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## Ex-Felon - The Un-Spoken and Un-Counted

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**Ex-Felon – The Un-Spoken and Un-Counted**

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in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS CRIMINAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP**

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## **Dedications**

I dedicate this capstone to my children. Without their patience, understanding, support, and most of all love, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

## **Abstract**

Ex-felons in Florida have a unique experience regarding their citizenship due to felony convictions and the effects it has on removed many from voting in elections. Due to the years of voter suppression. An initiative was put in place that focused on ex-felon. In the 2018 Florida election, their right to vote gave an initiative known as Amendment 4 or the Voter Restoration Amendment to re-enfranchise some ex-felons the right to vote the Florida voter agreed. It was accepted, but there were obstacles put in place. The Republicans added the stipulations that the ex-felons had to pay all fines and restitution, or the voting rights would not be restored under Amendment 4. Numerous data show the positive effect of how ex-offender relate to enfranchisement and interviews of ex-felons barred from voting to provide information to make claims about how voting rights will affect ex-felon citizenship.

Keywords: *ex-felons, disenfranchised, enfranchisement*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Ex-felons who reside in Florida share a unique experience regarding their citizenship because, until 2018, they were barred from voting. Although their political rights were removed, ex-felons were not wholly stripped of other rights such as social, civil and nationality rights. Given the combination of rights that ex-felons possess, it is unclear how scholars, policymakers, and ex-felons define their citizenship. However, restoring ex-felon voting rights may complete ex-felon citizenship.

The state of Florida has a disenfranchised population of 1.5 million, the highest of any other state. Florida is also one of the critical states that often determine the outcome of the presidential election. It is necessary to think Florida can accurately represent the opinion of its constituency while also excluding such a large number of the voting age. The question that arises in this investigation are questions of citizenship of felons; this paper presents data perspectives and public opinion data.

While conducting an interview, newspaper articles, web videos, and scholarly articles provide an ex-felon perspective. Throughout history, voter suppression has existed in many forms in America. Thanks to the ongoing attacks on mail-in ballots, long lines during early voting, and an administration that boldly and illegally suggested we all voted twice. There are still most insidious forms of voter suppression are hidden in plain sight, often being given legitimacy by those in power. In the United States, there is an ongoing effort to keep formerly incarcerated people from voting. There are practices known as felony disenfranchisement, and it has been bolstered by laws that tell people who have been convicted of crimes are ineligible to cast a ballot. More than half of U.S. states have amended their policies to expand voter eligibility in the last 20 years, with states passing a measure to restore voting rights.

However, there is no binding policy that ensures voting rights to formerly incarcerated people. The main reason for fighting for felons' rights to vote is because voting is inherent to our democracy. Yes, even for people who have done terrible things. Supporting voting rights for formerly incarcerated people is the right thing to do. Felony disenfranchisement laws are antiquated and have a sordid past. These ethical discrimination laws have a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low-income communities have no criminal deterrent or rehabilitative value. Increased attention should be directed to disenfranchisement laws with a severe overview of how it is implemented in the United States. Many historical reports will discuss the history of felony disenfranchisement. The different state laws and their impact on the specifically disenfranchised group, analyze the arguments surrounding felony disenfranchisement laws and explore the movement to restore voting rights to people with felony convictions.

The U.S. democracy has been susceptible to bias and discrimination since its founding. Many states the used felony disenfranchisement laws and other racist laws to dilute the black populace's voting power after the civil war. Most southern states had disenfranchisement laws on the books, but the laws were narrow and applied to a few select crimes.

There are eight state laws regarding felony disenfranchisement that were not as harsh as they are today. However, after the civil war and after the passing of the "15 Amendment, new disenfranchisement laws were significantly broader, extending to all felonies. Nine after the civil war, the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendment, which focuses on the right to vote no matter of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Ten the 15th amendment gave black men the right to vote" (Belle, 2020), in which it added another 50 years for black women to obtain voting

rights with the passage of the 19th amendments. In a society that was known black people as slaves or less than human, efforts were made to resist and interfere with these newly given rights.

One weapon states arsenal uses of punitive disenfranchisement laws. Felony disenfranchisement law is “race neutral” on its face (Belle, 2020). However, historically, the U.S. has a biased criminal justice system in which race is stied to criminal punishment, which is morally wrong.

### **Restorative Voting**

Some examples of our political systems' inequities after an ex-felon complete their term and regain their second and fourth amendment rights its passage landmark regain their full right as all citizens to vote. The simple fact that we have people that are now working and paying taxes. Yes, that are felons on probation and work yet not allowed to vote is the basis of how our country got established. "over the past two decades, many states across the country have made significant progress scaling back laws that deny voting rights to millions of Americans with criminal convictions in their past. We should stop letting the fear agenda dictate our decision to stop people from voting due to the stigma of having a label. disenfranchisement laws cause citizens with voting rights to not vote. One form of such de facto disenfranchisement occurs when disenfranchised individuals believe that they are ineligible to vote" (Wood and Bloom 2008).

### **Pros and Cons**

The pros would say yes, why wouldn't ex-felon have the ability to vote when the ex-felons have made an unwise decision in the past but should not be required to pay for them for their lifetime. Once we have paid our restitution and served time, and completed probation, an ex-felon should have the ability to vote. When an ex-felon is released, the person assumes it is

because the law says that he/she is once again ready to become a part of society again. If this is not what the law is saying, then maybe they should not allow ex-felon back onto the streets with law-abiding citizens.

Some community people are stating their oppositions towards ex-felon voting rights. One person's statement was no. These people meaning ex-felons, have broken the laws that help shape this beautiful country. If a person is unwilling to follow our laws, they should not vote on who makes our laws. Some view that ex-felons would vote for congress or even presidents who would promise to let felons out of prison, allowing them to roam the streets, possibly leading to murders or crimes. Studies have shown that people place their own biases and misinformation instead of placing themselves in the opposite persons' shoes.

### **Disenfranchisement**

Many ex-felons do not know the meaning of disenfranchisement to describe the "loss of voting rights" (Jeff Manza Ph.D. & Christopher Uggen, Ph.D. 2006). This usage describes the extensive nineteenth-century debates over the extension of how disenfranchisement was the only method used to describe the "loss of voting rights," and most historians still employ the word today (Jeff Manza, Ph.D. & Christopher Uggen, Ph.D. 2006). Many states have "Felon disenfranchisement Law which includes history, policy, and politics as a policy justification. Some social contract has withstood the test of time it served a rationale for enactment felon disenfranchisement laws were used in the past and remains a compelling argument today.

When someone commits a crime, he commits it not just against the victim but against the entire society. Protest that time served is enough, and that organization should prioritize the rehabilitation and reintegration of felons should fall on deaf ears. (Miller & Spillane, 2012 p. 402). Ex-felons lost the right to vote to understand better the meaning of former offenders'

attributes to the loss of civil rights and its impact on staying out of trouble. It would help ex-offenders focus on a successful reintegration when positive rehabilitation starts when many interviews have been conducted, released ex-offenders who participated in the studies. Showing how disenfranchisement laws and other discriminatory practices cause ex-felons to believe they are without rights, including the right to vote. "Ex-felons interviewed unknowingly exaggerated rights and restrictions they faced post-conviction and often demonstrated that they were unable to decipher myth from the truth regarding their remaining rights."

The impact of felony disenfranchisement of the laws is confusion due to the different hassle which they generate. In each state, there is no federal felony disenfranchisement law; each state has its version. Different states have voting rights are restored upon release from prison. Nevertheless, in a state like "Nebraska's voting rights are restored two years after the end of one's sentence" (Clegg, 2021). This confusing information among states can be difficult for people with felony convictions, who have to relearn their rights. Also, election officials are tasked with keeping with voters' rolls updated information to remove the name of people who have been incarcerated. Many times, there are errors, and the wrong people are purged from voter rolls. These and other obstacles in which further and difficult restoration of ex-felon ability to regain their voting rights.

Many extensive debates regarding ex-felons disenfranchisement have drawn much public attention because many states allow each district to contain each prison facilities to count the inmates for economic status. Allowing these districts to add to their majority white and rural areas brings more finances to this low-economical rural area. Research shows the number of people who are disenfranchised because of a felony conviction is decreasing. Since 2016, they have been reforms in several states that have impacted this number. The law placed "840,000

people had their voting rights restored” (Clegg, 2021). Additionally, in Colorado, people on parole are now permitted to vote, the disenfranchised felony conviction is slowly decreasing, but there is still much more work to be done.

There are many arguments in favor of felony disenfranchisement. These arguments do not hold up well against the benefits of voting rights restoration. People in favor of felony disenfranchisement are working against their stated interest in public safety. The recent reform is in the air, and it is happening through different avenues of policy reform, a significant moment for voting rights restoration. Government officials pay attention to the history of felony disenfranchisement and the laws’ arbitrariness.

