Joan Petersilia

Joan Petersilia was a transformational leader and scholar who led the United States in correctional reform. She dedicated her life work to bringing social science research to bear on crime policy, and her work laid the foundation for methodologically rigorous, practice informed, and policy-relevant research and evaluation that set the standard for the field. She is most well-known for her work in the area of corrections, particularly her early work on intensive supervision probation. She was also pioneer in the study of prisoner reentry, and published the seminal book, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. This work serves as one of the major resources on reentry and offers a framework for reform that is still relevant today.

Joan was also an embedded researcher and served as special advisor to the governors of California during a critical time of reform and reorganization, and her efforts were instrumental in de-carceration in this state. She was also a generous mentor and teacher and trained her students to use science to inform policy. She took an active role in training applied criminologists at the University of California-Irvine and brought her knowledge of law in practice to students at Stanford. She was one of the very few who was able to blend academic skills with a unique ability to work with policymakers and practitioners in the criminal justice field.

Joan was also a tireless fighter for individuals with disabilities, something both of her sons faced. Those who knew Joan best would agree and attest to the fact that her passion for the work she did was fueled by the sheer love of doing criminological research and an unwavering commitment to escorting research into arenas where it could make a difference in the lives of real people, families and communities, especially those who most suffer from policies and practices. Her compassion for others knew no bounds; it motivated her dogged work ethic and insatiable desire to “get it right.”

Joan began her career as director of the Criminal Justice Program at the RAND Corporation. She then moved to the University of California-Irvine where she served as Professor of Criminology, Law and Society for twenty years. She also co-founded the UCI Center on Evidence-Based Corrections. She ended her academic career as the Albert H. Sweet Professor of Law at Stanford University. Her work has been honored in many ways including the 2014 Stockholm Prize in Criminology, the American Society of Criminology (ASC) Vollmer Award, and the 2002 ASC Division on Corrections and Sentencing Senior Scholar Award. Joan also served as president of the American Society of Criminology in 1990. She will always be one of the foundational scholars of correctional and criminal justice research and policy reform.