

the real cost of prisons project™

Prisoners of a Hard Life



Women
&
Their Children

Prisoners of a Hard Life

Women & Their Children

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The Real Cost of Prisons Project brings together prison/justice policy activists with political economists to create workshops and materials which explore both the immediate and long-term costs of mass incarceration on the individual, her/his family, community and the nation.

Two additional comic books are part of this series: *Prison Town: Paying the Price* and *Prisoners of the War On Drugs*. If you would like copies of our comic books to assist your group in its organizing work, contact Lois Ahrens. Or you can download the entire series for free from our website: www.realcostofprisons.org.

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THANK YOU

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*And to the women whose lives and families have been disrupted by incarceration.
We are grateful for what we learn from you.*

1 OUT OF EVERY 109 WOMEN IN AMERICA IS INCARCERATED, ON PAROLE OR PROBATION

150,000 women are in jail or in prison¹



MOST WOMEN ENTERING PRISON HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF NON-VIOLENT CRIMES²



1/2 OF ALL WOMEN IN PRISON ARE INCARCERATED MORE THAN 100 MILES FROM THEIR FAMILIES³



INCARCERATED WOMEN ARE AMONG THE POOREST PEOPLE IN AMERICA. 2/3 HAVE LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION. ONE IN FIVE HOMELESS⁴



ALMOST 1/2 OF THE WOMEN ENTERING PRISON IN 2000 WERE SERVING TIME FOR DRUG OFFENCES⁵



SEVEN MILLION CHILDREN HAVE A PARENT IN PRISON, ON PROBATION OR ON PAROLE⁶



AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE 18% OF N.Y. STATE'S POPULATION⁷

HISPANICS ARE 15.1% OF N.Y. STATE'S POPULATION⁸



77% OF ALL WOMEN IN N.Y. STATE'S PRISONS ARE BLACK OR HISPANIC⁹



OF ALL PEOPLE INCARCERATED IN NEW YORK WITH DRUG OFFENCES:

93% ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN OR HISPANIC¹⁰



Latisha Williams

AND THE ROCK

"THE ROCK" ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS ENACTED IN 1973 WHEN NELSON ROCKEFELLER WAS GOVERNOR OF N.Y. THESE LAWS REQUIRE HARSH PRISON TERMS FOR POSSESSION OR SALE OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF DRUGS!

ALL STORIES BASED ON REAL EVENTS!



LATISHA HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF FOSTER HOMES HER WHOLE LIFE



WHEN SHE WAS 15 YEARS OLD LATISHA MOVED IN WITH THE JONES FAMILY



HER FIRST NIGHT THERE SHE WAS MOLESTED BY HER "NEW FATHER"



3 WEEKS LATER SHE RAN AWAY

SWEARING NEVER TO BE A FOSTER CHILD AGAIN



LATISHA MOVED IN WITH HER BOYFRIEND JAMAL WHO LOVED HER AND TREATED HER WELL

JAMAL LIVED WITH HIS UNCLE JOHN. HE WAS GOOD TO LATISHA AND SHE WAS GRATEFUL THAT HE HAD NEVER TRIED TO TOUCH HER.



OVER THE YEARS JOHN ASKED LATISHA TO HELP OUT IN HIS "BUSINESS" SHE SAID YES BUT HAD A BAD FEELING ABOUT IT.



THERE WAS A POLICE RAID

A POUND OF HEROIN WAS FOUND IN THE APARTMENT

POLICE ARRESTED JAMAL, LATISHA & JOHN

LATISHA WAS SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON

WITH A MINIMUM OF 15 YEARS



SHE WAS CHARGED WITH POSSESSION OF A POUND OF HEROIN A CLASS A-1 FELONY



THE ROCK

THE MOST SERIOUS CLASSIFICATION OF A FELONY IN NEW YORK IS CLASS-A. THIS CATEGORY INCLUDES MURDER, KIDNAPPING, RAPE AND ARSON. IT ALSO INCLUDES THE POSSESSION OF 4 OUNCES OR SELLING OF 2 OUNCES OF A NARCOTIC DRUG (CLASS A-1).

UNTIL THE "REFORM" OF THE ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS IN 12-04 THOSE CONVICTED OF CLASS A-1 FELONIES WERE GIVEN AN INDEFINITE PRISON TERM WITH 15 YEARS MINIMUM AND LIFE MAXIMUM NOW IT IS 8-20 YEARS.

CURRENTLY ABOUT 450 PEOPLE LIKE LATISHA CAN APPEAL LEAVING 15,000 PEOPLE WITH DRUG FELONIES STILL INCARCERATED.

TAXPAYERS IN NEW YORK SPEND ABOUT \$700,000,000 A YEAR TO KEEP PEOPLE CONVICTED OF DRUG CRIMES IN PRISON.

WHEN AND IF LATISHA GETS OUT OF PRISON

SHE WILL FACE HUGE OBSTACLES FINDING A JOB OR HOUSING BECAUSE OF HER CRIMINAL RECORD SHE WILL BE UNABLE TO GET A STUDENT LOAN OR LIVE IN PUBLIC HOUSING.