What right constitutes citizenship in the United States? Voting rights are fundamental to holding citizenship status, then do ex-felons who have had their voting rights revoked. How can they hold any citizenship status, present or the future? If any ex-felon voting rights are reinstated, will that change ex-offender perception as a loyal citizen? These questions can be examined in the Florida policy because of the recent changes in election laws in the last five years towards restoring voting rights for ex-felons.

Disenfranchisement contributes to the political discourse surrounding definitions of citizenship; the theoretical concepts of two scholars, Pippa Holloway Cohen and Elizabeth Cohen, are applied in this paper. When it comes to Holloway (2014), *Living in infamy* is an examination of social and political history that led to felons' disenfranchisement in the United States. Holloway (2014) analyzes post-Civil war history, ex-felons, and what rights constitute citizenship in the united states.

The answer comes from the Fourteenth Amendment provisions when seen as a repudiation of more politically due to the history of discriminatory nature of voting policies and

implication of felon disenfranchisement that still hold today. American citizens fight for human rights for all, including all the voting rights. Many punished for crimes committed by convicts are enhanced by curtailing people's fundamental rights, including association and traveling rights.

### **Ethical Principles**

The rehabilitation process is impaired since they may perceive themselves as having lesser equal rights than other citizens who have not committed felony crimes. Accurate historian timeline of the United States of felon voting disenfranchisement started in the 1100 BC – 16th – Civil Death was used as punishment for a crime in Ancient Athens, literally without honor, a form of disenfranchisement was imposed upon criminal offenders. Between 1607-1776 The practice of "Civil Death" is carried to the British Colonies in America. 1789-US constitution Forges a link between voting in national elections and state suffrage rules-citizenship in the federal government's new nation-controlled.

Over the past decades, the United States has made significant progress scaling back archaic laws that are collectively denying voting rights to millions of Americans with criminal convictions in their past. This paper will discuss the information landscape regarding factors to show the history behind American voters' disenfranchisement. The U.S. has a history of susceptible to bias and discrimination since its founding.

They utilized these laws and other racist laws to dilute the black populace's voting power after the civil war. Before the civil war, most states had some form of disenfranchisement laws on the books, but the laws were narrow and applied to few select crimes. The focus on people of color in a society known black people as slaves or less than human, efforts were made to resist and interfere with these newly given rights.

They were used as a punitive weapon of disenfranchisement laws and were called "race neutral" (Belle, 2020). Since this new power was given to these newly free slaves, the power had to be removed or suppressed.

### **Felon Voting Laws**

Voter suppression is a tactic used for keeping ex-felons from voting; this unethical treatment of disenfranchisement. Keeping many people with criminal background history from having the ability to vote is another way of using the criminal justice system against someone who paid for the crime they commit. Now they are being punished again when they gain their freedom. Voter Suppression takes on many forms, but organizations help focus on ex-offenders voting rights, illustrating fulfilling ex-offender constitutional voting rights.

Organizations in different states are fighting for the ex-felon right to vote for these positive changes in ex-felon lives and the communities that they reside. Policies implemented by working with our legislators and talking with organizations managers to put bills in place to help ex-felons have the ability to speak for themselves also to have access to place addendums to help ex-felons with the ability to vote.

There have been drastic changes politically with the rules on felon disenfranchisement since 2011. Over 20 states have made changes with applications for re-enfranchisement and clemency that require them. State's like Delaware passed a law by the senate called the Hazel D. Plant Voter Restoration Act in a 15-6 vote. To amend the Delaware Constitution by removing the five-year or more waiting period to regain the right to vote. Ex-felon convicted of a felony is now eligible to vote after serving their full sentence, including incarceration, parole, and probation. However, there is an exception: ex-felon is convicted of murder or manslaughter, a

felony offense against public administration involving bribery, improper influence, or abuse of office, or a felony sexual offense, remain permanently disqualified from voting.

States included are Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Wyoming ex-felon would permanently lose their voting rights. However, twenty states have restored the rights to vote the ex-felons after being released from prison or have completed parole or probation. States include Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia and Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and others such as South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and have two states that voted to restored ex-felon rights to vote after prison includes CO, DC, HI, IL, MA, MI, PA, two states may allow an ex-felon to vote from prison, and those states are Maine and Vermont. Each state varies based on the severity of the crime the ex-felon commits.

Ex-Felon deserves the opportunity to participate in American democracy as every other citizen. Many ex-felons are now held in a position to enroll others who were just recently released from probation or parole, and now they are eagerly awaiting to register to vote. Many state policies are put in place in Florida, which is against ex-felons' right to vote, focusing on the analysis models with restrictions focused on the ideological and racial (Ewald, 2012, P.22) homeless focus criminalization of the offender. The right to vote is only for the elite, and those with political participation should have the right to vote, but if a person committed a crime. The analysis models have put a strict restriction on products of ideological and partisan, racial, and criminal-justice-based predictors that challenge democratic responsiveness or leaders.

Instead, voting should be encouraged to everyone, no matter what status a person. The guiding principles policy of the United States of America is that the government the code is that government is elected for the people and by the people. Which is supposed to be in line with this

ideal, regardless of social station, education, or means, is supposed to get one vote to weigh into the selection of political representation. Ex-felons should have the ability to vote as a millionaire vote who commits the same crime, which does not have the same value as a homeless person. Politicians are elected to serve the good of the people they represent and are held accountable through elections.

Many state political groups have attempted to control the government regardless of the specific issues: ex-felons, who are the primary aim of the action plan connected with eliminating disenfranchisement and racial issues to restore voting rights ex-offenders. Focusing on ex-felon, reentry, reintegration, and one man, one vote, this statement is used to describe the American democracy that presupposes the right to vote for every individual, regardless of race and socio-cultural background. Unfortunately, the applicable USA's voting laws have failed to live up to our lofty ideal, both in history and today. As long as the USA existed, there have been those who want to limit the voting franchise to push an agency that can cause apparent clarity between right and wrong. A decision that leads to a legal or illegal outcome is not the primary focus must report any code violations using (Gonzalez, 2019, P.1) the agency's established process. Limit the voting franchising order to push an agency or discriminate against a less powerful group.

Many political groups have attempted to control the government by bringing other people to their side by merely engaging in how leaders influence the unethical behavior of those whom they lead. Intensive studies have shown that the disenfranchised and racism in this area have focused on leaders' direct influence over subordinate behavior, such as role modeling or eliciting lively social exchange. Leadership is a critical driver of ethical and unethical behavior inside organizations (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Trevino, 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2015).

It has shown ethical leadership that “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct by focusing on treating people the way the person would like other to be treated. Applying non-normative focusing on the authoritative persona, do as told with no questions asked. Taking on these different personal actions and interpersonal relationships focuses on different focuses on fights that the ex-felon and the different organizations are fighting against (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005, p. 120).

While being U.S. citizens, we like to think that our country's days of voter disenfranchisement are long gone. In recent years has seen a massive resurgence in the effort to limit voting privileges on both the state and federal levels-several significant voter types disenfranchisement laws that have gained prevalence in his new round of voter suppression. The system further notified by requiring a type of identification not usually held by certain demographics, politicians can disenfranchise specific groups of voters.

While legally allowed to vote, those without ID are not allowed to cast ballots. Thus they are functionally unable to exercise their right to vote.

New legislation has been passed in conservative legislatures that aim to force every voter to show ID at the polls. Conservatives have also added stricter voter suppression laws focus on specific groups of people who are likely to become disenfranchised by such laws include students, urban residents, racial minorities, and the poor, all of which are Democratic-leaning demographics. Groups and organizations are the people who are trying to put a law in place to give ex-felons the right to vote. It is common for these demographics to have a driver's license or passport than many conservative demographics (ex. Working-class white males). Thus, these restrictions can disproportionately restrict democratic voters over republican voters.

By disenfranchisement of ex-felons, some African American Churches and other's organizations got together due to viewing the manipulating voting resources in districts and politicians who were manipulating early hours to reduce specific populations' ability to vote. The poor, disabled, and elderly find early to be extremely advantageous, as early voting reduces the time an individual has to put in an effort that must be put into voting. Collaborated with ex-felons and organized to help legislate for the disenfranchisement and the right for ex-felons to gain their right to vote.

Recent attacks on limiting the time for forms to be passed in increasing fines levied against these organizations and attacking the funding of voter registration organizations. Tactics that are often very effective can result in the defunding and disassembling of voter registration organizations. While the demise of organizations, especially targeting minorities and young students, conservatives have attempted to reduce the number of registered voters who are likely to vote democratic.

Voter purges due to being ex-felon are another form of disenfranchising many voters who tend not to vote by fabricating a reason to take these voters off the voter registration lists. Often by claiming that they have moved or are legally unable to vote, politicians can complicate the voting process for those unlikely to support them.

