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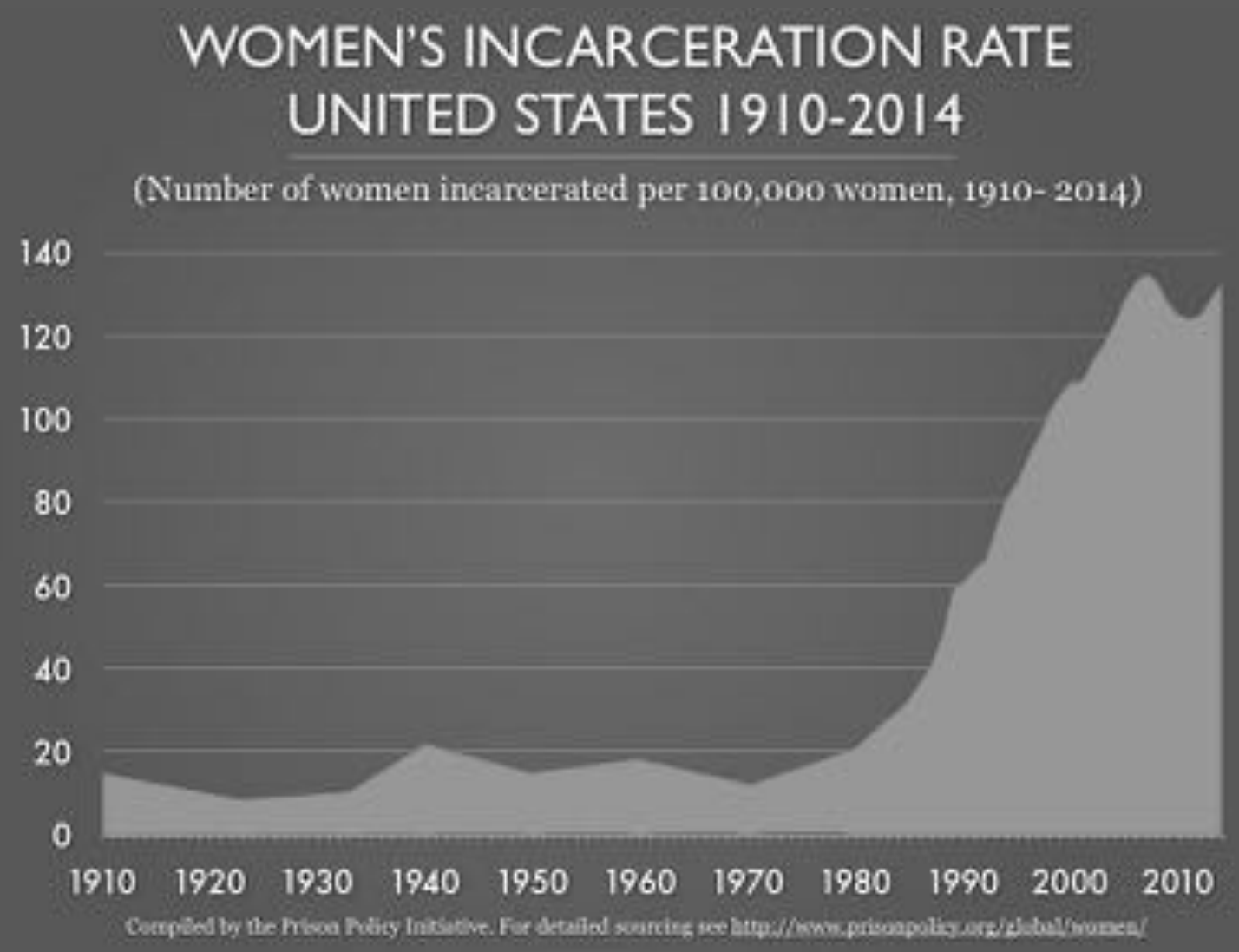
THE FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEST BRAND CONTENT

OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES, THE NUMBER OF WOMEN SERVING TIME IN AMERICAN PRISONS HAS INCREASED MORE THAN EIGHTFOLD.