IN MANY STATES WOMEN WHO HAVE CRIMINAL RECORDS MAY NOT VOTE BECAUSE OF THIS

ONE IN EVERY 50 BLACK WOMEN IN AMERICA CANNOT VOTE²



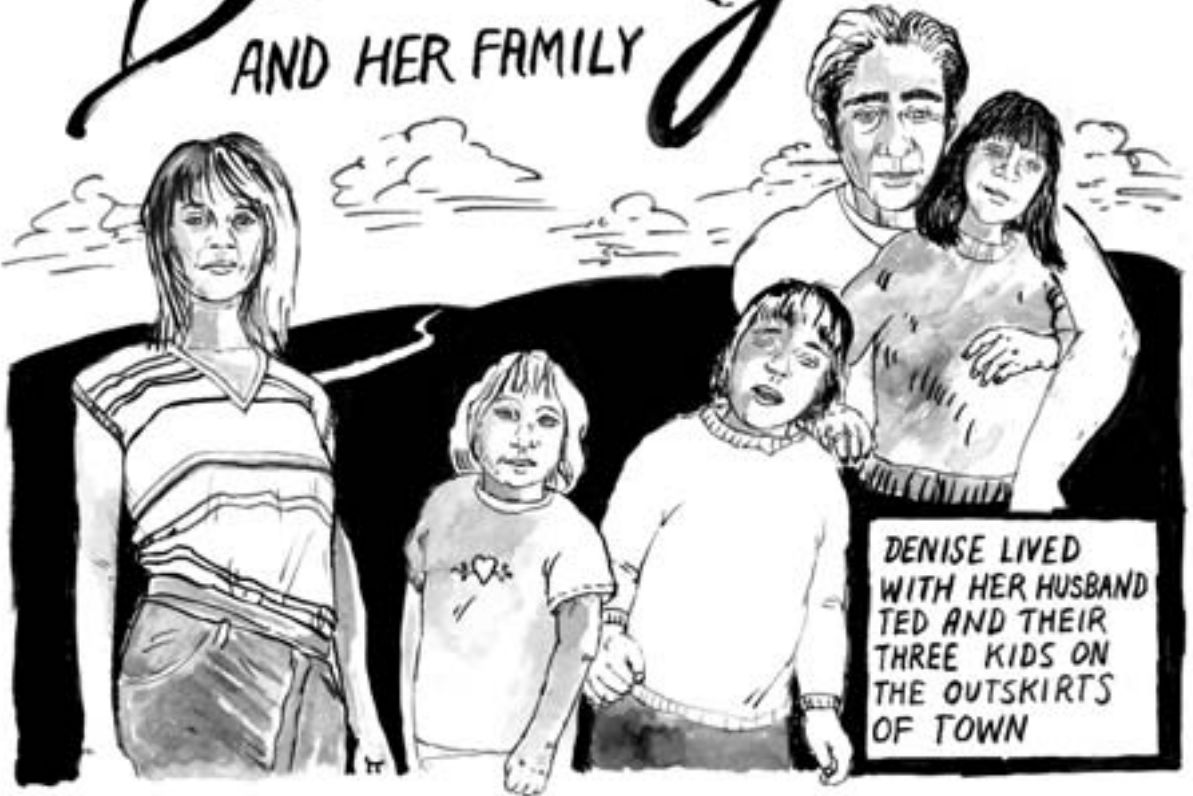
MORE THAN HALF OF THE WOMEN WHO GET OUT OF U.S. PRISONS ARE NOT ALLOWED ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS¹

OVER 92,000 ARE SUBJECT TO A LIFE-TIME WELFARE BAN¹ INCLUDING FOOD STAMPS

IN NEW YORK STATE LATISHA COULD APPLY FOR WELFARE (TANF) BUT IN MANY OTHER STATES PEOPLE WITH DRUG RELATED FELONIES ARE DENIED WELFARE AND FOOD STAMPS PARTIALLY OR COMPLETELY.

Denise James

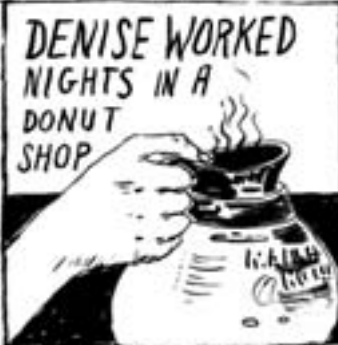
AND HER FAMILY



DENISE LIVED WITH HER HUSBAND TED AND THEIR THREE KIDS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN



OUT
TED WORKED DAYS AS A SECURITY GUARD



DENISE WORKED NIGHTS IN A DONUT SHOP

THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS LIVING IN POVERTY HAS RISEN FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW TO 34.6 MILLION AN INCREASE OF NEARLY 3 MILLION SINCE 2000 ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENSUS SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

CHILDREN REMAIN THE AGE GROUP MOST LIKELY TO BE POOR 16.7% OF ALL CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY UP FROM 16.3% IN 2001

THE PROPORTION OF AMERICANS LIVING IN POVERTY INCREASED 12.1% IN 2002 UP FROM 11.7% IN 2001



EVEN THOUGH THEY BOTH WORKED AT FULL TIME JOBS THEY WERE LIVING WELL BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

POVERTY AS DESCRIBED BY THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU AS \$14,499 A YEAR IN 2002 FOR A FAMILY OF 1 PARENT AND TWO CHILDREN

ONE NIGHT A COUPLE OF BORED COPS AT THE DONUT SHOP DECIDED TO RUN A LICENSE CHECK ON ALL THE CARS IN THE PARKING LOT...

