

# Intersectionality Learning Circles

Practitioner's Toolkit



## Women of Color

In Mass Incarceration

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# Opening

## About the Project

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The Learning Circle Toolkit is the result of a collaborative project undertaken by the African American Policy Forum, generously funded by the Public Welfare Foundation. We gathered together a group of scholars, activists, community leaders, and students who were actively involved in combating systemic racial and gender injustice at both the community and national level, with special focus on the over incarceration of girls and women of color in the United States. Our collaborators came from diverse backgrounds and brought a wealth of experiences with them to our Learning Circles.

In an effort to heal our communities we crossed the divides between our diverse spaces and backgrounds and came together to have a series of conversations. Through our collective difficulties, triumphs, and growing pains we learned that hosting learning circles focusing on the over incarceration of girls and women of color is both an incredibly important undertaking as well as quite difficult to execute. Deciding that many other potential circles could benefit from our experience, we came together outside the circle in order to create this Toolkit. We have pooled our resources as well as the wealth of knowledge we shared amongst and between one another within the learning circles we held in 2010 and 2011, and created this **Advocate's Toolkit**.

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The goal of the **Advocate's Toolkit** is to facilitate the hosting of many more Learning Circle events across the United States, all focusing on the over incarceration of women and girls of color.

# I Introduction

The Section introduces you to the relevant background information you will need to fully engage with this toolkit.

## This Section Contains:

- What is a Learning Circle?
- How to Use this Toolkit
- Primer:  
Overincarceration  
of Women and Girls  
of Color

## What is a Learning Circle?

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Realizing that social and institutional divides are often incredibly difficult to overcome, we decided to meet in what is known as a **Learning Circle**--a kind of organizational structure and descriptive metaphor that is meant to symbolize the coming together of equals.

Within the circle we are all equals and we recognize each other as capable, competent conveyors of information that may be shared between and amongst all those gathered. While in the circle, we aim to foster and empower one another by:

- honoring collective wisdom
- promoting reciprocity, as well as supporting, and
- facilitating the equal participation of all those involved in the circle

It is our hope that by breaking down the divides between scholars and activists, allies and the formerly and currently incarcerated, as well as students and teachers that we can form spaces where we can frankly discuss the problems at hand, and harness a collective moment to change the world.



## Primer: Overincarceration of Women and Girls of Color

Black, Latina, Native American, and some groups of Asian American & Pacific Islander women continue to be disproportionately incarcerated in the United States. Unfortunately, however, the media, pundits, politicians, and at times our own communities have tended to focus almost exclusively on the over-incarceration and over-policing of men and boys of color which, at times, has distracted our attention from and community resources away from the plight of our women and girls.

The United States is the current leader in incarceration rates across the developed world. This is in part due to the U.S.'s lengthy prison terms for first time offenses, usually tied to first time non-violent drug offenses. While incarceration rates have dramatically risen across all racial and gender demographics, the impact upon women and girls of color has been staggering.

An often unreported impact of this problem is the disproportionate effect it has on the African American community. Today, African American women and girls represent the **fastest growing incarcerated population**. A single snap-shot, a 13 county study in California, has revealed that African American girls represent an astounding 70% of incarcerated girls entering juvenile hall. Yet these same girls represent only 11.9% of the total population across the aggregated counties. This 13 county study has proven to not be a simple outlier. Statistics aggregated from the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that since 1986, the incarceration rate of African American women across the nation has **increased an incredible 400%**! That said, although incarceration rates for African American women and girls lead the nation, those for

women of color generally are seriously disproportionate to their representation in the general population of the United States.

**Scholars, activists, and community members** have cited many possible reasons for the over-incarceration of women and girls of color. These rationales range from:

- **over-prosecution** for economic crimes (e.g. shop-lifting), drug offenses, prostitution, assault, and technical violations
- **increased vulnerability** due to over-policing and over-incarceration created by the intersection of sex and race driven oppression (i.e. the compounding of racial and gender discrimination)
- **cycle of victimization** That is, girls in the justice system are more likely to have been the victims of abuse and neglect than girls not involved in the justice system
- **long term life consequences** The additional barriers they face associated with incarceration lead to continued challenges upon reentry into society.

