

**Circles of  
Support and  
Accountability  
(CoSA)**

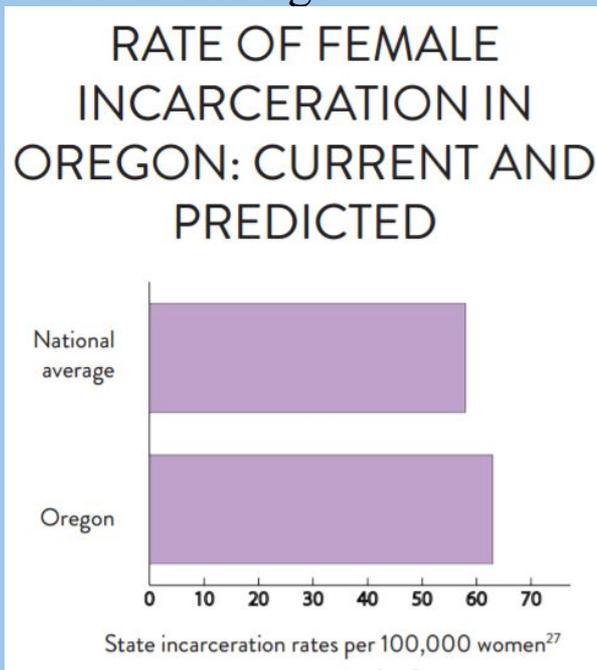
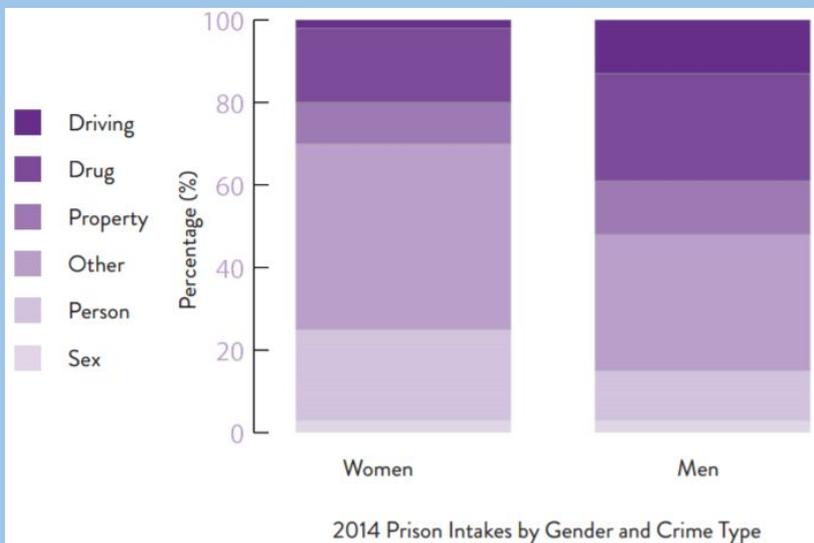
# An Introduction to CoSA <sup>1</sup>

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- CoSA (Communities of Support & Accountability)
- Rooted in Christian values: "We are all worth more than the worst thing we have ever done in our life." - Sister Helen Prejean
- Restorative Justice & redefinition of community
- Contact info: (503) 221-1054 or (971) 279-9724, or [cosa@emoregon.org](mailto:cosa@emoregon.org)
- Other Projects
  - Prison visitation for families and children of incarcerated women
  - Annual Collins Lecture
  - Interfaith Advocacy Day
  - Criminal Justice Sabbath <sup>2</sup>

# Prison Sentences in Oregon

- One out of three women stay in prison for over 24 months
- The rate of women prison sentences is larger than the national average
- Characteristics of incarcerated women
  - 75% of incarcerated women are mothers



(Lundell & Scissors, 2015)

# Psychological Effects on Women in Prison

-By the start of the 1990's the United States incarcerated more persons per capita than any other nation in the modern world

- As many as 80% of incarcerated women will meet criteria for at least one psychological disorder (eg. depression, bipolar and trauma related disorders).