Since the politician can complicate the disenfranchisement that targets those who have a criminal record stigma, they fail to see the bigger picture. Our criminal justice system, mainly related called the war on drugs, target a specific group of people, and some demographics are more likely to be disenfranchised due to a felony record.

Suppose a person African American poor and are more likely to be targeted, arrested, and charged for a crime with stiffer penalties than a person with a lighter skin charged with the same

offense. Another example, cases the person that resides in a more privileged area is arrested, receives a lesser sentence, or (ex. Dropping a felony down to a misdemeanor). When felons are barred from voting, the criminal justice system's structural inequalities will inevitably be translated into the voting franchise, which falls under the ethical systems.

Denying the vote to ex-offenders accomplishes little to value. Indeed, it may do more harm than good. Disenfranchisement contradicts the promise of rehabilitation. The offender finds himself released from prison, ready to start life anew, and yet at election time, still subject to the humiliation implication of disenfranchisement. Denying him/her the vote is likely to reaffirm feelings of alienation and isolation, both detrimental to the reformation process. If the correctio is to reintegrate an offender into a free society, the offender must retain all citizenship attributes. Vital as it changes equality, the kind, and the scope of the government. Has been promoted as a necessary element to improve laws' ethics (Pollock, 2019, P 203); no matter if employees know information regarding felon disenfranchisement, they prohibit the right to vote for convicts who have served their sentences.

**Con:** Below are views regarding giving ex-felons their right back to vote and giving their right to vote while viewing under the utilitarian view of American's and how ex-felon cannot benefit from these punishments regaining their voting rights back. American needs to focus on its new generation, which is growing up in an ever-changing world. American's new generation needs to learn that it cannot just break laws and think it is okay. Ex-felons start to teach everyone from their neighborhood, through their county and their state of how hard prison is, and to the people above their twenties, voting rights will be taken away if they commit a crime. Ethical leadership may occasionally be unpleasant; for example, hard to find employment and housing if you are an ex-felon, including stripping voting privileges.

**Pro:** Voting is an ex-felon right that everyone should have; voting allows people to say so in the political system, and it is a belief that is an essential American value to have. Ex-felon is a citizen, and since they have served their time and went through all their requirements to relieve out of their punishment, they should have the ability to regain their status of voting. He or she can get a job and pay taxes. What is taxation without representation? If they are free and required to pay taxes, which funds government officials' salaries, they should have the right to vote for those who will receive those salaries.

There are an estimated 6.1 million former felons who have been locked out of voting. Many are black men, specifically are affected by disenfranchisement at a rate that is seven times higher than any other group. However, rather than dwell on the magnitude of disenfranchisement, it is also an excellent opportunity to focus and mobilized underserved communities and engage with organizations that focus on the right to vote for ex-felons whose rights were taken away because of felony restrictions. By denying ex-felon the right to vote is more like sending messages that undermine respect for the law and democracy than messages that enhance those values. It tells the individual that yes, have completed time, but you can never become a citizen due to being denied the right to vote is to lose a necessary means of teaching them how to utilize their democratic values and social responsibility (Sauve' V Canada, 2002), that focus on the right to vote for ex-felons who rights were taken away because of felony restrictions.

Since other disenfranchisement duration can, which is part of it, is a disproportionate effect, would include the effect on minorities ex-felons (Burch, 2007: Durgree-Pearson, 2002: Goldman, 2004: Harvey, 1994; Keller, 2006: Wheelock, 2005). Hull (2006) evaluated the effect of disenfranchisement on racial minorities noting that Black disenfranchisement threatens (s).

This treatment throughout the criminal justice system, even when it has completed time, there are still individual prejudices and perceptions of groups minorities can influence decision making even when it comes to the time for an individual to vote (Patton, 2019 P 147).

While educating the ex-felon is to advise them about the rights they have and the rights that are trying to be denied. The disenfranchisement of ex-felon is the harshest civil sanction imposed by any democratic society. When brought ax, the disenfranchised is severed from the body politic and condemned to the lowest form of citizenship when voiceless at the ballot box. The disinherited must sit idly by while others elect civic leaders and while others choose the fiscal and governmental policies which will govern him and his family. (McLaughlin v. City of Canton, 1951). Petersilia (2003:133) notes that: losing the right to vote is not the most pressing concern for most convicted felons, and few criminologists have considered its broader implications; Unlike unemployment, housing, and education, each of which can have immediate effects on prisoner reentry, the significance of losing civil rights and only com the foreground as an ex-offender contemplates permanent exclusion from civic life.

True leaders teach and inform and lead by example or communicate to show what their participation could mean for their family and community and the services that the community can benefit from based on which candidate is offering, which means that the education will bring back the dignity of employees.

Placing focus on training on the diverse community of employers to examine state policies regarding access to education services. Concludes that states with increasingly large minority populations and whites exhibit less tolerant attitudes toward African Americans, feeling due to many people around the different ethnic populations by having open communication with employees to show unrestrictive. Disenfranchisement within the inclusiveness company helps

the company and everyone within the facility (Preuhs, [103]). Behrens, Uggen, and Manza ([12]).

The politician no longer explicitly argues that subordinate racial groups should be denied rights and privileges for reasons rooted in those very ascriptive characteristics. Nonetheless, configurations of power reflect and reinforce racial differences even without explicitly codifying them. This example also works to create an ethical work culture within the organization focusing on removing disenfranchisement of any group ability to vote.

Employing racial variables to help explain divergent state criminal justice policies builds on the theory of group threats” says that when minorities form an only small percentage of the population in a given polity, the dominant majority group is less likely to perceive members of that minority as a threat. Educating the majority group of employees showing them, they are more likely to view them as competitors in the political, economic, and social arenas.

According to a diversity of thought, professionals are comfortable sharing their work views, even if it goes against the majority. Today we see more and more leaders encouraging their employees to communicate freely and openly and not restrict their thought processes and ideas. A leader would be promoting an environment of honest and open communication and showing staff trust and respect where employees can voice their concerns. We also conduct office meetings to interact with management and give their feedback on issues that affect them.

Ethical leadership involves leaders demonstrating appropriate conduct both inside and outside of the office. Ethical leaders demonstrate good values through their words and actions. According to the ethical leaders will not overlook wrongdoing, even in cases when doing so may benefit. Showing integrity and doing what is right is at the core of being an ethical leader. Ethical leaders set an example for the rest of the company.

Disenfranchisement. The history expands to the current search for structural information to create a politically and socially labeled strategy placed upon convicted felonies during the reconstruction period. Although convicted individuals in the United States note that the English ideology influenced the South's policies, states began to distinguish between infamous and non-infamous crimes in the early 1820s and 1830s. For instance, in Mississippi, it was felonious to steal anything valued at or over twenty-five dollars until 1876.

Mississippi enacted their "Pig Law," which reduced the cut-off to ten dollars, thus expanding their grand larceny definition, which was a felony.

Arkansas expanded its definition of larceny to include anything valued over two dollars in 1875. The felony laws were ilk to increase the number of disfranchised African American's as it increased the number of African Americans convicted of infamous crimes. It was quite clear that these laws were meant to be used against African Americans for the progressive changes of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments that were supposed to abolish slavery and guarantee citizenship to all free men. This statement is central to Holloway's (2014) argument that "infamy offered a justification for denying African Americans' citizenship rights Holloway 2014. Southern states predicted that African American citizens would threaten Democratic seats.

Therefore, southern Democrats created policies that disproportionately convicted African Americans of felonies, consequently removing their voting rights; Holloway (2014) notes that felony convictions were not the only mechanisms that prevented African Americans from voting. She refers to other obstructions to voting, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, but also stresses that they were placed in conjunction with Black codes, which criminalized African Americans for breaking labor agreements with white property owners. Those who broke black codes were

convicted, disenfranchised, and deemed infamous, which essentially associated African Americans as infamous since they were the target of black codes.

The association of African Americans with infamy is evident, but Holloway (2014) adds to her argument that once the idea of infamy was established, there was a commitment in the South "to disenfranchise held in prison regardless of race" Holloway 2014. Southern state constitutions reflected the ideology that suffrage was reserved for those who were not associated with infamy

. Republicans in Congress were simultaneously division ways to put restrictions on southern state constitutions, such as indicating that states could only disenfranchise for felonious crimes. However, Democratic state legislators proved, yet against, that there were ways to circumvent federal restrictions. It was common for southern states to redefine crimes that were misdemeanors to be felonies, such as petty theft crimes. Holloway 2014, an illustration of the post-civil war era and the framework of infamy is vital for two reasons. Infamy functions can be explained as a theoretical framework method within which each scholar can understand the legalization of felons' disenfranchisement in a way each person could comprehend.

Holloway 2014, reveals how state constitutions reinforced infamy as a permanent status for felons, revealing the deep roots in perpetuating felon disenfranchisement beyond the post-civil war era. Secondly, the concept of infamy uncovers the racist motives of southern states to disenfranchise African Americans.