## How to Use this Toolkit

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The Learning Circle Toolkit was designed with you in mind! We have broken down the basic steps of launching your own Learning Circle event into 3 easy to follow sections:

Logistics, Substance, and Resources. Each section will help you pull together the people, tools, resources, and planning strategies needed to pull off your very own Learning Circle event.

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Throughout this Toolkit we provide you with the information you need to organize a Learning Circle focused on the over-incarceration of girls and women of color in the United States. Additionally, we offer you a detailed outline of how to structure your own circle and we have provided ideas and examples that can help you think through that process. However, the Toolkit is just a guide. We encourage you to recognize the Toolkit's limits as a guiding tool, as it is important to keep in mind that the people you bring together to form your Learning Circle, as well as the host of experiences your Learning Circle's participants bring with them, may warrant that you alter or break away from the suggestions we provide in the Toolkit.



# Logistics

## This Section Contains:

- Before You Get Started
- Figuring Out Who to Invite
- Setting Up the Space and Economic Support
- Developing Cross Collaborations
- Selecting the Backbone Organization

## Before You Get Started

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If you are thinking about organizing an Intersectionality Learning Circle you begin the organizing process by taking some time to evaluate your own interests and capabilities in order to determine whether you are fully ready to get started.

### **Evaluate your own interests**

Before you embark on a journey to organize an Intersectionality Learning Circle you should be certain that you understand what it is you want to get out of this experience. It is really important that you examine why it is you want to participate in this process. Moreover, you want to be certain that you have completely thought through what your expectations are for the Circle. Having a clear understanding of what your actual interests and expectations are in advance can help you think through *how* you want to organize the Circle.

Ultimately, because you or your organization will be the party that is initiating this collaboration, it is your goals that will end up shaping every aspect of the work you do in this arena. Your initial role in shaping the Circle can be both valuable and challenging. Because at its core a Circle is supposed to be a collaborative effort, the initiator must be very aware of how her own interests affecting the decision making process.

### **Decide How Much Effort You Will Invest**

You should also take some time to think through how much effort you are willing to expend in organizing the Circle. Consider in advance how much energy you are willing to invest into structuring the original gathering. Once you have decided how to engage yourself in the organizing phase then consider what you would like your long-term commitment to look like. Would you be interested in remaining the logistical coordinator for the group in the future or would you prefer to leave that role open for another individual participant or organization? Once you have thought through these issues you will be ready to start organizing the Learning Circle.

### **Moving Forward:**

#### *Figuring Out Who to Invite*

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Once you have sorted through the above mentioned concerns you can start focusing on who you think should be involved in the Learning Circle. Because the Circle focuses on addressing the issues women of color face in a system of mass incarceration you should consider how that will impact who should be part of your Circle. Because the issues that current and formerly, incarcerated women of color face are multifaceted and layered you should look to find participants who engage the subject in a variety of ways. In creating a list of who to invite you should look to invite a cast of diverse participants who can bring different perspectives to bear during the conversations.

### Figuring Out Who to Invite...

Having a variety of perspectives in your Learning Circle will ensure that you are able to pull together stakeholders who have different knowledge bases. By compiling a diverse group of participants you will be better prepared to develop a comprehensive strategic analysis as to the intersectional impact of questions of gender, race, class, and citizenship within the criminal justice system.

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### **How to Ensure Diversity**

To create the diversity of perspectives necessary to make your Circle an effective collaboration you should construct categories of stakeholders in your locale who can bring together disparate perspectives. Some categories of expertise to consider are:

- Local Advocacy Groups
- Legal Aid Organizations
- Community Organizers
- Scholars and Academics
- Student Researchers and Activists

*Figuring Out Who to Invite...*

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### **Final Thoughts on Diversity**

Keep in mind that simply pulling together people from different professional backgrounds will not be enough to generate true diversity. You must seek out individuals who have divergent perspectives. Finally, keep in mind that not all forms of knowledge are acquired through the traditional professions and academia. Thus, for example, you should reach out to formerly incarcerated women of color because there is no other group that can better articulate the lived experiences of intersectional discrimination within the criminal justice system.



## Setting Up the Circle

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### **Selecting Space**

When you are deciding where to host your Circle there are two important concerns you should think about. First, you should consider what sort of locations and options are available to you. It may be that you have several typical meeting places which you are accustomed to booking for group events that might work. However, if you find that you do not have access to a meeting space that could fit the size or needs of your Circle, then you should consider reaching out to the other individuals or organizations who have agreed to participate in this process to see if they could help provide you with an adequate space.

### Selecting Space...

Once you have a possible list of meeting room choices you can examine the second concern which requires you to consider what kind of atmosphere you want your Circle to work within. The type of physical space you choose can dramatically shape the overall mood of the Circle. Because you will be engaging in cross collaborative work with a diverse set of individuals, many of whom may be strangers to each other, you will want to seek out an uplifting and comfortable atmosphere.

## Figuring Out How to Get Economic Support

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One important concern you will want to think about with the Circle participants is whether or not the attainment of any of your goals require funding. In this respect, you will need to consider whether or not you will be able to contribute funds sufficient to manage the Circle. In this light, If you should consider several ways that you might be able to secure financial contributions for your Learning Circle.

### Figuring Out How to Get Economic Support...

If you work within an organization that has money allocated within its budget for initiatives such as this one you should first reach out to your Development Department to see if a financial contribution would be possible. If you do not work within such an organization or there are no funds available you may want to research whether there are any social justice or community engagement grants that your Learning Circle could apply for.

Additionally, when you meet with the other participants to discuss the logistics of operating the Circle, you should inquire as to whether there are participants within the group who are well situated to contribute funds. You should also consider how individual participants could become involved in fundraising. Would it be possible to tap into the resource networks of a specific participant? Are there any members who have expertise in applying for grant proposals who would be interested in submitting proposals on behalf of the Circle? Thinking about the role of finances early on will allow the members of your Circle to talk through the questions related to the fiscal viability of the Circle. By thinking ahead you can structure your financial decisions so as to avoid future frustrations for the group.

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Keep in mind that that each participant has access to different resources and is subject to different limitations this conversation may resolve itself quite naturally, or it may take some creative thinking. At the end of the day, however, both the diversity of your ideas and the depth of your resources that will enable your Circle to successfully sustain itself.



## Developing Cross Collaborations

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A common challenge that is faced by many Learning Circles is how to develop effective cross collaborations when the participants come from such diverse backgrounds. To bridge the gap between the divergent backgrounds of each participant the Circle needs to discover where its participants have common ground in order to mobilize around their intersecting interests. It is important to keep in mind that there are several possible challenges your Circle may encounter in trying to locate your common ground.

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### Developing Cross Collaborations...

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When addressing systemic and societal injustice associated with the incarceration of women of color, participants within the Circle may have different ideas about which issues should be focused on or how those issues should be addressed. To ensure that your Circle can effectively find common ground it will be useful to examine the following concerns.

#### **The most common forms of disagreement will likely arise over:**

- Priorities - One participant may feel that the mistreatment of youth in juvenile detention facilities is a central issue while another participant may feel that the loss of economic rights in post employment opportunities should drive the focus of the Circle.
- Intersectional Analysis - There may be disagreement, for instance, about whether the racial experiences of African American inmates should be addressed separately from the experiences of Latina inmates.
- Solutions - Lastly, because participants come from different professional backgrounds conflict may arise as to how to integrate the concerns of advocates, policy makers and educators.

### Developing Cross Collaborations...

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Because intersectional dialogue is multidimensional and because participants within the Circle bring divergent experiences and perspectives, searching for common ground within your Circle may be challenging. However, it is precisely because Learning Circles can be so thought provoking that they are able to serve as powerful tools for social change.

### Figuring Out the Backbone

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Before inviting all the participants to engage in your Learning Circle there are several structural concerns you should think through regarding the operational management of your Circle. In particular, there are several important questions that need to be addressed. Will there be one main organization or individual who is in charge of structuring logistics, such as setting up meeting times and organizing and delegating tasks, or will those be revolving tasks that are assigned to different people over time?

It may be in your best interest to consider selecting one particular participant or organization to act as an Organization Backbone. Those serving in this capacity would help to organize and facilitate the Circle meetings. Additionally, they would work to ensure that agenda items discussed and agreed upon actually reach fruition.

### Figuring Out the Backbone...

Keep in mind, however, that although delegating these tasks to one party can create stability it can also create some organizational inflexibility overtime. Moreover, if not carefully moderated, those performing this role may come to feel overtaxed – especially if they don't have all of the necessary resources to perform this role.

## Initiating the Circle

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Your first Circle get together will set the tone for following meetings and group work, so it is important to establish an atmosphere of collaboration from the onset. This may be the first time that many of these individuals or groups have interacted together and there may be an atmosphere of uncertainty or distrust. So, it is important that everyone gets to know each other before you start discussing ideas. Furthermore, because many of these individuals will come from diverse backgrounds this may be an uncomfortable experience for some people..

It is therefore extremely important that everyone feels valued as a participant who can make a significant contribute to the conversation. To ensure that this occurs, the facilitator for the meeting needs to allocate plenty of time for people to introduce themselves and to share a bit about their backgrounds and goals. This will help establish the diversity of experiences within the circle, and will help set the expectation of collaborative sharing for the future.

### Initiating the Circle...

In this section we will suggest some ways that you can set up the first circle to ensure you can establish this collaborative tone. Once again, we encourage you to view this toolkit as a guide and you should feel free to modify aspects of this format to fit with the particular needs of your Learning Circle.

### Opening

The organizer should ask that all participants show up about fifteen minutes early so that participants can mingle and get to know each other outside of the organized meeting structure. Once the meeting begins the circle should be opened with a short introductory commentary by the individual who organized the Circle. Since this will be the person who most participants in the room will be familiar with, she should be able to help foster a collaborative and comfortable environment.

After the opening comments the facilitator should introduce herself and then ask that everyone in the room introduce themselves as well. Introductions should consist of more than just the name and position of each person in the room. They should include some information about who each participant is and why they are in the room. Everyone could be asked to give a fun fact about themselves, and then they could be asked to explain one way in which they think they think this future collaboration could benefit their individual goals and the work of their organization.

### Opening...

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The introduction serves several purposes that all work toward creating and fostering an environment of collaboration. By asking every individual to speak about themselves, we ensure that every participant feels valued and included. By stimulating a conversation about individual goals, each participant can speak to both the commonality of interests within the Circle, as well as the diversity of experiences each participant brings to it.

### **Icebreaker**

Before the Circle begins to discuss what ideas and obstacles to address, the facilitator should engage the group in an activity that lightens the mood and sets the stage for collaborative interactions. This can be done through the use of an icebreaker before the meeting gets started. The icebreaker can happen before or after introductions, but it should be conducted before the Circle gets down to business. The icebreaker should be a pleasant exercise that engages all of the participants and that enhances their comfort level with one another.

### Icebreaker...

A fun and uplifting icebreaker can change the tone of any dreary meeting, and will encourage participants to engage one another more enthusiastically over the course of the meeting. If the meeting is held remotely, such as over a computer or over the phone, then the facilitator can ask several interesting or engaging questions of the participants instead of the icebreaker.

### Moving Through the Circle

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After the participants in the Learning Circle become comfortable with each other, the next step is to discuss where the divergent goals of each participating individual and organization intersect and how the Circle should act on those shared interests.

In trying to understand what the focus of the Circle should be it frequently helps to step back from the specific goals and agendas of each participant and to instead focus on the larger social justice issues that motivate each of the participants. By thinking through the broader motivations behind each individual's participation in this area of advocacy the Circle shifts the focus from the areas of divergence within the group to the areas of commonality. Once the Circle establishes common ground they can then begin articulating their shared agenda for the future.

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### **Create a Common Vision**

This can be done by creating a shared vision and mission for the circle. A vision is different than a mission in that it looks outward and explains the kind of world or system the group wants to achieve. A mission by comparison looks inward and describes how the group will seek to achieve that vision. Both the vision and the mission of the group can and should be expressed through specific statements that the circle brainstorms and articulates together. In this case, the overlapping goals of each individual participant will center around particular issues that incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women of color face.