- Female inmates had higher rates of mental health problems than male inmates (State prisons: 73% of females and 55% of males; local jails: 75% of females and 63% of males)

- In state prisons, 73 percent of women
- In federal prisons, 61 percent of women
- In local jails, 75 percent of women

-The United States has 10 times more mentally ill individuals in its prisons than the amount who are treated in psychiatric facilities.

-Pregnant women in prison are subjected to policies that negatively affect them, followed by a very routine hospitalization where their baby is taken away shortly after

roughly **1 in 3** Prison Inmates suffer from a serious mental illness



# Statistics on Women Offenders-2015

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- Since 2010, the female jail population has been the fastest growing correctional population, increasing by an average annual rate of 3.4 percent. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- According to Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, an estimated 17% of defendants were female in 2009. This was a slight increase compared to 1990 when females represented 14% of defendants. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- Female prisoners sentenced to more than a year in-state or federal prison grew by almost 3% (2,800 inmates) between 2012 and 2013, while male prisoners increased 0.2% (2,500). White females comprised 49% of the prison population compared to 22% black females. However, the imprisonment rate for black females (113 per 100,000) was twice the rate of white females (51 per 100,000). Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

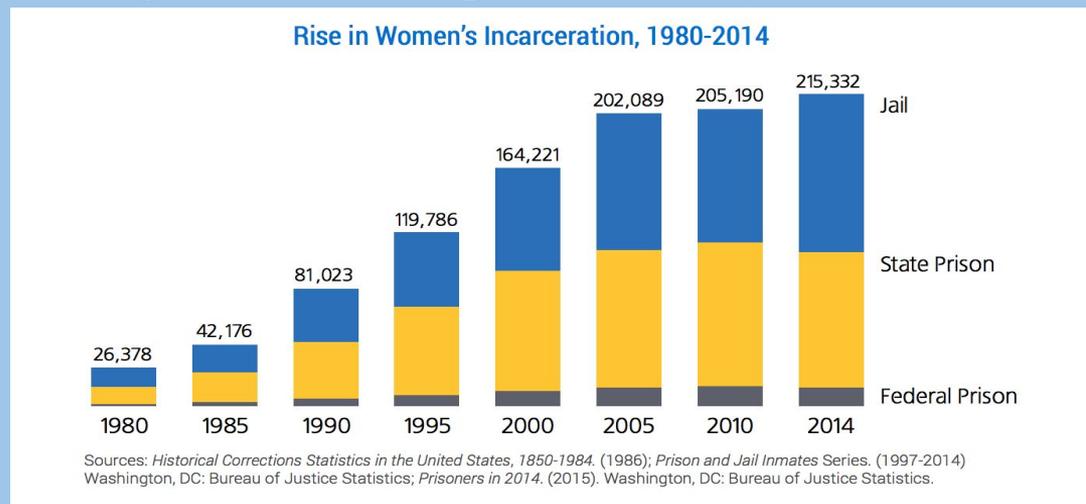
# Statistics on Women Offenders- 2015

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- Female prisoners increased from 108,800 in 2012 to 111,300 in 2013 (up 2,500). Although females in the BOP increased by 1% in 2013, this was offset by a decrease in male prisoners. The female prison population increased in 36 states. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)
- In 2013, females accounted for almost 25 percent of the probation population, up from about 22 percent in 2000. They made up 14 percent of the jail population in 2013, up from about 11 percent in 2000. The percentage of females on parole or incarcerated in state or federal prisons remained unchanged between 2000 and 2013. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

# Statistics on Women Offenders- 2015

- The female jail inmate population increased 10.9 percent (up 10,000 inmates) between midyear 2010 and 2013, while the male population declined 4.2 percent (down 27,500 inmates). The female jail population grew by an average of about 1 percent each year between 2005 and 2013. In comparison, the male jail population declined an annual average of less than 1 percent every year since 2005. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)



# Coffee Creek Facilities & Daily Life

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- From the outside looks “like a bland office park, except for the coils of barbed wire”
- Inside “it feels more like a community college”
- Normal utensils banned, only sporks for eating. Can have razors for shaving.
- Inmates can’t touch one another except for grieving, congratulations and hair braiding at beauty bar.
- Sex plays a larger role than violence. Not necessarily rape/sexual assault, more consensual but unpermitted sex.
- Coffee Creek houses women on death row.
- Budgeted capacity: 1759 beds

- Life-skills Programs:
  - Crafts, yoga, quilting, photography, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, theatre group, running, choir, etc.
- Library services
- Education programs (Adult basic ed, GED programs, ESL, Goodwill Job Connections, etc.)
  - Work-based programs (Barista training, computer tech lab, hair design)
- Treatment & transition programs
- Parenting programs:
  - Parenting training, child development programs, baby bonding
- Religious services:
  - Across the religious spectrum
- Work programs (off-site and institutional)
- Puppy program
- Food Handler’s course
- Community service (crochet blankets for various organizations)
- Sustainability Trainings:
  - Green House Project
  - Butterfly Project
  - Beekeeping

# Impact on Families of Women in Oregon Prisons

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- Debilitating lack of social contact between mother and child
- Negative effects on the bonding process
- Confused family roles and the matriarch
- Replacement caregivers can provide stability
- Lack of information and education for families
- Increased negative emotional, psychological and physiological effects
- Family Preservation Project reduces recidivism
- Early Head Start (EHS) and Onsite Nursery Programs provide measurable benefits
- Oregon state law and mandatory minimum sentences may have permanent effects
- Conflicts arise during reunification of families after release



# Political Landscape in Oregon

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- The D.O.C. has chosen to temporarily not request funds for a second prison unless inmate count rises
- Likely to see a request as early as December 2016
- State Representatives are working to save money and decrease amount of women in prison
- State currently has short-term transitional leave where eligible inmates are released 90 days early
- Since January 2014, 182,642+ state prison bed days have been saved
- Rep. Carla Piluso, D-Gresham is sponsoring a bill increasing this to 120 to 180 days
- Would delay new prison by 2+ years
- Oregon Districts Attorney Association though would oppose legislation for expansion, stating more time needed to accurately predict recidivism rates

# Incarcerated Women and Drug Related Charges

- Substance abuse by women demonstrates the most dramatic rise of female participation in the criminal justice system
- Pathways to addiction:
  - Early exposure to drugs and alcohol
  - Early trauma or victimization
  - Social marginalization, economic pressure, mental health needs
- Exacerbation of pathways due to incarceration
- Primary social response to substance abuse is incarceration
- Property crimes are directly linked to the drug trade, theft, burglary, fraud, forgery, and trafficking in stolen goods are a regular part of just doing business. Denton + Malley (2001)
- Women commit property crimes to support their addiction or engage in sex work
- “Survival crimes” are linked to economic necessity
- A comparison of data for 2011 and 2002 showed that the number of males arrested for property crimes in 2011 declined 6.1% from the number arrested in 2002, but the number of females arrested for property crimes rose 26.2% (FBI UCR)

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- 4/5ths of incarcerated pregnant women have a substance abuse disorder
  - Majority are of reproductive age (median age of incarcerated women in the United States is 34 years old)
  - Lack of comprehensive studies on rising female incarceration
  - Human Rights violations:
    - Shackling during delivery
    - Forced inducement of labor
    - Inadequate food, prenatal care
  - No national data collection
  - Only two states require data collection on pregnancy outcomes for incarcerated women
  - The lack of data illustrates the invisibility of incarcerated women
  - 70% of children of incarcerated parents will eventually end up committing crimes
  - Many have problems with school and serious mental health needs
  - Implementation of data collection on female incarceration and their children
  - School-based programs may produce secondary victimization
  - Too few community-based practices to address the needs of incarcerated women and their children

Click on the video for a link to hear a powerful story from someone who faced the impact of parental incarceration.



# The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls

## Mission:

To bring the voices and expertise of women who have been affected by incarceration into the conversation around policy, reform, organizing, and services.

To support the work that currently and formerly incarcerated women are already doing, often in isolation and with little encouragement.



# National Prison Strike

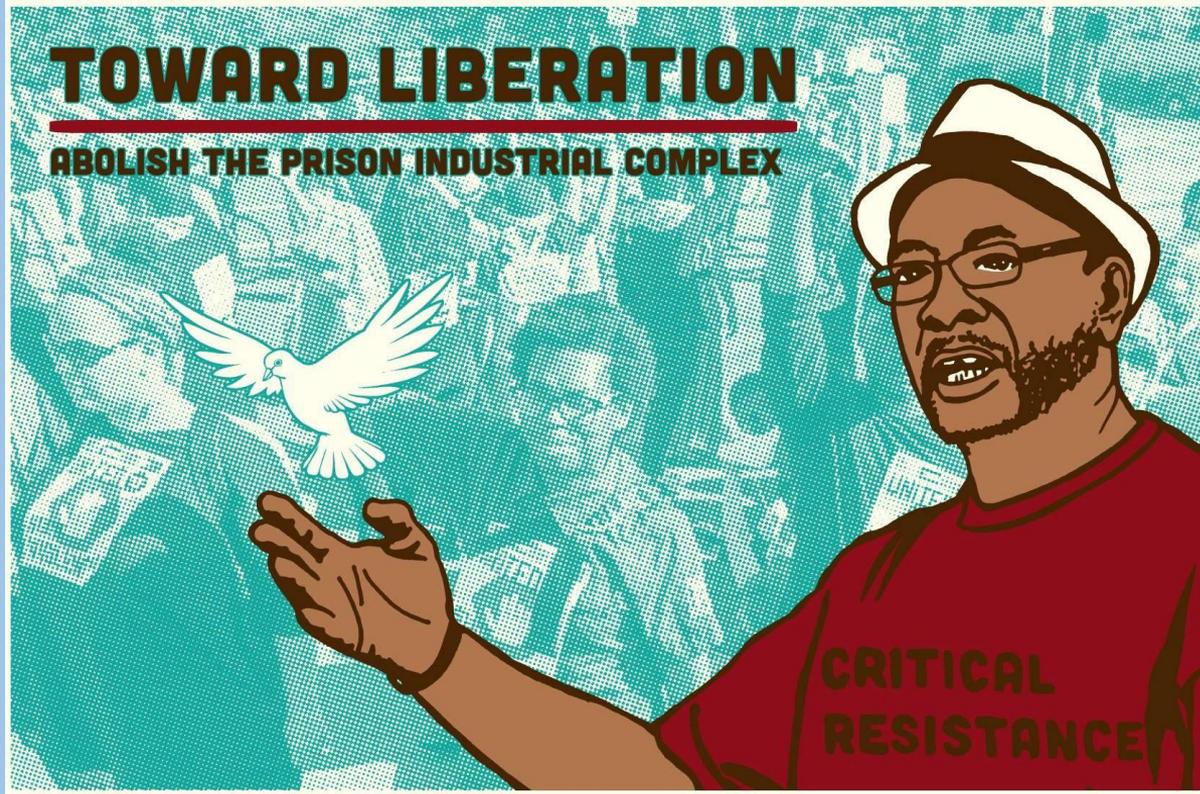
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After months of strikes, prisoners in Alabama and Texas prisons called for a national prison strike on September 9. There were dozens of solidarity actions across the count, inside and outside of prisons.

This was done on the 45th anniversary of the Attica Prison Uprising in NY in which 1000 inmates took control and held 42 staff hostage after Black Panther activist George Jackson was killed by guards in San Quentin Prison in CA.



