



# *Better by Half:*

**The New York Story of Winning  
Large-Scale Decarceration while  
Increasing Public Safety**

**October 28, 2016  
1:00pm–4:00pm**

**Harvard Club of  
New York City  
35 West 44th Street  
New York, NY 10036**



HARVARD Kennedy School  
**MALCOLM WIENER CENTER**  
for Social Policy  
*Program in Criminal Justice Policy  
and Management*

**JUSTICE  
STRATEGIES**

*katal*  
CENTER FOR HEALTH,  
EQUITY, AND JUSTICE

# About

The Harvard Kennedy School Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management (PCJ), Justice Strategies and the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice are pleased to welcome you to the launch of **Better by Half: The New York City Story of Winning Large-Scale Decarceration while Increasing Public Safety**. This new report is co-authored by Judith Greene, Executive Director of Justice Strategies, and Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Research Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's PCJ.

As Americans grapple with the challenges of and solutions to mass incarceration, we are in need of examples of jurisdictions that have successfully and substantially reduced incarceration rates without jeopardizing public safety.

New York City is an insufficiently studied and discussed example of both.

For much of the latter part of the twentieth century, New York City was a metaphor for the urban decay confronting many American cities. With the number of murders topping 2,200 in 1990, New York's jail population was bursting at the seams, peaking at nearly 22,000 in 1991. Few could have imagined that by 2015, the City would experience 350 murders with steep declines in other crime categories as well. Given the popularity of incarceration as a crime-control strategy in the United States during this time, a casual mid-90s observer could be forgiven for hypothesizing that, if such a miraculous decline in crime were to occur, it would surely be the result of a massive increase in imprisonment in the city.

But quite the opposite turned out to be true.

From the mid-90s to the present day, New York City's incarceration rate has plummeted alongside its violent and overall crime rate, while incarceration rates in the rest of the country and New York State rose. This leaves New York City as the safest big city in America and one of its least incarcerated.

In *Better By Half*, Greene and Schiraldi explore the reasons for this unique drop in both incarceration and crime, and offer recommendations to other jurisdictions around the country for how they might achieve the same.

*Our speakers today will reflect on these findings, and challenge us to think about what's next for bold reform in New York City.*



# Program

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**12:30**

## **Doors Open**

**1:00**

## **Welcome**

Opening remarks from **Bruce Western**, the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Professor of Criminal Justice Policy, and faculty chair of the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

**1:10**

## **Better By Half: The New York Story of Winning Large-Scale Decarceration While Increasing Public Safety**

Presentation by report co-authors. **Judith A. Greene**, Executive Director of Justice Strategies; **Vincent Schiraldi**, Senior Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School Program in Criminal Justice. Audience discussion to follow.

**1:40**

## **Response from the field**

**Glenn E. Martin**, Founder and President, JustLeadershipUSA.

**1:50**

## **Panel Discussion**

Moderated by **Danielle Sered**, Director of Common Justice.  
Panelists: **Eric Gonzalez**, Acting Brooklyn District Attorney; **Liz Glazer**, Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice; **Kyung-Ji Rhee**, Deputy Director of the Center for NuLeadership; **Robin Steinberg**, Executive Director of Bronx Defenders.

**2:50**

## **Closing Remarks**

NYS Assembly Member **Michael Blake**.

**3:00**

## **Reception**

Please join us for light fare and drinks.

*Event MC: gabriel sayegh, Co-Executive Director, Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice*

# Bios



**Michael Blake**

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER**

Michael A. Blake is the Assembly member of the 79th District in The Bronx, New York, representing parts of Concourse Village, Morrisania, Melrose, Belmont, Claremont and East Tremont.

Blake was born and raised in The Bronx, New York to Jamaican immigrants and is named after Jamaican public servants. Blake graduated from the prestigious Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University where he was inducted into the Deru Honor Society.

In 2007, Michael joined then Sen. Barack Obama's campaign and served as the Iowa deputy political director and constituency outreach director. After serving as the Michigan deputy state director for the general election, Blake joined the White House staff as the associate director of public engagement and deputy associate director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Blake was honored as one of "The Root 100" in 2012, featured in Jet magazine as one of 15 black politicians behind President Obama's re-election and recognized by MSNBC in 2011 as one of the Top 10 Black politicians on the rise. Blake has been preaching for the last 21 years as an exhorter in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a Certified Lay Speaker in the United Methodist Church.



