

CHARTING THE PATH TO VICTORY

5-YEAR IMPACT REPORT





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Worth Rises is the nation's leading organization working to dismantle the prison industry and end the exploitation of those it targets, namely Black, brown, and indigenous communities. We are building a society in which no entity or individual relies on human caging or control for their wealth, operation, or livelihood.



BIG DREAMS BECOME BIG IMPACT

I founded Worth Rises with a simple but ambitious goal to remove the financial incentives for locking people up by ensuring that no one makes a dime off incarceration.

As I shared this vision with activists, advocates, thought leaders, and donors in the field, I was met with cautious enthusiasm. People were excited by the idea, they saw its potential, and they knew the winds were shifting to create space for change, but they also knew that in the U.S., big money almost always wins.

They were right, and I knew it. We all love a David and Goliath story, but the truth is, far more often than not, Goliath wins — especially when he has \$80 billion.

Still, I believed that dismantling the prison industry was the skeleton key to so many of our criminal justice goals. As long as there was

money to be made on putting and keeping people behind bars, we would continue to see new prisons built and filled, more people sentenced and for longer, and transformative justice dismissed as unrealistic. So this fight, as long as the odds might be, was one we needed to take on.

I'm so glad we did because, powered by a dedicated team and a network of incredible partners, the impact we have made in the first five years has surpassed what I could have imagined. We have already halted financing for new prison projects, prevented hundreds of millions of dollars in personal and institutional investments in the industry, and put millions of dollars back in the pockets of families with loved ones behind bars. These are just a few of our victories, and we have many more on the horizon.

Most importantly, we have the prison industry scared. Corporations and investors no longer see prisons as easy money; they know that they'll be held to account for the devastation incarceration inflicts on people and communities. Once that money dries up, the industry will wither, and we can finally begin to pursue real justice.

With this momentum behind us, we must continue to push. We hope you'll join us for the next five years and until we win.

In solidarity,

Bianca Tylek
Executive Director



DISMANTLING THE PRISON INDUSTRY

Despite reams of evidence that incarcerating people does little for public safety, nearly two million people are caged in our prisons and jails. We lock people up at a higher rate than any other country in the world, hand out outrageously long sentences, deny people any opportunity for release, and actively worsen conditions in our facilities. As misguided and inaccurate narratives spread about crime today, we could easily see what progress we've made clawed back and decision makers double down on tough-on-crime policies.

Why? For one reason, follow the money.

The U.S. prison industry profits off this immiseration — to the tune of over \$80 billion each year — through the construction and management of carceral facilities both public and private. Corporations and governments collude to make eye-popping profits off everything from providing abysmal food services to people behind bars to transporting people in custody between facilities, and make even more money exploiting their labor in demanding and dangerous jobs for little or no pay. Along the way, corrections officers

earn high salaries, government agencies get kickbacks, and politicians get campaign contributions in exchange for the sweetheart deals they negotiate with the corporations.

Because mass incarceration drives profits, corporations and governments have a vested interest in more crime, more violence, and more victims, or at least in all of us believing that we are at imminent risk. Real solutions rooted in justice, equity, and community safety would undermine their very existence, and so these corporations use their massive financial resources to prevent solutions from being implemented.

At Worth Rises, we're breaking that cycle.

We are removing the profit motive from incarceration, exposing the facts about exploitation, and organizing to return resources from the industry to the communities that are and have been damaged by mass incarceration. In doing so, we can eliminate the biggest barrier to building a safe and just world free of police and prisons.