Holloway 2014, most significant contributions to the historical understanding of felon disenfranchisement because it showed that "infamous" was not just a label for criminals, but it was a way to degrade an entire race as criminals.

In this paper, references to infamy explain how Florida became one of only four states to disenfranchise felons until 2019 permanently. The concept of infamy is an ideology that is critically examined in the context of Florida in order to make sense of the shift in opinion of felons deserving suffrage. Suppose infamy was a label that was meant to endure over time and serve as a permanent label against felons, specifically African American felons. Why did legislators and the general public within the last year vote in support of restoring the voting rights of ex-felons?

### **History**

The history of ex-felon suffrage started in 1866; with Floridian politicians who made it very clear, they will not support Reconstruction's progressive efforts by being one of ten states that did not approve of the 14th amendment. Florida's rejection of such a necessary amendment to African Americans' legal status underscores how significant the issue of citizenship is in this state. Would bring one provision, Article XIV in Florida's 1868 Constitution, which excluded ex-felons from voting. This provision enacted 150 years ago created a long-lasting impact on the citizenship of ex-felons in Florida.

The 1868 state Constitution marked the beginning of the social and political exclusion of ex-felons from Florida citizenry. Article XIV made it so that ex-felons *automatically* lost all voting rights. Any convicted felony be qualified to vote at any election unless restored by civil rights. The legislature shall have power and shall enact the necessary laws to exclude from suffrage, all persons convicted of bribery, perjury, larceny or infamous crime" (Riggs, p.108). However, it did allow ex-felons to have their rights restored after completing their sentences. An authorized body made up of the governor, attorney general, and Supreme Court justices would be responsible for granting the restoration of rights. During this period, Florida did not

have a formal process by which ex-felons could restore their voting rights. By 1872, Florida's state supreme court agreed that the governor had the authority to grant pardons to restore ex-felon voting rights. Pardon's, or clemency, became the process through which ex-felon civil and political rights would be restored. Clemency is formally defined as the constitutionally authorized process that provides the means through which convicted felons considered relief from punishment and seek restoration of their civil rights.

The arbitrariness of clemency is evident in varying rates at which different governors grant clemency. For example, Florida's governor from 2007 to 2010, Charlie Crist, granted clemency to 155,315 ex-felons. Whereas Rick Scott, Florida's governor from 2011 to 2019, only granted clemency to 2,488 ex-felons. The stark difference between Governor Crist's clemency rate and that of Governor Scott speaks to the need for a more standardized and fair process for ex-felons seeking the restoration of their voting rights.

Ex-felon citizenship is partly based on political rights, and it should not be up to the arbitrary decision of one person to decide whether an ex-felon is deserving of their right to vote.

## **Background**

Many ex-felons decided that they needed to no more extended feel like "semi-citizens" who could not play a role in Florida's political process. In 2007, the governor's clemency board voted to grant automatic clemency to ex-felons who completed sentences for non-violent crimes. Governor Rick Scott overturned this decision, in 2011 which sparked community leader and former felon Desmond Meade, rally voting and non-voting citizens across every part of Florida to support rights restoration. This local effort eventually led to the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) establishment in 2017. The FRRC became a nationwide effort to make the

issue more visible. The goal of the FRRC was to end disenfranchisement in Florida by way of an amendment, called the Fourth-Amendment, on the November 2018 midterm election ballot.

It required an intense campaign involving over one million Floridians to sign a petition showing their support for Amendment 4. The FRRC, which is led mainly by ex-felons, instrumental in this effort. The coalition's ability to gather a significant number of volunteers to participate in local grassroots work to show solidarity with Florida at the national level was crucial to its eventual success. The FRRC also works in partnership with other social justice and political action groups. Efforts for Amendment 4 passed due to political change through lobbying and litigation efforts. When it came to the 2020 elections, I was involved with the phone bank advising by e-mailing ex-offenders in Florida that they could vote by assisting FRRC in collaborating with MNSecondChance by committing to social and political change through lobbying and litigation efforts. Through phone banking and e-mailing, explain the importance of giving ex-felon a second chance at participating in a crucial political process.

Working such as this was essential to the success of the Amendment 4 campaign because the biggest obstacle was changing the public perception of ex-felons in society. The campaign main slogan was "Say Yes to second Chances." This idea of a "second chance" is pivotal in persuading people to vote in favor of a population that has a negative reputation in society. The movement's leaders explain how framing the Amendment as giving ex-felons a second chance recognizes their wrong-doings, but also appeals to the public empathetic side in saying that everyone deserves another shot at contributing to society in a positive way.

Emails sent to the community members and phone call scripts always acknowledge that the disenfranchised "paid their debt to society" in completely service their sentences and probation. Sharing ex-felon and their ally could influence the voting public to support their story

on the ground that ex-felons have paid their debt to society. In giving the voting public the political power to restore voting rights, there is also a sense of community and patriotism to reintegrating their fellow citizens and allowing them the full benefits of citizenship in a democratic nation.

### **Outcome**

Understanding of rights restoration in Florida's case, both the perspectives of ex-felons and the public opinion of Floridians and other members of the public are examined. Sources include studies and surveys from multiple sources that interview non-incarcerated and formerly incarcerated citizens via via-e-mail and telephone conversations. Scholarly research on voting rights provides quantitative data that shows public opinion regarding the restoration of voting rights. Survey data alone will not accurately portray perspective. Their feelings as citizens without full political rights. interviews and testimonies from different sources such as political organizations, like Say Yes to Second Chances Florida, and research centers like the Brennan Center for Justice, offer formerly incarcerated individuals' perspectives.

The quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed using Holloway's Infamy and Cohen's semi-citizenship. Pippa Holloway's infamy concept provides one perspective. The data about public attitudes of ex-felon suffrage can be understood. Elizabeth Cohen's semi-citizenship concept provides another perspective to interpret the qualitative data representing ex-felons views of their political rights' importance. The paper's two goals are to understand how ex-felons might achieve full citizenship through the attainment of their political rights and to demonstrate how public attitude influenced policies in favor of felon disenfranchisement.

## **Ex-Felon Data**

The review includes videos from news sources such as NBC and local newspapers in Florida, political organizations, and research centers. They have published interviews and short testimonies and interviews with ex-incarcerated individuals in Florida and the United States. Interviews and testimonies are critical to gain insight into the point of view of the ex-incarcerated in Florida that can speak directly to their experience with the process of voting rights restoration. Leading organizations involved in the voting restoration campaign in Florida, Say Yes to Second Chances, published testimonies of Floridian residents seeking to restore their political rights. Several of those who contributed their perspective were veterans of the United States military, including Alphonso Matthews, an Army veteran. Darling spoke about losing his eligibility to vote should not last longer than the sentence for a person's crime. Having access to voting is fundamental to being an American and a Floridian." (secondchancesfl.org).

Joseph M. Spears also stated we have worked paying taxes, like everyone else; despite military service, honorable discharge, we still cannot vote. Any American who has served his time should be able to vote, and especially veterans who have served their country (secondchancefl.org). Both Matthews and Spears note their service in the military as a means of demonstrating their worthiness of requiring their voting rights. These testimonies must be factors that prove their desires to overcome their status as felons without political rights.

In a previous interview published in 2018 in Tallahassee, Florida, an ex-felon successfully applied to have her voting rights restored. When listening to Joanne Calvarese stated in front of the clemency board. She explains why she deserved her voting rights. I feel that I have paid consequence do not deserve your mercy, but beg for it. It would make them feel whole ("Felons in Florida want their voting rights back without hassle," 2018). As the previous

veterans, Spears and Mathews mentions accomplishing what is legally and socially required of her by completing her sentence and accepting the punishment.

There is also another NPR piece with a formerly incarcerated woman named Yraida Guanipa, who speaks about how she is currently suing Florida for voter suppression because the wait to apply to have one's voting rights restored is too long, in her opinion. "I have to get into the line of backlog, of maybe ten years. ("felon's in Florida want their voting rights back without hassle," 2018). She believes that this not only does the removal of political rights punish her but also blocks her family and community from having a voice. These two women show their recognition of the value of political rights and the desire to exercise their political rights. Their messages also convey a feeling of neglect by the Florida government, which has made them wait and beg for the restoration of their voting rights.

In an article published by Florida today, a woman named Cecilia Thompson recalled same disappointment as Guanipa expressed when she could not participate in voting for the first African-American president. As Thompson simply put it, "It hurt." Thompson, a resident of Orlando, Florida, now has her voting rights restored and she explains that this accomplishment "means she can participate, that can have her say.," ("Felons get their right to vote restored", 2018). Her previous attitude of frustration and disappointment is because of value of expressing her political voice exercising her right to vote.

Another ex-felon in Florida, Jerry Armstrong, explains the emotional joy and pride that came with the accomplishment of regaining his political rights at age 45 through the passing of Amendment 4. Armstrong told the New York Times; he stated, "he feels like a United States citizen." Legitimate status or political position in their communities in Florida and the United States.