**Liz Glazer**

**DIRECTOR, THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Elizabeth Glazer is the Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. In that role, she serves as the senior criminal justice policy advisor to the Mayor and First Deputy Mayor. Ms. Glazer oversees citywide criminal justice policy and develops and implements strategies across city agencies and partners to enhance public safety, reduce unnecessary incarceration, and increase fairness. Previously, Ms. Glazer served as the Secretary for Public Safety to NYS Governor Cuomo, where she was responsible for the oversight and management of eight state agencies, including Corrections, Parole, State Police and National Guard. Ms. Glazer has also held a variety of leadership positions

at the local, state and federal levels, including the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York where she pioneered the use of racketeering laws to address the violent gang problem. Ms. Glazer received her B.A. from Harvard University and her J.D. from Columbia Law School. She clerked for then-US Circuit Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



## **Judith Greene**

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUSTICE STRATEGIES**

Judy Greene is a criminal justice policy analyst and a founder of Justice Strategies. Her areas of expertise include sentencing and corrections policy, prison privatization, police accountability and immigration enforcement. From 1985 to 1993 Judy was Director of Court Programs at the Vera Institute of Justice where she was responsible for planning and development of a variety of demonstration programs designed to improve the efficacy of both pretrial release and sentencing practices. For the next six years she served as program director of the State-Centered Program for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, a research associate for the RAND Corporation, and a senior research fellow at the University of Minnesota Law School's Institute on Criminal Justice. In 1999 she received a Senior Soros Justice Fellowship from the Open Society Foundation.

Ms. Greene's articles on criminal sentencing issues, police practices, correctional policy and prison privatization have appeared in numerous publications, including *The American Prospect*, *Corrections Today*, *Crime and Delinquency*, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, *The Federal Sentencing Reporter*, *The Index on Censorship*, *Judicature*, *The Justice Systems Journal*, *Overcrowded Times*, *Prison Legal News*, *The Rutgers Law Journal*, and *The Wake Forest Law Review*. Her work has been cited in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, as well as in hundreds of local newspapers across the nation.



## **Eric Gonzalez**

### **ACTING BROOKLYN DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

Eric Gonzalez began his legal career in 1995, as an assistant district attorney in the Kings County District Attorney's Office. In 2011, Mr. Gonzalez became the Executive Assistant District Attorney of the Green Trial Zone. Under his leadership, the Green Zone attained a record of being one of the most successful and productive trial zones in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.



Promoted by District Attorney Thompson to Counsel to the District Attorney in March of 2014, Mr. Gonzalez was especially instrumental to the office's smooth transition during the change of administrations. In October of 2014, Mr. Gonzalez was appointed by District Attorney Thompson as Chief Assistant District Attorney, the first Latino to hold that position in Brooklyn.

Mr. Gonzalez grew up in East New York and Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and attended John Dewey High School in Coney Island. He graduated from Cornell University in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a dual major in government and history. In 1995, he received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Michigan Law School. He was sworn in as Acting District Attorney in October of 2016 after the passing of District Attorney Thompson.

Mr. Gonzalez resides in Brooklyn with his wife and three boys.



## ***Glenn Martin***

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUSTLEADERSHIPUSA**

Glenn E. Martin is the founder and president of JustLeadershipUSA, an organization that aims to cut the U.S. correctional population in half by 2030 by empowering those affected by incarceration to drive policy reform. Mr. Martin is co-founder of the Education Inside Out Coalition (EIO Coalition) and the David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. He is a 2014 Echoing Green Fellow, a 2012 America's Leaders of Change National Urban Fellow, and a member of the Boards of The College and Community Fellowship, Million Hoodies, and the California Partnership for Safe Communities. Glenn was appointed in 2016 to the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform at the invitation of New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman to look at the possibility of closing Rikers Island. He regularly contributes his expertise to national news outlets such as MSNBC, Fox News, CNN, and CSPAN.



## ***Kyung-Ji Rhee***

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR, THE CENTER  
FOR NULEADERSHIP**

Kyung-Ji Kate Rhee serves as the Deputy Director of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions (CNUS), an independent research, training and advocacy Human Justice think tank (formerly at Medgar Evers College in the City University of New York) that was founded and developed by academic

professionals with prior experience within the criminal punishment system. It is the first of its kind in the country. She oversees the development of Human Justice policy/advocacy/training agenda at CNUS.

She is nationally recognized for her expertise in campaign strategy development, youth justice advocacy, and dynamic training design for system and community stakeholders on culture change, racial disparity and leadership growth. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Community Justice Network for Youth (CJNY), a project of the W. Haywood Burns Institute, and the Steering Committee of the New York City Task Force on Racial Disparity in the Juvenile Justice System. She has been featured in a range of publications and magazines, including the Utne Reader (Top 30 Visionaries under 30), the Village Voice, The Source, (Top 10 Artists, Albums, & Political Players of the Year), The KoreAm Magazine, the Gotham Gazette, the New York Sun and the Brooklyn Free Press among others.



## ***gabriel sayegh***

**CO-FOUNDER & CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KATAL  
CENTER FOR HEALTH, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE**

gabriel sayegh is co-executive director of the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice. Prior to launching Katal, sayegh served in many capacities at the Drug Policy Alliance, including as Managing Director of Policy and Campaigns. In New York, he led the coalition effort to roll back the Rockefeller Drug Laws, designed the campaigns to reform New York City's marijuana arrest practices, and advanced efforts to reduce overdose fatalities through health-based interventions. sayegh has appeared in a wide range of broadcast, online, and print media, including *The New York Times*, *NY1*, *MSNBC*, *NBC*, *Fox News*, *NPR*, *NY Daily News*, and *Associated Press*. He is the author of numerous articles and coauthor of several reports, including *Blueprint for a Public Health and Safety Approach to Drug Policy* (coauthored with the New York Academy of Medicine) and *From Handcuffs to Healthcare: Putting the Affordable Care Act to Work for Criminal Justice and Drug Law Reform*. sayegh serves as a Trustee of the New York Foundation, and sits on the board of Atlanta-based community organization, Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide. He holds an MPH from the CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College.