Keep in mind that the vision and mission of every circle that is organized will be different depending on the array interests and the capacities of each participant within the group. It is, therefore, essential that both the vision and mission statements are reflect the breadth of experiences within the group.





### **Construct Group Goals**

Once the Circle has had an opportunity to discuss its common interests and shared vision for future work, it then needs to break down its overall mission into smaller, attainable goals. Setting up goals will help the Circle determine its next steps.

Goals should not be only ambitious. They should be reasonable and achievable, and they can range from long term concerns to short term goals. By establishing a variety of goals the Circle can take a diverse approach to addressing the numerous issues women of color face in a system of mass incarceration.

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### **Organizational Structure**

Because the Learning Circle is a collaborative space that engages individuals and organizations from very diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the capacities of each participant in the Circle will vary widely. This is both a challenge and an asset, not only in the formative stage, but also when it comes to organizing and delegating responsibility.

### Winding Down

At this point the first gathering of your Learning Circle should be drawing to a close. There are however, a few small, yet important, details that need to be addressed to wrap up the meeting and prepare the Circle for its future work.

**Review the Conversation** - As the Circle begins to wind down it is essential to take a few minutes to review what transpired during the meeting. Try to recapture the positive energy behind some of the earlier discussions when you review the big themes and conclusions of the meeting.

**Short Term Action** - Before the Learning Circle disbands it is important to determine what will be its short-term collaborative agenda. Earlier the Circle determined what its goals would be. Now you must take those goals and turn them into actionable events.

**Immediate Next Steps** - Once the actionable events are part of the agenda, the Circle needs to determine its immediate next steps. One of the most important next steps is to sort out how often the group should meet and then to establish the next meeting. After the next meeting date is set the facilitator should make sure that all the participants understand what the next steps are, and how future organizing and communications will be structured.

**Closing Statement** - The facilitator or the organizer of the Learning Circle should take a moment to reinvigorate the group by reiterating its vision, and then thank the participants for sharing their ideas and their time.

## Beyond the Circle

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### **Following the Meeting**

After the first Learning Circle is over people may leave with a sense of optimism. You must build on this sense of enthusiasm right away. In this light, either the organizer or the facilitator of the Circle should reach out to all of the participants within a day or two of the end of the meeting to debrief them as to the ideas discussed in the Circle and to reiterate the conclusions surrounding the groups shared vision and agenda. A simple communication can increase the motivation of each of the participants, and help remind them of the work they pledged to do.

### Continuously Evaluate

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Never stop evaluating your process or your productivity. Sometimes an event does not go as planned and that may be simply due to bad circumstances or a learning curve. If a member of the Circle begins to notice a pattern of miscommunications or failed engagements they should be encouraged to speak up so as to discuss what new strategies the group can try out to address the issue to avoid similar problems in the future.

Even if the original Learning Circle structure and delegation of work worked quite well in the beginning, it may be that because certain circumstances have changed the old processes no longer operate in the way they used to. For example, a participant of the Circle may have recently switched jobs and can no longer participate in the same way, or a new law may have been passed which creates new problems or affects old initiatives. Whatever the reason, if a member of the Circle begins to notice that there is a disconnect between what the Circle is attempting to do and what is actually done, they should bring it to the attention of the Circle. In this way, a Learning Circle will continue to adapt appropriately and it will remain productive.

Facilitator's

# Guide

## On Overincarceration of Women and Girls

### This Section Contains:

- Discussion Topics
- Discussion Questions

This Section provides you with a set of Issues to Discuss, Discussion Questions, and Talking Points.

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**Issues to Discuss** These preselected issues are not intended to be comprehensive--you and your Learning Circle participants will undoubtedly be able to come up with an almost infinite number of discussion issues. Take the issues provided below as a jumping-off point to help you organize and conceptualize your learning circle.

**Discussion Questions** These questions relate to the issues we highlight in the *Issues to Discuss* subsection.

## Initiating the Circle

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### Topic Areas: Issues to Discuss

The Over-incarceration of women and girls of color is a problem that plagues our communities. To help you facilitate a successful, collaborative learning circle discussion we have collected **six topics** that ***highlight some of the concerns your circle might choose to focus upon.***

**Boys & Men of Color Crisis**--The national, local, and community specific media outlets have often run stories and exposes, and dedicated a tremendous amount of resources to reporting on the crisis of the over-incarceration of boys and men of color in the last two decades. Often, however, coverage of the crisis from the vantage point of men and boys makes the simultaneous crisis of the over policing and over-incarceration of girls and women of color invisible to the general public as well as our own communities.