# Critical Resistance



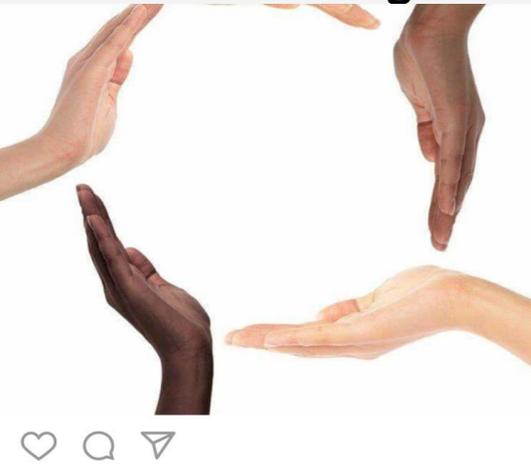
[criticalresistance.org](http://criticalresistance.org) ||  
[facebook.com/CriticalResistancePortland](https://facebook.com/CriticalResistancePortland)

# No Selves to Defend



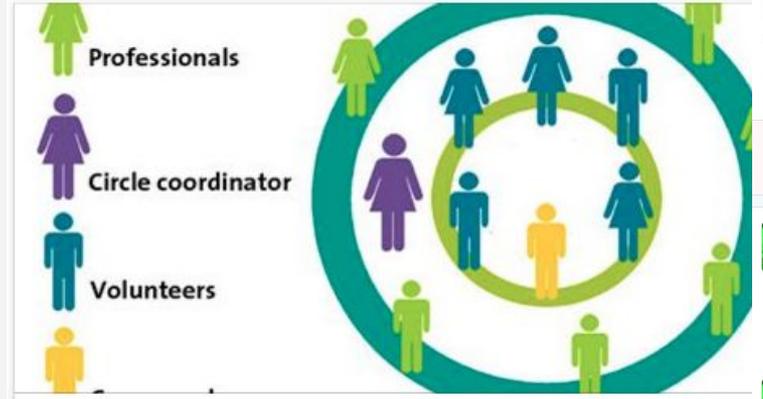
(Kaba, M., 2016)

# Social Media Postings about CoSA



**Kendall Schuler**  
Just now · Portland · 📍

Hi everyone, I had an opportunity to work with a group called Community of Support & Accountability (CoSA), ran by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. They help with people impacted by the justice system including victims, offenders, staff and family. They have done amazing work and it's worth checking out! 😊  
check them out here at



**Circles of Support and Accountability**

**verdant\_samuel** Communities of Support & Accountability (CoSA) is a program run by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon that works to help people impacted by the criminal justice system, including offenders, victims, staff and their families. They've done a lot of amazing, brave work around justice and healing, and they're always looking for volunteers! Find out more about them at their website --> <http://emoregon.org/cosa.php>

**CoSA**  
@OregonCoSA

ASFA intended to limit the time a child of an incarcerated parent spent in foster care.  
[#AdoptionandSafeFamiliesAct](#)

5:25 PM - 24 Nov 2016

**160 MILES**

AVERAGE DISTANCE KIDS HAD TO TRAVEL TO SEE THEIR INCARCERATED MOMS

**quinn**  
@quinnthereaux

This state-sponsored attack on women is inseparably tied to racism, anti-immigrant hatred, transphobia, homophobia, colonization, and more.

RETWEET 1

12:37 PM - 27 Nov 2016

Reply to @quinnthereaux

**quinn** @quinnthereaux · 9h  
So when I say writing about this is hard for me, it's because it's so utterly terrifying and disgusting. This is humanity at our worst.

**quinn** @quinnthereaux · 9h  
I'm going to give a few examples of the struggles and activism of women in prisons. Some things will be graphic, so pls mute me if needed.

**cosa\_oregon**

inthereaux · 9h  
looks at the struggles of aging women who are behind bars for 1g abusers [truth-out.org/news/item/3785...](http://truth-out.org/news/item/3785...)

5d  
ry turned 60. Instead of planning a birthday celebration with loved ones,

[#emoregon](#) [#restorativejustice](#) [#oregonians](#) [#oregon](#) [#restoregon](#) [#mothersandkids](#)

amanakin 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

Instagram: @cosa\_oregon

# Moving Forward

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- Actions without
  - Hold our own Criminal Justice Sabbaths
  - Participate in lobby days
  - Hold No Selves To Defend readings or poetry events
  - Donate
  - Volunteer
- Actions within
  - Critically examine our interactions with the Criminal Justice System
  - Self-reflection

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