

Unpacking the Crisis

Women of Color, Globalization, and the Prison-Industrial Complex

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The emergence of a vibrant antiprison movement has brought attention to the crisis of mass incarceration in the United States. This crisis is a direct outgrowth of tough-on-crime policies that have lengthened prison sentences and widened the net of activities that U.S. society deals with through imprisonment. As more and more people have received longer sentences, federal and state governments have responded to the ensuing overcrowding by building more prisons and contracting with private prison firms for additional prison beds. Low-income women and girls of color have particularly felt the impacts of the exponential growth in the use of prisons and jails.¹ Since the 1980s, governments have withdrawn resources from community infrastructure and economic supports for low-income families, in part to fund costly law enforcement and prison budgets.² This shift in public spending priorities is one manifestation of a global process of economic restructuring. Faced with ever-shrinking options amid these social and economic transformations, women turn to survival strategies that are increasingly criminalized. Poverty, racism, gender violence, and sometimes addiction intersect to create a cycle of survival, criminalization, and repeated incarceration. At the same time, as mothers, grandmothers, and community activists, women in low-income communities of color bear the burden of supporting and advocating for loved ones who have been locked up and caring for their dependents.

To address the cycle of mass incarceration, activists, academics, and policy makers need to understand the socioeconomic conditions that lie at its root. Unpacking these root causes allows us to identify meaningful transformative possibilities for long-lasting change. Connecting these phenomena with global transformations enables us to identify commonalities with women's struggles for justice in other parts

of the world and thus strengthen transnational feminist solidarities. This essay examines four interlocking factors that underlie the prison crisis. First, I examine the impacts of globalization and economic restructuring on low-income communities in the United States. The rise in low-waged casual labor and cutbacks in welfare, education, health care, and social provision all contribute to women's economic insecurity, leading to the use of criminalized survival strategies. Second, I explore the war on drugs, a set of policies and practices that are U.S. led but global in nature and that have led to an exponential rise in domestic and international imprisonment. Third, I explore the role of globalization in fueling migration from the global South, the criminalization of migration, and the growth in immigrant incarceration in the United States. Finally, I describe the emergence of the prison-industrial complex, a symbiotic relationship between corporate and governmental interests that has fueled prison expansion in the United States and increasingly around the world. As an activist-scholar, my writing aims to encourage the reader to live in the solution rather than simply dissect the problem. The second part of the essay discusses the antiprison movement. I explore the antiracist and feminist abolitionist visions developed by antiprison activists and describe steps toward a world without prisons. This section includes examples of contemporary abolitionist work in the United States and Canada. I hope that these examples may dismantle the apparent omnipotence of the prison-industrial complex and help inspire grassroots action.

THE PROBLEM

Economic Restructuring and the War on the Poor

The introduction of Reaganomics in the 1980s signaled the beginning of a lasting shift in U.S. economic policy.³ Arguing that “small government”—a combination of reduced spending on social provision, reduced government restrictions on corporate profit-making, and tax cuts—was necessary to stimulate economic growth and stem unemployment, the Reagan administration gradually rolled back the supports and protections on which many working families relied. Despite the rhetoric of small government, Reagan dramatically increased government spending on the military and imprisonment. During the 1980s, both federal and state criminal justice budgets grew exponentially as prison populations swelled due to tough-on-crime legislation and the war on drugs.⁴ This shift from welfare state to law-and-order state was not unique to the United States. In Britain, for example, Thatcherism pushed a *laissez-faire* government, the ascendance of the free market, privatization, union busting, and cutbacks to the welfare state. And like Reagan, Thatcher pursued a racialized war on crime that targeted low-income communities of color for surveillance and punishment.⁵

At a global level, these strategies can be seen as political responses to corporate

economic restructuring. Since the 1970s, corporations have begun to separate their manufacturing and administrative components. By using new technological developments, corporate headquarters in advanced capitalist nations could manage manufacturing operations in locations where land and labor were cheaper. Corporations headquartered in the United States and Europe were quick to capitalize on the low-waged, nonunionized women workers in nations in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, many of which were still struggling with the legacies of colonialism and underdevelopment. As manufacturing moved overseas, economies in advanced industrialized countries began to shift toward service industries and specialized management and technology. A segmented labor market emerged, consisting of highly paid, high-tech positions for highly educated workers and more numerous low-waged, nonunionized, and casual positions.⁶ With well-paying unionized skilled trade jobs in decline, women and men in urban communities faced unemployment or dead-end jobs that did not pay enough to support a family. Cut-backs and trickle-down economics were a double-pronged tool that governments in advanced industrialized nations used to reduce the potential economic burden of a growing population that was surplus to the needs of global capital. And criminalization and warehousing were the weapons of choice for minimizing the potential for social unrest and dissent.⁷

During her reign, Thatcher coined the acronym TINA, There Is No Alternative, to describe the lasting shift in economic policy signaled by free trade and economic liberalization. Since the 1980s, even left-leaning parties have been unwilling or unable to turn the tide of neoliberalism.⁸ The impact on low-income women and girls of color of three decades of neoliberal policies has been severe. A key aspect of the move toward “small government” has been the radical transformation of welfare. Welfare reform has targeted women of color, depicting them as “welfare queens,” overly dependent on state handouts, and as irresponsible mothers. Although the rhetoric of welfare-to-work programs emphasized “tough love” to wean poor women, in particular mothers, off dependency and push them to build economic independence, the reality has been the ejection of numerous families from the welfare rolls into minimum-wage jobs.⁹ Because economic restructuring has involved the creation of numerous casual, low-waged jobs that often lack health insurance and seldom pay enough to cover adequate child care as well as living expenses, the welfare-to-work policy has largely furthered the sedimentation of poor women of color into a permanent poverty trap.¹⁰

With social expenditure decreasing, criminalization has become the primary response to growing poverty. Women’s poverty is criminalized in numerous ways. Women who turn to the street economy, sex work, petty theft, welfare “fraud,” or other economic survival strategies in the face of declining incomes and few economic opportunities are frequently caught up in the revolving door of initially short and then lengthier jail times.¹¹ For poor young women of color, especially those

who have escaped abusive homes, the courts have become the state's alternative to adequate social services, youth programming, and educational opportunities. Queer and transgendered youth and young people of color who have been in foster or institutional care are particularly likely to spend time in the juvenile-justice system and to "graduate" to adult prisons and jails.¹² The criminalization of poverty also occurs when women with mental illness, including many who live with post-traumatic symptoms from childhood and adult sexual trauma, come in conflict with the law, either through antisocial or violent behavior or through self-medication with illegal drugs.¹³ The next section examines the primacy of the war on drugs in the prison boom of the past three decades.

Making Addiction a Crime: The War on Drugs

In 1973, the state of New York's Rockefeller drug laws ushered in a new era of punitive antidrug measures and a shift toward determinate sentencing, with fixed sentences related to the quantity of drugs involved, regardless of the individual's history or circumstances.¹⁴ By the early 1980s, Reagan had formally announced the "war on drugs" as a government priority, and throughout the 1980s, the federal government pumped billions of dollars into combating the newly identified "enemy."¹⁵ With federal initiatives led by the "drug czar" and dramatic media representations fueling public fears, states soon began introducing mandatory sentencing. As judges were compelled to hand down lengthy sentences, even when they believed that the defendant posed little threat to public safety, the number of women in prison and the length of time they spent inside grew exponentially throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

The war on drugs has been a major contributor to the U.S. imprisonment binge. It has also expanded the criminalization of people by race and gender, leading to sharp increases in the numbers of incarcerated African American women and Latinas.¹⁶ Women come into contact with the war on drugs both as consumers of criminalized drugs and as low-level dealers and couriers or family members of participants in the drug industry. The war on drugs has coincided with the retrenchment of health services in general, and drug treatment facilities in particular. Increasingly, women of color who are struggling with drug addiction are processed through the criminal punishment system rather than through drug rehabilitation programs or services that offer support for underlying issues, such as mental illness and trauma. Rather than viewing a rise in drug use as a public health crisis requiring generous public funding of treatment centers, education programs, mental health facilities, and clean-and-sober living arrangements, the war on drugs identifies drug use as a threat to public safety and pumps funds into the arrest and incarceration of both users and suppliers of criminalized drugs.

