



70 Million S3 E1 Annotated Transcript: COVID-19 Makes Deciding Who Gets Out of Jail Urgent

James Howard III was arrested this spring and sent to Chicago's Cook County Jail a few weeks into the state's coronavirus lockdown. Crowded, unsanitary, and with little means of social distancing, the single-site jail experienced a rapid outbreak of COVID-19. Mark Betancourt reports on the unprecedented steps officials took to control the outbreak, and the urgent attempts of families to keep their loved ones safe.

Mitzi Miller: 70 million adults in the United States have a criminal record. In Season Three, we'll explore how our rapidly changing reality is impacting those in custody, and the policies that keep them there. I'm Mitzi Miller.

This summer the COVID-19 cases in the United States reached an ominous parallel with our prison population. By the end of June the U.S. had 20% of the [world's prisoners](#), and 25% of the world's [COVID-19 cases](#). The U.S. has less than [5% of the world's population](#).

What's more, those in prison have been 5 times more likely to contract COVID-19, and [3 times](#) more likely to die from it. Many of the country's worst outbreaks of the virus happened in [prisons and jails](#)-- which are often crowded and unsanitary, with no way to social distance. But the threat posed by jails isn't evenly distributed, or limited to detainees. [Research in Chicago](#) suggests that the overrepresentation of Black people in the Cook County Jail has in turn led to higher rates of COVID in Black areas of the city. Cook County is one of the largest [single site jail](#) in the US, with a population that is [75% Black and 15% Latino](#). Last spring the jail experienced a rapid outbreak of COVID-19. Like others around the country, officials there took unprecedented steps to control the outbreak, partly by reducing the jail population to a historic low. But the system could only bend so far. Reporter Mark Betancourt has the story.

James Howard: Sometimes it can be much louder.

Mark Betancourt: I'm talking on the phone with James Howard the third, a detainee at the Cook County Jail in Chicago. In the common area he's calling from there's a lot of yelling.

Howard: A lot of guys are upset about many, many things, man. You know, it's early in the day. So once you wake up and you realize you're here again, you know, it's, you got a lot of guys fighting a lot of different situations. You know, it's easy for them to be upset, or you know, things to spiral out of control. You have people that have nonviolent cases or simple possessions and things like that.

They should, you know, work on, give them people reasonable bonds and getting them back home to their family and, you know, away from this exposure of this, you know, this dangerous disease.

Betancourt: The first detainee in the jail tested positive for coronavirus on March 18th¹, and as happened in nursing homes and anywhere people couldn't get away from each other, it spread rapidly. As we wrapped this reporting, there had been over 500 confirmed cases among the detainees, and more than 400 among the [staff](#). As with the general public, not everyone is being tested regularly, which means the real numbers are [likely higher](#). Seven detainees and three correctional officers [have died](#). Howard, who has slight asthma, is worried about what will happen to him if he catches the virus.

Howard: If I cough once or twice, or you know, it'll be scary cause I don't know what all the symptoms are.

Betancourt: Howard was arrested on May 9th, seven weeks into Illinois's coronavirus lockdown.

Howard: My fiance, she works for a hotel, a major hotel. They shut her down. So, you know, she was looking on unemployment and things like that. And I'm a licensed electrician, so...

I was trying to catch side jobs, but a lot of things were you know, it was, it was real slow, you know, because of, you know, the pandemic and things like that. So. I'd do things like paint, you know, slight carpentry work. You know, sometimes wire, you know, small circuits and things like that, you know, to make, make ends meet, you know.

Betancourt: I won't go into the details of how Howard was arrested, because his case has yet to be tried. But suffice it to say, he ended up being charged with possession of a stolen car—but not for stealing it. The police report alleges that Howard was seen near the car at a gas station, and after police chased him down they found a gun and drugs on the passenger seat. Footage from

¹ [Outbreak of COVID-19 and Interventions in One of the Largest Jails in the United States: Cook County, IL, 2020](#)

the officers' body cameras hasn't been reviewed in court yet. That's because

Howard: We're detainees. They treat us like we're already proven to be guilty. It's like we're being punished because of the COVID-19.

Betancourt: When he first arrived in the Cook County Jail, Howard was tested for COVID-19. As a precaution, he and other newcomers who tested negative were housed in a dormitory-style unit for the first couple of weeks.

Howard: They're bunk beds. It's one big open room, everyone is exposed to everyone. There's three phones, four toilets and like one big shower with like two or three or four showerheads. It's like...

