

Coalition Chronicles

**A newsletter of
End Domestic Abuse WI
Volume 33 Issue 2**

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Patti Seger**

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The Double Imprisonment of Battered Women Who Are Incarcerated

Wisconsin's women's prisons are filled with survivors of domestic and sexual violence. These women are doubly imprisoned: first, by trauma from the violence they have suffered, and second, by the iron bars and razor wire fences that surround them daily. They are incarcerated by a criminal legal system that does not consider their histories of abuse when deciding their fates.

The experience of interpersonal violence is a significant factor in the crimes committed by the majority of incarcerated women. Some women land in prison because they killed or seriously hurt an abuser, almost always in self-defense. Some are there because an abuser threatened to kill them if they didn't forge a name on a check, steal, deal drugs, or engage in prostitution. They may be there because they stole to feed themselves and their children. The crimes that result in incarceration are often acts of survival.

Behind bars and far from homes, families, children, and domestic violence agencies that might offer assistance, too often these women are forgotten victims of domestic abuse: they are left with few ways to heal from trauma, both from the initial abuse and from the circumstances of their present lives in prison.

This issue of the Coalition Chronicles sheds some light on incarcerated and re-entering battered women, a population that is largely hidden from our view, from our thoughts, and often from our services. Recognizing, remembering, and reaching out to these invisible survivors can be a critical first step on a path to healing.



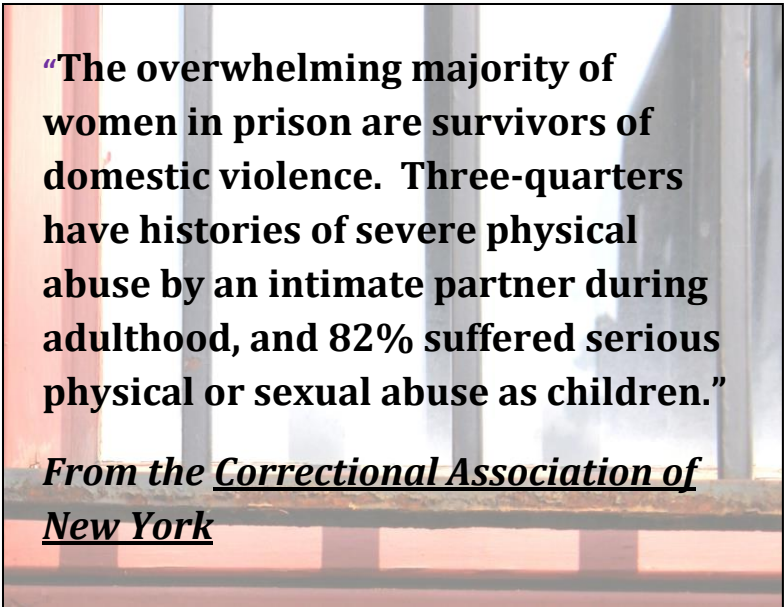
Introduction

—Christina Zuba

Each woman in prison or jail has lived a life filled with a series of unique experiences that led to her incarceration. A disturbing number of these incarcerated women, however, share histories of domestic violence and trauma, mental health problems such as depression and PTSD, and self-medication with drugs and alcohol.

Too frequently the trauma, mental illness, and/or substance abuse that may have contributed to the circumstances that led to incarceration remain unaddressed. When a woman is released from jail or prison, she faces many challenges to successfully reintegrate into society. It is difficult enough to find a job, get housing, and resume a life after incarceration. If a woman is grappling with untreated trauma, mental health problems, and addictions, those challenges are compounded. Without proper care and supportive services in the community, the obstacles she encountered will remain upon reentry and will often lead to reoffending.

As we note in this issue, resources are available for those reentering society after incarceration and for advocates who assist them. With assistance, perseverance, and hope, formerly incarcerated survivors of violence and trauma can build successful, fulfilling lives that are free of abuse. We hope you will find useful information—and also inspiration—in this collection of articles, excerpts, and interviews.



“The overwhelming majority of women in prison are survivors of domestic violence. Three-quarters have histories of severe physical abuse by an intimate partner during adulthood, and 82% suffered serious physical or sexual abuse as children.”

From the Correctional Association of New York

Acknowledgements

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Betty Brown for sharing her story

Tess Meuer (End Abuse Director of Justice Systems) for the direction and guidance she provided to legal interns Vanessa Paster and Christina Zuba, and for her thoughtful development of the content.

Vanessa Paster (legal intern, summer 2013) for compiling the many resources for Chapter 10 of the Legal Manual, from which a number of articles in this issue were drawn

Antonia Vann (Executive Director of Asha Family Services in Milwaukee) for generously giving her time for an interview and offering insight, information, and ideas, and

Christina Zuba (legal intern, summer 2014) for researching, writing and excerpting articles, and compiling this issue of the Chronicles (You will see the initials CZ on several sections that Christina authored.)

We also acknowledge that we relied heavily on the **National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women** and the **Battered Women’s Justice Project**, to locate information and resources for this issue. We truly appreciate their great work and leadership on behalf of incarcerated victims of abuse.

—**Colleen Cox**, End Abuse Education Coordinator and Editor of the Coalition Chronicles

Excerpt from **Women's Experiences of Abuse as Risk Factors for Incarceration**

by **Mary E. Gilfus**

Many women are in prisons for economic crimes, primarily larceny for shoplifting and using stolen credit cards. Some women charged with economic offenses are runaways, street women and drug-addicted women, but others may have no prior illegal activity or drug addiction. They may be coerced into crimes by abusive partners, they may try to support themselves and their children with stolen items, they may be caught in welfare fraud, or they may steal or forge checks in order to escape from abuse. Battering may force women into poverty and homelessness; it can cause women to lose jobs, welfare benefits, housing and educational opportunities. Financially abusive partners may steal women's earnings and possessions, force them into debt and harass them at work until they lose their jobs. Women who escape often have no resources of their own and cannot afford housing, food, medical care and childcare. Recent changes in welfare policies have left many abused women with even fewer choices and resources. Low-income women of color experience the highest rates of domestic violence and are the most affected by welfare reform policies.