WOMEN'S INCARCERATION RATE
UNITED STATES 1910-2014
(Number of women incarcerated per 100,000 women, 1910- 2014)
140
120
100
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Compiled by the Prison Policy Initiative. For detailed sourcing see http://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/women/

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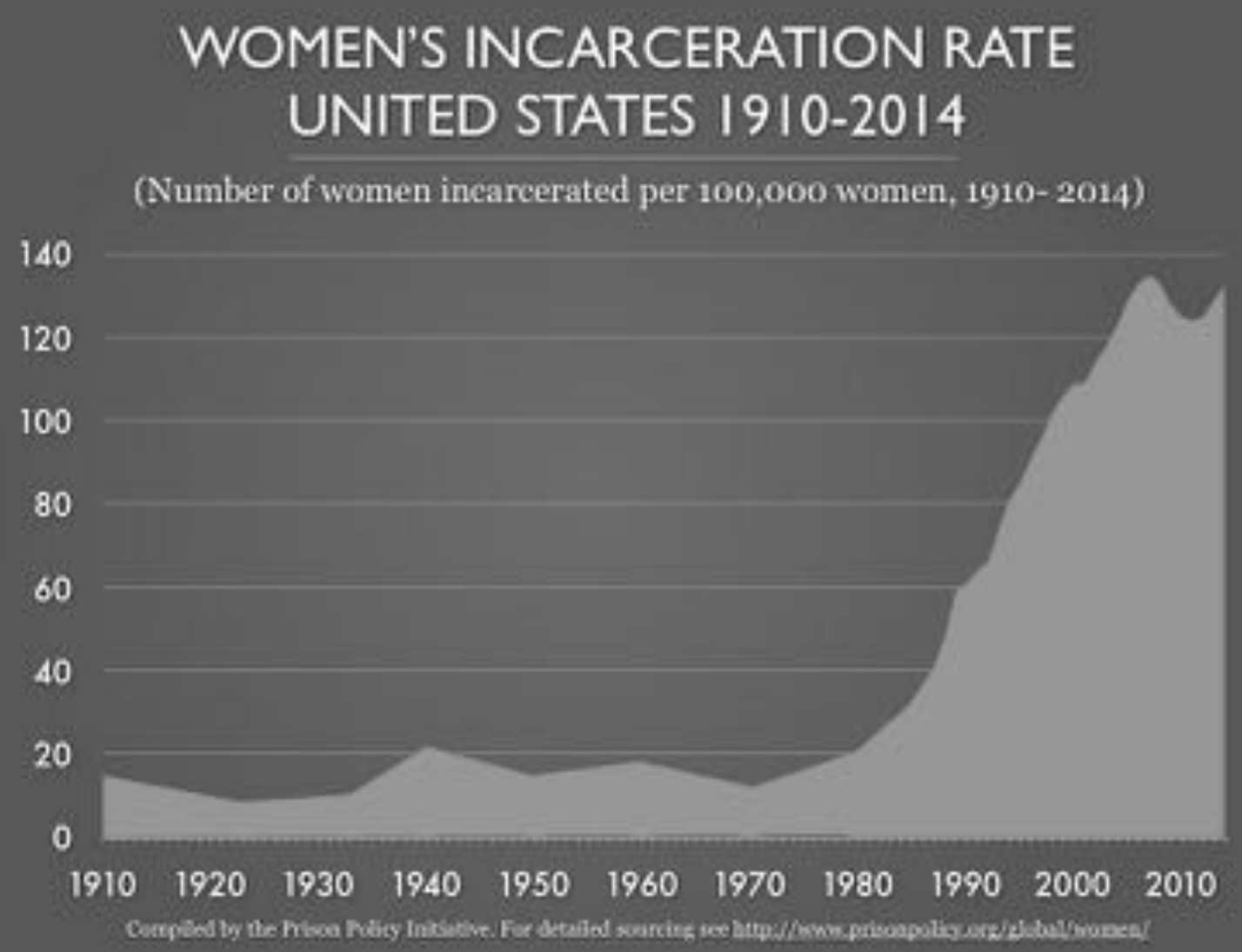
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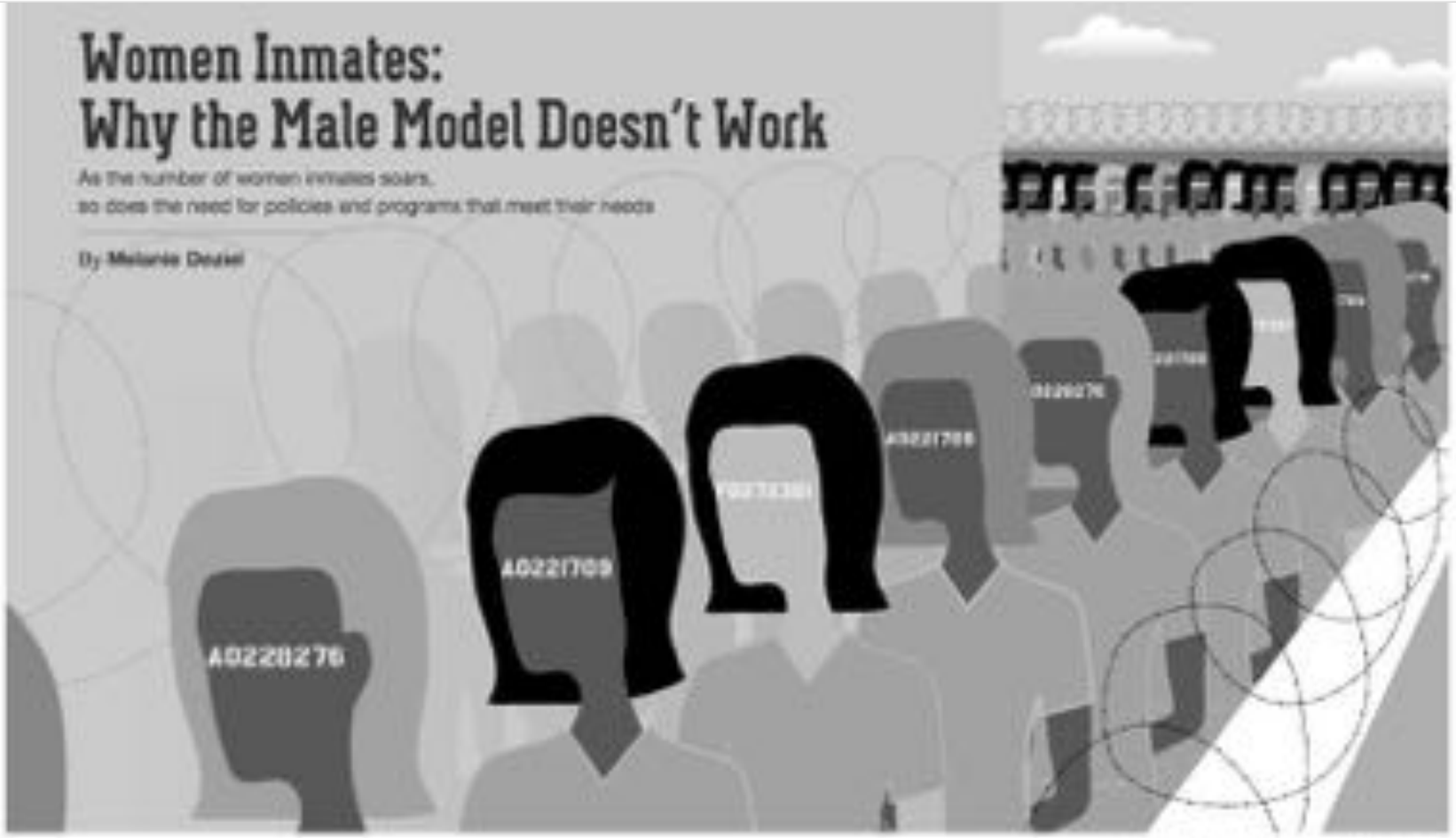
Women Inmates: Why the Male Model Doesn't Work

As the number of women inmates soars, so does the need for policies and programs that meet their needs

By Melanie Deziel



ILLUSTRATIONS BY OTTO STORNINGER

Over the past three decades, the number of women serving time in American prisons has increased more than eightfold.

Today, some 15,000 are held in federal custody and an additional 100,000 are behind bars in local jails. That sustained growth has researchers, former inmates and prison reform advocates calling for women's

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healthy."

Healthy women, McGruder adds, are those who receive treatment for their health issues, support for their emotional needs and respect from correctional officers and other prison staff. Sadly, she says, that's rare.

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Women inmates "are not looked at as people. They're just a letter, a number, a piece of paper," McGruder says. "So people treat them like a piece of paper: They crumple them up and throw them away."

While the dynamic between male correctional officers and women inmates can certainly be problematic, banning male staff is not the answer, says CORE Associates' Benedict. "Male staff has an even more important role in showing — sometimes for the first time — how a man can interact with these women in a respectful manner," she adds.

Challenges outside

The challenges of re-entry

Feeling respected can go a long way toward helping women inmates gain the confidence to make positive changes in their lives, both inside and outside prison.

Of course, reentry is a challenge for all inmates. The sudden loss of structure and the reintroduction of choices can be overwhelming. Former inmates must relearn little things, like eating at a leisurely pace now that they aren't being timed, or sleeping for longer stretches unpunctuated by roll calls. And they need to secure employment, for which prison does not always prepare them.

Training programs and jobs that are available to prisoners are often geared to traditionally male-dominated professions such as electrical work, plumbing or construction, since prisoners can help with the facility's upkeep.

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an already dehumanizing experience even worse.

75% or more of female inmates have suffered either physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime.

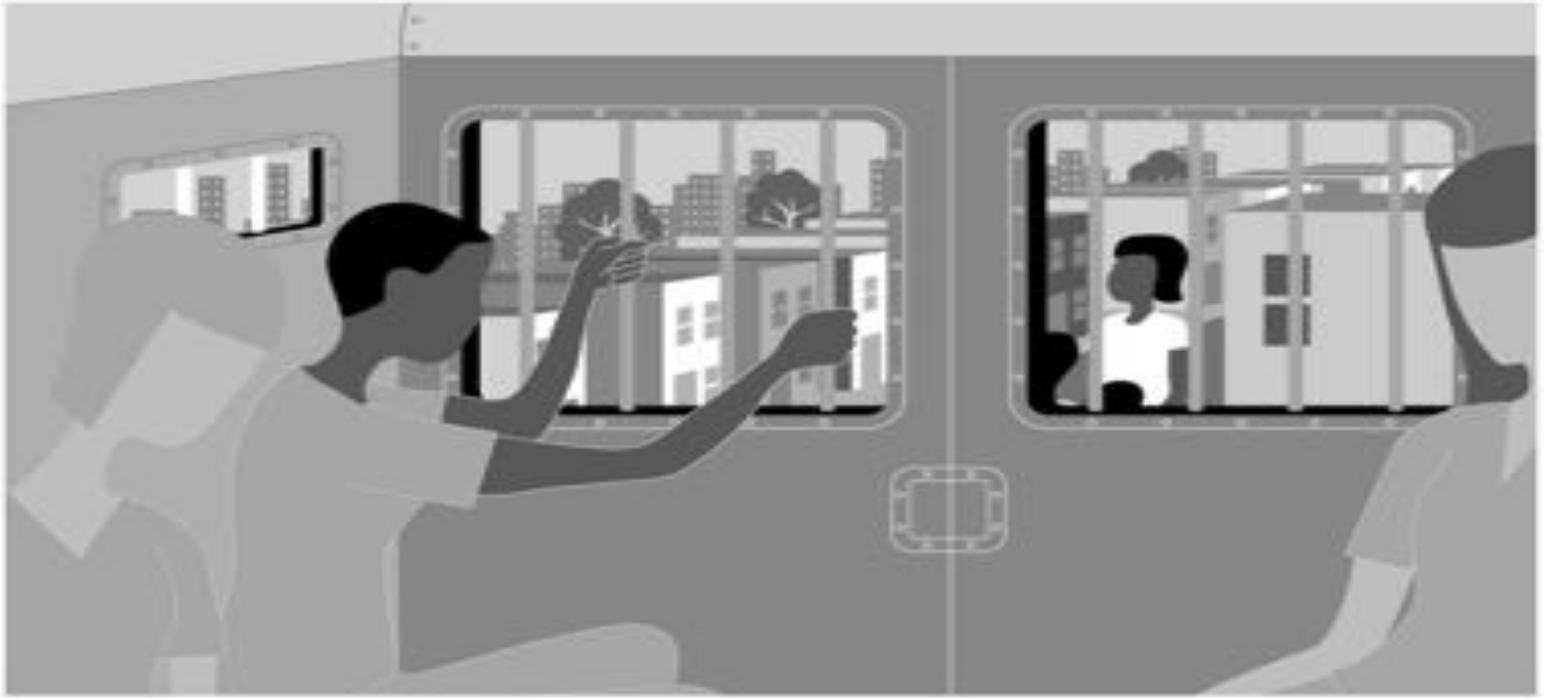
That history can transform otherwise normal prison protocols such as strip-searches, supervised showers, and physical restriction of movement into traumatic experiences.

This triggering of past abuses can keep inmates with painful pasts in a state of hyper-alertness, causing reactionary behavior that results in cycles of repeated punishment.

That punishment often comes in the form of the removal or reduction of visitation or phone privileges, further severing the familial connections that can otherwise offer imprisoned women needed support.

"When you incarcerate a woman, you incarcerate her whole family," says Rusti Miller-Hill, whose children were put into foster care and subsequently adopted while she served two and a half years for possession of crack cocaine with intent to sell.

> "When you incarcerate a woman, you incarcerate her whole family."



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receive to help them recover and grow.

An ex-prisoner reflects
49

This "transformation from a modality of punishment to a modality of change," Patterson says, has resulted in a 1.3 percent drop in the facility's inmate population over the last seven years. Some former residents are returning — but usually as volunteers and supporters, not as recidivist inmates.

"When women come to this facility, they are forgiven," Patterson says. "And then we teach them how to live a forgiven life."

Additional Resources & Credits

Federal Bureau of Prisons

National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women

Education Based Incarceration of the LA County Sheriff's Dept.

Correctional Association of NY Women in Prison Project

Women's Prison Association

Fortune Society

Osborne Association

College and Community Fellowship

FILM PRODUCTION

Directors: Kaylee King-Balentine and Solly Granatstein

Executive Producer: Shawn Ehan

Producer and Editor: Erlo Jankstrom

Produced by T Brand Studio and Ehan Films

AUDIO

Samples from Joanne Liupaono, a former inmate at W.C.C.C. in Hawaii

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