



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

What Criminal Justice Policymaking Needs: Women Who Have Been There

Tamanika Ferguson,

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani recently made a rare governance move: He appointed [Stanley Richards](#), who served a prison sentence for robbery in the 1980s, as commissioner of the city's Department of Correction. The city described Richards, who previously served as a deputy commissioner with the agency, as the first formerly incarcerated person to lead it. That matters because it treats lived experience as executive competence, not as a feel-good backdrop.

Now New York and other jurisdictions should take the next step. If we truly believe that people most impacted by our criminal justice system belong in decision-making, then more formerly incarcerated people — particularly women — should be appointed to the seats that shape jails, prisons, parole, sentencing and reentry.