5 YEARS OF IMPACT

10

bills passed making prison and jail communication free in various jurisdictions

\$187M

saved in communication costs for families impacted by incarceration

175,000

incarcerated people granted access to fully free communication

1.1B

minutes of additional call time used by incarcerated people and their families

36%

decrease in prison call rates nationally

4,000

prison beds prevented from construction

\$636M

in individual and institutional assets diverted from the prison industry

4

corporations forced to terminate contracts with the carceral system

2

corporations in the prison industry forced to abandon merger deals

Bloomberg

Prison-Food Vendor Hikes Yield to 10.5% on Struggling Debt Sale

CBS 42

Workplace safety company terminates contract with Alabama after pushback from death penalty opponents

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

New York Jail Inmates Charged \$50 Million Annually, Report Says

ESPN

Activist calls on NBA to pressure sale of Pistons over Tom Gores' ownership of jail telecom business

The Philadelphia Inquirer

PA's Millions: Pensions Split on Private-Prison Protest

Bloomberg

NYC Pensions to Expand Prison Investment Ban With Platinum

VICE

Prisoners Are Going Viral on TikTok

Los Angeles
MAGAZINE

Billionaire Tom Gores Resigns from LACMA's Board Amid Prison Telecom Controversy

ESSENCE

As We Struggle To Stay Connected, Prison Calls Must Be Free

**FULL
FRONTAL**
WITH SAMANTHA BEE

It's Time to Call Out Connecticut for Prison Phone Costs

MSNBC

A Proposed Amendment Fully Abolish Slavery

HOW WE WIN

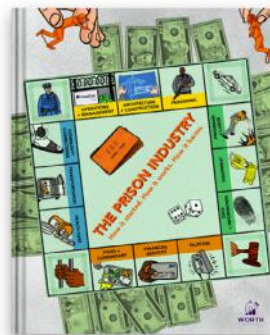
Worth Rises set out to test a bold new set of strategies for dismantling the prison industry while protecting and empowering the people, families, and communities it targets. Our innovative approach has allowed us to secure substantial victories and to build the capacity and infrastructure needed to achieve continued impact for years to come.

Shifting Culture

Most people know little about the prison industry, and what they do know is often shaped by the industry and its allies who stoke fear to justify dumping billions into caging people. If people knew the truth, their perception of incarceration would change. Worth Rises replaces the industry's dehumanizing, racist, and blatantly false narratives with data and stories about the impact that the prison industry has on incarcerated people and their families. We expose the dirty tactics governments and corporations use to expand and exploit incarceration. Our prison industry report series, op-eds, media hits, creative content, and art exhibits have driven more frequent and more accurate coverage of the prison industry. Media is finally talking about the prison industry and the harm it does to incarcerated people and their families, changing perspectives around the country.

Changing Policy

Worth Rises advocates for policies that prevent corporations and government from exploiting people behind bars and their families and that block the growth of the prison industry. We have run successful administrative, legislative, and regulatory campaigns that keep resources in communities and out of the hands of prison profiteers. And when we win, we don't walk away. We support the procurement and contracting processes to ensure the smart and safe implementation of our policies.



Our prison industry report series, which includes a textbook, curriculum, and database exposing over 4,000 corporations in the prison industry, has received 60,000 views.

Private Companies Are Cashing in on ICE's Detention Centers

The Guardian

'Slavery by any name is wrong': the push to end unpaid labor in prisons

Rolling Stone

Lecrae's Rap Contest Was Meant to Lift Up the Incarcerated. Did It Help Exploit Them Instead?

Forbes

Toxic Alabama Private Prison Deal Falling Apart With Barclays Exit

npr

Drakeo's Acclaimed Album Highlights How Much Prisons Profit From Phone Calls

The Nation.

How Private Equity Is Turning Public Prisons Into Big Profits

Los Angeles Times

Troubled companies made him billions. A prison phone investment made him enemies

IN THESE TIMES

Below the Surface of ICE: The Corporations Profiting From Immigrant Detention

responsible investor

Inequality is hitting bottom-lines: Why finance is turning against the US 'prison industrial complex'

BC

Investment Aims to Diversify in America

TED

The multibillion-dollar US prison industry -- and how to dismantle it

NBC NEWS

Some prison labor programs lose money—even when prisoners work for pennies



Toxifying the Industry

If corporations and investors come to see investments in the prison industry as harmful to their bottom line, because they are not profitable or they put their other investments at risk, they will ultimately decide to invest their money elsewhere. Worth Rises is waging a multi-front effort to make any involvement in the prison industry so publicly toxic that the corporations and executives involved cannot fundraise from investors, access the capital markets, donate to political campaigns without public scrutiny, sit on prestigious boards, or otherwise capitalize on their investments. We are holding corporations and their executives accountable for the harm they cause, urging them to change their business practices when appropriate. When it's not, we support class action litigation to right past wrongs and promote divestment to prevent future harm, providing investors the education and tools to do so.