A video of an interview by the Guardian shares three ex-felon stories and their voting rights restoration experiences in Florida. One of the individuals was Desmond Meade, who is mentioned earlier in this paper for his significant contribution to promoting Amendment 4 to voting citizens in Florida. Meade shares his experience with losing voting rights nearly in tears. That is when genuinely experience what it means to be an American citizen. That feeling has been taken away for so long" ("Florida's disenfranchised: voices of the 1.7 million not allowed to vote", 2016). Meade states the legitimacy that comes with regaining voting rights as a status and describes it as a feeling. Being a citizen is a political position in the United States and a feeling that is critical to note here.

The following video presents Jessical Chiappone, an ex-felon whose rights have been restored, expresses indifference to the political status that is supposedly attached to voting rights. Chiappone claims, "All of us are felons for the rest of our lives until the day we die." ("Florida disenfranchised: voices of the 1.7 million not allowed to vote", 2016). Her tone is not cynical, as she positively shows gratitude for the restoration of her voting rights. Chiapponne's sentiment offers a contrasting view that ex-felons will never really feel like full citizens. Their voting rights are still essential to represent themselves politically as felons.

Overall, the general mood of those asked to speak about their experience without voting rights is a sense of not having a way to represent themselves politically. Many express the feeling of completing the sentences should show an indicator of their moral character, such as military service should demonstrate their credibility to regain suffrage. As expressed previously by Jessica Chiappone, there is still recognition of one's status as a perpetually being a felon, which may not be changed despite having the right to vote. However, more often than not, ex-incarcerated individuals believe that being granted the right to vote. However, more often than

not, ex-incarcerated individuals believe that being granted the right to vote, either via clemency or a constitutional amendment, will guarantee full citizenship.

The restoration of ex-felons voting rights will empower ex-felons with political citizenship and, ultimately, full citizenship status in Florida. Through testimonies from other ex-felons in Florida, it is evident that ex-felons that have not had their rights restored do not view themselves as full citizens. Ex-felon's expressions of wanting their political rights restored show their recognition of the right to vote as a necessary right to full citizenship. Therefore, the Fourth Amendment is crucial to ex-felons transitioning from their current status as semi-citizens to full citizens in Florida.

Additionally, public opinion data regarding approval for felon enfranchisement was taken from the 2018 midterm election results and a survey conducted by scholars. In this paper, findings from both qualitative and quantitative data are coupled together to illustrate what effect voting rights restoration would have on ex-felon citizenship.

During the Trump Administration, and the Florida Republican's used another voter suppression move. The focus this time was against the Amendment 4 legislation, which placed high fines, fees, and restitution on ex-felons who do not have the means or the income to pay these fees. Lesley Stahl stated, "if a person has some money, get to vote. If a person does not have money, the person does not get to vote". The problem is trying to pay-off the large fees that range from \$200.00 to 5,000.00. Florida Rights Coalition and other's advocates of the amendments want ex-felon to pay debts long after the person completes their probation or parole are over.

The theoretical concepts, which has two separate scholars, Elizabeth Cohen and Pippa Holloway, who authored *Semi-Citizenship*, have suggested a spectrum of citizenship based on

rights that ex-offender lack. Holloway (2014) authored *Living in Infamy*, which describes the historical labeling of felons as “infamous” and explains how public opinion of felons impacted the citizenship of ex-felons during Reconstruction period the U.S. *Semi-Citizenship* offers a way of viewing rights restoration as path towards full citizenship for ex-felons in Florida that are currently experiencing semi-citizenship without their political rights. *Living in Infamy* emphasizes the importance of distinguishing ex-felons as non-infamous individuals in order for the public to support their enfranchisement and ultimately for ex-felons to experience full citizenship.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how Florida can accurately represent the opinion of its constituency while also excluding such a large number of it voting age citizens. The central questions that arise in this investigation are questions of citizenship. What rights constitute citizenship in the United States?

Voting rights are fundamental to holding citizenship status, then do ex-felons who have had their voting rights revoked. How can they hold any citizenship status, present or the future? If any ex-felon voting rights are reinstated, how will that change ex-offender perception as a loyal citizen? These questions can be examined in the Florida policy because of the recent changes in election laws in the last five years towards restoring voting rights for ex-felons.

To contribute to the political discourse surrounding definitions of citizenship, the theoretical concepts of two scholars, Pippa Holloway Cohen and Elizabeth Cohen, are applied in this paper. Voting rights are fundamental to holding citizenship status, then do ex-felons who have had their voting rights revoked. How can they hold any citizenship status, present or the future?

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Holloway's offer interpretations of what citizenship in the United States may or may not look like for ex-felons. Holloway and Cohen's semi-citizenship democratic politic which both suggest that ex-felon experience a different form or level of citizenship than the rest of the population. Cohen uses more of a democratic and liberal theory to offer a way of viewing citizenship as a view from semi to full citizenship on which the person can place ex-felons given their political situation

Holloway uses historical evidence to explain the justification of ex-felon disenfranchisement and how that has impacted their citizenship to this day. Both concepts will be used to suggest that in order for ex-felons to experience the benefits of full citizenship and to be reintegrated back into society, they must have their voting rights automatically restored after their incarceration. The Democratic Politics, by Elizabeth Cohen. The book concept of citizenship in the context of liberal democratic states. Cohen argues that liberal democracies focus on the in-depth citizenship of mostly liberal states. Cohen's main focus is that in liberal democracies, citizenship "has never been a unitary concept, nor can it even be a purely characterized binary. (4). Modern liberal democracies, targeted in the United States, are usually heterogeneous, which complicates the ability of institution and theorists to easily define citizenship.

Cohen addresses the normative conceptions of citizenship based on certain norms and ethics. Citizenships based on ought to be a citizen opens a debate that encourages subjective

interpretations of what different citizenships should look like. Cohen argues that in liberal democracies, citizenship" has never been a unitary

## **Research**

The restoration of ex-felon rights affects the political “participation of ex-felons” due to frequent disagreement in Minnesota when someone is found guilty of felon crime: they forfeit the right to vote (Meredith & Morse, 2015). This civil right is lost regardless of whether they are sentenced to incarceration, probation, or released into the community.

The process of regaining this public right can be complicated, time-consuming, and impossible for some. Prisoner re-entry suggests that the loss of these civil rights in many states targets ex-felon with a lack of information about their voting rights.

Many ex-felons have been disenfranchised due to many legislatures; Republicans feel that ex-offenders who would have the ability to vote would probably vote democratic.

The criminal justice system rarely has information on the process of expungement of criminal background and history, which would affect a person access to voting for many this constitutional right is just a dream; In Minnesota, we have more than 53,000 individuals who had their voices silenced every election year due to a felony conviction even if they have not done any time. This is a violation of the rights of the ex-felon civil principles of democracy that our country founded. We need to change the law to make it simple and clear to assist each ex-felon to gain their ability to vote. The current system is confusing and often leaves felons wondering if or when they are eligible to vote. The first step in the process is to change the current law, which would make it simple for ex-felon no matter if; you are not behind bars; you still can vote.

The changes in the bill would also make it easier for everyone, including election officials. While automatically giving ex-felon the opportunity to vote upon their release from incarceration does not require complex restoration procedures that are cumbersome to administer, and thereby conserves government resources and saves taxpayers dollars. Also, it shows the positive for the voting rights ex-felons having the ability to vote would give them the ability to show their children and family they are taking a more active role in the community in which the ex-felon reside and set an excelling example to the community and to their family.

While looking into the expansion of African American, Latino's and Asian American voting rights made all more relevant when deciding dramatic demographics when concedes with increasing access to the ballot. Ninety percent of the adult population was White when the voting rights passed, but today one in three adults is non-White. Minority citizens now have the potential to shape national election outcomes than ever before. The growing minority population looks quite different than it did in 1965.

While Afro-Americans make up more than 13 percent of the people, slightly up 11 percent in 1965, Latinos went from a small, mostly southwestern demographic composing roughly 4 percent of American's in 1965 to over 18 percent today (Pew Research Center 2015).

Only one has of 1 percent of the United States was Asian American in the mid-1960; today makes up 10 percent more of the population is more than ten times as large. With Felony disenfranchisement, laws are adequate to target ex-felons who are the minorities from voting. Nationwide, 2 million African Americans are disenfranchised, which is another discriminatory action towards people of color to stop them from voting. Allowing newly released ex-felon to vote after release from prison encourages participation in public life and helps rebuild ties to the community that motivates law-abiding behavior. The above information was the reason behind

the election of the first African American President, Barack Obama, due to the large turnout of people of color based on a study from (National Election Pool 2008). The backing of well over three-quarters of minority voters.