Betancourt: According to the Sheriff's Office, which runs the jail, the tier was filled to only a fraction of its capacity to allow social distancing. But it made Howard nervous.

Howard: It's limited cleaning supplies. Some of the control officers, they don't even walk around with the mask or gloves or anything, and they touch things, which is, which exposes us to the COVID-19 virus. We really can get it from them because they're exposed to being outside, and bringing it in. And that's how it got in. It didn't start in here, you know.

Betancourt: Sarah Staudt is a former defense attorney who is now a senior policy analyst at Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, a nonprofit that advocates for more fairness in the city's justice system.

Sarah Staudt: I hope that COVID has at least been a sort of very visual illustration to people of how dangerous jail is, but jail has always been dangerous. Jail has always been bad for people's health. Jail has always been deadly. Right? And jail has been completely destructive to people's lives, to their jobs, to their schooling, to their families.

Betancourt: Jails aren't like prisons, where inmates are serving sentences. Staudt says the vast majority of people in the Cook County Jail are awaiting trial—they haven't been convicted of anything. As of late June, she says about a thousand detainees in the Cook County Jail were only being held because they haven't paid their bail. In half the cases that's \$10,000 or less.

Staudt: So you know a judge has said basically it's safe for this person to go back to the community, but they don't have, you know, a hundred dollars, five hundred dollars, a thousand dollars. So fundamentally, they're being held for poverty reasons. There are charges that as an initial factor are not dangerous enough

to anyone to really merit jailing. We shouldn't be jailing people for retail theft, period. We can't keep keeping this many people in a jail setting who haven't been found guilty of a crime. It's just nuts.

Betancourt: Advocates like Staudt and officials from all corners of the Cook County justice system have spent the past few years significantly reducing the population of the jail—from about 10,000 in 2014 to under 6,000 at the beginning of [this year](#)—by reshaping how judges set bail. When COVID came along, that slow march toward reform became a race to save lives.

Staudt: We talked about it as evacuation and I think that's really what it was. We knew that we weren't going to be able to clear out the entire jail. But the problem was what we knew is that the social distancing and hygiene stuff that we were doing in the community was impossible—and for the record, still is impossible—inside Cook County Jail.

Betancourt: To understand how that evacuation happened, and why it didn't go further, we first have to look at how the justice system in Cook County usually works. When someone is arrested, they go before a judge who sets their bail. If the person can pay a percentage of that bail—that's called a bond—they go home and wait for a court date. As long as they show up for court, they get their bond money back. A jury or judge will then decide whether they're guilty or not, and based on that decision, they're sentenced or they go free.

Staudt: It's really those exits that balance the arrests, if you think of it as sort of an inflow outflow thing, the way we maintain our jail population at some vaguely even level is that cases are always resolving.

Betancourt: That was before everything changed.

Richard Harris: (NPR news clip) Health officials in Chicago have been on high alert since a woman who returned from a trip to Wuhan, China, on January 13th fell ill with the [novel coronavirus](#)...

Betancourt: By mid-March, the country was mostly shut down, and so was Cook County's justice system. No one in the jail was able to start a trial. State prisons in Illinois—and all over the country—stopped accepting transfers from county jails, fearing they might bring the virus [with them](#). So people were going into the jail, but they weren't coming out. It was a disaster waiting to happen.

Amy Campanelli: We knew the conditions of the jail. I know what the deal is like. I know how people live in the jail.

Betancourt: Cook County's public defender, Amy Campanelli.

Campanelli: I knew that many people lived in bunk beds. Two to three to a cell. Certainly I was learning about COVID, I was learning about social distancing, masks. Nobody had tested positive. I said someone's going to test positive and it's going to spread like wildfire. We had been working with the state's attorney and going through lists of people that the jail had sent us names... That were high risk, that were definitely more susceptible to getting COVID than other people in the jail, and/or could depopulate the jail, like misdemeanor clients, clients on a violation, a technical violation of probation. Missed appointments. People who were not dangerous.

We were working for three weeks on that. And we had five or six hundred people that we wanted released, my office, and they agreed to about a hundred. And that took three weeks.

Yeah, it wasn't working.

I have a lot of advocates who work with me on different initiatives, especially bail reform. I worked with my advocates, we discussed doing a motion for mass release. I filed the motion on Friday, I believe it was March 20th. I wanted just one judge to then go through these lists of people that we would give them and say, yes, no, yes, no. You know, very streamlined.

Kim Foxx: The public defender filed a motion for, in essence, a mass release that went before the presiding judge.