Arrest and incarceration can result when women try to protect or defend themselves and their children from abuse, as well as when they cannot protect their children. Arrests of women for domestic violence assaults have increased since mandatory and pro-arrest laws and policies have been implemented. Some abusers call the police to have their partners arrested and use arrest as an additional tool of power and control. Some battered women do fight back to defend themselves and are treated as the primary aggressors by the police and courts. However, we

have few examples of women arrested for harming their male intimate partners who fit the profile of batterers--the majority of women who fight back do so in self-defense.

Gilfus, Mary. "Women's Experience of Abuse as a Risk Factor for Incarceration." VAWNet.org. N.p., Dec. 2002. Web. 29 July 2014.

Ten Truths That Matter When Working With Justice- Involved Women

- 1. Women are a fast-growing criminal justice population, yet they pose a lower public safety risk than [do] men.*
- 2. Women follow unique pathways into crime and present risk factors that signal different intervention needs.*
- 3. Women's engagement in criminal behavior is often related to their relationships, connections, and disconnections with others.*

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Best Practice Toolkit for Working with Domestic Violence Survivors with Criminal Histories

Pathways to crime are influenced by many factors—one of which is domestic violence. [Beth] Richie (1996) notes that these pathways to criminal activity include:

Coercion by abusers to commit crimes

Women often feel that their families depend on them for care giving and providing essential goods. Some batterers use this internalized expectation and the idea that women will be treated more “gently” by the criminal legal system to coerce them into economically-driven crimes. In other cases, women may be arrested and convicted of crimes committed primarily by their abusers, but in which they took part out of fear for themselves or their children.

Poverty connected to the abuse

Common abuse tactics include stealing women's money, destroying their credit or ability to work, or withholding finances and resources from them. Some women may turn to criminal behavior to obtain basic needs for themselves and their children.

Retaliation for past abuse taken out on someone else

Due to previous abuse by a partner or significant other, women often experience anger, shame, physical and emotional injury, and depression. They may respond to past abuse by enacting their rage onto others. They may have the belief of “I will never let someone abuse me again.” In some cases, the violence they exhibit may be considered extreme for the current situation but is actually connected to their past trauma experiences (e.g., Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder).

Sexual abuse (as a child or as an adult) as a vulnerability for later sexual exploitation and illegal sex work

Due to previous sexual abuse as a child (by a family member, community member, and/or stranger) as well as during adulthood (by a partner or another adult), sexuality is often a vulnerability for women. It can become a tool for economic gain in the form of sex work or prostitution, but it often involves male control or coercion (either by their pimps or their abusive partners). Some women who have experienced abuse either during childhood or adulthood and are involved in sex work express a lack of control, power, and autonomy over their lives.

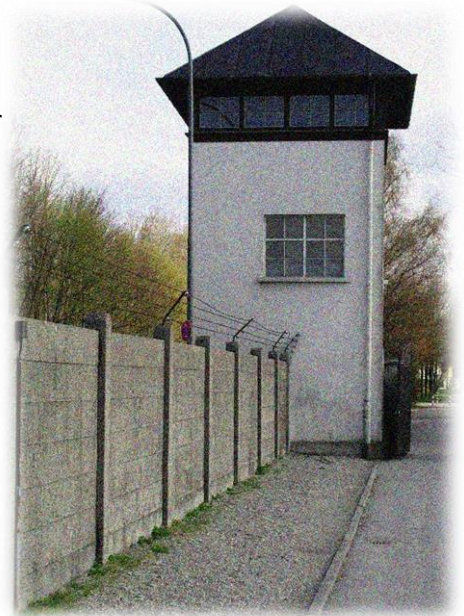
Self-defense or fighting back against an abuser

A battered woman may use violence against her partner in self-defense of his violence or a threat of violence. Many women (especially those marginalized or oppressed) have a sense of disconnection from social services and social institutions due to prior negative experiences. They may feel as though they have only themselves to rely on for protection.

Click [HERE](#) to view the toolkit in its entirety.

Kubiak, S., Sullivan, C.M., Fries, L., Nnawulezi, N., & Fedock, G. *Best Practice Toolkit for Working with Domestic Violence Survivors with Criminal Histories*. Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Dec. 2011. Web. June 2014.

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Victimization, Mental Illness, and Incarceration: How They Intersect

For 491 women randomly sampled from both urban and rural jails, experiences of trauma were significant predictors in overall mental health, which was a significant predictor of offending history.

The study, titled “Women’s pathways to jail: The roles & intersections of serious mental illness & trauma,” demonstrates that while child and adult victimization related directly to the women’s mental health, victimization alone did not predict offending history directly; only mental health was directly associated with offending histories. The analysis indicates that women with more victimization had poorer mental health, and poorer mental health predicted offending histories.

In addition, the women who experienced intimate partner violence were more than twice as likely to deal drugs or be charged with drug offenses. Both substance use disorder and partner violence were significant predictors of engaging in sex work. The women in the sample frequently described a common story of addictions driving them to commercial sex work, often through the encouragement and coercion of violent men who played roles in their lives as dealers and pimps. In general, female offenders report greater incidence of mental health problems and serious mental illness than do male offenders. Of those women studied, only 9% did not meet criteria for a lifetime diagnosis of serious mental illness (including major depression, bipolar disorder, and psychotic spectrum disorders), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or substance use disorders. Compared to prisons, jails have similar, if not higher, rates of offenders entering with mental health issues but typically have fewer resources.

...the women who experienced intimate partner violence were more than twice as likely to deal drugs or be charged with drug offenses. Both substance use disorder and partner violence were significant predictors of engaging in sex work.

This is concerning for multiple reasons. Jailed offenders with mental health problems are more likely to be dependent on drugs, to be violent recidivists, to commit infractions while incarcerated, and to have served three or more prior sentences. Another concern is the fact that a number of staff members interviewed for the study noted that the most significant need of women leaving jail is finding safe housing, yet these safe housing options are severely limited for women with serious mental illness and even more difficult when coupled with a conviction.

According to the study, the significant connection between trauma, mental illness, and criminal offenses suggests that implementing interventions for at-risk girls and women addressing trauma-related distress and mental health may decrease entry or re-entry into the criminal justice system. For women who are incarcerated, it is important to provide a “continuum of care” after release. These women need access to resources such as safe housing options, detox centers, medical treatment, and community centers for the mentally ill. Additionally, a better understanding of these offenders and their needs is critical for the success of behavioral health treatment programs, jail management, correctional staff safety, problem-solving court initiatives, and the development of gender responsive programming.

