that, as Christians, we are still human and have rebelled against God by way of sin. This causes distortion; however, because we were made in His image, we are not entirely broken to the point that we cannot be healed and put back together. After all, as I once heard a preacher say in his sermon: "Even a broken clock is correct twice a day." In essence, God can still use us, flawed and all. Grace and redemption are given and appreciated.

**Contextualization: Every person in the world is different in various ways; however, SIN connects and makes us the same. Since the fall of Adam, our rebellion against God has been a central theme in the Bible, and with that rebellion came a distortion of our original divine image. However, this distortion is not total; the imprint of God's likeness remains marred by sin. For example, in the Bible, I love the story of the prodigal son, where our loving father, Jesus Christ, shows us that no matter how far away from home or Him we go, grace and mercy allow us to return home, even to Him. God loves His children too much to leave us stranded!**

**Source Six:** Schmidt, A. J. (2004). How Christianity Changed the World. Zondervan. [Seminal] [Amazon-

Preview] [see Course Resources]

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*The early Christians did not set out to change the world. The world was affected as a by-product of believers’ transformed lives. They rejected the pagan gods and refused the immoral lifestyle of the Greco-Romans. They knew that Jesus made no promises of an easy and pain-free life*”(p.3).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Historical Methodologies

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment adds to my understanding and gives me a different perspective on the saying that we should always act as if someone is watching us because we never know who is looking. The early Christians’ actions, even though they probably did not realize it, influenced the world. Their actions were not intentional regarding acting to change the world; however, the world watched them and was changed by their actions. As Christians today, we must also live our lives as such because we represent Christ wherever we go and in whatever we do.

**Contextualization:** I must admit. This article almost made me shout in joy! It was a great read. The early Christians did not set out to change the world. The world learned by the actions of the early Christians. What was unintentional for them was received intentionally by the world, and thus, the world was transformed. Choosing to reject what would have brought shame to God, such as pagan gods and immoral lifestyles of the Greco-Roman world, the early Christians lived to be different from the world. They understood it was ok to be different, even if they were unintentional. They knew their actions would come with pain, but they were committed to Jesus, and their actions would eventually reshape the world. All that is going through my mind right now is: Be Intentional! This insight gives me a new perspective on the saying, *"act as if someone is always watching,"* because we never know who is impacted by how we live and our choices. As Christians today, we, too, are called to live out our faith, knowing that our actions, however small or unnoticed, may have a far-reaching influence.

As a juvenile justice administrator, I strive to live by this principle daily, understanding that the youth in custody always observe my decisions and behaviors. If I make a poor decision, like them, it will affect everyone I am connected to—whether it is a fellow officer, the community, or the kids themselves. In my line of work, I try to model the changes I hope to see in them, knowing that before I try to help change the world or their lives, I must first examine and change myself. The same principle drove early Christians—living out a transformed life that unintentionally impacts others in ways we may never fully understand. My good and bad actions serve as a lesson, and I carry the responsibility of showing these kids what redemption, integrity, and change look like. I must be a living example of the values I encourage in them—showing that change is possible, not just through words, but through how we live daily.

**Source Seven:** Kurnia, R. P. (2021). *A case for Mezirow’s transformative learning. Diligentia: Journal of*

*Theology and Christian Education, 3*(1), 73–82. https://doi.org/10.19166/dil.v3i1.2945

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Reflection is not daily journaling; while we write, we should process our thoughts and feelings. it is useful for questioning and being skeptical about our bias. We have distortions in particular views as we are influenced by our perspectives on politics, religions, as part of traditions. It is good to learn and to practice rationality and reflective practice. Self-awareness is essential with self-control for leading a necessary change. Power should be aimed at making a difference to make the world a better place. It is given to those contributing to the greater good while keeping power requires empathy, giving, caring, kindness, and gratitude”* (p.79).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Historical Methodologies

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the importance of reflection in addressing our biases and how critical it is to seek wisdom through God’s Word to discern our true motives and thoughts better. In *creation*, we were made to reflect the image of God, thinking clearly and living like Christ. However, we were then bound by sin due to clouded judgment during the *fall.* This resulted in blindness, which distorted reflection with clarity and humility. As a result, selfishness became us; however, glory to God for redemption where we were given a new lease on life. Christ restored us and transformed us.