Betancourt: Kim Foxx, the State's Attorney.

Foxx: The reality is, is that we did have far too many people who were in our jail that didn't need to be there because they did not pose a threat to public safety. We could not agree to a mass release without knowing the individual cases, whether there were victims involved, where people would be going back to.

We are in the middle of one of the worst summers that we have had in at least two decades, with the violence that we are seeing. There are some people who have engaged in behaviors that have caused harm. One had to factor the public health risk, in relation to public safety. It was a balancing of public health and public safety.

The judge said, no, we're not going to do a mass release. However, we will have additional judges who are being brought in to do bail reviews on a daily basis so that we can get the maximum number of people's cases reviewed.

Betancourt: Working entirely online via Zoom, the bond court reviewed previous bond decisions in over 2,000 cases in just a few weeks. In early March, the jail population was about 5,700.² By the end of April, it was down to 4,100. The state's attorney's office also made sure fewer people went in.

Foxx: One of the things that we did from the very beginning was talk to our law enforcement partners and say, listen, the courts are shutting down. And so there are offenses that you just should not bring to us at all. The overwhelming majority of misdemeanor cases, drug possession cases.

Betancourt: But all of this wasn't enough to prevent a major outbreak. By April 1st there were over [200 cases](#) in the jail. Campanelli says prosecutors and judges should have been more flexible.

Campanelli: Just because you're arrested and you're pretrial and you're innocent until proven guilty doesn't mean that you also should possibly get sick and/or die.

Betancourt: On April 5th, a man named Jeffrey Pendleton was the first detainee in the jail to die of coronavirus. A few days later, another detainee died. Then, a third — Nickolas Lee.

Cassandra Greer-Lee: Nickolas was actually my brother's friend, and he always liked me and he wanted my brother to introduce him to me. But I couldn't have boyfriends.

Betancourt: Cassandra Greer-Lee met Nickolas Lee when they were teenagers.

Greer-Lee: He'd say, "Yes, one day she's going to be my wife." And I'm like, oh, my God. But nothing happened because my brother was really, really watching the situation and until he just couldn't watch it anymore. So. [laughs] We did not actually get together until I came back home from college. Altogether, Nickolas has been incarcerated this time for three years and five months.

Greer-Lee: If you have someone that you love and that person is your spouse and they go away, you're lonely. You're by yourself and you're worried. You don't know how long they're going to have to go away and it just, it's a impact on your household. But Nicholas was always a very, very good guy. He made some bad choices in life, but he was a wonderful person overall.

² According to [Cook County Sheriff's Office \(CCSO\) data](#), the population was as high as 5,710 in March (March 9th) before the reductions began on March 20th.

Betancourt: In February Lee was transferred from prison to the Cook County Jail. He was awaiting trial for charges related to an armed robbery when COVID-19 hit.

Greer-Lee: I began to hear about it via the news the same way I think a lot of other people did.

Greer-Lee: So I would keep Nick abreast of what was going on, because he had a lot of questions. I was Googling things because I hadn't heard of this virus.

Betancourt: Lee was housed in an open, dormitory-style tier in the jail, which he shared with dozens of other men.

Greer-Lee: He noticed these two men, they were really, really sick. At first he felt like maybe was just a cold or something, but then he noticed that they kept getting sicker and sicker.

So I told him do not worry. I will do the best I can to get you moved. No one answered the phone, tried to get him help. This went on and on, these inmates got sicker. The first time someone answered the phone for me in Division 8 was March the 28th. She informed me that due to the pandemic, they were short staffed. There was actually no one I could speak with. I left my name and number. She said she would try to have a sergeant to get back to me within 24 hours. That never happened.

My husband didn't have his first symptom until the very next day, which was March 29th. He called me. He said that he had a sore throat. I told him, "Do not worry, sweetheart. It's just a common cold. We gonna just pray that that's what it is. Just keep doing what you're doing. I'm gonna call." I called, called, called, called Division 8, called the inmate family help line, called Cermak, which is the hospital on the jail compound. At Cermak there's not a person that can answer the phone, you have to leave a message and just pray someone calls you back, which someone did. I said, "Ma'am, can you please listen to me? My husband is in Division 8. There's two really sick inmates. I am afraid, my husband has a sore throat now." I said, "Please, can you help me?" She said, "Ma'am, each division at the Cook County Jail have a nurse... "...if a nurse could have saw an inmate is sick, they'll send them to Cermak."