—CZ

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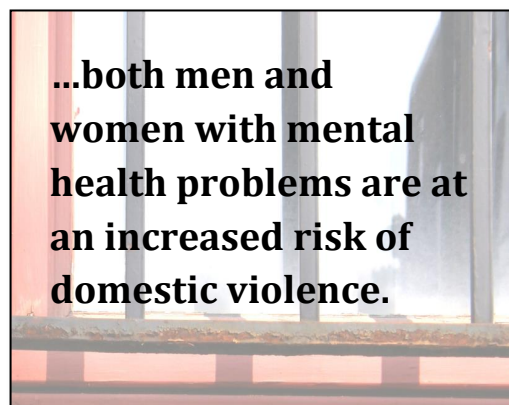
Domestic Violence and Mental Health Problems

A recent study by researchers at King's College London and the University of Bristol examined the link between domestic violence and mental health problems.

Researchers reviewed data from 41 studies worldwide to find that "both men and women with mental health problems are at an increased risk of domestic violence." According to Louise Howard, Head of the Section of Women's Mental Health at King's Institute of Psychiatry, "the evidence suggests that there are two things happening: domestic violence can lead to victims developing mental health problems, and people with mental health problems are more likely to experience domestic violence." The study showed that compared to women without mental health problems, women with depressive disorders were about 2.5 times more likely to have experienced domestic violence over their adult lifetime. Women with anxiety disorders were over 3.5 times more likely, and women with post-traumatic stress disorder were around 7 times more likely to have experienced domestic violence.

Click [HERE](#) to read more about this study.

—CZ



Continued from page 3

- 4. Traditional criminal justice policies and practices have largely been developed through the lens of managing men, not women.*
- 5. Justice-involved women often report histories of sexual victimization and trauma and continue to be vulnerable to victimization within correctional settings.*
- 6. Traditional prison classification systems tend to result in unreliable custody designations for incarcerated women.*
- 7. Gender responsive assessment tools can enhance case management efforts with justice-involved women.*
- 8. Women are more likely to respond favorably when criminal justice staff adhere to evidence-based, gender responsive principles.*
- 9. Incarceration and reentry are particularly challenging for justice-involved mothers of minor children.*
- 10. The costs of overly involving women in the criminal justice system are high.*

Excerpted from Ten Truths That Matter When Working With Justice-Involved Women, published in 2012, by the National Resource Center on Justice-Involved Women. To read the full document, click [HERE](#).

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Class, Culture, Gender, Race...

Some characteristics of those who are sentenced to prison

[...] African-American women are less likely to ask for and/or receive police intervention with domestic violence and are disproportionately vulnerable to arrest, conviction, and incarceration.[...] African American women are negatively stigmatized, marginalized, and oppressed in society, which influences the disproportionately high arrest and conviction rates for African-Americans. [...] In fact, due to differing relationships with, and availability of, law enforcement in some communities, both African American and Latina women are less likely to seek out this type of intervention for domestic violence. Law enforcement might not be seen as a helpful source to some communities based on a historical legacy of racist intimidation, harassment, and persecution within particular racial communities. As a result, some people of color might have developed a mistrust or “healthy paranoia” of people associated with the criminal legal system. The loss of this option may limit survival strategies women use to cope with violent situations. [Excerpt from Michigan Toolkit](#)

“In states where Native Americans are a significant portion of the state population, we see generally very significant disparity in [incarceration rates],” said Mark Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project, a nonprofit organization which pushes for prison reform in the U.S. “Native Americans tend to be incarcerated at high rates overall.” [...]

In the federal and state prison systems, Mauer said, there could be higher numbers of Native Americans because there is a higher crime rate on reservations. But he also theorized the disparity may come from an underlying issue in the state and federal justice systems, like racial bias.

Excerpt from [Problems of liberty and justice on the Plains](#)

Desjardins, L. & Lacey-Bordeaux, E. “Problems of Liberty and Justice on the Plains.” *CNN*. 13 Dec. 2012. Web. 30 July

Common profiles of women involved in the criminal legal system:

- Disproportionately women of color
- Thirty years of age with low socioeconomic status
- Unemployed and have not obtained a high school degree
- Unmarried/un-partnered and often parenting in isolation
- Most likely convicted of a drug offense
- Survivors of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse
- Likely to have mental health and substance abuse issues
- Survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence

[From Michigan Toolkit](#)

[Wisconsin](#) has the highest percentage of incarcerated African American men in the nation, with 1 in 8 behind bars.

[Excerpt [From Race and America's Prisons: It's Complicated](#)]

Outside of Wisconsin, though, the number of black folks in prison is actually trending downward, and the number of black women behind bars, in particular, is plummeting. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of incarcerated black women dropped 30.9 percent, according to the Sentencing Project. [...] For black men, the number dropped about 10 percent over that same stretch.

But the Sentencing Project's study found that the incarceration rates for whites and Latinos is climbing – and again, the increase is most stark on the women's side. The percentage of incarcerated white women jumped by nearly half, and the percentage of Latinas in prison jumped by a quarter. [However], black women were still nearly three times as likely to be locked up.

*Demby, G. “Race and America's Prisons: It's Complicated.” *NPR*, 26 Apr. 2014. Web. 30 July 2014.*

Survivor and Advocate: Brenda Clubine

[Brenda Clubine](#) filed 11 restraining orders against her husband and a warrant for his arrest existed when he attacked her for the final time. After he threatened that investigators would be unable to identify her body after he finished with her, Brenda hit him on the head with a wine bottle and ran for her life.

At the time of her sentencing in 1983, Battered Woman Syndrome, which is the psychological condition that describes someone who has been the victim of consistent and/or severe domestic violence, was not yet legally recognized. The judge did not allow a psychologist to testify about Brenda's mental state, nor did he allow testimony from friends or doctors who had seen the physical signs of her abuse. Despite the fact that she had medical records, witnesses, and photos to document the severe domestic abuse over the years, Brenda received a sentence of 16 years to life in prison for killing her violent husband.



While in prison, Brenda learned that many other inmates were domestic violence survivors. After years of hearing and sharing stories informally, Brenda organized a support group called Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA). This group, the first of its kind in the US prison system, was created to help women in prison break the silence about abuse and learn how they could help others stop the cycle of violence.