## **Vincent Schiraldi**

**SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT HARVARD  
KENNEDY SCHOOL PROGRAM IN CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

Vincent Schiraldi is a Senior Research Fellow directing the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management (PCJ) at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS).

Schiraldi founded the policy think tank, the Justice Policy Institute, then moved to government as director of the juvenile corrections in Washington, DC. Following that, he was appointed Commissioner of the New York City Department of Probation. Most recently, Schiraldi served as Senior Advisor to the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.

In Washington and New York Schiraldi gained a national reputation as a fearless reformer who emphasized the humane and decent treatment of the men, women, and children under his correctional supervision. For Schiraldi, making communities safer and reducing crime necessarily means improving fairness in the system and developing opportunities in the poor communities where the crime problem is most serious. He pioneered efforts at community-based alternatives to incarceration with the YouthLink initiative in Washington DC, in New York City with the NeON network and the Close to Home program.

Schiraldi has a Masters in Social Work from New York University, and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Psychology from Binghamton University.



## **Danielle Sered**

**DIRECTOR, COMMON JUSTICE**

Danielle Sered envisioned, launched, and directs Common Justice. She leads the project's efforts to develop and advance practical and groundbreaking solutions to violence that advance racial equity, meet the needs of those harmed, and do not rely on incarceration. Danielle sits on the Downstate Coalition for Crime Victims, the Advisory Council to the New York State Office of Victims Services, the Diversity Advisory Committee to the federal Office for Victims of Crime, the New York State Governor's Council on Reentry and Community Reintegration, and the Advisory Board to the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice. She co-facilitates the monthly Executives Undoing Racism group with the Anti-Racist Alliance in New York. She has presented at dozens of conferences nationally, including the Aspen Ideas Festival and the Bipartisan Summit on Criminal Justice Reform, and is the author of *The Other Side of Harm: Addressing Disparities in our Responses to Violence*. Under her leadership, Common Justice received the Award for



Innovation in Victim Services from Attorney General Holder and the federal Office for Victims of Crime in 2012. A Stoneleigh fellow, Danielle received her BA from Emory University and her masters degrees from New York University and Oxford University (UK), where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar.



## **Robin Steinberg**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRONX DEFENDERS**

Robin Steinberg is a leader and a pioneer in the field of indigent defense. In 1997, Robin founded The Bronx Defenders, where she developed holistic defense – a client-centered model of public defense that uses interdisciplinary teams to address the underlying causes and collateral consequences of criminal justice involvement. She is the co-founder of The Bronx Freedom Fund, the first charitable bail organization in New York State. Robin has been honored by the National Legal Aid & Defender Association for her “exceptional vision, devotion, and service in the quest for equal justice,” and by the New York Bar Association for her “outstanding contributions to the delivery of defense services.”

Robin is the author of a number of articles, including: “Police Power and the Scaring of America: A Personal Journey” (Yale L. & Pol’y Rev. 2016); “Shared Roots and Shared Commitments: The Centrality of Social Work to Holistic Defense” (Hamishpat L. Rev., 2016); “Broken Windows Policing and Community Courts: An Unholy Alliance” (Cardozo L. Rev. 2016); “Heeding Gideon’s Call in the 21st Century: Holistic Defense and the New Public Defense Paradigm” (Wash. & Lee L. Rev., Summer 2013); and “Beyond Lawyering: How Holistic Lawyering Makes for Good Public Policy, Better Lawyers, and More Satisfied Clients” (N.Y.U. Rev. L. & Soc. Change, 2006); and others.



## **Bruce Western**

**PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, GUGGENHEIM  
PROFESSOR OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY,  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

Bruce Western is a sociology professor, the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Professor of Criminal Justice Policy, and faculty chair of the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Western served as vice chair of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on the Causes and Consequences of High Incarceration Rates in the United States, and he is the principal investigator on the Harvard Executive Session on Community Corrections and the Boston Reentry Study. He is the author of the award-winning book, *Punishment and Inequality in America*.

*Better by Half: The New York City Story of Winning Large-Scale Decarceration while Increasing Public Safety* is published in the Federal Sentencing Reporter, Vol. 29, No. 1. You can find it at [www.hks.harvard.edu/criminaljustice](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/criminaljustice) and [www.justicestrategies.net](http://www.justicestrategies.net)

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**#NYCBetterByHalf**  
**#OrganizingWorks**

Today's program and launch of *Better by Half* was produced by the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice.