The Need
JustLeadershipUSA believes that America’s most challenging barrier to systemic criminal justice reform is the absence of clear and consistent leadership by those who have been directly affected. It is not for lack of intelligence or hard work that formerly incarcerated people rarely assume roles of leadership in our society, but a lack of access to resources. We believe that everyone has the capacity to lead, but not everyone is exposed to opportunities that teach them critical leadership skills.

Leadership Development Training for the Formerly Incarcerated
JustLeadershipUSA is creating a national network of leaders united through a shared vision for criminal justice reform. With the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia University, we have partnered with leaders who are formerly incarcerated to research, develop, and employ a dynamic and inclusive leadership model. We will provide culturally competent leadership development trainings to national cohort of 35 formerly incarcerated individuals annually. Our Director of Leadership Cultivation is a highly skilled facilitator who has also worked with National Urban Fellows. All qualified participants will have demonstrated leadership capacity in their respective careers and/or communities, and will gain entry into the program through a competitive application process. With our above-mentioned partners, JustLeadershipUSA is currently interviewing over 50 formerly incarcerated leaders nationwide and hosting focus groups to help inform our dynamic leadership development curriculum. Personal stories of leadership and success will be made available to people in prison on Android Tablets through collaboration with American Prison Data Systems.

Program Elements
JustLeadershipUSA’s training program will utilize the heavily research-based four key elements of adult learning theory, including:

• Careful preparation
• Skillfully facilitated learning
• Responsibly supported transfer of knowledge
• Evaluation and acknowledgement of achievement

Cohort-Based
Cohort-based training practices will promote a sustainable leadership community that fosters ongoing development long after training is complete, and will take place both in-person and remotely with a highly trained facilitator.

• Peer coaching sessions will enable participants to provide ongoing practical support to each other and to practice coaching skills
• Peer group learning projects and presentations will challenge participants to step outside of their comfort zones and fine tune skills that are critical to leadership capacity
• One-on-one executive coaching will help participants to frame their experience and to self-reflect throughout the program
• Individual leadership development planning will guide leaders in identifying their clear goals and objectives throughout the training experience
• Networking activities will expand the scope of participant opportunity

Structure and Evaluation
Programs will take place over the course of 9 months, and participant growth will be thoroughly evaluated:

• Pre and post 360° assessments will identify areas of strength and weakness in participant leadership skills and measure personal/professional progress upon program completion
• In partnership with Columbia Law School, we will utilize a cutting edge online network evaluation tool to support participants’ pursuit of goals; this tool will assess participant need and evaluate change over time in areas such as job transitions, policy opportunities, personal challenges, life events and more.
• A 6-month intensive training period will be followed by a 3-month work period.
• Cost per trainee is now estimated to be $15,000; nominal compared to similar programs, and a relatively small investment for lifelong professional development and leadership skills.

"I believe that the launching of JustLeadershipUSA will be viewed, one day, by historians and advocates alike as a true game changer: the moment in the emerging movement when formerly incarcerated people finally had a chance to be heard, to organize, and to influence policy in major ways — even though many of them still lacked the right to vote."

- Michelle Alexander, civil rights lawyer, advocate, legal scholar, and author of “The New Jim Crow"