In addition to working through their pain, Brenda and the CWAA women played an active and important role in the statewide effort to gain [clemency](#) for battered women in prison in the early 1990s. By 1992, Battered Woman Syndrome became legally recognized and widely used to explain the circumstances that may lead to a victim killing her abuser. While this was a step in the right direction, the majority of the women of CWAA were convicted prior to the availability of this defense. Brenda and the members of CWAA took a stand. As a result of their efforts, some cases were re-tried and some convictions were overturned.

In 2008, after serving 26 years, Brenda became the 20th CWAA member released from prison. Brenda reunited with her son, who was put up for adoption as a toddler after her conviction, and enjoys spending time with her grandchildren. Since her release, she continues to be a staunch advocate for imprisoned survivors and founded [Every 9 Seconds](#), "a non-profit committed to education, prevention, intervention, and legislative lobbying to create change in the arena of domestic violence victimization and survivor incarceration worldwide."

Brenda's story is featured in a moving documentary called "[Sin by Silence](#)."

Brenda Clubine will be the featured speaker on Tuesday, September 16, 2014 from 11:30 am -1:00 pm, at the ***Together We Can End Domestic Violence Luncheon*** in Madison. For details or to register for the luncheon, [click here](#).

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Betty's Story

Betty Brown's husband abused her physically and emotionally for years before she killed him in an act of self defense in 1990. At trial, witnesses were not permitted to testify about Betty's relationship with her husband, and Betty is still unaware of the reason for that. Her attorney did not focus on the domestic abuse Betty suffered, and she did not have the opportunity to discuss it during the trial. [Note: Wisconsin law allows defense attorneys to discuss Battered Woman Syndrome.] Betty received a life sentence with the possibility of parole and served twenty years in prison in Milwaukee.

While in prison, Betty was able to get a job at a fast food chain. Eventually Antonia Vann (see page 13) hired her to work at a [coffee shop](#) that provides job training and development for Asha program participants. Betty saved money while working at the restaurant and the coffee shop and was able to rent an apartment shortly after her release from prison.

Fortunately, Betty reports that she struggled with fewer obstacles to reentry than many others do. Regarding successful reentry, Betty said, "If you get a job before you get out and you work to save money, it's easier to get back into society and you have the money to get the stuff you need. Some of my friends that got out didn't have the money saved up like I had so they haven't had it so easy. They didn't have [a] place to stay because they couldn't find [a] job right away."

"[The Clemency Project] made me push for what I really wanted out of my life...it made me realize we are not in this place alone. People out there do care about people in prison who got into a situation like this."

Betty believes that domestic violence support group meetings and the programs at Asha were crucial to her healing. In these groups, she learned the signs of domestic abuse so she would be able to recognize and avoid them. Once she was able to talk about what happened in her life, she also stopped having nightmares.

Betty described the experience of one of her friends from prison who started using drugs after being released and went back to an abusive relationship. Betty observed, "She used to come sometimes [to support group meetings] but not as often as I did. I think that [the meetings] would have helped her a lot and she would have seen some of the signs before the abuse started."

In 1995, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV, now End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin) received a grant that made it possible to spend two years working on a project to seek [clemency](#) for battered women in Wisconsin. The WCADV Clemency Committee identified battered women incarcerated for crimes committed against their abusers and petitioned the governor to grant pardons to three survivors in 1998. Betty was one of these three women. While clemency was not granted for any of the women, the petition succeeded in other ways. Betty recalled, "It made me push for what I really wanted out of my life. It gave me a lot of hope, not just to try to get clemency but it made me understand that there is help out there for women in this type of relationship. It made me realize we are not in this place alone. People out there do care about people in prison who got into a situation like this."

If she could give advice to incarcerated survivors, Betty said, "I would tell them to stick with their groups and try to get as much help as they can for the healing process. Keep healing. There need to be more domestic violence programs and groups for women [in prison] so they can heal."

—CZ

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Collateral Consequences and Re-entry

In addition to the direct consequences of a criminal conviction (such as punishment, probation, and economic penalties consisting of court fees and fines, fees for mandatory intervention programs and, in some jurisdictions, costs of probation or parole), women also face the hardships of collateral consequences of criminal convictions. A **collateral consequence** is an indirect effect of conviction that may impede a woman's ability to vote, obtain employment, or attain government assistance. As such, a collateral consequence is considered a civil disability imposed on the defendant following the criminal conviction. The failure to recognize the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction could create undue hardship for an uninformed defendant and produce barriers to long-term self-sufficiency and immediate safety.

Criminal records affect women's lives in many ways. They carry a negative social stigma, as well as create barriers to needed resources such as employment, housing, custody and parental rights, immigration, educational benefits, and public benefits eligibility. Criminal records are often permanent (including juvenile records) and therefore can have consequences for the woman's entire life. Unfortunately, many of these consequences have direct implications for women's safety by decreasing their options and resources and/or giving their abusive partners more leverage with which to control them. Many survivors who have been charged with crimes report that they will never call the police again, even if their partner is seriously harming them.

In addition, many domestic violence service providers do not recognize the needs of formerly incarcerated women as both survivors and formerly incarcerated women. The stigma attached to "a convict" sometimes overrides other factors and prevents agencies from providing services to women who are entitled to them. The ramifications of this stigma are evident by the various system and service level barriers facing women with criminal histories. This stigma can be exacerbated when coupled with other forms of systemic oppression such as racism, ageism, anti-immigrant sentiment or classism.

Excerpt from [Michigan Toolkit](#)

Battered women report being pressured by prosecutors and their defense attorneys to plea bargain for a "light" sentence even when they were wrongly arrested. One of the reasons women give for accepting plea bargains is to get released from jail in order to care for their children and to protect them from the batterer. A plea of guilty leaves a woman with a permanent criminal record. Women with criminal records may lose welfare (TANF), food stamps and Medicaid, may be subject to deportation if they are immigrants, face employment barriers and may be permanently denied the right to vote. A battered woman facing criminal charges and imprisonment has even less power and fewer resources to ensure her own and her children's safety.

