

The Impact COVID had on Carceral Institutions in the United States

Kennedy Suzette Ratcliff¹

The COVID-19 pandemic is something that affected, and continues to affect, the entire world. In the United States specifically, it impacted the nation majorly- so many people became infected and died, and there were numerous policies implemented to slow the spread. These policies mostly took place in the general population, but in the prison population, many inmates were not protected. Inmates have five times greater risk of COVID than citizens in the general population do. Carceral institutions in the United States are already known to treat many of their inmates inhumanely, but the COVID pandemic amplified the poor living conditions of the inmates. This paper gives an overview of how prisons functioned pre-pandemic, and then it goes into how federal, state, and local carceral institutions initially responded to the start of COVID. How inmates were treated and whether or not they were prioritized in vaccine distributions is discussed, and the impact the COVID virus had on correctional staff is discussed as well. The rise of lawsuits is also briefly explored. Ultimately, there is much variation in how different jurisdictions responded to the pandemic and how they continue to respond. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2024 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS: COVID, United States, Prison, Jail, Staff, Infection, Vaccine.

¹ **Kennedy Suzette Ratcliff** received her B.S. and her M.S. in criminal justice from Lamar University and is currently a Ph.D. student at Sam Houston State University in the criminal justice and criminology department. Her research interests include global and domestic terrorism, political and religious extremism, women in criminal justice, and COVID-19 policies in criminal justice.