INCLUDING DENISE'S BEAT UP TRUCK. THEY DISCOVERED SHE HAD AN OUTSTANDING WARRANT FROM FOUR YEARS AGO...





DENISE WAS ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO JAIL

THE WARRANT WAS FOR A BAD CHECK SHE HAD WRITTEN WHEN THEY COULDN'T PAY THE RENT



DENISE SAID SHE WOULD PAY RESTITUTION... AS MUCH AS SHE COULD POSSIBLY AFFORD EACH MONTH

"SIX MONTHS IN JAIL..."

BUT THE JUDGE FELT HE HAD TO TEACH HER A LESSON.

INSTEAD OF ALLOWING DENISE TO PAY \$900.00 IN RESTITUTION FOR BAD CHECKS IT WILL COST ABOUT \$15,000.00 TO KEEP HER IN JAIL FOR 6 MONTHS

AFTER 6 MONTHS IN JAIL DENISE AND HER FAMILY WILL BE HOMELESS

TED COULDN'T PAY RENT WITH HIS INCOME ALONE



THE FAMILY WAS EVICTED FROM THEIR HOME

TED AND THE THREE KIDS MOVED INTO A MOTEL



THE CHILDREN HAD TO CHANGE SCHOOLS



TED: "what am I gonna do? I can't keep up with the bills and the kids are doing so bad in school"

DENISE: "this is all my fault"



WHEN IT SEEMED THINGS COULDN'T GET WORSE A SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR CALLED THE SOCIAL SERVICES

"... they appear to be homeless and uncared for..."

DENISE AND TED'S CHILDREN WERE TAKEN AWAY AND PUT INTO 3 DIFFERENT FOSTER HOMES



TWO MILLION CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 HAVE AN INCARCERATED PARENT. 53,000 OF THESE CHILDREN GO INTO FOSTER CARE AT AN ESTIMATED MINIMUM COST OF \$20,000 PER CHILD - THIS COMES TO OVER ONE BILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR³

WITHOUT PROPER COMMUNITY SUPPORT CHILDREN OF PRISONERS WILL SUFFER AN ARRAY OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS WHICH LEAD TO TRUANCY, EARLY PREGNANCY DRUG ABUSE AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY⁴ THIS BECOMES VERY COSTLY TO CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY.

JAILS AND PRISONS ARE OFTEN THE FIRST RESPONSE TO COMPLICATED ISSUES LIKE POVERTY, MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTION.

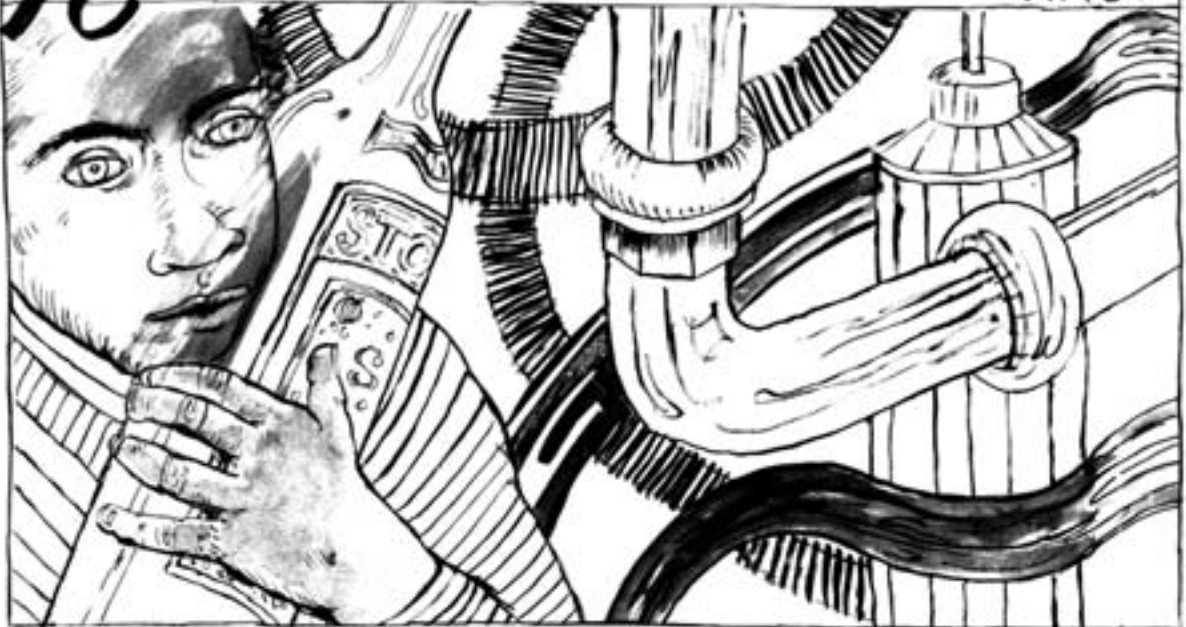
DENISE'S KIDS WERE TAKEN AWAY WHEN SHE ONLY HAD ONE MONTH LEFT OF HER SENTENCE.

SHE AND TED ARE NOW HOMELESS. TAX-PAYERS WILL PAY AT LEAST \$150.00 FOR THEM TO STAY IN A SHELTER FOR ONE NIGHT.

