

of 20 programs serving more than 8,000 youths and 5,000 adults, including Promise Academy, a group of public charter schools with approximately 1,300 students.

Anecdotal evidence in recent years has provided cause for optimism. And now initial data are in: The average Promise Academy sixth grader arrives at the school outperforming just 20 percent of white New York City public school students in the same grade in math. After three years, the academy's students outperform 45 percent of white students. In other words, they achieve near parity. And when their math scores are adjusted for factors such as gender and eligibility for the school lunch program, the black students outperform their white peers in the city. (Reading scores ticked up but not as dramatically.)

What makes the difference? To begin with, Promise Academy has an extended school day and year, with coordinated afterschool

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tutoring and weekend remedial classes. The authors estimate that students who perform below grade level spend twice as many hours in school as traditional New York City public school students. Those who are at or above grade level spend 50 percent more time in the classroom.

Promise Academy also goes to incredible lengths to recruit and retain top-quality teachers, and it spares them many administrative tasks so they can spend more time with their pupils. In addition, its schools provide a host of supplementary services, such as free medical, dental, and mental

health care; nutritious meals; and support for parents. The authors say it's possible that student achievement gets an extra boost from the community services Harlem Children's Zone offers beyond Promise Academy.

Of course, such intensive efforts come at a cost, but to Dobbie and Fryer the \$19,272 per student price tag looks quite reasonable. Though higher than the median expenditure per student among school districts in New York State (\$16,171), it's far below what top-notch districts lay out. It's an investment that will pay off in the years to come.

SOCIETY

Toward a Post-Prison Society

THE SOURCE: "The Outpatient Prison" by Mark A. R. Kleiman, in *The American Interest*, March–April 2010.

THE UNITED STATES HAS A REMARKABLE total of 1.7 million criminals behind bars, but that's nothing compared with the number who are on probation (4.3 million) and parole (700,000). More people go to jail each year for violating such "community supervision" than for committing fresh crimes—and the same group also accounts for a large share of the new crimes.

In 2005, Steven Alm, a judge on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, concluded that there must be a better way. Tired of hearing probation revocation cases only after the offenders had repeatedly failed to show up for meetings and drug

EXCERPT

The Food Network

Daily life is full of anonymous encounters: the Internet, the airport, the subway, the supermarket. Crowds to jostle, forms to fill out. E-mails greet you with mass-produced individuality. Dining out is the antidote: the host, the waiter, the chef with his pat on your shoulder, the season's first acorn squash grown by farmers closer than your commute. You sit down to dinner and you have joined a community, a gastronomic Facebook.

—**PHYLLIS RICHMAN**, a former *Washington Post* restaurant critic, in *Gastronomica* (Winter 2010)



Judge Steven Alm promised probation violators in Hawaii something rare: certain punishment. They were arrested far less frequently than those who received vague warnings.

tests without suffering any consequences, he demanded that officers act on the first violation. But the caseload is too big for that to be feasible. In fact, the entire U.S. “community corrections” system is swamped, writes Mark A. R. Kleiman, a professor of public policy at UCLA. As a result, not only do criminals on parole or probation get away with a lot, but, because of the lax supervision, they get no clear signals about what constitutes going too far—so inevitably that’s what many do, winding up in courtrooms such as Alm’s. Yet one of the most important things we know about using punishment as a deterrent, accord-

ing to Kleiman, is that its severity is not nearly as important as its “swiftness and certainty.”

Knowing this, Alm picked 35 of the worst probation violators (mostly methamphetamine users) and gave them a clear warning: Miss your next drug tests and meetings with probation officers, and you’re going to jail. It worked. After a year, Alm’s group had half as many arrests as average (i.e., less troublesome) offenders, and “a third as many probation revocations and prison terms for new offenses.” And they didn’t soak up any more precious courtroom time than their better-behaved peers.

Alm’s success in changing con-

victs’ behavior could be the foundation for a national revolution, Kleiman argues. Pilot projects based on the Alm model have already been launched.

Two keys to success in going national are to keep the focus on the worst cases and ensure the “swiftness and certainty of . . . sanctions.” The types of monitoring could be expanded. For \$5 per day, an offender on probation could be equipped with an “anklet” containing a Global Positioning System monitor. Software could compare his location to that of any reported crime; officers could monitor his movements, including appearance at work and adherence to curfews. Probation violations would result in swift punishment. Such a system holds the potential to reduce new arrests among probationers and parolees by 75 percent, Kleiman believes.

Ultimately, we could begin emptying the prisons, reserving them for violent and repeat offenders. Says Kleiman: “If we can make this work—a big ‘if’—we ought to be able to cut the crime rate and the incarceration rate in half” after a 10-year effort.

SOCIETY

Anger Under Siege

THE SOURCE: “Anger Management, American-Style: A Work in Progress” by Peter N. Stearns, in *The Hedgehog Review*, Spring 2010.

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, ANGER was a minor but indispensable attribute of the ideal American