In the 1990s, low-income African American communities were particularly hurt by the moral panic about crack cocaine, a cheaper, more accessible form of the drug

than the powder form. The media presented the “crack epidemic” as a crisis that posed a far greater threat to public safety than did the drugs more commonly used by middle-class users, such as powder cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. In addition, although the majority of crack users are white, the use and retail marketing of the drug was depicted as a black phenomenon.¹⁷ Thus, policing operations focused on low-income urban black communities, sweeping up female family members and users as well as women and men working as low-level dealers and distributors. In addition, defendants in trials involving crack continue to be subject to discriminatory sentencing practices whereby the penalty ratio for crack versus powder cocaine is one hundred to one. Thus, a woman in possession of only five grams of crack cocaine receives the same sentence as one who possesses five hundred grams of powder cocaine.¹⁸ Kemba Smith’s case (see chapter 68 in this volume) demonstrates the intersection of racial targeting, gender violence, and punitive drug laws. A young mother and college student, Kemba neither used nor dealt in drugs, yet she was punished for “conspiring” with her abusive boyfriend and sentenced to a 23.5-year mandatory minimum sentence. Kemba was subsequently granted clemency by President Clinton in his final days in office and has dedicated her life to working for the women sentenced in the war on drugs.

The war on drugs has also disproportionately affected Latino/a communities. In 1997, Latinas/os comprised 33 percent of people held for drug offenses in federal prisons.¹⁹ Latino/a communities in the United States and in Latin American countries have been stereotyped by the media and government initiatives as “narcotraffickers.”²⁰ Whereas African American communities are stereotyped as dealers and distributors, Latinos/as are largely depicted as traffickers who bring drugs across the border or as “illegal aliens” who live outside the law. Both sets of controlling images lead to disproportionate policing, arrests, and incarceration rates. Latinos/as are subject to overpolicing, random stops for suspected insurance and immigration violations, inadequate and inaccessible legal representation, and language barriers at every level of the criminal justice system. For Latinas, racial discrepancies and cultural barriers are exacerbated by gendered vulnerabilities. As Juanita Díaz-Cotto demonstrates in her study of Chicana “pintas,” Latinas are likely to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol to deal with childhood and adult gender violence and abuse. Once arrested, Latinas are disadvantaged by their low status in patriarchally structured drug networks; they often lack the valuable information necessary for plea bargaining. Finally, Latinas are sometimes caught in law enforcement efforts to intercept their male family members and may be encouraged to take full responsibility for a crime in order to protect their menfolk.²¹

Latin American women are also vulnerable to criminalization and incarceration within the United States. The federal government wages a war on drugs both within and outside its borders. The U.S. strategy of destroying agricultural land to eradicate the coca crop, while failing to address demand for illegal drugs, promotes eco-

conomic insecurity among rural communities, which are simultaneously suffering from the impact of free-trade agreements in the region.²² In the context of foreign debt, structural adjustment, civil unrest, and U.S. interventions in Latin America, women face increasingly limited survival options. With the unabated demand for illegal drugs in the United States, acting as a courier or “mula” is one option available to women struggling to make ends meet. Once they cross into the United States and are interdicted at the border or in the airport, these women are treated as “traffickers” and consequently receive lengthy sentences disproportionate to their low-level involvement in the illegal drug industry. On completing their prison time, these women are deported to their countries of origin, with few resources to survive, and are thus forced back into the cycle of poverty and criminalization.

If we look only at the racial and ethnic makeup of women’s prison populations, we overlook the impact of immigrant status. Latinas in U.S. prisons include women arrested when crossing the border, women who were living in the United States either as documented or undocumented immigrants before their arrest, and women who were born in the United States. The next section turns to the criminalization of migration and argues that Latina immigrants are the overlooked face of women’s imprisonment in the United States.

Criminalizing Migration

Globalization creates the structural conditions for mass movements of women and men around the globe, leading immigrant rights activists to label migrants “the refugees of globalization.”²³ In 2005, approximately 185 million, or one in thirty-three of the world’s population were migrants, and nearly half that number were women.²⁴ Globalization and neoliberal economic policies drive women’s migration in multiple ways. Women are particularly vulnerable to structural adjustment policies, often imposed on debt-laden developing nations by the International Monetary Fund. Like economic reforms in the United States, structural adjustment policies involve cutbacks in government spending on education, health care, and social provision. As women struggle to pay more for basics such as education, health care, water, and food, migration becomes a realistic alternative to extreme poverty and offers the opportunity to provide remittances that can support dependents. Women are also affected by food insecurity caused by free trade and the global integration of food production, processing, and sales.²⁵ With less access to growing their own food, women must work for transnational corporations or migrate if they are to meet family nutritional needs. Women who migrate to work in export-processing zones are also more likely to continue their migration journeys into the global North.

A key aspect of globalization is the selective control of national borders. Although free-trade agreements open borders to the flow of capital and enable free movement of a highly educated capitalist elite, they call for much stricter control of the movement of workers. As socioeconomic conditions at home drive outmigration

from countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Philippines, labor needs in U.S. agriculture and service industries draw workers across the border. Many women rely on family reunification provisions in immigration legislation or come on temporary work visas, but those who are ineligible are forced to rely on migrant “traffickers” who facilitate illegal entry into the country. Once these women are in the United States, racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment combine with lack of documentation to ensure that they are restricted to low-waged, casual, and nonunionized labor in the service sector, jobs as domestic caregivers, or work in the sex industry.

During the past three decades, the budget of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS) has grown exponentially as U.S. immigration policy has become more punitive. Although the USCIS is also tasked with providing information and services to “new Americans,” budget increases over the years have focused on enforcement and interdiction, with an emphasis on the U.S.-Mexico border. Increasingly, the goal of controlling migration has been conflated with that of controlling drug importation and crime, and it has been classified as a national security concern rather than a matter for economic policy. This emphasis in turn has led to closer integration of the USCIS, the Border Patrol, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the military, and the police.²⁶ Enforcement activities on the U.S.-Mexico border have become militarized operations, involving military technology, surveillance equipment, and tactics to trap undocumented migrants. Women are particularly affected by the militarization of the border because they are vulnerable to the sexual assault and harassment that is a documented characteristic of war zones.²⁷ These operations clearly demonstrate the racialization of immigration policy, with Latinos/as making up 90 percent of deportations.²⁸ The surveillance and policing of Latinos/as, who are racially profiled as potential “illegal aliens,” ensures that a disproportionate number of Latino/a immigrants are picked up for other infractions, from drug possession to driving without a license. These frequent interactions with law enforcement lead to higher rates of arrest and incarceration.

Noncitizen immigrant women who are convicted of offenses other than immigration-related charges are labeled “criminal aliens” by the state. These women make up 27 percent of the federal prison population. In the state prison system, 80 percent of noncitizens are imprisoned in five states: Arizona, California, Florida, New York, and Texas.²⁹ The policing and criminalization of immigrant Latinas has therefore been an important factor in U.S. prison expansion in the past three decades and has become a feature of life in the border states in particular. The majority (over 60 percent) of incarcerated noncitizens are from Mexico, with women and men from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Cuba making up about one-fifth of the federal noncitizen population. When globalization, free trade, and neoliberalism in Latin America and the Caribbean intersect with xenophobic and racial-

ized law enforcement in the United States, the result is the criminalization of migration and the growth of globalized prison populations.

Profiting from Punishment:

The Rise of the Transnational Prison-Industrial Complex

Since the late 1990s, antiprison activists and scholars have adopted the concept of the “prison-industrial complex” to explain the complex web of overlapping interests that together have driven three decades of prison expansion. The concept derives from the “military-industrial complex,” a term coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to describe the “conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry.”³⁰ Making visible the corporate interests behind the Cold War arms buildup, Eisenhower called on “an alert and knowledgeable citizenry” to prevent this complex from exerting “unwarranted influence” over national policy. The term *prison-industrial complex* was first used by urban theorist Mike Davis in 1995 to describe a multibillion-dollar prison-building boom in California that, he argued, “rivals agribusiness as the dominant force in the life of rural California and competes with land developers as the chief seducer of legislators in Sacramento.”³¹ Conceptualizing prison expansion as the result of interlocking economic and political forces has enabled radical intellectuals to explain the apparently illogical willingness of politicians to continue to spend billions of dollars on a failed social policy despite evidence that the prison buildup has had no positive impact on public safety or the fear of crime.

The concept captures two related processes. The first is the transformation of prisoners into profits. In private prisons, criminalized and processed bodies are bought, sold, and traded. Federal and state governments pay private corporations a fee per prisoner per day, thus transforming the deprivation of a human being’s freedom into a transaction that can be traded on the stock market. The majority of private prisons are designed, constructed, managed, and financed by multinational corporations. Thus, this form of private enterprise has integrated low-income communities of color into the global economy. Warehoused in megaprison designed for economies of scale rather than rehabilitation, prisoners have become a commodity that is sold to governments, and ultimately to taxpayers, under the guise of “keeping us safe.” And the corporations and their stakeholders that profit from these transactions in turn benefit from and actively promote criminal justice policies that guarantee rising rates of incarceration.³²

The dramatic increase in the number of people sentenced to time behind bars has led to a prison-building boom in the United States, Canada, Latin America, parts of Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. Prison construction has also become denationalized. Today a prison in South Africa is likely to have been built by a U.S.-headquartered multinational corporation, or a prison in Chile may be constructed by a Chilean subsidiary of a French-headquartered multinational corporation. Prison

expansion has generated a host of profit-making opportunities for both multinational and local construction firms, architecture firms, and manufacturers of security and telecommunications equipment, as well as for service industries, including real estate agents, banks, and restaurants. These profits flow whether the prison is ultimately operated by the state or by a private company. Imprisonment transforms immense sums of public money into private profits. These funds are then unavailable for expenditure on the public workers and facilities—from schools to rehabilitation centers—that support families and individuals in crisis before they can come into conflict with the law.

The second process that scholars have drawn to our attention is the cementing of the prison into local economies. For rural towns devastated by economic restructuring and free-trade competition, prisons seem to be a panacea for economic stagnation and population loss.³³ Amid the farm bankruptcies and factory closures caused by the rise of corporate agribusiness and the influx of foreign products, the jobs and construction contracts offered by new public or private prisons have pitted small towns against each other in bids to offer the most attractive package of tax breaks, cheap land, and other incentives. Politicians and business elites in rural towns in the United States and Canada have promoted prison construction as a form of economic development, touting prisons as a recession-proof and non-polluting industry.³⁴ Ultimately, however, prison towns fail to reap the promised benefits and instead suffer from inflated real estate prices, high unemployment, and environmental degradation.³⁵

Although the prison-industrial complex emerged in the United States, the past two decades have seen it become a transnational phenomenon. Punitive U.S. measures—including tough sentencing for troubled youth, three strikes, truth-in-sentencing policies, and mandatory minimums—have spread internationally.³⁶ As politicians around the world have pushed their own versions of U.S.-style tough-on-crime strategies, global prison populations have begun to rise inexorably. As a result, countries have again turned to the United States for an answer to the dilemma of how to lock more people away while minimizing the cost of growing prison populations. Mass warehousing in “no frills” superjails that may house over a thousand prisoners has increasingly become politicians’ solution, fueling the growth of a transnational prison-industrial complex.

ENVISIONING A SOLUTION: WOMEN IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT PRISONS

The brutal impact of the prison-industrial complex on families and communities has led to the creation of a strong grassroots antiprison movement. This movement is made up of a plethora of organizations, campaign and lobby groups, activist collectives, nonprofits, prisoner associations, and student groups. These groups focus

on a range of intertwined issues, including the war on drugs, police accountability, incarcerated women, LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transsexual) prisoners, political prisoners, private prisons, prison expansion, prison financing, the death penalty, juvenile justice, human rights violations in prisons, access to health care, control units, deaths in custody, post-9/11 harassment and detention of Muslims and Arab Americans, detentions in the war on terror, and the rights of undocumented and incarcerated immigrants.³⁷

Although men make up over 90 percent of prison populations in the United States and globally, women, particularly women of color, play critical roles in antiprison movements. In the United States, activist-intellectuals and former prisoners such as Angela Y. Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Ramona Africa, Linda Evans, and Kemba Smith have played key roles in analyzing the prison-industrial complex, popularizing understanding of this analysis, and mobilizing opposition. As activists and mothers, women do much of the hard work of community organizing and providing support to prisoners and their families. Women activists have ensured the visibility of women prisoners and their issues through organizations such as the National Network for Women in Prison, the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Justice Now, Free Battered Women, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, and the Out of Control Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners.

For diverse groups to become part of a collective movement, they must be unified by a common understanding of the problem and share a vision of the possible solutions. These radicalizing and life-affirming visions move us beyond a combative dualism, whereby we know only what we are against, to a place of constructive imagination, where we can begin to build the world we want to live in. For the antiprison movement, abolition is the key to a radical and profoundly transformative vision of social change. A number of organizations are promoting dialogue about abolition, discussing what it means and how it can translate into concrete action.³⁸ Justice Now is an Oakland, California-based organization that provides legal services for women prisoners and campaigns against women's imprisonment. The organization's Building a World Without Prisons campaign provides a forum for women in and out of prison to share abolitionist ideas and strategies. Informed by women's experiences of interpersonal violation and state violence, Justice Now's politics is feminist and abolitionist:

As an organization that works with women in prison, we see that prisons are a form of violence against women, and that locking up men is not a solution to interpersonal violence in our communities. We are interested not only in challenging what we see happening in prisons, but also in building a different world—a world where all of us have affordable housing, food, healthcare, economic opportunity and freedom from both individual and state violence. This vision includes creating new ways to respond when people hurt each other, ways that no longer rely on violence and control.³⁹

This feminist abolitionism grows out of the deep belief that a world without prisons can also be a world in which women are safe from interpersonal violence. It resists the antiviolence movement's tendency to assume that policing and prisons are an effective tool against male violence, but it also holds the antiprison movement accountable for finding alternative strategies to end violence and build safety.

For an abolitionist vision to offer anything meaningful to communities and individuals suffering from overpolicing, criminalization, and incarceration, it must be accompanied by practical actions that promise short- and medium-term successes as well as long-term transformation. Critical Resistance, founded in 1998 by a group of Bay Area activists including Angela Y. Davis, has played a critical role in coordinating gatherings where diverse organizations can generate alternatives to the prison-industrial complex. Critical Resistance describe abolition as:

[a] political vision that seeks to eliminate the need for prisons, policing, and surveillance by creating sustainable alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. . . . An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead the average person to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives.⁴⁰

In this sense, prison abolitionists shoulder a dual burden of first, transforming people's consciousness so that they can believe that their own visions of a different world are possible; and second, taking practical steps to oppose the prison-industrial complex. Abolitionist work involves three steps that build on one another with the ultimate goal of "shrink[ing] the system into non-existence."⁴¹ The first is a moratorium: ending prison expansion. This step may call for raising public awareness of the cost of prisons to reduce public support for prison construction and laws that increase prison populations. It may also require campaigns to prevent the construction of specific prisons or jails. For example, the Prisoner Justice Action Committee's 81 Reasons 2005 campaign asked Ontario residents to think of alternative ways of spending the \$81.1 million (Canadian) that the provincial government planned to spend on a new youth "superjail" in Brampton, a suburb of Toronto.⁴² The campaigners mobilized public concerns about spending cuts in other areas, including education, to create pressure on the provincial government to explore less expensive and punitive alternatives to incarceration for youth.

The second step is decarceration: shrinking the prison population. The most common approach is to target a specific prison population that the public sees as low risk and argue for an end to imprisonment of this population. For example, California's passage of Proposition 36, the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act, in 2000 allows first and second-time nonviolent drug offenders charged with possession to receive substance abuse treatment instead of prison, and this measure channels approximately thirty-five thousand people into treatment annually.⁴³

Free Battered Women's (FBW's) campaign for the release of incarcerated survivors is another example of decarceration. The organization supports women imprisoned for killing an abuser, challenging their convictions by demonstrating how the battering led to the killing. In addition, FBW draws attention to the large proportion of women prisoners who have a history of intimate violence and challenges the state's use of imprisonment as its response to women's victimization. By revealing the connection between women incarcerated for defending themselves against a violent partner and the majority of women in prison, FBW promotes the decarceration of women at a massive scale.

The third strategy is abolition: building a world without prisons. As a strategy, abolition moves from opposition to construction. It aims to build "a world where all people have access to the material, educational, emotional, and spiritual resources necessary to be safe and thrive in our communities."⁴⁴ For Critical Resistance South, located in New Orleans, abolition means working in coalition with grassroots economic and racial justice organizations to build community empowerment and representation in the reconstruction of the city.⁴⁵ Because the war on drugs has played such a huge role in the boom in imprisonment, strategies to tackle substance abuse and addiction must play a critical role in any abolitionist vision. The recovery movement, a user-led mental health and addiction movement, offers an important alternative to the criminalization of drug and alcohol abuse.⁴⁶ Divesting of prisons and investing in sober-living houses, recovery programs, treatment centers, and women's wellness and mental health programs designed and run by and for women and men in recovery would promote healing from addiction and self-determination for affected individuals and communities. Promoting community recovery would also stem the demand for criminalized drugs, undermining the transnational drug industry and creating economic crises for rural communities around the world that cultivate coca and opium. Transforming the war on drugs through an abolitionist politics must therefore involve a commitment to global economic justice and the creation of alternative economic development opportunities for all communities involved in the drug trade.

Abolition also requires alternative strategies for dealing with interpersonal harms that threaten the safety of individuals from oppressed groups. For Justice Now, abolition means facilitating community conversations about collective strategies for tackling violence against women that do not rely on criminal punishment. For INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, abolition means developing and disseminating "community accountability" politics and practices for progressive organizations run by people of color, so that gender abuse and violence in activist settings is neither brushed under the carpet nor dealt with using the criminal punishment model.⁴⁷ Through their activities, these organizations become a reflection of the world we want to live in, providing real safety based on justice and focusing on healing and transformation rather than punishment and imprisonment.

NOTES

1. See Arthur T. Denzau's *Fiscal Policy Convergence from Reagan to Blair* (New York: Routledge, 2003) for a detailed overview of, and the legacies bequeathed by, Reaganomics and Thatcherism.
2. Although fewer women are imprisoned than men, women's imprisonment has grown at a faster rate than men's since the 1980s. Between 1986 and 1991, the number of people in state women's prisons increased 75 percent, versus a 53 percent increase for men. The trend continues, with women's prison populations increasing 4.8 percent in the twelve months to midyear 2006, versus a 2.7 percent increase for men. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Special Report: Women in Prison* (Washington, DC, 1994); U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006* (Washington, DC, 2007). African American women and Latinas are imprisoned at four times and twice the rate of white women, respectively, indicating that the prison boom has disproportionately affected women of color (U.S. Department of Justice, *Prison and Jail Inmates*.)
3. Rebecca Bohman and Naomi Murakawa, "Remaking Big Government: Immigration and Crime Control in the United States," in *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex*, ed. J. Sudbury, 109–26. (New York: Routledge, 2005). The other major shift of public spending priorities has been from the welfare state to the global war on terror.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Julia Sudbury, "Transatlantic Visions: Resisting the Globalization of Mass Incarceration," *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 133.
6. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
7. Angela Y. Davis, "Race and Criminalization: Black Americans and the Punishment Industry," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. James Joy, 61–73 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).
8. Neoliberalism is a philosophy that views the unfettered market as the key to economic and social progress. Neoliberal policies include government cutbacks, privatization of state services, reduced governmental protection of workers and the environment, and the removal of trade barriers, in particular through international trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Antiglobalization activists and scholars view these developments as a recipe for corporate profit at the expense of marginalized communities. See Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories, 1998).
9. National Women's Law Center, "Welfare Reform Should Help Women Striving to Support Their Families, Not Hold Them Back" (Washington, D.C.: National Women's Law Center, February 2003); www.nwlc.org.
10. Judith Goode, "From New Deal to Bad Deal: Racial and Political Implications of U.S. Welfare Reform," in *Western Welfare in Decline: Globalization and Women's Poverty*, ed. Catherine Kingfisher, 65–89 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
11. Beth Richie, *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered Black Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
12. Beth Richie, "Queering Antiprison Work," in Sudbury, *Global Lockdown*; Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002), 201–7.
13. Terry Kupers, *Prison Madness: The Mental Health Crisis Behind Bars and What We Must Do About It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).
14. For example, anyone convicted of selling two ounces or possessing four ounces of narcotics would receive a sentence of fifteen years. Marc Mauer, "The Causes and Consequences of Prison Growth in the United States," in *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*, ed. David Garland (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 6.
15. The federal budget for the war on drugs grew from \$1.5 billion in 1981 at the beginning of Reagan's term to \$6.6 billion in 1989, and it hit \$17 billion ten years later; *ibid.*

16. Stephanie Bush-Baskette, "The War on Drugs as a War on Black Women," in *Crime Control and Women*, ed. Susan Miller, 113–29 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998); Juanita Diaz-Cotto, *Chicana Lives and Criminal Justice: Voices from El Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

17. Although the majority of crack users are white, nearly 90 percent of those convicted in federal court for crack-cocaine distribution are African American. U.S. Sentencing Commission, *Special Report to Congress: Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy* (Washington, DC, April 2007), 8.

18. Drug Policy Alliance 2001, "Crack/Cocaine Disparity"; www.drugpolicy.org.

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26. Bohrman and Murakawa, "Remaking Big Government."

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29. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Information on Criminal Aliens Incarcerated in Federal and State Prisons and Local Jails* (Washington, DC, April 7, 2005); www.gao.gov.

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31. Mike Davis, "Hell Factories in the Field: A Prison-Industrial Complex," *Nation*, February 20, 1995, 260.

32. For example, the Institute on Money in State Politics report identified evidence that legislators were introducing or voting favorably on bills that would benefit the private prison companies that had donated to their campaigns in Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Oklahoma, and North Carolina during the 2000 election cycle. Edwin Bender, *A Contributing Influence: The Private-Prison Industry and Political Giving in the South* (Helena, MT: Institute on Money in State Politics, 2002), 4.

33. Ruthie Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

34. Geert Dhondt, "Big Prisons and Small Towns" (Amherst, MA: Center for Popular Economics, 2002).

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37. For an excellent list of over one hundred organizations, see the Prison Activist Resource Center's links page: www.prisonactivist.org.

38. These organizations include Critical Resistance, the Prison Moratorium Project, the Prison Activist Resource Center, Justice Now, the Prison Justice Action Committee (Toronto, Canada), and the International Conference on Penal Abolition.

39. Justice Now, "The VoicesProject: Building a World Without Prisons"; www.jnow.org.

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42. Prisoner Justice Action Committee, "The 81 Reasons Campaign Statement"; www.pjac.org.
43. Drug Policy Alliance, "California Proposition 36: Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000"; www.prop36.org.
44. Free Battered Women, "What We Believe: Our Vision & Guiding Principles"; <http://freebatteredwomen.org>.
45. Critical Resistance, "Hurricane Katrina Rebuilding and Relief"; www.criticalresistance.org.
46. The recovery movement includes twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous and a range of community-based recovery facilities. These programs are peer led and run, nonhierarchical and noncommercial.
47. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *Gender Oppression, Abuse, Violence: Community Accountability within the People of Color Progressive Movement* (Seattle, WA, July 2005); www.incite-national.org.