TO RENT AN APARTMENT THEY WILL NEED FIRST AND LAST MONTHS RENT PLUS A SECURITY DEPOSIT. TO RENT AN APARTMENT AT FAIR MARKET VALUE THEY WILL NEED TO EARN \$19.66 AN HOUR 40 HOURS A WEEK. THIS IS 3 TIMES THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE⁵

46% OF ALL JOBS BETWEEN 1994 AND 2005 WILL PAY LESS THAN \$16,000.00 A YEAR. NOT ENOUGH TO LIFT FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY⁶

Ramona Willis AND THE VIRUS



RAMONA STARTED DRINKING WHEN SHE WAS 11 YEARS OLD. HER PARENTS KEPT VODKA HIDDEN UNDER THE SINK. THEY WERE BOTH ALCOHOLICS AND NOT THINKING ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO THEIR LITTLE GIRL



OR
WHAT
HAPPENED
THAT TIME
THEY LEFT
HER ALONE
IN THE
HOUSE
WITH HER
UNCLE . . .

BY THE TIME SHE'S 17 RAMONA IS A STRUNG OUT HEROIN ADDICT — TRICKING ON THE STREET AND ABOUT TO GET HERSELF ARRESTED FOR THE UMP-TEENTH TIME.



AFTER SHE GETS ARRESTED... ALONE IN HER CELL SHE THINKS ABOUT HER DAUGHTER AYISHA WHO IS JUST STARTING TO TALK...

All these times in jail

why am I so bad?

All these times in drug treatment

what is wrong with me?

why can't I just stop using drugs?

why can't I just be a good mother?

RAMONA IS MISSING ALL OF IT



OUT ON PROBATION RAMONA GETS SOME GOOD NEWS IN THE MAIL...



IN JAIL SHE HAD APPLIED FOR A PLACE IN A GOOD DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAM — SHE GETS ACCEPTED!

RAMONA IS HAPPY AND WANTS TO TELL AYISHA AND HER MOTHER THE NEWS



BUT SHE KNOWS SHE COULD GET ARRESTED JUST WALKING AROUND THE BLOCK.

2002 NEW YORK CITY "OPERATION SPOTLIGHT" "OPERATION CLEANSWEEP" POLICE ARE PRESSED TO TICKET ANYONE THEY RECOGNIZE AS A PROSTITUTE USUALLY LEADING TO AN ARREST - JUDGES WERE ENCOURAGED TO GIVE HARSH SENTENCES AND "SWEEP UP PROSTITUTION"

RAMONA CALLS A DETECTIVE SHE KNOWS FROM THE POLICE STATION

Hey Curtis? I got in the program! I'm just waiting for a bed then I'll be leaving the city... I'm CLEAN now Curtis, I'm not tricking... Please don't get me arrested o.k.?



RAMONA

RUSHES OUT TO HER MOTHER'S HOUSE...

Well look who's here! Ramona you just can't stay out of trouble can you?

OH MANI CURTIS DON'T DO THIS TO ME!



RAMONA'S MOTHER + AYISHA WATCHED FROM THE WINDOW



ONE IN FIVE

CHILDREN OF WOMEN WHO BECOME INCARCERATED WILL WITNESS THEIR MOTHER'S ARREST. FEW POLICIES ARE IN PLACE TO MAKE SURE THESE CHILDREN'S NEEDS ARE MET.

BACK IN JAIL FOR SIX MONTHS, RAMONA GETS TESTED FOR HIV

"I always tried to get them to use a condom but ... I was real strong out ..."



WHILE SHE WAITS FOR HER RESULTS TO COME BACK, RAMONA PARTICIPATES AS MUCH AS SHE CAN IN THE UNIT ACTIVITIES.

SHE GOES TO G.E.D. CLASSES.

SHE STARTS WORK AT A PAID JOB.



RAMONA'S TEST RESULTS ARE POSITIVE

"I've got HIV?"

"What if Aiysha has it?"

"Who gave it to me?"

"Will I live long enough to see her grow up?"

"How did I get it?"

"Should I keep it a secret?"

"How will the other women treat me if they find out I have it?"



3.6%
OF ALL WOMEN INCARCERATED
IN THE U.S. ARE HIV +
THAT IS 12 TIMES THE
NATIONAL RATE.

**WOMEN IN PRISON
HAVE A VERY HIGH
RATE OF HIV.**

18%
OF ALL WOMEN INCARCERATED
IN NY STATE ARE HIV +
THAT IS 60 TIMES THE
NATIONAL RATE.¹



78%
OF ALL WOMEN INCARCERATED
IN THE U.S. HAVE A HISTORY
OF PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL
ABUSE, WHICH IS CLOSELY
LINKED TO DRUG ABUSE
AND POST TRAUMATIC
STRESS DIS ORDER.²

**WOMEN WITH A HISTORY OF
SEXUAL ABUSE ARE TWICE
AS LIKELY TO HAVE INJECTED
DRUGS AND 2.8 TIMES AS
LIKELY TO HAVE ENGAGED
IN HIGH RISK SEXUAL
BEHAVIOR.⁵**

WOMEN OF COLOR ARE NOT
MORE LIKELY TO BE ABUSED
OR USE DRUGS BUT BECAUSE
THEY LIVE IN AREAS
SUBJECT TO OVER POLICING
(TARGETING) THEY ARE
MORE LIKELY TO BE
ARRESTED AND INCARCERATED
FOR DRUG USE.

Angelina Rivera

SENTENCED TO A HARD LIFE

WHEN ANGELINA WAS A LITTLE GIRL HER MOTHER HAD A "NERVOUS BREAKDOWN"

SHE WOULD STOP TAKING HER MEDICATION AND GET PARANOID.

