

# The Citizen

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PHOTO FROM PROPUBLICA

**PARDON ME** | Throughout history, the U.S. President's powers have grown, but the number of presidential pardons is small.

## Keeping POTUS' powers in check

By Kevin Hunte  
Citizen Staff Writer

In spite of claiming objectivity, there's lots of bias in the American justice system. The president not only is allowed to project his will onto the people by law, but is able to bend the law at will based off of the actions of prior presidents. Although powers such as presidential pardons, executive order, and war powers are necessary, they can also easily be abused.

Giving one person the power to overturn terms and agreements made by groups of people is contradictory to the values the United States was made on. With checks and balances being such an essential theme to our Constitution, giving one person unchallenged power can prove to be quite dangerous.

Pardons give the president the authority to forgive any federal crime other than one that ended with impeachment. This means that other than an officials who have been brought to trial by the majority of Con-

gress and found guilty by the Supreme Court justices, they can be given a get-out-of-jail card for their crimes. That is a significant amount of power for one person. This causes the law to turn a blind eye to whoever has been convicted of a felony. This allows this person to once again own firearms, serve on jury, serve in many professions and even vote again in many states. Pardons have such a life-changing impact on those fortunate enough to receive one.

It's very much like a golden ticket from Willa Wonka's Chocolate Factory, where there are many prisoners similar to an Albert Byron Stork, who was convicted on filing a false tax return, but are still branded as convicted felons. And with those who do get this chance, there is always the chance that they will make the same mistakes later on. Pardons are an example of a need-ed power in our society, but has great potential for harm in the wrong hands.

War Powers allow the President, as commander in chief, to send soldiers into enemy territory without the con-

sent of the other branches of government. The power to declare war is delegated to the Congress. The part that is wrong with this power is the reaction of another country under attack by soldiers. Regardless of who sends them into battle from our end, the defending country is still under attack by the United States. This was the case with President Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War.

The power to send soldiers into battle should not be left in the hands of one person. Whether or not the rights exercised by the president in the Vietnam War example were justified, it still shows the possibility for something to go dangerously wrong with such a great amount of authority.

The president does not deserve of all the blame. Manipulation of the Constitution has always taken place in United States history. It is also the duty of the people to thoroughly know their candidates before electing them to office, as well as the powers they will obtain.

## TV prison myths meet harsh reality

By Fatoumata Diallo  
Citizen Staff Writer

"Orange is the New Black" is a hit Netflix series that focuses on Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling) who was sentenced to a women's federal prison for drug smuggling. The show is based off a book of the same name by Piper Kerman who served a year in a women's prison. Even though the author of the book did serve some time in prison, how accurate is the portrayal of women prisons in the show?

Some scenes take place in the Riverhead Jail in Suffolk County on Long Island, N.Y. Although the women in the show do deal with some abominable conditions, their conditions pale in comparison to those living in the correctional facilities of Suffolk County.

The New York City Liberties Union initiated a campaign to raise awareness about the cruel conditions at these correctional facilities.

"Prison life isn't funny," says Beatrice Codianni, who served time in the Danbury Federal Prison.

According to Beatrice Codianni who served time in the Danbury Federal prison, According to a former inmate at Riverhead Jail, Jason Potter, the toilets used to literally spray waste, "projectile, six to eight feet into the air." The flood would last about 30 hours and prisoners had to crowd onto a small table while the flood was cleaned up.

The major problem with bath-

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## Opinion: Overpolicing a problem for students

By Andi Arch  
Citizen Staff Writer

Post-9/11 Police Presence in schools has been an issue of much controversy and debate, especially between students, parents, administrators, and police. Debate has focused particularly on how this new surge of policing in the educational sphere affects the way minority students are entered into the criminal system.

As a point of personal reference, I go to a school with a large multitude of police officers. There is not a day where I do not see a cop in every hallway, every door. There is at least one cop at the door of the cafeteria, two cops behind the main entrance, a cop inside the cafeteria, and other officers patrolling. Many parents may see this

presence as making students safer, however most of my interactions and the interactions I have seen with the officers have been handled negatively. For example, for being 15 minutes late I was forced into a police car with threat of arrest and my parents were called. This was one of the first times in that year that I had ever been late to school. I was also interrogated by a police officer and two members of the administration for allegedly being a witness to a crime, and my parents were called after that as well.

Not only have do my experiences show this trend of extreme policing, but others do as well. The police are the ones that break up fights, from simple arguments to punches. They have the power to arrest and send any stu-

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PHOTO FROM NATIONOFCHANGE.COM

**COPS** | For some students, having police at school feels like an aggressive tactic.





PHOTO COURTESY OF NETFLIX

**PRISON PORTRAYAL** | As dramatically interesting as “Orange is the New Black” is, and though it does create full characters, it gets parts of the prison experience wrongs.

## Despite inaccuracies, ‘Orange’ humanizes inmates

**ORANGE**, from front page

rooms in “Orange is the New Black” is the lack of privacy, as there is only one stall with a door. Privacy in the Suffolk County prisons are the least of their concerns.

In addition to that, the food in the series does not represent the full extent of the food that typical prisoners have to eat. In the show Yoga Jones warns Piper not to eat the pudding because “sometimes the kitchen has to scrape the mold off the top [of the can] before they serve it”. But in the Suffolk county correctional facilities the prisoners not only have to face mold but are “served food containing rodent droppings” recalled Potter.

The conditions featured on the show may not be in direct corre-

spondence to the conditions in other women prisons but the show does attempt to humanize prisoners by displaying their background stories.

In a review of the series, Hank Stuever of the Washington Post stated, “Within, the first six episodes, they [the women] are expertly and fully sketched, textured and realized: Latinas, lesbians, an activist nun, a fireman who transitioned into a woman...together, these women and their stories form a sad and strange tapestry”.

This is where the creator, Jenji Kohan, departs from the storyline of the book. Piper Chapman is her “access point” to tell all the other stories of women that are in prison. “In a lot of ways Piper was my Trojan Horse. You’re not going to go into a network and sell a show

on really fascinating tales of black women, and Latina women, and old women and criminals. But if you take this white girl, this sort of fish out of water, and you follow her in, you can then expand your world and tell all of those other stories” said Jenji Kohan in an interview for NPR.

At first glance it may not be apparent, but Orange does address some important issues. When Taystee is released, the inmates in Orange hold a farewell party. However, she is back in prison for violating parole.

“When you get out, they be up your ass like the KGB. Curfew every night. Piss in a cup whenever they say,” Taystee says after returning to prison. “Minimum wage is [a] joke. I got part-time work at Pizza Hut and still owe the prison \$900 in fees. ... I was sleeping on the floor of my sec-

ond cousin apartment like a dog. ... I got lice. Everyone I know is poor, in jail, or gone.”

Taystee’s statement addresses the issue of recidivism and how the prison system set people up to fail. Drug offenders are usually denied public housing and other government assistance programs. Yet, inmates are expected to assimilate back into society without any problems.

Although Orange is the New Black does not have an exact depiction of the conditions at Suffolk County prisons, the show may serve as an outlet for social commentary.

Sometimes an element of comedy is necessary to confront big issues that society tends to ignore. It helps ease tensions associated with these issues and allows for conversation and action to follow.

## Policing schools creates problems, solves few

**POLICE**, from front page

dent to jail. In cases where many of the school-related mass shootings have been in small, white, affluent neighborhoods, whereas the police seem to be in schools based in large, mostly minority, poor neighborhoods.

Politics plays a large role in this. Politicians must show some sort of action whenever a nationwide crisis appears, for fear of losing voters, and tend to make promises that they do not keep or that seem to solve a problem but simply only create a facade of security.

A fitting example would be the large amount of police force that is being put into high schools. The problem that students face is the same problem that people under the age of majority face in terms of having a say.

Those who cannot vote cannot do much to influence the government. Children who cannot vote cannot do much to change the situations around them, especially situations that are reinforced by laws that they cannot vote against. The stress and amount of time

every day used for schools ensures that they will not have enough time, energy, or focus to properly tackle other issues.

A 2011 longitudinal study of 470 schools nationwide examined school safety over a period of years suggested that, more weapons possession and drug crimes are recorded in schools that add police officers than in similar schools that do not.” This shows that policies enacted on public education, which has a much higher percentage of minorities than private schools, do not seem to work.

In fact, they seem to show an adverse effect. Children who are put into the system at a young age are at an astronomically higher rate of going from juvenile punishment to adult prison, where what might have caused a slap on the wrist, or even just a few days of suspension and a scolding at home, may lead to years behind bars.

Instead of creating ways to stop this problem, it seems as if police are rubbing salt on the wound, transforming every small issue in school into a police matter.

## Freedom and Citizenship students 2014-2015