A historic barrier had been overcome in America more diverse than ever. Research shows that 93% of formerly incarcerated individuals are eligible to vote. Connecticut shows that the effort to reintegrate released felons into the political process can substantially reduce the participatory consequences of incarceration. By having an incentive way into reintegration for ex-felon to welcomed back into society.

This study shows that many ex-felons are interested in gaining the ability to have the opportunity to vote. There should be automatic re-enfranchisement to advise ex-felons since they would like the opportunity to achieve their voting rights back; this would give them some worthiness of participating in the Constitutional right. Even though it has been standard practice in the United States to make all felons ineligible to vote, in some states permanently, over the last decades, the main focus has been toward reinstating the right to vote focus on a state-by-state policy. Currently, state who approach removing felon disenfranchisement varies tremendously. In some state's cases, they are automatic restored, but it does not automatic enroll voter registration.

Some prison officials automatically inform election officials that an individual right has restored. Previous research has completed on ex-felon that was recently released from prison or completed probation and parole around the United States that was asking a series of content validity measures that would focus on a study focus on advocating the rights of felons across the nation.

Research identifies how Felon disenfranchisement has become a severe crime against fellow citizens and a significant public policy issue in restoring voting rights for felons and the lack of known and the unknown process to regain your power as a citizen to gaining access to recover a person's constitutional right to vote after they completed time serve in Iowa are the questions on every ex-offender mind. We know that in Iowa, many felons are ineligible to vote for fairness in American democracy.

More than two hundred years after the United States they are founded on the principle of equality, criminals-only class of citizens still disenfranchised from the vote. Recent estimates by the sentencing project suggest that over five million citizens are ineligible to vote based on crimes that they committed. Based on different states, the pros are focused on that nobody who disagrees with the re-entry into society released prisoners who were not able to improve by incarceration.

Because it is a high number of criminals who are released are so unimproved that they find their way back into prison, so it makes sense to wait some period before allowing the ex-felon the ability to apply to have their voting rights reinstated. After a certain period, it would depend on the crime committed, where the offenses committed, and what the ex-felon has done since being released should determine if the ex-felon should have the ability to have their voting rights restored.

The focus on different community organizations that work with citizens with a felony conviction who work with restoring the voting rights of probationers and parolees in Minnesota and Florida based on their state referendum that committed crimes. Ex-felon lost their right to vote while they were incarcerated, but after their release, their voting rights were automatically restored.

But in Florida, voting rights restored doesn't mean that voter registration is automatic. Many times, prison officials automatically inform election officials that an individual's rights have been restored. Ex-felon is responsible for re-registering through normal processes required that voter registration information be provided to formerly incarcerated people. In many states, there are different processes in restoring voting rights for felons.

The method of gaining access to regain a person's constitutional right to vote after they completed time serve.

It is know that in the United States, many felons are ineligible to vote permanently. In the previous presidential administration, a trend has been toward reinstating the right to vote at some point; many of the presidential candidates for 2020 are in agreement with allowing ex-felon based on their crime to enable them to vote. But as it "stands now, it is a state-by-state policy choice; currently, state approaches to felon disenfranchisement vary tremendously. In some cases, "automatic restoration" does not mean that an ex-felon the right to vote; we also need to view the citizens that are not in agreement. Many people and organizations are against the voting rights of ex-felons, the reason is since ex-felon broke the law, why should have any contribution in how laws passed for everyone else, which is what you do when you vote either directly by either referendum or ballot initiative or indirectly by choosing lawmakers and law enforcers.

This research shows that white defendant shows no demobilization, while Black defendants show substantial turnout decreases due to jail time. Evidence from pre-arrest voter histories suggests that this difference could be due to racial disparities in exposure to arrest results differ starkly by race. The goal of punishment is to better the ex-felon and try to reintegrate them back into society to have the ability to vote. Taking away anyone right to vote

achieves the opposite by alienating them from the rest of American culture, especially people of color, to keep them from being involved in their constitutional rights. Many opposition individuals or political parties in power can write unfair laws that deliberately work to disenfranchise any racial or

political groups who might oppose them some states like Minnesota lose the right to vote until they have completed probation. But there is not a process to advise the ex-felon of how to regain their ability to vote.

At this time, there is no direct process to suggest how or when a former ex-felon would become eligible to vote. Even though there is proposal to end the ban on voting by felons on probation have been introduced in the Minnesota Legislature have found some bipartisan back in the Senate. Still, they've blocked attempts by the House Republicans.

White defendants show no demobilization, while Black defendants show substantial turnout decreases due to jail time. Research shows that it is a current struggle for people of color to even think about voting based on the inequities in the criminal justice system due to how the treatment of Caucasian defendants would be different from how an African American are treated due to racial disparity. Based on the inequality treatment of a first-time black defendant when they are released, they don't think about voting. Many Minnesotans who have a felony conviction lose the right to vote until they released from supervision, including while they are still residing in their community, this includes if the ex-felon who never did any prison time. Restoring their right to vote for anyone living in the city or suburban area which would positively engage more ex-felon in the democratic process, make the law clear, save resources, and ultimately make all Minnesotans communities safe.

Before the approval of the 2018 midterm election in Florida, ex-felons have decided that they needed to take action to no longer feel like “semi-citizens” who could not play a role in political process in Florida. In 2007, the governor’s clemency board voted to grant automatic clemency to ex-felons who completed sentences for non-violent crimes. However, in 2011, Governor Rick Scott overturned this decision, which sparked community leader and others to rally voting and non-voting citizens across every part of Florida to support rights restoration. This effort eventually led to the establishment of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) in 2017. The goal of the FRRC was focused to end the disenfranchisement in Florida by way of an amendment, called Amendment 4, on the November 2018 midterm election ballot. The Floridians had to sign a petition showing their support for Amendment 4. The FRRC, which is largely led by ex-felons, was the focus in this effort.

The volunteer's show of solidarity with the national level was crucial to gain FRRC success. Partnership with other social justice and political action groups. 2020 election, I was involved with MnSecondChance, and with interviewed Congresswoman Hodan Hassan, who is also on the committee of MNSecondChance. I assisted with phone calls and petition organization efforts for Amendment 4 as a volunteer, lobbying for political change and legislation. I also contacted Floridians by phone and email to explain the importance of giving ex-felons in Florida a second chance to participate in our elections.

## **Background**

In many states ex-felons are bar from voting due to unwise decision in the past, but should not be required to pay for them for their lifetime. Once you have paid restitution and served your time completed your probation you should be given the right to vote again. Many provide a context for understanding attitudes toward felon disenfranchisement. “Over the past

two decades, states across the country have made significant progress scaling back archaic laws that collectively deny voting rights to millions of Americans with criminal convictions in their past (Kwame Akosah, 2017). This paper will discuss the information landscape regarding factors to show: restorative voting rights, pros and cons, felon disenfranchisement, State's Felon Voting Laws.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Voter suppressions take on many forms' examples: photo ID verification and gerrymandering is making it difficult for people to vote also adding preventing felons to vote. Organizations help focus on ex-offenders voting rights, illustrating fulfilling the constitutional voting rights for ex-offenders. There are organizations from different states fighting for the right to vote for these positive changes to help ex-felons change the lives of individuals in the communities with changing policies that focus on authority by working with legislator and talking with organizations managers to put bills in place to help ex-felons to have a voice and that include a voice with a vote. For the ability to vote for the next mayor or next Presidential election after completing their time served.

The first step would focus on educating the ex-felon community to advise them about the laws education has been promoted as a necessary element to improve the ethics of laws regarding and research (Pollock, 2019, P 203), does show that educated no matter if it's New Life employee's know the laws regarding felon disenfranchisement prohibit the right to vote for convicts who have served their sentences.

Leaders should demonstrate proper training for new hires and veteran employees by advising employees of ex-felon information and appropriate behavior in every facet of their life over time, even when their behavior is not necessarily observable by their employees. Ethical

leadership may occasionally be unpleasant, for example, terminating an employee who uses company property for personal ends.

All New Life employees are required to participate in the code of conduct training. Include employees information about appropriate behavior in the workplace and also the right to vote for ex-felons of voting rights training would matter that are outlined below:

By denying ex-felon the right to vote is more like to send messages that undermine respect for the law and democracy than messages that enhance those values. It tells the individual that yes you have completed your time but you can't never become a citizen due to you are denied the right to vote is to lose an important means of teaching them how to utilize their democratic values and social responsibility (Sauve' v Candada, 2002).

Since other disenfranchisement duration can, which is part of it, is a disproportionate effect, would include the effect on minorities ex-felons (Burch, 2007: Durgree-Pearson, 2002: Goldman, 2004:Harvey, 1994; Keller, 2006: Wheelock, 2005). Hull (2006) evaluated the effect of disenfranchisement on racial minorities noting that Black disenfranchisement threatens (s).