SHE WOULD SCREAM AT ANGELINA AND LOCK HER OUTSIDE.



WHEN SHE WAS NINETEEN SHE STARTED HEARING VOICES IN HER HEAD

THEY KEPT HER OUT OF SCHOOL SHE COULDN'T WORK

SHE GOT BY ON A SMALL DISABILITY CHECK EACH MONTH



ANGELINA OFTEN SLEPT AT CHURCHES OR SHELTERS OR FRIEND'S HOUSES



CARLOS

A GUY FROM HER OLD NEIGHBORHOOD SHOWED UP - SHE WAS REAL HAPPY TO SEE HIM

HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN NICE TO HER, SO...



WHEN CARLOS ASKED FOR A FAVOR

I NEED TO GO TO THE CITY BUT MY DRIVER'S LICENSE GOT LOST... CAN YOU DRIVE MY BROTHER'S CAR?

SHE COULDN'T REFUSE



"Now Angelina when we get there
you just stay in the
car - NO MATTER
WHAT - ok?"



"ok"



CARLOS TOOK A BIG
PACKAGE FROM THE
TRUNK AND WENT
INTO AN
APARTMENT
BUILDING

**10 MINUTES LATER
CARLOS CAME OUT
HANDCUFFED AND SURROUNDED
BY POLICE**

HE WAS CAUGHT BRINGING
OVER A POUND OF POWDER
COCAINE TO CUSTOMERS HE KNEW



ANGELIA WAS
TAKEN AWAY
BY THE POLICE
COMPLETELY
CONFUSED AND
TERRIFIED

CARLOS WAS
SELLING TO A WHITE
COUPLE WHO TESTIFIED
THAT ANGELINA
"appeared to know
what was in the
trunk of the car"

ANGELINA WAS CONVICTED
ON CONSPIRACY CHARGES

SHE STAYED IN
JAIL FOR NINE
MONTHS -

UNABLE TO
MAKE BAIL -

WAITING FOR
A TRIAL -



MANDATORY TEN YEARS

NO CHANCE OF PAROLE

WOMEN SENTENCED WITH DRUG CONSPIRACY HAVE OFTEN BEEN USED AS COURIERS OR "DRUG MULES"

SINCE THEY DON'T HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEALERS TO TRADE OR "PLEA BARGAIN" THEY END UP WITH LONGER SENTENCES.

EVEN WHEN THEY ARE INNOCENT WOMEN WITHOUT MONEY HAVE TROUBLE FINDING GOOD LEGAL DEFENSE.



CARLOS GOT A SHORTER SENTENCE THAN ANGELINA. HE TRADED INFO ABOUT OTHER DEALERS AND CUSTOMERS FOR A REDUCED SENTENCE.

IN THIS CASE THE DRUG BUYERS DIDN'T GO TO JAIL AT ALL. THEY WERE FEDERAL UNDERCOVER AGENTS.

WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED OR NEGLECTED AS CHILDREN HAVE A 77% HIGHER RATE OF ARREST THAN WOMEN WHO WERE NOT ABUSED.

78% OF ALL INCARCERATED WOMEN WERE ABUSED AS A CHILD.

25% OF THESE WOMEN ALSO HAVE A SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS:

SEVERE DEPRESSION

BI-POLAR DISORDER

SCHIZOPHRENIA

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER



THE COST OF KEEPING ONE PERSON IN PRISON FOR ONE YEAR IS \$29,000

\$290,000 OF OUR TAXES WILL BE SPENT TO KEEP ANGELINA LOCKED UP

FOR EVERY 1000 WOMEN IN AMERICA:
36 IMPRISONED WOMEN ARE BLACK
15 IMPRISONED WOMEN ARE HISPANIC
5 IMPRISONED WOMEN ARE WHITE



REGINA MCKNIGHT

REGINA MCKNIGHT IS IN PRISON IN SOUTH CAROLINA BECAUSE THE STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL THINKS SHE HAS COMMITTED MURDER.

SHE IS THE FIRST WOMAN IN AMERICA TO BE CONVICTED OF MURDER BECAUSE OF HER BEHAVIOR WHILE PREGNANT.

REGINA IS A 27 YEAR OLD AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN WHO LEFT SCHOOL AFTER 10th GRADE AND WENT TO WORK ON A TOBACCO FARM. WHEN HER MOTHER WAS KILLED BY A HIT AND RUN DRIVER SHE BECAME HOMELESS AND ADDICTED TO DRUGS.



IN 1999 SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH HER THIRD CHILD, A GIRL SHE'D NAMED MERCEDES. THE BABY WAS DELIVERED STILLBORN. WHEN AN AUTOPSY FOUND TRACES OF COCAINE IN THE FETUS, REGINA WAS ARRESTED AND PUT ON TRIAL FOR MURDER.

EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NO MEDICAL EVIDENCE THAT COCAINE USE CAUSES STILLBIRTH AND A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF STILLBIRTHS HAVE NO OBVIOUS CAUSE, REGINA WAS TRIED FOR THE DEATH OF HER OWN FETUS.



SHE WAS TRIED UNDER SOUTH CAROLINA'S "HOMICIDE BY CHILD ABUSE" LAW WHICH CAN BE APPLIED TO A FETUS. IN SOUTH CAROLINA A "VIABLE FETUS" IS A PERSON FOR PURPOSES OF PROSECUTION.