- We forced Barclays to pull out of a \$634 million bond underwriting to build new prisons in Alabama, which is still struggling to find funding for the project and has been forced to downsize its initial size by 4,000 beds.
- Our work with banks and investors has made it difficult for prison operators and vendors to access the capital markets, dramatically increasing the cost of financing. In 2021, when interest rates had bottomed, food service and commissary provider TKC was forced to pay a 10.5% yield on new debt.
- We pressured FDRsafety to withdraw from a contract with Alabama to approve a new death penalty execution protocol for workplace safety. Alabama is now struggling to implement the new protocol, and at least one person's execution date has been postponed as a result.



MAKING THE CASE WITH TELECOM

As we set out to test our theory of change, we knew we had to focus. The prison industry is too big and powerful to take on all at once. We chose telecom as an initial proving ground because of its ubiquitous impact on all incarcerated people and their families, the universal relatability of needing to connect with loved ones, and the clarity of the solution: free communication.

In prisons and jails, telecom vendors charge as much as a dollar minute for a simple call. Often, governments take a commission in exchange for these lucrative contracts. As a result, one in three families with a loved one behind bars goes into debt trying to stay connected through visits and phone calls, and 87% of those carrying this burden are women, disproportionately Black and brown women. They make the impossible decision to forgo other bills like rent, electricity, or groceries just to pay for calls.

Providing free communication in prisons and jails increases hope for those incarcerated, strengthens families, mitigates trauma for children facing parental incarceration, improves working conditions for corrections officers, reduces homelessness upon release, increases reentry success, and improves public safety for all.

If we could take on prison telecoms that have made billions through their predatory business practices, we could not only make a major difference in the lives of millions, but also lay the groundwork for future victories. That's exactly what we did. We forced the public to grapple with the human impact of corporate greed in prison telecom, leveraged public outrage to win policy campaigns that made communication free, and demanded accountability from the industry and their executives along the way.

Here's what it looked like to take on telecom through our three topline strategies and win.

Shifting Culture

We helped directly impacted people tell their own stories about how egregious call rates impacted them in the media. We worked with outlets that set culture, ranging from Essence to Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, to amplify their stories and our fight for phone justice. We produced a public service announcement featuring NBA coach and former player Caron Butler with our partners at the Nate Parker Foundation calling for all jurisdictions to make prison and jail communication free. With polling revealing majority support across all demographics and editorial boards across the country coming out in support of this policy, it's clear that consensus is moving in our favor.

Changing Policy

In 2018, we passed the first bill in the nation to make calls free in a jail system in New York City, saving families \$10 million annually and increasing call volume by 35% overnight. This victory catalyzed nationwide attention for the issue, and since then, we have successfully led and supported ten other jurisdictions in making prison and jails calls free for hundreds of thousands of people. We have also been successful at the federal level in encouraging the FCC to increase the regulation of prison telecom.

Toxifying the Industry

We started our corporate accountability work focused on Securus, one of the nation's largest and most predatory telecoms. We challenged their acquisition of ICSolutions, which would have consolidated 50% of the industry, at the FCC and won. We targeted major pension investors in their private equity owner, Platinum Equity, and successfully diverted a \$150 million investment. In the months that followed, Securus' value plummeted and its investors showed signs of declining faith in its viability. The following year, we forced Platinum Equity's CEO, Tom Gores, off the prestigious board of the LACMA.



“We had the highest prison call rates in the country until I worked with Worth Rises to pass Senate Bill 972. We made a complete turnaround, becoming the first state to make these calls free. They wrote the bill, and we strategized together from start to finish. Families across the state have told us that having free calls has been life changing.”