From March 29th, my husband's health declined so quick. It went from a sore throat to a fever, from a fever to chills, from chills to loss of sense of smell and taste to a 100 percent weakness.

Betancourt: She went to the jail. And she says nobody helped her.

Greer-Lee: First of all, the gates were all locked because they wasn't having any visitors. There were no guards on the outside. You could see that guards coming in and out. All they could tell me was call the inmate help line. I'm telling them no one's answering. No one's helping me. There was no help. Finally, on April 6th, my husband was taken to John Stroger hospital. He was placed in ICU. When he arrived, he was already in a severe stage of COVID.

Greer-Lee: I was blessed to speak with him on April 11 at 7:30. He was having a really, really hard time breathing. I was able to tell him how much I love him and how much I needed him. And I wanted him to fight for me.

Betancourt: Lee died the next morning, two weeks from the day he first experienced symptoms of COVID. It was April 12th, Easter Sunday.

Greer-Lee: I was sitting on the couch from 5:20 a.m. when I got the phone call to maybe... for hours. I was devastated. I was confused, I was shocked. I really, I was numb.

I just... after the pain set in, I just wondered, as his wife did I do everything that I could have did to save him. And that's what made me count the phone calls. And... that pain turned to anger when I got to 60, 70, 90, a hundred. I said oh, no. No. So I knew then I had to get up and do something.

Cassandra's Facebook video:

Hello, My name is Cassandra...

Greer-Lee: So the very next day. That's when I made the video seeking help.

VIDEO: I will not let him die in vain. This cannot happen to another family because the pain that I'm enduring that I feel now is not right.

Greer-Lee: I had a homemade sign that I just made. I just found something at home and it had "Justice for Nick." It's a white sign, I just wrote it in marker. That will al... I don't want to get sentimental, I'm sorry... That will always be the one that I remember the most, because I didn't even know how to create a sign. But I knew I had to do something.

Tom Dart: I had heard, I think, in the newspaper about the family had been trying to reach out to people, and to no avail. That would be completely contrary to anything we ever do around here.

Betancourt: Tom Dart is the Cook County Sheriff.

Dart: We are incredibly responsive, always have. And clearly to do all the different things that we have done in regards to this. It would fly in the face of all of that, that we were indifferent about any individual, particularly someone who's sick and could get very sick themselves, infect other people.

I know that we have had protocols in place from the beginning that said if someone is symptomatic, they get removed from that setting. They go into isolation. The people that were in that living unit then are in quarantine themselves and then they get tested, all of them get tested. Now at certain points during this timeline where there are no tests available in the country? Possibly. And clearly, people weren't clamoring to give the limited testing that there was to jails and prisons throughout the country.

Betancourt: Another detainee from Lee's tier, Leslie Pieroni, also died of complications from COVID-19, a few days before Lee. Spokespeople from both the Sheriff's Office and Cermak said the same thing Dart did—that any detainee showing symptoms was immediately removed from their unit. The Sheriff's Office also confirmed that the tier Lee and Pieroni were on was quarantined. But neither man was moved into isolation *until* they were sent to the hospital.

A week before Nickolas Lee died, civil rights lawyers filed a lawsuit against Sheriff Dart. It was based on accounts from detainees suggesting that measures like social distancing, mask wearing and testing were not being properly implemented inside the jail at that time. A federal judge issued an injunction to compel Dart to implement those measures. But he appealed, arguing that he was following CDC guidelines for correctional facilities. In July, the Sheriff's Office, the Cook County and Chicago health departments, and the Centers for Disease Control [released a report](#). It outlined the measures the Sheriff's Office took to bring the outbreak under control by the end of April. And it said the measures "effectively slowed" the spread of the virus. It didn't mention the lawsuit.

Greer-Lee protesting:

Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Sheriff Dart has got to go...

Betancourt: Every day on her lunch break, Cassandra Greer-Lee goes to the Cook County Jail. She paces just outside the razor wire, and chants, and demands justice for Nick. Because he was already serving a sentence, he could not have been released, but she says he should have been better protected.

Greer-Lee: There's no reason why, if you know about a pandemic in January, why people are still dying, why did they start dying in April? He was going to have to go in front of a judge and the judge was going to say if he was guilty or not guilty.

But that judge was not going to say, Nickola Lee, you are sentenced to death by coronavirus, and a slow one at that. My husband suffered. He didn't deserve that. I didn't deserve that.