Excerpt from "[Women's Experiences of Abuse as Risk Factors for Incarceration](#)" by Mary E. Gilfus

From the National Inventory of the Collateral Consequences of Conviction

The collateral consequences of a criminal conviction—legal sanctions and restrictions imposed upon people because of their criminal record—are hard to find and harder to understand. Now it will be easier to do both. Congress directed the National Institute of Justice to collect and study collateral consequences in all U.S. jurisdictions, and NIJ selected the ABA Criminal Justice Section to perform the necessary research and analysis. The results are now being made available through this interactive tool:

<http://www.abacollateralconsequences.org/>

Collateral Consequences

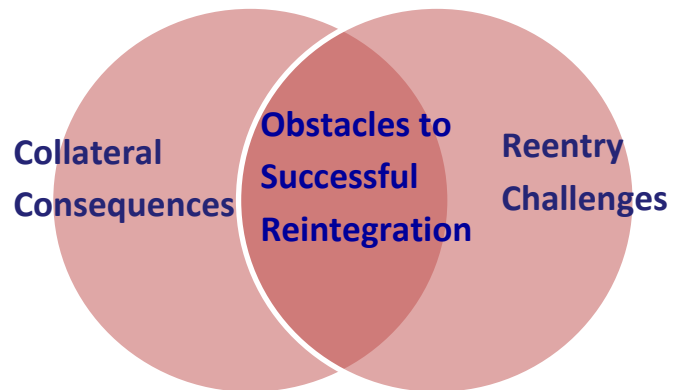
Parenting

The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requires the State to terminate parental rights when a child is in foster care for 15 months out of the most recent 22 months, unless a compelling reason exists to not terminate rights. Women are required to show throughout their incarceration that they are maintaining contact and “being good parents.” [...] If they fail to do so, children are considered “abandoned” and mothers are subsequently labeled unfit parents, and action to terminate parental rights may ensue.

Excerpt from [Michigan Toolkit](#)

Click [HERE](#) for more on family concerns.

Many collateral consequences of conviction and incarceration are also challenges to reentry, which are ultimately obstacles to successful reintegration into society.



Employment

Under many circumstances, a criminal offense cannot serve as the sole basis for the state denying an employment opportunity. According to Wisconsin's Fair Employment law, Wis. Stat. § 111.321, the general rule is that no employer, labor organization, employment agency, licensing agency, or other person may engage in any act of employment discrimination as specified against any individual on the basis of arrest record or conviction record. However, an important limitation of this rule is that an employer or licensing board may take into account a criminal record the circumstances of which are substantially related “to the particular job or licensed activity” in question.

Critical Employment Areas

Government Licenses, Certificates, Registrations, and Contracts: As a general rule, if a job requires any type of government-issued license, certificate, registration, or contract, a criminal conviction could have adverse employment consequences.

Vulnerable People and Positions of Trust: As a general rule, the greater the extent to which a job involves working with vulnerable populations (i.e. students, the mentally ill, prisoners, etc.), the greater the extent to which a criminal conviction may curtail employment possibilities.

Also as a general rule, the greater the extent to which a job involves a position of trust or responsibility (i.e. financial responsibility, responsibility for the well-being of another, etc.), the greater the extent to which a criminal conviction may curtail employment possibilities.

Excerpt from [Wisconsin Public Defenders](#)

Bell, E.J., Kurszewski, D., & Silverman, M. “Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction.” Wisconsin Public Defenders. 4 Nov. 2011. Web. 29 July 2014.

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Collateral Consequences

Public Housing

The federal government established several subsidized-housing programs that are administered by local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). Individual PHAs have great discretion regarding what types of criminal records they will accept in the personal histories of their tenants. Federal law, however, imposes several broadly applicable restrictions on whom PHAs can admit or retain as residents.

PHAs must prohibit admission if any of the following circumstances apply:

- The PHA determines that any household member is currently engaged in illegal use of a drug.
- The PHA determines that a household member's illegal drug use or pattern of illegal drug use may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.
- Any household member has ever been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for the manufacture or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally-assisted housing.
- Any household member is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.

PHAs may prohibit admission if any household member is currently engaged in or has engaged in any of the following activities, during a reasonable time before the admission:

- Drug-related criminal activity.
- Violent criminal activity.
- Other criminal activity that may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents or persons residing in the immediate vicinity.

Note: the structure and role of the PHA will differ among municipalities and communities. Check with your local PHA to determine which units fall under these guidelines.

Excerpt from [Wisconsin Public Defenders](#)

"Civil Consequences of Conviction: The Impact of Criminal Records under Wisconsin Law." *Wisconsin Public Defenders*. Nov. 2012. Web. 29 July 2014.

From [A Woman's Journey Home Webinar](#)

Some pressures that women have to cope with upon reentry include:

- Expectations of family
- Family violence and lack of domestic violence resources
- Untreated trauma, depression, and mental illness
- Lack of parenting models
- Lack of education and employment background
- Prejudice against ex-offenders in the workforce
- Immigration and deportation concerns
- Ineligibility to vote

Antonia Vann on challenges to reentry

"We have an expectation on a population that's got strikes against them. There's an additional one if you're a woman of color. There's the issue of race, class, and status so there's a whole stigma that's already tied to you once you get out. And you're expected to get out, get into safe housing, get that house furnished, get yourself together, get shoes, toiletries, get the little things like food in the house. [You have to] get a job, get to that job, and work towards getting your children back. And that's a huge mountain to climb, even for us trying to help her [...] [T]hat whole process of what's required of them [at the point of reentry] can be overwhelming."

More about Antonia Vann on page 13.



Spotlight on [Asha Family Services](http://www.ashafamilyservices.org/) & Antonia Drew Vann

Antonia Drew Vann founded Asha Family Services, Inc. in 1989 in Milwaukee, WI. She utilized her experiences as a survivor, research studies, and stories from other women to develop the organization's programming.

Asha works with survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the community and in prisons. In addition, Asha offers many other services, such as treatment and education for groups of incarcerated men, mentorship and skill building in preparation for reentry, groups for children who witness or experience abuse, and transitional housing and job skill building for survivors.

Asha's mission statement declares that they "are committed to the provision of a spiritually based, holistic, and culturally specific service method designed to end violence, poverty, and other social ills impacting poor African American women and children specifically and all families in general. To adequately address domestic, sexual, and dating violence and promote healthy living, we must treat the abuser as well as the abused and build networks to that end."