— Josh Elliott, Connecticut State Representative



“Worth Rises was a powerful partner in our successful effort to make all jail calls free in Miami. Because of them, we were able to connect with and learn from the national movement, access tools and research that contributed to the victory, and share what we learned with others so that they could win their own fights.”

— Katherine Passley, Deputy Director, Beyond The Bars Miami



“Worth Rises helped San Francisco put people before profits by working with local advocates to convince leadership to make jail calls free and providing invaluable technical assistance for implementation. Now, together we've been able to help other jurisdictions pursue similar policies that keep families connected and protect their limited resources.”

— Anne Stuhldreher, Director of the Financial Justice Project, Office of the San Francisco Treasurer



LOOKING FORWARD

The impact we have created in the past five years exceeded even our own ambitious goals. Along the way, we tested and refined our strategies and tactics, strengthened relationships with advocates, legislators, and journalists across the country, and built organizational infrastructure to achieve future victories. We're now leveraging all that to expand our work both in the sectors we've already delved into and new sectors.

Increasing Awareness and Support

Worth Rises has developed a variety of public-facing resources and tools, but we have not yet fully invested in popular education to maximize their use in different settings like high schools and universities and through different media like podcasts and television. With greater public awareness, we can build a mass movement to dismantle the prison industry.

Expanding Telecom Victories

We have secured free communication for thousands of incarcerated people and their families, saving them nearly \$200 million. Within five years, we will make all prison and jail communication free across the country. We'll also leverage our wins in telecom to eliminate other fees charged by the carceral system.

Ending Prison Slavery

The Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution includes an exception that allows slavery as criminal punishment. The prison industry takes full advantage of this exception. Across the country, incarcerated people are forced into arduous work for little to no pay under the threat of solitary confinement, loss of family contact, and even violence. Worth Rises will pass the Abolition Amendment to end the exception and abolish slavery for all.

Drying Up Capital for the Prison Industry

Worth Rises has pushed individuals and institutions to divest from the prison industry. We have used public pressure to kill financing for prison-related deals. We've made the financing that is available for prison profiteers extremely expensive. We aim to make it so expensive to secure capital for the building and running of prisons that governments, corporations, and investors abandon them as investments altogether.

We won't stop until no one has a financial interest in the caging of people because only then can we have a legal system that puts people over profits and prioritizes justice, healing, and safety.

DOING IT THE RIGHT WAY

Our work is best served when those most directly impacted by incarceration and harmed by the prison industry are at the center. Here's how we do that.



“We are always better served when people who are impacted by an issue are involved in the work on that issue. When Bianca asked me to join the Board, as a formerly incarcerated person, it showed me that

Worth Rises takes that seriously. I have been able to make sure that formerly incarcerated people remain at the forefront of the organization's work and are engaged ethically. I've learned some important lessons about how to lead my own organization that serves formerly incarcerated women in Indiana.”

— Michelle Daniel Jones, Board Member



“When you have an incarcerated family member, you know that they're being exploited and that you're being exploited, but you often don't see the whole picture. Worth Rises showed me the whole picture when we

were working on the Connecticut Connecting Families campaign and once they did, they moved out of the way so that I could tell my own story. When I later joined the team at Worth Rises, I got to do that for other mothers with incarcerated children like me and I loved it.”

— Diane Lewis, Former Community Associate



“When my father was incarcerated, our family didn't have much money. He didn't want us to spend what we did have on expensive calls or overpriced soap and underwear from commissary. So he was disconnected from

us and lacked basic necessities. All the while, he was forced to wash dishes for hours on end without air conditioning for \$10 a month. Since joining Worth Rises, I have learned so much and, in a short time, been able to make a huge difference in the lives of millions of people by addressing these issues and many others.”

— Morgan Duckett, Corporate Campaign Associate



“Worth Rises is committed to letting people behind bars tell their own stories, in the form and media in which they feel most comfortable. I was proud to partner on their ground-breaking exhibition featuring the

work of incarcerated artists depicting the prison industry and its exploitation. The exhibition opened the audience's eyes to the ways in which governments and corporations are cashing in on deep human suffering.”