**Bridging the Gap--Communities and Key Actors in this Arena**--A driving motivation behind the Learning Circles movement is to bring together members of the community as well as scholars, academics, policy makers and activists of all stripes to share and exchange information we have individually come across.

**Bridging the Gap--Across Racial Groups**-- Different racial groups have not always been able to foster collective discussions and exchanges that result in the sharing of information as to their experiences, and expectations with regard to the discourse surrounding women and girls of color who are currently or have in the past been incarcerated.

**LBT Issues (Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender)** One area that has not always been explored in this arena is the plight of queer identified or labeled women. This topic will engage your circle in the issues that arise out of the multiple intersections of identity experienced by girls and women of color that are LBT.

**Motherhood/Parenthood**--The difficulties as well as unique obstacles faced by girls and women of color who are mothers is often marginalized in these discussions. This topic will introduce your circle to these concerns.

**Reentry**--Though the over-incarceration of women and girls of color necessarily implies that the same women and girls that suffer the pains of incarceration will one day also face the trials and tribulations of reentry, what women and girls of color need upon reentry is not always candidly and thoroughly discussed.



## Discussion Questions

### Initiating the Circle

We have gathered a set of discussion questions to help you guide your circle members through a constructive discussion covering the over-incarceration of women and girls of color. These questions are by no means intended to be comprehensive. They merely represent questions we used in our own learning circles, or questions participants suggested we pose in future learning circles.

### **Boys & Men of Color Crisis**

#### **Why the Focus**

Why do we think the media has chosen to focus on the "crisis" of over-incarceration with special focus on how the crisis affects men and boys of color?

Have our communities taken any steps to realign the focus on over-incarceration of persons of color generally?

What were these steps?

How successful were they?

#### **Reframing the Focus**

How can we conceptually reframe the focus this discourse so that it includes girls and women of color?

What are some pathways to imprisonment that girls and women of color face and that boys and men of color do not face?

#### **Involving Women's and Girl's Voices**

What are some ways that we can harness our collective resources to ensure that girls and women of color's voices take center stage?

What support might they need?

What kind of outreach do we need to help facilitate?

Which already existing organizations should we contact?

Discussion Cont...

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**Bridging the Gap--Communities and Key Actors in this Arena**

**What Kinds of Problems**

What are some of the ways in which communication can become strained between communities, advocates, policy makers, and educators?

What are some ways that

**How to Cross-Collaborate**

What are some difficulties circle members have personally experienced when attempting to cross-collaborate?

What are some examples of *unsuccessful* cross-collaboration between key actors in this domain experienced by circle members?

What are some examples of *successful* cross-collaboration?

**Facilitating Healing**

What are some ways that we can facilitate healing between these disparate actors?

**Bridging the Gap--Across Racial Groups**

**Drawing Similarities**

What are some of the common barriers that girls and women of color of different racial groups face in this arena?

Are there similar paths to incarceration across the board?

How does racial bias or "non-White" status contribute to likelihood of incarceration?

What kind of gender or sexual vulnerabilities do women of color of different racial groups share with one another?

What kinds of crimes are women and girls of color arrested for?

Discussion Cont...

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**LBT (Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender)**

**Barriers**

- What are some examples of the barriers that women and girls of color who are LBT face upon reentry that are different from those faced by straight or gender normative women and girls of color?

**Over Policing**

- What are some ways that girls' and women's sexual orientation are "policed"?

**Reentry Context**

- Do our community's current reentry projects support women and girls of color who are LBT identified?
  - What should we change?
  - What can we change?
- What roadblocks might we encounter, if we advocate for change for LBT identified girls and women of color?