This treatment throughout the criminal justice system, even when it has completed time, there are still individual prejudices, and perceptions of groups minorities can influence decision making even when it comes to the time for an individual to vote (Patton, 2019 P 147).

While educating the ex-felon is to advise them about the rights that they have and the rights that are trying to be denied. Disenfranchisement is the harshest civil sanction imposed by a democratic society. When brought beneath its axe, the disenfranchised is severed from the body politic and condemned to the lowest form of citizenship, when voiceless at the ballot box the disinherited must sit idly by while others elect his civic leaders and while others choose the fiscal

and governmental policies which will govern him and his family. (*McLaughlin v. City of Canton*, 1951).

Petersilia (2003:133) notes that: losing the right to vote is not the most pressing concern for most convicted felons, and few criminologists have considered its broader implications; Unlike unemployment, housing, and education, each of which can have immediate effects on prisoner reentry, the significance of losing civil rights and only come to the foreground as an ex-offender contemplates permanent exclusion from civic life:

Disenfranchisement laws that are put in place are to block and hurt many people of color from the ability to vote. Ex-felons deserve the opportunity to participate in American democracy. There are grassroots organizations that are helping ex-felons with that fight to regain their rights to vote and also advising each ex-felon with the tools needed to assist with how to register and apply legally. Due to the misinformation or lack of that stifles many ex-felons with the knowledge of how or when to register to vote due to the state policies that are put in place against the registering ex-felon the right to vote. The Republican policies and laws that are put in place focus on the criminalization of the offender.

Unfortunately, the practical application of the voting laws in the United States has failed to live up to our ideal, both in history and today.

The United States has focused on wanting to limit the voting franchise in order to push an agenda that can cause apparent clarity between right and wrong. Whether a decision on a certain group of people by leads to a legal or illegal outcome is not the primary focus must report any code violation using agency's established process. Limit the voting franchise order to push an agenda or discriminate against a less powerful group.

In 2007, Florida governor's clemency board voted to grant automatic clemency to ex-felons who completed sentences for non-violent crimes.

However, in 2011, Governor Rick Scott overturned this decision, which sparked community leader and former felon Desmond Meade to rally voting and non-voting citizens across every part of Florida to support rights restoration.

This local effort of working with MNsecond Chance who eventually led to the Florida Right Restoration Coalition (FRRC) establishment in 2017. The MN Second Chance and other organizations utilized a nationwide effort to make the issue more visible. The choice of picking Florida was due to the dormitory policies implemented to suppress the vote. The practices the goal of the MN Second Chance was to end disenfranchisement in Florida by way of an amendment, called the Fourth Amendment, on the November 2018 midterm election ballot.

This implementation required an intense campaign to encourage over one million Floridians and citizens worldwide to involve themselves to sign a petition showing their support for the Fourth Amendment. The MN Second Chance, which is mostly lead by ex-felons, was instrumental in this effort. The Coalition's ability to gather a significant number of volunteers to participate in local grassroots work to show solidarity with Florida at the national level was crucial to its eventual success.

## **Conclusion**

Before Cohen's theoretical contribution to discussions of citizenship, ex-felons with their voting rights reinstated would be deemed "citizens," while ex-felons who could not vote would be deemed "non-citizens," Now, scholars and legislators can discuss citizenship as a spectrum rather than a positive versus negative binary. Expanding the vocabulary is significant for groups whose social identities, like ex-felons, are bound to a specific set of rights. Essentially, the

notion of semi-citizenship prevents scholars, legislators, and the general public from completely comprised of individuals who possess every category of rights. Although ex-felons temporarily cannot share political rights with full-citizens, they still share social and civil rights: and may be considered “semi-citizens.”

Understanding the concept of sem-Citizenship not only changes the way that the public and institutions view ex-felons. It also gives ex-felons a new way to identify themselves politically and socially in their communities within Florida. The interviews and testimonies reveal ex-felons sentiments in Florida and even in Minnesota who feel marginalized from the general voting-eligible population. Instead of feeling detached from the public due to their identity as non-citizens, ex-felons can take ownership of their semi-citizenship.

In applying Cohen’s concept, implications may be made about the potential for ex-felons to ever be considered full citizens. Although Floridians have voted in favor of automatically restoring the rights of ex-felons, the idea of semi-citizenship suggests that ex-felons, the idea of semi-citizenship suggests that ex-felons will always hold semi citizen status because of their incarceration and alienation from society.

Voting rights will empower each person with political citizenship and full citizenship status in Florida and volunteering with MNSecondChance assisting with a political phone survey. Including an in-person interview with MN House Representative Hodan Hassan, who a offered testimonies from ex-felons in Florida, exelmplifying that when their rights are not restored, they do not view themselves as citizens. Many ex-felons want to regain their constitutional rights restored.

The restoration of ex-felon’s voting rights will empower ex-felons with political citizenship and ultimately, full citizenship status in Florida and volunteering with

MNSecundChance assisting with political phone survey and interviewing MN House Representative Hodan Hassan who gave great interview on the testimonies from ex-felons in florida it is true that when their rights are not re-stored they do not view themselves as citizens. Many ex-felon's want to regain their constitutional rights restored.

The Fourth Amendment is crucial to ex-felon transitioning from their current situation as a ex-felon to American citizen. Floridians who have never been convicted with a felony and are enjoying full citizenship play an important role in the future of ex-felon citizenship with their support, ex-felons are granted a second chance a full citizenship after completing their sentences. However, national data presented in this paper suggest that certaint ypes of ex-felons are still deemed unworthy of full citizenship. Thus, some ex-felons will remain semi-citizens unless the public no longer judges crimes such as sexual abuse and murder as infamous.

The Fourth Amendment is crucial to ex-felons transitioning from their current status as semi-citizen to a full citizens in Florida. However, Floridaians who have never been convicted with felony and are enjoying full citizenship play an important role in the future of ex-felon citizenship. With their support, ex-felons are granted a second chance at full citizenship after completing their sentences. However, national data presented in this paper suggest that certain type of ex-felons are still deemed unworthy of full citizenship. Thus Some ex-felons will remain semi-citizens unless the public no longer judges crimes such as sexual abuse and murder as infamous.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

Author's Personal Philosophy of Pippa Holloway and Elizabeth Cohen, Elizabeth Cohen  
 Authored Semi-Citizenship

Ex-felons appear to be excited to vote because of the way rights restoration facially appears to completely change one's citizenship. However, we cannot make any national generalization based on the testimonies of Floridians. Firstly, Florida is unique because other states have different processes for voting rights restoration. For example, in Maine and Vermont, felons never lose their right to vote. In other states like Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, felons only lose their right to vote during their incarceration and are granted their voting rights immediately after being released.

Therefore, there is not enough qualitative or quantitative data to presume that ex-felons share the same perspective or experience throughout most ex-felons who do not even know that their voting rights have been stripped during or after their incarceration. However, this information is nonetheless useful in understanding the citizenship of ex-felons in Florida. Based on the interviews and testimonies, ex-felons in Florida express that voting can overcome semi-citizens status.

Their citizenship is not just about their political rights, but also what they individually feel in relation to others in their community. Semi-Citizenship offers a framework that supports, but also challenges ex-felons claims of semi-citizenship in Florida. Cohen's understanding of citizenship as a sum of political civil social, and nationality rights means that in order to be considered full citizens, ex-felons would need more than their political right to vote. Moreover, regardless of what ex-felons in Florida feel after they get to cast their ballot, they are still labeled ex-felons in society nonetheless.

Ultimately, that has a significant impact on how others view their citizenship since ex-felons cannot completely rid themselves of their conviction. Thus, even though ex-felons in Florida may get some political rights back, the semi-citizenship argument contests their full

citizenship. This framework portrays ex-felons residing in Florida as semi-citizens because their full political citizenship is not automatic. Full citizens born in the United States and are never convicted of a felony automatically have their voting rights.

Although the semi-citizenship argument seems to reduce ex-felon citizenship, it offers a different understanding of an ex-felon new political and social place. Cohen is not arguing that ex-felons are no longer citizens in their attempt to reacquire their political rights. Cohen also states, “that citizenship out to entail political actions of certain types, and some individuals whom we call “citizens” do not or cannot perform these actions, we would be forced to say that these individuals are not citizens.”

Hence, she recognizes that citizenship is not limited to the political action of voting. However, the ability to exercise one’s voting right is still a criterion to deeming that person a full citizen because it is a political right. Therefore, no one is simply a “citizen,” full stop

There can be a different type of citizenship based on the combination of rights an individual possesses at any given point.

Before Cohen’s theoretical contribution to discussions of citizenship, ex-felons with their voting rights reinstated would be deemed “citizens.” Ex-felons who could not vote would be deemed “non-citizens.” Scholars and legislators can discuss citizenship as a spectrum rather than a positive versus negative binary. Expanding the vocabulary is significant for groups whose social identities, like ex-felons, are bound to a specific set of rights. Essentially, the notion of semi-citizenship prevents scholars, legislators, and the general public from completely removing ex-felons from the general citizenry because the general citizenry is not exclusively comprised of individuals who possess every category of rights.