Betancourt: James Howard was booked into the Cook County Jail almost exactly a month after Nickolas Lee died. By the time I spoke with him in late June, the outbreak had slowed to a trickle of cases. The jail population was low enough that Howard had a cell to himself, partly thanks to emergency bond hearings. But just because those hearings were held doesn't mean everyone received a bond reduction. Only about 60% did. Howard didn't get a hearing.

At this point, his family only has \$1,500 for his bond.

Howard: It's \$2,500 for me to walk, which is a \$25,000 D-bond. And yeah, I'm just praying that they have the money so I can get out of here, man. It's just, man, it's just... It's like livin hell in here man, I'm sorry.

Betancourt: The reason Howard didn't have an emergency bond hearing is that, even if he can post bail, he still won't be able to leave the jail. That's because when he was arrested in May, he was on parole for gun possession and drug convictions.

Howard: When I caught my new charge, it violated me from being on parole. So I have to wait for my parole to be over with, which is on July 10th, for me to bond out. It's always something that's keeping you from getting home. Just when you think you've overcome this or overcome that, there's always another layer and then it's like, you know, it just discourages you. You know, people lose their mind in here, man, they lose their self. And by the time they get back they've been so tormented to the point where they can't even adjust to the normal that, you know, the normal aspects of life.

Kim Foxx: I believe that our jails should only be for people who pose a risk to safety. That's it. That's all.

Betancourt: Detainees like Howard are in jail largely because the system has given them a label: risky. Kim Foxx, the State's Attorney, says that her office decides to prosecute cases like Howard's, and recommends pretrial detention, as the result of a pretty basic calculation.

You describe someone with a gun in a stolen car who's on parole? Those set of circumstances alone are, are flags. And so, again, without knowing the totality of that person's circumstances, that is a flag that would be different

than if someone wasn't on parole but had a gun case or someone who just had a gun case and not in a stolen vehicle. And so all of that nuance is what we take into account with the, again, stated purpose of not having people brought into the jail who don't need to be there.

Then there's something called the Public Safety Assessment. It's basically an algorithm that tells a judge how likely someone is to be arrested again if they're released. Bond hearings are very brief—some can last as little as 20 second — and the algorithm plays a big role in how judges assess whether it's safe to let a person go home.

Staudt: The real problem with them, though, is sort of a human error problem.

Betancourt: Here's Sarah Staudt again.

Staudt: The Public Safety Assessment pops out a number between one and six with an additional little flag for violent behavior. The human mind then divides the whole world into six categories. Right? Where people with a one are not going to do anything and people with a six definitely are. The reality, of course, is that [the actual violent crime rearrest rate for people released on bond is under one percent.](#)

Betancourt: Kim Foxx agrees the numbers are important.

Foxx: I think we have to constantly, constantly see who's in that jail and should they be there. What have we learned about the people who had been let out and hadn't picked up additional cases? That will tell us, you know, we can broaden and expand the number of people that we should let go of. Not even just for the next wave of COVID, but really streamlining this as we look at bail reform wholesale and how we can improve what we're doing.

Betancourt: But not everyone agrees on the numbers themselves, or the story they tell. Here's Sheriff Tom Dart again.

Dart: Our population right now, 90—nine zero—percent are people charged with the most violent offenses, offenses that everybody would agree are violent: murder, sexual assault, armed robbery, home invasion, attempt murder.

Betancourt: Sheriff Dart says he supports bail reform, and he also doesn't want to see people who are charged with nonviolent crimes stuck in his jail while they await trial. But he says that most of the detainees who can be released already have been.

Dart: So this notion that somehow there is a greater group of people that we can somehow, you know, reduce from the jail population. We did all that work.

(sound of Sarah typing)

Staudt: I'll plug it in. I'll be interested to see what it comes out to.

Betancourt: Through Freedom of Information Act requests, Staudt has been tracking who's in the Cook County Jail during the pandemic, and what they're charged with. She had data as of June 30th, a couple weeks after I spoke to Sheriff Dart, and I asked her how many detainees had been charged with violent crimes.

Staudt: When we look at sort of how we define crime in Illinois, the definition that matters in the statute is whether something is a forcible felony. So I went ahead and ran the numbers on June 30th about how many people are in for forcible felonies. And the answer is about 66 percent of the jail is in jail for forcible felonies. Which means a third of the jail is in the jail for non-forcible felonies. And those range anything from possession of drugs or guns to theft to other sort of lower level issues.