**Contextualization:** I often say that if God created us all the same, this world would be boring. He made us different for a reason, and we must learn to embrace that. We must be open to questioning our views, especially those shaped by politics, traditions, or religion, because our perspectives can easily be distorted. Without intentional reflection, we may not see how our judgments are clouded. This reflection is important for Christians because it helps us seek wisdom from God’s Word, renewing our minds and guiding us toward humility. We were made to mirror God’s image with obedience and righteous living from creation. I told my pastor the other week that the Fall messed us up and smeared our eyes, causing us to focus on ourselves, but God’s love for us brought us back to Him, and therefore, we should lead with grace, empathy, and kindness.

Looking at my notes on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I think God would even say we need more believers like him. A strong man in his Christian faith, Bonhoeffer connected his faith to his actions during Nazi Germany’s rise. Knowing that evil was at his hand, he knew the risks of resisting. He could be killed; however, like Jesus, Bonhoeffer remained committed to the will of God, not focusing on himself, but the justice and lives of others. In the end, he lost his life. God raised him to confront injustice with courage and wisdom.

**\*Dr. Ward, this is my first time using a PDF source to download like this, and I am struggling with the APA format. Please don’t eat me up too badly. I have tried and spent over 20 mins. trying to get this right\***

**Source Seven:** Tait, J. (2021). *Christian Organizations thru History Christian History\_issue 141.pdf* [PDF]

[file:///C:/Users/lbryant/Downloads/Tait%20(2021)%20Christian%20Organizations%20thru%20History\_Christian%20History\_issue%20141.pdf](file:///C%3A/Users/lbryant/Downloads/Tait%20%282021%29%20Christian%20Organizations%20thru%20History_Christian%20History_issue%20141.pdf)

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Daughters/Sisters of Charity: This order of nuns was established by priest Vincent de Paul and laywoman Louise Merillac in 1633; Elizabeth Ann Seton formed an American version in 1809. They are famous for organizing hospitals, schools, and orphanages; nursing the sick; doing advocacy; and providing job and literacy training. Healthcare and social services, economics, education*”(p.47).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Historical Methodologies

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This adds to my understanding of the key role of women in shaping the fields of healthcare and social services. Despite being deemed inferior to men during this time, their efforts were not overlooked. Naturally, women are nurturers, so it is no surprise to me that these women helped to organize schools, hospitals, and orphanages. They found a way to serve even when overlooked.

**Contextualization:** When we look at the history of our country, it is evident that women have played a major role in shaping many areas, including healthcare and social services, despite being deemed inferior to men in many societies. We have certainly come a long way! While historically interpreted to limit women’s leadership roles, the Bible provides a deeper theological understanding of the value of women in service to others. The most referenced scripture about women is found in Proverbs 31. Here, we see the characteristics of a woman. She is strong. She is a capable, dependable leader who cares for her family and community. She seeks after God regularly. God created women to be movements and not monuments.

Historically, the social impact of Christianity on women's roles in healthcare and social services has evolved. Because my professional role falls under social services, I am forever grateful for how far we, as women, have come in our world. As a Black female Christian, I have witnessed firsthand how women continue to bear the brunt of community service, especially in the lives of the incarcerated youth I work with. Most of the kids in my facility have active mothers but absent fathers, and the majority of the officers I work with are women. This is a testament that women, while working together with others, are the glue that holds society together. We still might struggle with gender equality in some areas, but I am thankful that God has raised us as world changers.

**Source Nine:** Werntz, A., Rhodes, J. E., Brockstein, H., Fallon, L., & Cook, A. (2025). A scoping review of therapeutic mentoring for youth mental health. *Frontiers in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *4*.1509971.

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*In fact, families often turn to mentoring programs to support their youth’s mental health (10, 11)*”(p.2).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential elements of Christianity’s Influence on Society and Social Reform

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is variant to my understanding because in working with youth and families for years, there are times when certain families feel that mentoring programs may come with too many commitments and obligations, diverting attention away from more direct, professional help such as therapy or counseling.

**Contextualization:** In my years of working with youth and families, I have seen firsthand that while mentoring programs tend to better most families, there are times when certain families view them as more of a burden than a benefit. For some, these programs come with too many commitments and obligations, which can deter attention away from more direct, professional help such as therapy or counseling. We live in a "right now" society. Everything is instant, and there are times when families want medications and treatment to work instantly with their children; however, the reality is that mental wellness is a process. Nothing is ever instant.

For instance, about eight months ago, I had a parent who opted not to enroll her son in our weekly mentoring program. She told the judge and me that our program would not make a difference for her son, who was battling severe mental health challenges, including anger, depression, bipolar disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. Despite her son's complex struggles, she believed that other forms of intervention, like medication and therapy, would be more effective. It did not work! Sadly, not long after being released from our custody, he and three other teens were charged with murder after a carjacking turned deadly, claiming the life of one of our local university’s star football players. It broke my heart to see this kid, 15, charged as an adult. With all my heart, I feel like had he enrolled in our program, he would have received the consistent help he needed. I am sure this young man would have gotten the love, support, guidance, and mentoring he needed to become the electrical lineman he dreamt of. Above all, he would have had the opportunity to grow closer to God. We lost this kid to the adult system. His mother lost a son. This is a heartbreaking reminder that, sometimes, a more comprehensive approach—including mentoring—could have made all the difference.

**Source Ten:** Freeks, F. E. (2021). Mentoring fathers who grapple with fatherhood issues in a faith-based context: A pastoral-theological review. *In die Skriflig*, *55*(2), 1-9.

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Thirteen years ago, authors such as Wall (2007:53), argued that fatherhood should be reconsidered from a child-centered viewpoint rather than from an adult-centered viewpoint. There is nothing wrong with this statement, but it continues to emphasize the human domain, even if the focus is on children*” (p.2).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Social Reform

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding that how children see their fathers is as equally important as how their fathers think the younger ones view them. With the adolescent brain still developing, children will say whatever comes to mind and whenever it comes to mind. Hearing the child's perspective shifts things from the father's power and control to that of a listening ear, nurturing and guiding the child. The child grows, as does the father.

**Contextualization:** Working with children for over twenty years, one of the most common feelings they often share with me is how they do not feel as though their voices matter in certain situations. I agree that fatherhood should be determined from a child’s perspective. When a child’s voice is heard, the kid feels valued and understood, enhancing their emotional and developmental well-being. I also say that the role of a father is important. What is even more important is to view fatherhood from a child’s perspective. Doing this helps create a more compassionate relationship, where the father becomes a figure of authority and a source of motivation and support. To a child, a father is looked at like a king. I cannot count the number of times I have told my friends that my father could do anything. He was my hero! In my eyes, there was nothing he could do wrong.

Christianity's influence on society is vital as Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers to raise their children with care and instruction, and by doing this, children grow spiritually and emotionally. As I just finished speaking with a young man regarding this, I will say that, at times, how we see our earthly fathers shapes how we view God as our Heavenly Father. If we experience neglect or lack of care from our fathers, it can be challenging to trust in God's nurturing nature fully. However, like Jesus displays His love each day, we must do the same. With everything in me, I will continue to work to connect young people to our Heavenly Father. Through compassionate intervention and faith-driven action, we can create a world where children, and ultimately society, are treated with the care they deserve.

**Source Eleven:** Johnson, E. I., & Arditti, J. A. (2023). Risk and resilience among children with incarcerated

parents: A review and critical reframing. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *19*(1), 437-460.

**Comment 1:** (from PHI 815-22 History of the Integration of Religion and Society):

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “*Parental incarceration increases risk for these adverse child outcomes via a cascade of disadvantages that are thought to be largely driven by economic hardship and family instability (Arditti & Johnson 2022). Parental incarceration often diminishes family economic resources by leading to loss of income and child support (Geller et al. 2011, Glaze & Maruschak 2010) while simultaneously introducing new economic burdens such as legal fees, court costs, and expenses associated with prison visits and phone calls that can jeopardize families’ ability to meet their basic needs (deVuono-Powell et al. 2015)*” (p.439).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of Social Reform

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is variant to my understanding that while I recognize parental incarceration may bring forth challenges, it is not always the only factor that should be considered when relating to negative outcomes for children. It is important to note that other factors, such as educational, environmental, social, and psychological, also contribute to youth development. There are times when some families can manage financially.

**Contextualization:** A lot of times, children of incarcerated parents tend to follow the pattern of learned behavior, engaging in delinquent acts because they saw or heard about their parents doing the same. Though there are contributing factors that lead them to engage in criminal acts, what is most important to me is helping better their lives. When it comes to advocating for change in juvenile justice, I think of women like Marian Wright Edelman, who is like me, is from Mississippi, and is the daughter of a Baptist preacher. After growing weary of the rise of juvenile incarceration, Edelman founded the Children's Defense Fund, where she worked hard to create policies to reduce juvenile incarceration and provide better support for at-risk youth. Because of her, there has been a shift in Juvenile Justice Reform, prioritizing prevention and rehabilitation over punishment. Edelman's push created room for national conversations, encouraging the world to invest in the youth and to advocate for change for our children.

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*First Policy Institute*, 1-8

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