Asha has helped thousands of people. Ms. Vann has received numerous prestigious awards and recognitions for her exceptional and tireless work. For more information on Ms. Vann and Asha Family Services, see:

<http://www.ashafamilyservices.org/>

—CZ

Antonia Vann on one key to successful reentry

"One of the issues has to be healing. There have to be healing elements prior to coming out [of prison]. There are things you have to drill into women, and what you pour into them is what you're going to get out. So that's our job: to pour in information and healing. That healing is going to be key and it has to start before they leave. There have to be groups specific to them with individuals that they can relate to."

When asked about what helped them successfully reenter into the community, women listed the following:

- Relationships with people who cared, listened, and could be trusted
- Relationships with other women who were supportive and role models
- Proper assessment/classification
- Well-trained staff—especially female staff
- Proper medication
- Programs (job training, education, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and parenting
- Inmate-centered programs
- Efforts to reduce trauma and re-victimization/alternatives to seclusion and restraint
- Financial resources
- Safe environments

From ["A Woman's Journey Home" Webinar](#)

Numbing the Pain

“Women in prison are more likely to be drug abusers because they tend to use drugs to self-medicate after being abused or experiencing different types of violence,” according to Natalie Sokoloff, a sociology professor at John Jay College who specializes in women’s studies and judicial justice.

Lisa Rappa experienced this as a long-time victim of domestic violence who sought out drugs instead of help from police. She said, “I become comfortably numb. The whole idea of doing drugs is that you don’t feel. You don’t want to cry.” The violence she suffered led to scars on her face, losing her hearing in one ear, and fifteen arrests on her record. She has spent the last nineteen years either in jail, in a drug treatment program, or living on the streets. Convicted of three felonies resulting from her attempts to self-medicate with drugs, Lisa says that her domestic violence experiences were rarely discussed in the courtroom. According to Lisa, “The judge did not ask.”



Carole Eady is also a victim of domestic violence who used drugs to numb her pain. Her twelve years of addiction resulted in her going to jail six times. Homeless for almost a decade, Carole said, “A lot of the times I felt I didn’t deserve anything better because of the fact that I was using drugs. I had such low self-esteem, such self loathing, and such low self value that I didn’t realize that I wasn’t supposed to be subjected to that kind of behavior.” Carole eventually completed a women’s drug treatment program and went on to achieve a bachelor’s and master’s degree from John Jay College.

See [The Abuse-Incarceration Connection](#) for more information.

“[D]rug-using offenders are twice as likely to have unstable housing in the community, are less able to manage stress, are hospitalized more often for mental health issues and have higher recidivism rates than do non-substance-abusing women. Many of them have experienced trauma in their lives, such as childhood, physical or sexual abuse, or domestic abuse, which may have contributed to their substance abuse and mental health issues.”

St. Michael’s Hospital. [Higher return to prison for](#)

–CZ

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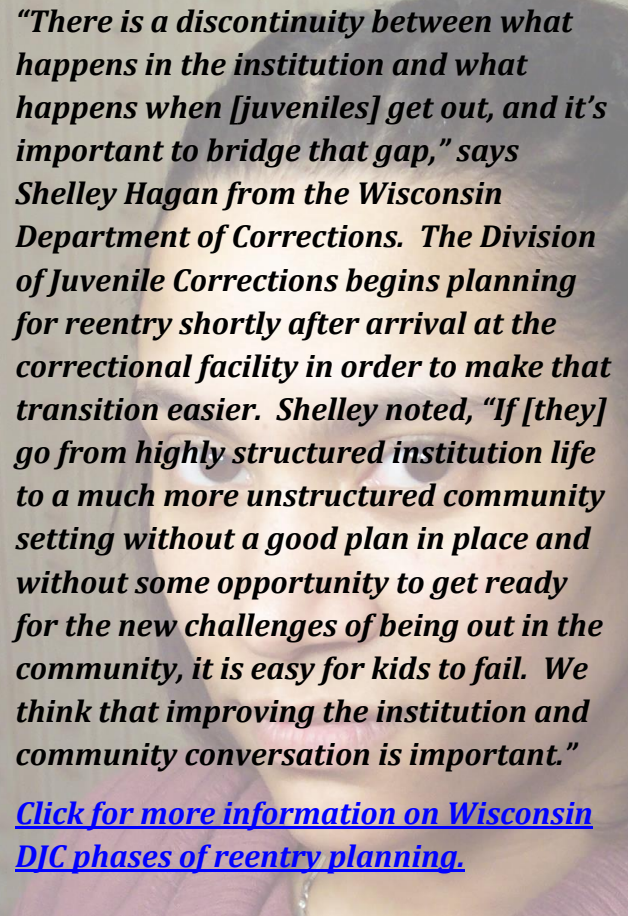
Reentry and Recidivism

Susan Burton's New Way of Life

Susan Burton is a formerly incarcerated woman who was imprisoned six separate times for crimes related to her substance abuse. Even though she was determined not to return to prison each time, she struggled to break the cycle. When asked about obstacles to permanently rejoining the community for herself and for other women, she said, "First is having a safe place to go. I could return to my family, but it was not safe and started the cycle of substance abuse again, leading to incarceration again. Second is getting papers—an ID card, Social Security card. You can't start to get a job until you have your papers. Third is money, like how to get welfare to help while you are looking for a job. Fourth is shaking off the effects of prison post-incarceration syndrome. In prison you have not been allowed to make any decisions, you've experienced a lot of shame and being told what a bad person you are. So people leave prison with this post-incarceration syndrome. People don't even realize this is affecting them, and they are expected to hit the ground running. So much happens between entering prison and leaving and is unspoken. I didn't realize each time I left prison how much I was affected by post-incarceration syndrome." (See [Getting Out and Staying Out](#))

Susan broke the cycle of recidivism once she found services that helped her address her substance abuse and trauma. She started an organization for formerly incarcerated women reentering the community and has received numerous awards and recognitions for her work. "I started *A New Way of Life* after decades of going in and out of the prison system. And someone helped me, and that made all the difference in the world, and I thought about if I'd have received that help decades earlier perhaps I wouldn't have been in and out so many times. So I thought I need to be that reason and I started *A New Way of Life*." Susan says that if she could say something to women who have just been released or will soon be released, she would tell them, "You need help to break the cycle of incarceration. Don't let yourself get cut off and try to do it alone. It's important to connect with a support system before you get out." ([Getting Out and Staying Out](#))

—CZ



"There is a discontinuity between what happens in the institution and what happens when [juveniles] get out, and it's important to bridge that gap," says Shelley Hagan from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. The Division of Juvenile Corrections begins planning for reentry shortly after arrival at the correctional facility in order to make that transition easier. Shelley noted, "If [they] go from highly structured institution life to a much more unstructured community setting without a good plan in place and without some opportunity to get ready for the new challenges of being out in the community, it is easy for kids to fail. We think that improving the institution and community conversation is important."

