There Is No Such Thing as a Mental Health Jail:
Alternatives to Arrest and Incarceration for Dealing with Mental Illness
Mental Health Diagnosis on the Rise

- Over the past 40 years, mental health problems have become more common
- Adults are experiencing more mental health issues
- Depression is rising, as is the use of anti-depressants
- Increases of suicides
- Large surge in bi-polar treatment for the youth.
Social and Government Support has Decreased

**Government:**

- Deinstitutionalization of Mental Health services
- Economic Recession has cut spending on Mental Health

**Social:**

- Unstable job market
- Dependency on pharmaceuticals
- People are psychically vulnerable
Mental Health Impacts of Incarceration on People

• More people with mental illnesses in prisons and jails due to state hospitals being forced to reduce service.

• Over half of all people inside prisons and jails deal with mental health issues. Over 1.25 million suffer from mental illness.

• Suicide is the leading cause of death among people placed in local jails and is in the top 5 at state prisons.
The Latest Trend: Carceral Humanism

- Jailers and Wardens are portrayed as therapists and caregivers
- Sheriffs and Law Enforcement are marketing themselves as service providers
Why keep the seriously mentally ill out of prison and jails?

- Mental Health Diversion improves Public Health
- Community Based Programs are more effective than jails
- The cost of mental health needs are far less than prison/jail costs
- Outside of jail, Medical and Social Security pay ~50% of mental health service costs
What do alternatives to incarceration look like?

• Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)

• Permanent Supportive Housing

• Supportive Employment
Examples of Successful Programs for Mental Health:

- Miami Dade Diversion Program
- Pathways in Los Angeles
- Nathaniel Project in New York
- Thresholds Justice Program in Chicago
- Forensic ACT Program in Seattle
- Full Service Partnership in Los Angeles
Racial and Gender Impacts and Accessibility to Diversion

Women in prisons and jails are more likely than men to have a history of mental health problems.

Percentage of incarcerated men and women reporting any history of mental health problems:

- Female Jail: 66%
- Male Jail: 41%
- Female Prison: 66%
- Male Prison: 35%

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12
“There is a long history in the United States of using mental health diagnoses as a means of subjecting black people to institutional violence and brutality including incarceration and confinement. Los Angeles hosts the world’s largest jail system and it is not exempt from that history. In fact the county jails’ disproportionately Black mental health population, and the culture of physical abuse and medical neglect against prisoners by the Sheriff’s Department, are all extensions of that historical racism.”

-Mark-Anthony Johnson, Dignity and Power Now
BREAKING THE SILENCE: CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS RESULTING FROM MEDICAL NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF WOMEN OF COLOR IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY JAILS

IMPACT OF DISPROPORTIONATE INCARCERATION OF & VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST JAIL SYSTEM

A Supplementary Submission for the August 2014 CERD Committee Review of the United States
LOS ANGELES OPERATES THE LARGEST JAIL SYSTEM ON EARTH

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