DURING REGINA'S TRIAL THE STATE'S OWN EXPERTS TESTIFIED THAT THEY COULDN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN IF COCAINE USE HAD CAUSED REGINA'S STILLBIRTH. MANY TESTS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE WERE NOT DONE. WHEN TWO JURORS ADMITTED TO USING THE INTERNET TO RESEARCH THE CASE A MISTRIAL WAS DECLARED.



AT THE RETRIAL THE SAME EXPERTS WITH NO NEW EVIDENCE CLAIMED THAT COCAINE WAS THE DEFINITE CAUSE FOR REGINA'S STILLBIRTH.

THE JURY CONSIDERED THE CASE FOR 15 MINUTES

REGINA WAS FOUND GUILTY OF HOMICIDE BY CHILD ABUSE AND SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS WITH 8 SUSPENDED.

THE CASE WAS APPEALED TO THE STATE SUPREME COURT MANY MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH GROUPS TRIED TO SUPPORT REGINA'S CASE FILING NUMEROUS STATEMENTS EXPLAINING HOW COCAINE USE ALONE COULD NOT CAUSE THE STILLBIRTH.

PROSECUTORS ADMITTED THAT REGINA HAD NO INTENTION OF HARMING HER PREGNANCY, AND YET THEY UPHELD HER SENTENCE OF MURDER. THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY BECAUSE SHE WAS A DRUG USER WHICH THE COURT INTERPRETED AS SHOWING:

EXTREME
INDIFFERENCE TO
HUMAN
LIFE



THEY ALSO STATED THAT REGINA WOULD BENEFIT FROM DRUG ABUSE TREATMENT BUT WITH LIMITED RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN SOUTH CAROLINA FOR DRUG ABUSE PROGRAMS SHE WENT TO PRISON INSTEAD.

- FALL 2003 U.S. SUPREME COURT DECIDES NOT TO HEAR THE CASE. IT IS STILL ON APPEAL.
- SINCE 1985 OVER 200 WOMEN HAVE BEEN ARRESTED ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEIR BEHAVIOR JEOPARDIZED THEIR PREGNANCY. 1



PRISONS AND JAILS

Stop building new prisons and jails and close others down. Re-direct the \$57 billion¹ spent on jails and prisons to quality education, housing, job training, daycare and health care.

ALTERNATIVES TO JAIL²

Citation Programs – Give tickets to those committing misdemeanor or low-level crimes without booking them through the arrest process.

Improve Release Procedures for the Pretrial and Sentenced Populations – These improvements decrease jail populations by ensuring that people are moving through the system in a timely fashion.

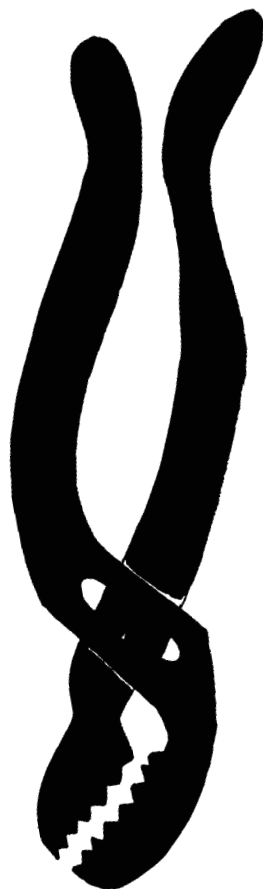
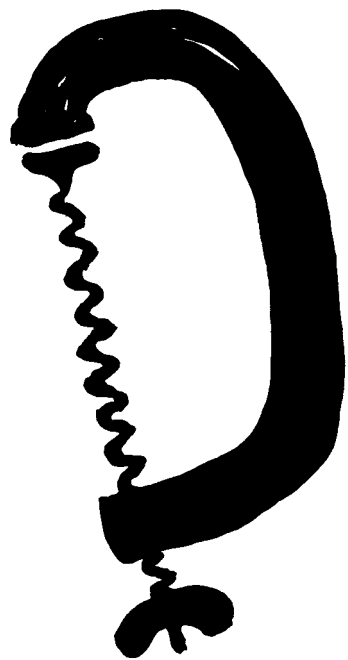
Pre-Trial Diversion – Pretrial services programs can help alleviate jail crowding by releasing people who are incarcerated before trial.

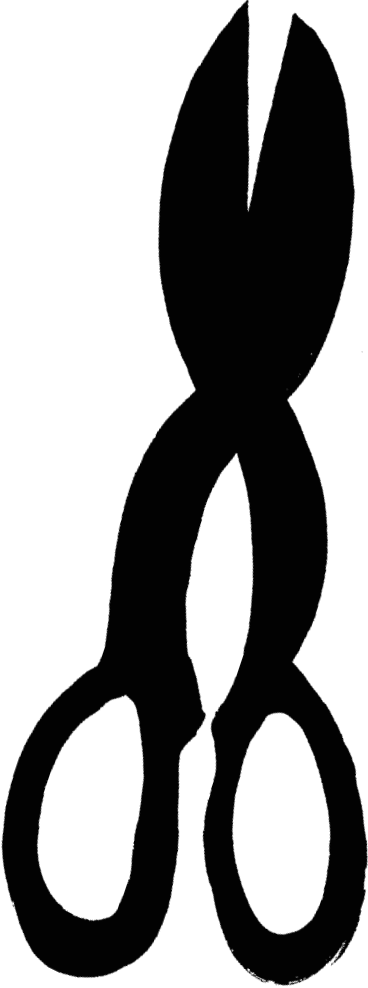
Bail Reform – National studies show most people being held pretrial cannot post a money bond or bail.

Specialty Courts – Drug courts, domestic violence courts and mental health courts and other specialty courts were developed to provide individuals involved with the criminal justice system with treatment.

Alternatives to Incarceration in Jail – In response to increased jail populations, probation agencies need to work with other criminal justice agencies to develop alternative programs.

Probation and Parole – Missed appointments with a parole officer, breaking curfew or a failed drug test should not be the reason to send someone back to prison. Instead, treatment should be offered through diversion programs.





FAMILIES³

States should:

Actively encourage kinship care placements

Ensure that child welfare authorities remain in touch with incarcerated parents.

Facilitate visitation between children and incarcerated parents.

Make reunification services available to parents.

Explore alternatives to incarceration that could make child welfare intervention and child removal unnecessary in many cases.

Ensure that incarcerated parents have the opportunity to attend all hearing in their cases.

Provide incarcerated parents with legal services.

DRUG POLICY⁴

Repeal mandatory sentencing laws. See the Glossary for a definition and learn more about the injustices of mandatory sentences by contacting Families against Mandatory Minimums.

WOMEN BACK HOME⁵

Modify restrictive public housing and Section 8 guidelines to allow formerly incarcerated women access to affordable housing.

Lift the ban on welfare (TANF and food stamps) for people with drug felony convictions.

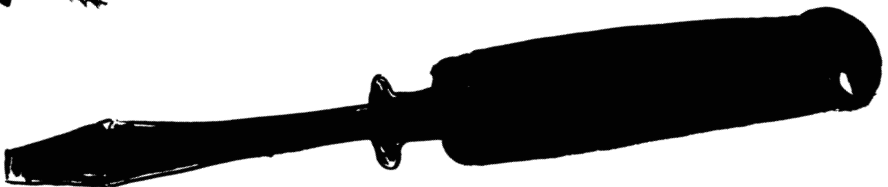
Repeal the ban on student financial aid which was passed as part of the 1998 reauthorization of Higher Education Act of 1965. It keeps anyone convicted of a drug felony from getting college loans.

Make work more possible for people coming out of jails and prisons. Examples include: expunging offenses, sealing records, offering certificates of rehabilitation. Eliminate discrimination by prospective employers.

DISENFRACTISEMENT

All citizens should have the right to vote including those who are incarcerated, on probation and on parole.

WORK TO DESTIGMATIZE AND DECRIMINALIZE "SEX WORK."



DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT

Shift funding priorities from the \$167 billion for law enforcement, courts, prisons and jails to comprehensive women-focused drug and alcohol treatment. From 1997 to 2001 State and local spending for corrections rose 1101%. Spending for education rose 470%. Spending for healthcare and hospitals rose 482%.⁶



NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Encourage and fund needle exchange programs to help stop the spread of Hepatitis C and HIV.

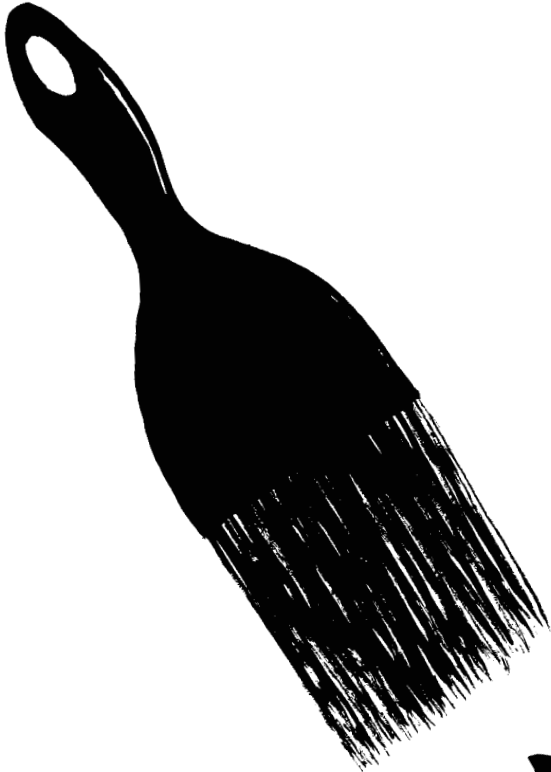
PREVENTING AND TREATMENT FOR SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE⁷

Untreated physical and sexual abuse contributes to mental illness and drug abuse. According to the WPA 12/03 report, "Women with a history of sexual abuse are twice as likely as non-abused women to have injected drugs." Early identification, treatment and prevention of sexual and physical abuse would significantly make the lives of girls and women more productive and positive.

INVEST IN QUALITY EDUCATION, JOB TRAINING FOR WORK THAT PAYS A LIVING WAGE, AFFORDABLE SAFE HOUSING, RELIABLE PUBLICLY FUNDED DAY CARE FOR EVERYONE WHO NEEDS IT.

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT/COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT⁸

Justice reinvestment is the creation of safer and viable communities by communities taking control of justice dollars and reallocating them to finance education, housing, healthcare and jobs.



1. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, Justice Expenditure and Employment in the U.S., May 2004; 2. Thanks to Dana Kaplan, National Resource Center on Prisons and Communities, Cincinnati, OH 2/04; 3. Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records/ Center for Law and Policy CLASP, 2003. www.clasp.org; 4. Families Against Mandatory Minimums, www.famm.org; 5. Women's Prison Association: Dina Rose, WPA Focus on Women and Justice October 2003, wpaonline.org; 6. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, Justice Expenditure and Employment in the U.S., May 2004; 7. WPA Focus on Women and Justice 12/03; 8. "Justice Reinvestment" by Susan B. Tucker and Eric Cadora, Ideas for an Open Society, 11/03. www.soros.org.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON EACH OF THESE AND OTHER ISSUES, VISIT THE REAL COST OF PRISONS WEBSITE AT WWW.REALCOSTOFPRISONS.ORG.

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2. Project on Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children, Vol. 1, #1, 8/03. Harris School for Public Policy.
3. "Incarcerated Parents and Their Children," Christopher Mumola, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report 8/2000
4. Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children, Vol. 1, #1, 8/03
5. Ibid.
6. Re-Entry Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Release of Prisoners to the Community. 1/05
7. Human Rights Watch, 5/00.
8. MALDEF, 12/03
9. WPA: Focus on Women and Justice—A Portrait of Women in Prison. 12/03
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LATISHA WILLIAMS AND THE ROCK

1. "Drop the Rock" www.droptherock.org
2. The Sentencing Project, "Felony Disenfranchisement Rates for Women" 8/04
3. WPA, Focus on Women and Justice—Barriers to Re-entry. 10/03
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DENISE JAMES AND HER FAMILY

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“Crack Baby”

There is no such thing as a “crack baby.” Stories on TV and the news about the effects of crack on fetuses were unsupported, misleading and inaccurate. Dozens of studies now show that other factors are responsible for many of the problems that women who use crack are blamed for, such as poverty and lack of pre-natal care.¹

Crack vs. Cocaine Sentencing

Crack is produced from powder cocaine. The penalties for possession or sale of crack are far more severe than for powder cocaine. A person who sells or possesses five grams of crack get the same five year federal mandatory sentence as someone who sells or possesses five hundred grams of powder cocaine. Drug policy reform advocates see these laws as racist, since 85% of people arrested for crack sale or use are Black.

Harm Reduction²

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies that reduce negative consequences of drug use. It seeks to minimize the harmful effects of drug use rather than ignoring or condemning drug users. It calls for the non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to drug users, families and communities. Needle-exchange is an example of a harm reduction strategy. Harm reduction sees drug use as a public health issue.

Mandatory Minimums

In the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. Congress and many state legislatures passed laws that required judges to give fixed prison terms to those convicted of specific crimes, most often drug offenses. Lawmakers believed these harsh, inflexible sentencing laws would catch those at the top of the drug trade and deter others from entering it. Instead, this heavy-handed response to the nation's drug problem filled prisons with men and women found guilty low-level offences resulting prisons being filled with people serving long sentences at tremendous cost to taxpayers. Mandatory sentencing laws disproportionately affect people of color and, because of their severity, destroy families.³

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has been the dominant ideology behind economic policy for more than 20 years. Neoliberalism calls for free markets and a smaller role for the government. According to neoliberal thinking, government policies and regulations—including taxes on the wealthy—create conditions that slow down economic growth. Neoliberalism calls for free trade between the U.S. and developing countries; the reduction of protections for workers and families; the private ownership of hospitals, water, transportation and education; drastic cuts in public spending for welfare, housing and job development; and no voice for workers and unions. Neoliberalism claims its approach will generate economic growth and prosperity for all. In the neoliberal view, poverty is the result of government interference and lack of motivation on the part of poor families. However, neoliberal policies make it harder and harder for most people to survive. One way those in government and business enforce these policies is by making poor people believe they are poor because of their shortcomings rather than the effects of negative effects of neoliberal policies on their daily life.

Racialized Patriarchy

Women of color face many forms of discrimination which are deeply rooted in our society. Racialized patriarchy is what happens when racism AND sexism are combined. The effect is that the combination makes the negative effects not just two times more powerful but many more times more powerful since racism strengthens sexism and sexism strengthen racism. This powerful combination can lead women of color to face even greater vulnerability than white women to poverty, lack of access to quality education and discrimination in jobs and housing. While individual women experience its effects and individuals perpetuate it, racialized patriarchy is a complex set of harmful beliefs, attitudes, economic practices, and laws which restrict and/or prevent the full development of girls and women of color in the U.S. and around the world.

Transactional Sex

Transactional sex is the exchange of sex for money, drugs, a place to live, rent money, or what ever it is that the person performing sex needs. Many people engage in transactional sex without even realizing it. Women who engage in transactional sex by working the streets are exposed to tremendous risk of abuse and violence and exposure to sexually transmitted infections including HIV. They are also at risk of police harassment and arrest in most cities in the U.S.

1. National Advocates for Pregnant Women website: www.advocatesforpregnantwomen.org

2. Harm Reduction Coalition website: www.harmreduction.org

3. Families Against Mandatory Minimums website: www.famm.org

RE-DIRECT THE
57 BILLION
DOLLARS SPENT
ON JAILS AND
PRISONS IN
AMERICA

- Ⓐ Quality Education
- Ⓑ Housing
- Ⓒ Job Training
- Ⓓ Health Care
- Ⓔ DAY CARE