[Click for more information on Wisconsin DJC phases of reentry planning.](#)

"We do a lot of this work before women leave prison. A lot of what we do in the Sister Circles is preparation for coming out. And we work on specific issues. We'll educate them. Some individuals say they had no idea that they were victims of domestic violence until we came and told them, until we identified what it was and what was happening to them and that it wasn't right. So for a lot of them, they don't even think that they have been in violent relationships or domestic violence relationships. They don't see it as that."

—Antonia Vann

Reentry and Recidivism

[Recidivism](#) is a pressing and costly problem that affects many individuals and society as a whole. On average, more than four out of ten adult American offenders return to prison within three years of their release. (See [State of Recidivism](#)) A significant number of women leaving prison have problems-- such as substance abuse, trauma, and mental illness-- that contributed to the circumstances leading to their arrest. Without treatment and supportive services in the community, the obstacles they encountered before prison will remain upon reentry and will often lead to reoffending. (See [WPA Focus on Women & Justice](#))

Some women experience abuse within prisons and jails, and many women are reminded of previous abuse while incarcerated. This can exacerbate existing mental health problems and lead to the onset of others, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and/or depression. (See [Michigan Toolkit](#)) When left untreated, these mental health problems may be debilitating and can make it extremely difficult to reintegrate into the community successfully.

Many women turn to substances to cope with their victimization and/or mental health disorders, often because it can be easier to obtain illicit drugs than prescription medication. These behaviors may lead to the initial incarceration and will greatly increase the risk of recidivism, in part because using substances is generally a violation of probation and parole conditions. Moreover, staying sober in unsafe, unsupportive environments in addition to attempting to meet and sustain basic needs can be overwhelmingly difficult. An ex-offender who is abusing substances will find it even more challenging to find and keep housing and employment, which will further increase her risk of returning to prison. ([Michigan Toolkit](#))

According to Antonia Vann (see p. 13), "Some [women] will go back to abusive men [after being released] because they have no other resources. They're there, they're available. They'll go back to those kinds of situations, and to people who may be involved in alcohol and drug use that will send them back to the issues because [...] their crimes are embedded in their life and the consequences of their existence. [...] If she has a stronger support system where she can build confidence, where she can build her own self-honor, where she can build spirituality, [it will] strengthen her to be able to stop [abusive partners] in their tracks and move on." Additionally, addressing the effects of trauma can be critical to success in dealing with the myriad other collateral consequences, including child custody disputes, employment, and compliance with parole or probation. ([Michigan Toolkit](#))

When a woman is released, if she faces the same problems she struggled with prior to serving her sentence and has not gained new skills, she will use the same coping mechanisms that may have contributed to her incarceration. The reentry process should begin before the woman is actually released and should address many issues, especially those that led to her incarceration. Mental health services, substance abuse treatment, opportunities for education and employment, mentorship, and support to cope with trauma are some very important resources and services that can help prevent women's initial entry into the prison system and can also play a significant role in preventing women from relapsing into criminal behavior.

For some useful resources, see page 19.

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Prison Life: Facts and Figures

- Over 50 percent of inmates currently in federal prison are there for drug offenses, according to the [Federal Bureau of Prisons](#). As the number of people convicted of drug offenses has increased, the federal prison population has also increased – almost 790 percent since 1980 ([link](#)). As a result of a determination that federal drug sentences have been too severe, in April the U.S. Sentencing Commission submitted to Congress an amendment that would reduce these penalties by two “levels” in the sentencing guidelines structure. That amendment will go into effect on November 1st unless disapproved by Congress. [Click Here](#) for more information.
- Private prison companies’ business models depend on high rates of incarceration. As incarceration rates in the United States skyrocket, the private prison industry grows exponentially, generating massive profits. The number of prisoners in private prisons increased by approximately 1600% between 1990 and 2009. [Click Here](#) for more information.
- Today there are more than 10,500 state prisoners incarcerated in private for-profit prisons outside of their home states. According to a 2013 report, the interstate transfer of prisoners is a detrimental criminal justice policy that hurts families and impedes prisoner rehabilitation by diminishing prisoners’ ties to family and community. Currently, prisoners in out-of-state private facilities are held approximately 450-3,000 miles from their home states. [Click](#) for more information.
- According to the [New York Times](#) in 2012, a 15-minute call from prison could cost a family as much as \$17. For struggling families who want to keep in touch with loved ones behind bars, this could mean choosing between a phone call and putting food on the table. Such a high cost discourages contact with loved ones behind bars, which, in turn, makes it all the more difficult for ex-offenders to fit in at home when they are released. Fortunately, U.S. prison inmates and their families will now be able to make interstate phone calls at much lower prices as a result of new federal rules that went into effect in February. The new [rules](#) were crafted by the FCC and are designed to crack down on what prison inmate advocates call abusive and predatory practices by phone companies. [Click Here](#) for more information.

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Today there are more than 10,500 state prisoners incarcerated in private for-profit prisons outside of their home states.

Continued from Prison Life: Facts and Figures, previous page.

