

## The Marshall Project: “We Are Witnesses”

Rev. Dean Bucalos

Executive Director, Mission Behind Bars and Beyond, and  
Mission Specialist, NBA Prison and Jail Ministries

September 2018



For more than an hour, I sat in front of my computer and watched and listened to 19 short videos containing the reflections of people from all different walks of life who have been affected in some way or another by our broken criminal justice system. It is difficult to describe the different emotions these videos evoked. Anger. Sadness. Disbelief. Sympathy. It was as though I

was looking at our criminal justice system through a prism. So many different perspectives. So many sorrowful images. So many frustrated voices.

What I was invited to watch was a powerful new film series, created and produced by The Marshall Project. [“We Are Witnesses”](#) gives voice to those whose lives are enmeshed in the criminal justice system—the formerly incarcerated, crime victims, officers of the court, and more—and provides a rare 360-degree portrait of crime and punishment in America today.

The series, comprised of 19 short films that each portray the human cost of mass incarceration, provides a unique opportunity for each of us. It is an opportunity to gather people together in your community or your congregation to watch together and discuss the ways that people of faith can both witness and advocate for a just criminal system. Soon, a study guide will be available to guide discussions and help small groups process the information and images shared in these videos.

National Benevolent Association (NBA) Prison and Jail Ministries continues to address many of these very same issues throughout the year through webinars, blogs, and information posted on our Facebook page. What we have discovered is that many Disciples of Christ lay members and clergy are working daily, not only to improve our criminal justice, but also to provide relief and comfort with those who have been so negatively affected by it, especially people of color who have been disproportionately affected.

Committed to criminal justice reform and mitigating mass incarceration, the National Benevolent Association is collaborating with The Marshall Project to share these stories to spark discussion and thought. You can access them directly through this link: [“We Are Witnesses.”](#)

Please look at these videos and think about ways they can become a vehicle for powerful and meaningful conversations in your congregation, and a catalyst that moves people in your community of faith to take action to improve our broken criminal justice system—so that stories like these never have to be told again.

---

*Rev. Dean Bucalos serves as Executive Director of Mission Behind Bars and Beyond in Louisville, KY, and as Mission Specialist with **NBA Prison and Jail Ministries**, one way in which the National Benevolent Association supports congregations and individuals as they engage in prison- and jail-related ministries, focusing on inspiration, education, and advocacy. Learn more at [www.nbacares.org/prison-and-jail](http://www.nbacares.org/prison-and-jail).*