

# Prison Research Meets Practice: A Conversation on Restrictive Housing

## Speaker Biographies

**Keramet Reiter**, is a Professor and Vice Chair of Criminology, Law & Society at the University of California, Irvine. She studies prisons, prisoners' rights, and the impact of prison and punishment policy on individuals, communities, and legal systems. She is the author of two books: *23/7: Pelican Bay Prison and the Rise of Long-Term Solitary Confinement* (Yale University Press, 2016) and *Mass Incarceration* (Oxford University Press, 2017). She is the Director of LIFTED, a program to offer University of California BA degrees to incarcerated students, and the co-founder of UCI PrisonPandemic, a digital archive of incarcerated Californian's stories of living through the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Sara Sullivan**, is the Senior Policy Advisor with the Corrections, Reentry, and Justice Reform Team at the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Ms. Sullivan oversees technical assistance to state and local correctional facilities and health departments to detect and mitigate COVID-19, and provides subject-matter guidance to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and their funding recipients. She has 19 year's experience in criminal justice and corrections reform, with a particular focus on the use of solitary confinement, improving facility conditions, and the intersection of health and justice. Prior to joining BJA, Ms. Sullivan served as a senior consultant with the Public Health Management Corporation in Philadelphia, working with external stakeholders to expand PHMC's delivery of public health services. From 2012 to 2021, Ms. Sullivan served as a project director at the Vera Institute of Justice's Center on Sentencing and Corrections. She led Vera's restrictive housing and solitary confinement work, including a national, multi-site project with state and local corrections agencies to reduce and end solitary confinement and improve health and behavioral outcomes for people in secure facilities. Before joining Vera, Ms. Sullivan worked at the Illinois Department of Corrections where she focused on reducing the use of segregation, procuring a risk and need assessment tool for use in prison and parole operations, and preparing the state for the expansion of Medicaid. She also worked on juvenile justice and child welfare issues in the Illinois Governor's Office and Defender Association of Philadelphia. Sara holds a master in public administration from Baruch College of the City University of New York, and a BA in criminal justice from the University of North Carolina Charlotte.

**David Pitts**, is a senior research fellow in the Justice Policy Center and director of the Prison Research and Innovation Initiative, a multiyear project that leverages research to promote transparency, innovation, and well-being in US prisons. Pitts uses evidence-based strategies to promote prison reform that benefits both incarcerated people and correctional staff, and toward that end, he has partnered with an array of advocacy organizations, nonprofit service providers, and departments of corrections. His work has addressed a variety of topics in this area, including restrictive housing, prison education, visitation, and correctional staff well-being. In addition to his criminal legal system research, Pitts has written extensively on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in public policy. He has consulted for government organizations at all levels, from small cities to federal agencies, and has taught a variety of courses to graduate students in public policy and criminal justice programs. He is currently an adjunct professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and he spent a decade in academia as a tenure-track and tenured professor prior to his work in applied criminal legal research. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Pitts earned a bachelor's degree from Birmingham-Southern College; master's degrees from Indiana University and the University of California, Irvine; and a PhD from the University of Georgia.