What are some causes of the growth of incarceration?
State and federal policies drove the increase in incarceration, such as:
- mandatory minimum sentence laws
- long sentences for violent and repeat offenders
- intensified enforcement of drug-related laws

Are longer sentences effective as a crime control measure?
NO. Unless they target very high-rate or extremely dangerous offenders, long sentences are an inefficient way to control crime. In fact, the experience of incarceration may foster re-offending.

What are the effects of the growth of incarceration?

On prisoners: As prison populations have grown, inmates have had fewer opportunities for educational and vocational programs that could prepare them for release. Applicants with a criminal record are disproportionately denied jobs.

On children and families: Fathers’ incarceration is linked to family hardship, housing insecurity, and developmental problems in children.

On communities: The effects of incarceration’s rise have been most acute in minority communities that already face significant social, economic, and public health disadvantages.

On society: Incarceration has contributed to the political marginalization of minority communities. From 1980-2009, state spending on corrections has increased by just over 400%, reducing the funds available for other public purposes.

What practical steps can we take to change this?

Reexamine long sentences, mandatory minimum sentences, and policies on enforcement of drug laws.
Prepare incarcerated men and women to re-enter society.
Reduce unnecessary harm to their futures, their families, and their communities.

http://www.nap.edu/incarceration