Although ex-felons temporarily cannot share political rights with full-citizens, they still share social and civil rights: and may be considered “semi-citizens.” Understand the concept of semi-citizenship not only change the way that the public and institution view ex-felons. It also gives ex-felons a new way to identify themselves politically and socially in their communities within Florida.

The interviews and testimonies reveal the dejected sentiments of ex-felons in Florida who feel marginalized from the general voting-eligible population. Instead of feeling detached from the public due to their identity as non-citizens, ex-felons can take ownership of their semi-citizenship. Not only can ex-felons have a new social and political status to identify with, but they can also be motivated by the fluidity between the level of citizenship instead of feeling left out of political life in Florida permanently.

In a sense it gives ex-felons hope that they are in transition towards exercising all categories of rights and thus, enjoying full citizenship. Therefore, Cohen’s approach of recognizing that there are different levels of citizenship based on rights that individuals possess, the restoration of ex-felons’ voting rights will essentially promote ex-felons to full citizenship upon completion of their sentences.

Semi-Citizenship presents a framework for justifying levels of citizenship and offering a new positive identity for ex-felons in Florida to possess. However, it does not explain why it is justifiable to have citizenship levels in the first place. If Amendment 4 received over a 60 percent approval rating, Florida citizens do not support completely barring ex-felons from voting anymore. However, ex-felon disenfranchisement's deep roots would suggest that there is still something holding the public back from fully supporting ex-felon suffrage.

The relationship between the general public and ex-felons is essential because public influences affect ex-felon citizenship. Semi-Citizenship does not provide a complete explanation of the interaction between semi-citizen and full-citizens. Therefore, the questions that remain are, why Floridians in the past content with a significant portion of their state's population unable to vote? Moreover, what is motivating Floridians in the past year to support ex-felon enfranchisement?

The public's disdain for ex-felon's suffrage in the past reflected shared views on crime and punishment. American held idea and citizenship was reserved for those that demonstrate moral responsibility. Morally responsible citizens are those who abide by the law. Thus, ex-felons were not fit to be citizens because of their irresponsible choice to commit a felony. Furthermore, it was acceptable to disenfranchise felons as punishment for breaking the "social contract. As Holloway argued, labeling ex-felons as infamous through the type of crimes they committed was another way of portraying ex-felons as unsuitable for citizenship. Holloway explains that "the logic of the time was that if one was infamous, one could not enjoy the full rights citizenship."

Therefore, infamous theoretical concepts explain why ex-felons are seen as semi-citizens and how the public justified denying ex-felons of full citizenship. According to Holloway, ex-felons are not just semi-citizens because of their lack of political rights but also their "infamous" status. In the finding provided by Manza, Brooks, and Uggen, respondents were less willing to support voting rights restoration for ex-felons when the type of crime committed was explicit. If the respondent knew that the ex-felon committed sexual abuse, they were 28 percent less likely to approve re-enfranchising ex-felons.

Crimes such as sexual abuse are examples of crimes that earned ex-felons their infamous status in the late 1800s. Therefore, if ex-felons committed an infamous crime, public opinion shows less opposition to denying full citizenship to ex-felons. Nonetheless, respondents were still supportive of ex-felon enfranchisement. Similarly, data from the 2018 midterm election suggest that Floridians support ex-felon enfranchisement, with more than 60 percent voting in favor of Amendment 4.

There is support for the restoration of political rights to ex-felons that align with the public's ideas of a moral citizen.

### **Chapter 3: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

There are numerous movements across the nations that are giving former felons the democracy is equality in voting. The right to vote cannot be abridged. American performance on the right to vote and the impact of reforms like the right to vote amendment, ex-felon re-enfranchisement hope that they will one day overcome the stigma of incarceration and be accepted as responsible citizens giving impoverished communities a more extraordinary voice. However, many conservative groups fiercely oppose the changes, arguing that people need to prove that they are members of society before they can vote.

One of the most important aspect of incorporating the voice of all citizens into the legislature, is guaranteeing that citizens that belong to racial and linguistic minority groups can freely and equally participate in elections. In the U.S., no piece of legislation has been more important in ensuring voting rights to previously disenfranchised groups than the voting rights Acts of 1965. The right to vote is influential to all race, ethnic, and language minority citizens. The voting rights act is significant as it prohibits minority vote dilution thought tactics, legislation, a situation that weakens the right to vote of minorities. It also prevents states from

enacting discriminatory practices designed to give minorities an unfair chance to elect candidates of their choice enforceable nationwide.

There are different movement to restorer's felon's voting rights has gotten tangled up in partisan ideological battles, with Democratic leaders tending to support expanded access to the ballot and Republic opposing it. This disenfranchisement laws wreak particular havoc on minority communities, but they encumber everyone with a felony record, whatever their color in fact, that two thirds of the men and women released from prison end up behind bars again within three years. Laws foster recidivism by former prisoner's political power as a class, making them easy targets for politicians who can restrict their access to jobs and social service benefits whenever they must cut the budget or brandish their get formidable credentials. Of course, restrictions focused on the support of the disenfranchisement laws, considering that at one time, 75% of the states enforced them and that even now, fully 64 percent continued to do so. Indeed, in the south, during the reconstruction era, these laws served a baldly racist purpose.

However, their present-day proponents insist that they now promote a variety of non-discriminatory and salutary objectives, from deterring crime to rewarding good citizenship to strengthen the social fabric. The reformers have focused on the states where progress is necessarily incremental only because they've concluded that Congress which alone is capable of enacting large-scale and uniform change, is unable or unwilling to do so. Supposed Congress provide them wrong by passing a law permitting ex-felons to vote in federal elections (Hull & Conyers 2006). Would this be an unqualified good, or by empowering ex-felons might lawmakers be encouraging participation from the very people least likely to vote in public interest.

The issues of felon disenfranchisement came to head in the 2000 presidential election, where a few decisive votes determined the outcome of the election. As many newspaper outlets and advocacy groups were quick to point out, disenfranchisement kept a large enough group of minority citizens from voting that it most likely affected the outcome of the election. Aside from affecting elections results, felon disenfranchisement serves to keep felons feeling alienated from society.

Ex-felons appear to be excited to vote because of how rights restoration facially appears to change one's citizenship completely. However, we cannot make any national generalizations based on the testimonies of Floridians. Firstly, Florida is unique because other states have different processes for voting rights restoration. For example, in Maine and Vermont, felons never lose their right to vote. In other states like Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, felons only lose their right to vote during their incarceration. They are granted their voting rights immediately after being released. Therefore, there is not enough qualitative or quantitative data here to presume that ex-felons share the same perspective or experience throughout the country as they do in Florida. Data does not account for most ex-felon experiences that their voting rights have been stripped during or after their incarceration.

Based on interviews and testimonies, of ex-felons in Florida that express voting can overcome their status as semi-citizens. Their citizenship is not just about their political rights, but also what they individually feel in relation to other in their community.

### **Practical Applications**

Based on interviews and e-mail and video's also testimonies, of ex-felons in Florida that express voting can overcome their status as semi-citizens. Their citizenship is not just about their political rights, but also what they individually feel in relation to other in their community.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Ex-felons are not just semi-citizens because of their lack of political rights, but the contribution of citizenship, ex-felons with their voting rights reinstated would be deemed "citizens." Ex-felons who could not vote would be deemed "non-citizen." Thru a positive versus negative binary. Focus on legislators and the general public for completely removing ex-felons from the general citizenry is not exclusively comprised every category of their rights.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, voters should consider the importance of a second chance to someone who has committed a crime in his or her past but is now part of the community and trying to care for themselves and their families just like every other non-felon citizen. It's no secret that a large number of our prison population is made up of minority groups. The large number of them are people of color. Therefore, if they are not allowed to vote after they have paid their debt to society, it could look as though we are discriminating by restricting the voting rights of that specific minority group.

This is due of course to the fact that this will greatly sway the vote against minorities. In addition to tis it will affect our voting outcome in yet another way of redlining district to suppress the vote from people of color. Due to certain states suppression the vote of ex-felons by doing so, there has been an upwards of 6 million Americans have lost their rights to vote due to felony charges. We can only imagine what this number would become if all states disenfranchised their ex-felons.

The Fourth Amendment is crucial to ex-felons transitioning from their current status as semi-citizens to full citizens in Florida. Moreover, Floridians who have never been convicted of a felony and are enjoying full citizenship lay an important role in the future of ex-felon citizenship. With their support, ex-felons are granted a second chance at full citizenship after completing their sentences. However, this paper's national data suggest that certain types of ex-felons are still deemed unworthy of full citizenship. Thus, some ex-felons will remain semi-citizens unless the public no longer judges crimes such as sexual abuse and murder as infamous.

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