— Nicole Fleetwood, Author, Curator, Art Historian, and Professor at New York University

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

\$1,000,000+

Art For Justice
Galaxy Gives
Start Small

\$500,000 - \$999,999

Meadow Fund
Jacob & Valeria Langeloth Foundation

\$250,000 - \$499,999

Open Philanthropy
Justice Catalyst
Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation

\$100,000 - \$249,999

Rob Horwitz
Just Impact Advisors
Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies
Jennifer Lin-Weinheimer
Rebecca Ressler
The David Rockefeller Fund

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Mighty Arrow Family Foundation
Sam Jacobs
David Aronoff
Jason Flom
Ropes & Gray
NBPA Foundation
Sam Englehardt
Tim Ingrassia

\$20,000 - \$49,999

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Adrienne Sternlicht
JMB Charitable Foundation
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Rick Solit

Jess Jacobs
Bianca Tylek
Anonymous

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Anonymous
Eli Bashevkin
Sable Knapp
Lucas Sanders
Kathleen Ruff
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Robert Bogucki, Jr.
Brian Vickers

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The Minneapolis Foundation
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Justice Collaborative

In-Kind

Urban Justice Center (fiscal sponsor 2017-2019)
Ropes & Gray
EP+Co
Vox Media
Dechert
Wandering Wines

“Worth Rises has a keen sense of how to build and wield power, which has been critical to their ability to achieve so much impact in such a short period of time. They are expert collaborators, which is essential within a diffuse movement that is taking on entrenched and well-financed interests.”

— Cat Gund, Documentary Filmmaker, Art for Justice Board Member

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“The outlandish fees for people behind bars to access necessities and basic services causes real financial harm to families — and it’s almost always the ones already struggling financially. Worth Rises has made a difference in the lives of thousands of families, and has educated so many on this important issue. Ending the prison industrial complex will be an incredible economic justice victory.”

— Phuong Luong, Monthly Donor

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Worth Rises works to dismantle the prison industry and end the exploitation of those it targets by shifting culture, changing policy, and toxifying the industry. Support our work to remove the financial incentives to lock people up, so we can keep people out.

“It’s a joy in my life to be part of an organization that has made millions of lives better in such a short time, particularly when it feels like we are backsliding on so many other issues. The work of Worth Rises has been a bright spot during a challenging time. With strong leadership, an amazing team, and fearless advocacy, I can’t wait to see what the next chapter brings.”

— Sam Jacobs, Worth Rises Board Chair

HOW TO MAKE A GIFT

You can help dismantle the prison industry by donating to Worth Rises. (EIN: 83-3653756).

- Donate online to make a one-time donation, set up a recurring donation, or find out if your employer will match your donation at [worthrises.org/donate](https://www.worthrises.org/donate). If you are donating using a credit or debit from a bank outside the U.S., donate at [worthrises.kindful.com](https://www.worthrises.org/kindful).
- Donate using an electronic funds transfer or stock by contacting donate@worthrises.org.
- Donate by mail by making a check payable to “Worth Rises” and sending it to

Worth Rises
85 Delancey St, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10002

- To leave a donation in your will, please contact donate@worthrises.org.

Thank you for supporting Worth Rises.

GET INVOLVED

People make things happen. Visit [worthrises.org/jointhefight](https://www.worthrises.org/jointhefight) for job openings and volunteer opportunities.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

    @worthrises

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Worth Rises partners with directly impacted people to tear down the commercial wall that blocks even mild criminal justice reform and clear the road for lasting transformational change.

We pair research with storytelling to expose the prison industry, including private and public actors, and educate everyone, from our targets to our allies, about the harms it causes. Through this education we build an informed base and equip allies with the tools to challenge the industry.

Together, we then advocate and organize legislative, regulatory, and corporate campaigns that threaten the industry, strategically targeting its vulnerabilities, to protect and return economic resources extracted from impacted communities, strip the industry of its power, and eventually dismantle it entirely.

In the long run, with the prison industry and its sinister influence out of the way, the collective efforts of the movement to build a safe and just world free of police and prisons can advance more easily. If we remove the financial incentives to lock people up, we can keep people out.





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