- [The Prison Rape Elimination Act \(PREA\)](#) was passed in 2003 with unanimous support from both parties in Congress. The purpose of the act was to “provide for the analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape in Federal, State, and local institutions and to provide information, resources, recommendations, and funding to protect individuals from prison rape.” In addition to creating a mandate for significant research from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and through the National Institute of Justice, funding through the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Institute of Corrections supported major efforts in many state correctional, juvenile detention, community corrections, and jail systems. The majority of states and territories are taking steps to reduce sexual assault in prisons, as required by federal law. However, sexual assault in jails and prisons remains a serious issue. [Click Here](#) for more information.
- A 2013 Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) study found that LGBT prisoners are ten times more likely to be sexually abused than straight prisoners. A BJS report from 2012 revealed that 39% of gay male former state inmates reported being abused by another inmate. [Click Here](#) for more information about PREA in general, and [Here](#) for more information on WI DOC and PREA.
- According to the ACLU, despite the popular misconception that solitary confinement is used to house only “the worst of the worst,” it is actually often used on the most vulnerable: pregnant women, individuals with mental illness, transgender women, and victims of sexual assault by prison guards. Solitary confinement can exacerbate mental illness, re-traumatize victims of past abuse, and render incarcerated women more vulnerable to abuse by correctional officers. Solitary confinement is sometimes even used as retaliation against women who have reported sexual abuse or other harmful treatment while in prison. [Click Here](#) for more information.
- The prevalence of HIV in prison is approximately 3 times greater than among the general US population. Over the past decade there has been increasing recognition that criminal justice settings should be high-priority for HIV testing and linking infected individuals to care. [Click Here](#) for more information.
- "LGBT immigrants and people living with HIV who are held in immigration detention facilities are systematically denied medical care and [are] abused physically, mentally, and sexually," said Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Lambda Legal Staff Attorney. "LGBT immigrants are among the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. The Department of Homeland Security must protect the civil rights of immigrants in detention centers." [Click Here](#) for more information.

***LGBT prisoners
are ten times
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prisoners.***

—CZ

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A-Z Resources for Reentry

[Asha “Sister Circles”](#)

Members, both in the community and in prisons, receive tools and learn skills to heal and liberate themselves from childhood and adult trauma. Sister Circle groups are for all women but particularly women of color. See page 13 for more information about Asha.

[Circles of Support’s](#) mission is to provide recently released prisoners with a support network that provides guidance and direction in all areas of their lives.

The program serves Fond du Lac, the Fox Valley, Green Bay, Manitowoc, Oshkosh, and surrounding communities.

Food banks: for a list of food banks in Wisconsin [Click Here](#).

[Infallible Helping Hands](#) in Milwaukee offers women resources such as pre-release planning, groups that focus on daily living skills, and courses that help with readjusting to life outside of prison.

[Job Center of Wisconsin](#) has created a useful “Ex-Offender Toolkit” of resources to assist with reentry into the community.

The Legal Manual: For much more information and resources related to reentry issues such as housing, employment, treatment, and family concerns, see Chapter 10 of End Domestic Abuse WI’s [Legal Manual](#), compiled by Vanessa Paster in the summer of 2013.

Madison Area Urban Ministry (MUM): [Just Bakery Initiative](#) is a vocational and employment training program specifically designed to meet the needs of men and women returning to the community after incarceration. [MUM](#) also offers groups and support for those newly released from prison.

[Mental Health America of Wisconsin](#) lists statewide mental health resources, separated by county.

[Project RETURN](#) is an interfaith ministry that helps men and women make a positive and permanent return to community, family, and friends after incarceration.

[The Resource Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse Behind Bars](#) is a state-by-state guide to legal and psychological counseling resources for survivors of prison sexual assault.

See [Six Critical Steps for Ex-offenders Trying to Get Back into the Workforce](#) for employment tips.

[United Way of Dane County’s Journey Home](#) program helps provide housing, employment, support groups, and mental health and addiction treatment to ex-offenders.

[Wisconsin Front Door](#) provides detailed information about housing, employment, and other service providers in the community.

[The Wisconsin Women’s Education Network on Addiction, Recovery, and Prevention](#) lists women-specific Wisconsin treatment centers, arranged according to region.

[Xamire](#) is a resource for finding jobs, housing, federal programs, and help for those convicted of a felony in Wisconsin.

Websites, Books, & Other Publications for Further Exploration

[**“Addressing the Intersection of Trauma: Mental Health Challenges, and Substance Abuse”**](#)

Webinar recording and Powerpoint

[**Battered, Black, and Blue: An Overview of Violence in the Lives of Black Women**](#) (article) by Carolyn M. West and her book [**Violence in the Lives of Black Women: Battered, Black, and Blue**](#)

[**Battered Women’s Justice Project**](#) promotes systemic change within the civil and criminal justice response to domestic violence in order to hold institutions accountable for the goals of safety and security for battered women and their children.

[**Best Practice Toolkit for Working with Domestic Violence Survivors with Criminal Histories**](#), developed by MCADSV, was produced to assist both criminal legal and domestic violence to effectively work with domestic abuse survivors charged with crimes.

[**Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered, Black Women**](#) and [**Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation**](#), both books by Beth Richie, tell the stories of individual African American women and bring issues of sexuality, class, age, and criminalization into focus alongside questions of public policy and gender violence.

[**“Collateral Damage: America’s Failure to Forgive or Forget in the War on Crime—A Roadmap to Restore Rights and Status After Arrest or Conviction”**](#) is a report by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, which explores the stigma and policies that harm those with an arrest or conviction. The report also provides recommendations to reverse this trend.

This [**diagram**](#) created by the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, illustrates how over-policing and profiling of low income people and of trans and gender non-conforming people intersect

[**“Hope Behind Bars”**](#) is an advocate’s guide to helping survivors of sexual abuse in detention.

[**“How Do You Afford Healthcare in Prison on 50 Cents Per Hour?”**](#) summarizes a report that describes how healthcare systems in prison create further harm to incarcerated women.

[**The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community**](#) focuses on the unique circumstances of African Americans as they face issues related to domestic violence.

[**“Jail Reentry Planning: A Little Collaboration and Communication Go a Long Way”**](#) is an article that

describes how several justice and community service agencies joined forces to launch a reentry system for county jail inmates in Michigan.

[**“Mothers of Bedford”**](#) is a documentary that shows how long-term sentences affect mother-child relationships.

[**National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health**](#) provides training, support, and consultation promoting trauma-informed practices.

[**National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women**](#) (NCDBW) is a resource and advocacy center for battered women charged with crimes related to their battering. [**Click Here**](#) to access their recorded series of webinars “When Survivors Reenter Their Communities after Jail or Prison.”

[**The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness**](#), a book by Michelle Alexander, reveals how the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control.

[**“Women and Gender in the Drug War”**](#) discusses incarceration of women for nonviolent drug offenses, on the website for the Drug Policy Alliance.

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