**Motherhood/Parenthood**

**Reentry**

- What are we doing to become better prepared to help those who need us?
- What tools do we need to help women and girls of color transition from incarceration and detention to reentry, and what are we prepared to make those tools work for us?
- We live in a society that locks up a larger percentage of its population than any country in the world. What do we owe to the men and women who are incarcerated? What do we owe to their families?
- How have you prepared yourself to use your skills, insights, experiences, and training to advance the movement to combat the over-incarceration of girls of color?
- How can we develop non-traditional models and approaches to assist women as they are transitioning out of prison such that they can not only survive but thrive?
- What kinds of justifications for imprisonment generally exist? With an eye towards public safety, how are these justifications implicated when we think about the over-incarceration of women and girls of color?

# Resources

## This Section Contains:

- Organizations and Projects
- Articles and Studies of Interest

### Related Organizations and Projects

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Though we have done our best to provide you and your Learning Circle with all the background information you need to get started, we realize no matter how thorough our work is there is always more research that can be done in preparing for your circle. With this in mind we have provided you with a list of **Organizations & Projects** as well a list of **Articles & Studies of Interest**.

**Women and Prison: A Site for Resistance** makes visible women's experiences in the criminal justice system. Documenting these stories is integral to this project of resistance. The stories are supported by a collection of resources, such as organizations, reports, essays, and links to a wide range of information on women and prison.

<http://womenandprison.org/>

**The Innocence Project** works to exonerate wrongfully convicted individuals through DNA testing and reforms of the criminal justice system.

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

Organization's Cont...

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**Prison Activist Resource Center** exposes all forms of institutionalized racism, sexism, able-ism, heterosexism, and classism within the prison industrial complex and works to develop strategies and tactics to build safety in communities without dependence on the prison industrial complex.

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

**California Coalition for Women Prisoners** addresses the violence imposed on women, transgender people, and communities of color within the prison system by prioritizing the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted by the criminal justice system.

<http://womenprisoners.org/>

**Justice Policy Institute** identifies effective programs and policies through their research as they enlighten the media, policymakers and advocates. The Justice Policy Institute provides support to people working for justice reform, works to reduce the reliance on incarceration, and promotes policies that improve the well-being of all people and communities.

[www.justicepolicy.org/index.html](http://www.justicepolicy.org/index.html)

**Amnesty International** represents an international movement to eliminate the abuse of human rights through the use of research and action in order to prevent such abuses and demand justice.

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

Organization's Cont...

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**Prison Policy Initiative** is known for its documentation of the impact of mass incarceration on individuals, communities, and the national welfare as it works to encourage improvement in criminal justice policy.

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

**Women in Prison Project** is a subdivision of the Correctional Association of New York specifically devoted to addressing the effects of the criminal justice system and New York State policies on women and their families.

<http://www.correctionalassociation.org/WIPP/index.htm>

Articles and Studies of Interest

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*Some of the best information on the overincarceration of women and girls of color has been published in the nation's leading academic journals or has appeared in mass-print book form.*

*Though not all academic sources are accessible, or even intended to be accessible to community organizers, leaders, and advocates, we wanted to make sure that these sources were shared.*



*To access a scholarly journal for free check out **Google Scholar** ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)), a free search engine designed to search through scholarly materials. To access preview versions of various books on the subject of overincarceration of women and girls of color also check out **Google Books** ([books.google.com](http://books.google.com)), a free search engine designed to search through both commonly available as well as limited distribution books. If you have difficulties using any of these sources go to your local public library--public libraries nationwide will provide you with free tutorials on accessing materials online on any subject!*

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### About the African American Policy Forum



AAPF is part think tank and part information clearinghouse. We strive to promote the interests of all communities, with special emphasis on those suffering from intersecting forms of discrimination based on race, gender, and class as well as those suffering from unrecognized patterns of institutional exclusion.

Our Work consists of comprehensive programs, workshops, salons, consultant services, and training sessions that provide targeted education to equity conscious community leaders, elected officials, businesses, grassroots organizations, and advocates. Our multi-layered analyses and multi-dimensional programming facilitate achieving and maintaining inclusive and equitable institutional environments. Our reports, videos, workshops, advocate's toolkits, educational games, and exercises bring innovative intersectional analysis to the problem of discrimination. We create print, multimedia, and web-based projects, as well as custom training services.