Staudt: I think it's really important when we're talking about people in the jail, to be clear about our terminology, because, you know, branding someone a violent criminal says something about them that's not necessarily true. And also, of course, all of this categorization is being done on charges that have not been proven.-So. So from that, from the jump, we're already making a heck of a lot of assumptions when we categorize someone by what they're charged with.

Betancourt: Howard knows how the algorithm works. He knows it's meant to see his previous convictions and his new charges, spit out a risk number, and indicate to a judge that he shouldn't be released without having to pay.

Howard: I guess they took my background and paired it up. It's just it's just crazy, man, you know, wrong place at the wrong time, definitely. And, you know, you'll end up being lost in the system for, for just that much, you know, wrong place at the wrong time.

Betancourt: So far, Howard has managed to avoid getting the coronavirus, but then again he says he hasn't been tested in weeks. When he's finally released, he won't know if he's carrying the virus back to his family, and his neighborhood. [A recent study](#) found that one in six cases of COVID-19 in the State of Illinois can be attributed to the cycling of residents through the Cook County Jail. The zip codes that are most affected tend to have more Black residents. And researchers who've looked at this say part of why COVID-19 kills [more Black Americans](#) than [white Americans](#)...is that so many more of them end up in jail.

Emmanuel Andre: On any given day I can go into the jail and almost everyone I can see is African-American between the ages of 18 and 40.

Betancourt: Emmanuel Andre is a defense attorney in Chicago.

Andre: Now, systematically, what have we put in place that promotes certain things and diminishes others, helps put them there? One of those, to be honest with you, is the cash bail system.

Betancourt: COVID disrupted that system, and because of it a lot of people who normally would have been stuck in jail were released, or were never locked up.

Andre: Every single person who is released post-COVID, at least those people, at minimum, we should be asking ourselves, "Well, why didn't we do that in the first place?" That's where we failed. That's one of the many places where we f... Why were they in there in the first place? Why weren't we thinking about these creative ideas in the first place?

Betancourt: In February state legislators in Illinois were considering [a bill](#) that would have ended cash bail, and limited the charges for which judges can use pretrial [detention](#). Then COVID hit, and the legislature shut down,³ just like the courts.: Even if that legislation does eventually pass, it'll be too late to help James Howard.

Howard: I got two boys. My family's struggling with me, you know. And like, with me picking up this, you know, it hurt me bad, you know. I don't see why I wouldn't be able to get back and help my family through this pandemic versus, you know, like I'm a r... I don't have no violence, you know? I don't hurt people or do anything, just like why not give me a reasonable bond or create a way for me to get home?

Betancourt: Howard's family managed to pull together enough for his bond by the time his parole was up. We talked just before he went home on July 11th, two months after his arrest.

Howard: I feel like when I leave, it's like I'm still gonna be leaving a part of me in here because it's like, you know, guys are facing a lot of adversity in here. You know, they got big cases, heavy cases. You even got guys that's been in here for almost going on a year for misdemeanors because the courts have been shut down. It's just it's, it's crazy man. I'm blessed to be able to leave and get

³ The 2020 session was suspended until May 20th, when they convened [for a brief emergency session](#) to discuss COVID-related business only.

back to my family, but there's still gonna be a part of me that wants to help these guys get home to theirs, too.

Miller: Mark Betancourt reported this story.

Thanks to the reduced population and the jail's protective measures, the second wave of COVID infections that swept the country this summer did not hit the Cook County Jail. But the sheriff warned that if the population grew too much larger, he wouldn't be able to properly social distance detainees. By August 27th, when we wrapped up production for this episode, trial courts were still closed. Between detainees and staff, the jail had [42 active cases](#) of COVID, no hospitalizations and no further deaths. The jail population was just under [5,200](#)—and climbing.

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70 Million is made possible by a grant from the [Safety and Justice Challenge at the MacArthur Foundation](#).

70 Million is a production of [Lantigua Williams & Co](#). Season 3 was edited by Phyllis Fletcher and Laura Flynn, Cedric Wilson is our lead producer and sound designer. Virginia Lora is our managing producer. Leslie Datsis is our marketing lead. Laura Tillman is our staff writer, and Michelle Baker is our photo editor. Sarah McClure is our lead fact-checker. Ryan Katz also contributed fact checking. Juleyka Lantigua-Williams is the creator and executive producer. I'm your host, Mitzi Miller.

Citation:

Betancourt, Mark. "COVID-19 Makes Deciding Who Gets Out of Jail Urgent." *70 Million Podcast*, Lantigua Williams & Co., September 14, 2020. 70millionpod.com

Produced by:

