


Improving Response to Girls' Trauma by Disrupting the Abuse to Prison Pipeline

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A photograph of three young women of diverse ethnicities smiling and posing closely together. The woman in the center has long brown hair with bangs and is wearing a teal shirt. The woman on the left has dark hair and is wearing a dark top. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a dark top. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a blue sky. A blue gradient overlay covers the right side of the image.

**GIRLS
RIGHTS
ARE
HUMAN
RIGHTS**



Criminalization of Trauma

- Childhood Sexual Abuse is a **primary predictor** for girls' justice involvement
- Girls are being **criminalized** for their experiences and responses to trauma
- **Net widening**, i.e., using law enforcement to address:
 - Family conflict
 - Non-violent behaviors
 - School discipline issues
 - Safety concerns/Gendered violence



1 in 4
AMERICAN GIRLS
WILL EXPERIENCE
SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY
THE AGE OF
18.



rights4girls #NoSuchThing



rights4girls

60%
OF BLACK
GIRLS HAVE
EXPERIENCED
SEXUAL
ABUSE
BEFORE THE
AGE OF 18.

BLACK WOMEN, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND
THE ART OF RESISTANCE- BROOKE
AXTELL, FORBES



Native women are
2.5x
more likely to be
sexually assaulted than
other women



THE MINNESOTA AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER,
SHATTERED HEARTS:THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF
AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MINNESOTA



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

Neglect:

- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect

Household Problems:

- Violent treatment towards mother
- Household substance use
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member



What Does a High Ace Score Mean

- A high ACE score means that a youth is more likely to have physical and mental health problems in adulthood (Covington, 2013)
- Girls with an ACE score of **4 or more** are more likely to have learning or behavioral problems (Covington, 2013)
- Girls with an ace score of **6 or higher** are **30x** more likely to attempt suicide (Covington, 2013)
- Girls with an ACE score of **7 or more** are **980%** more at risk of mental health problems (Covington, 2013)

GIRLS IN THE JUVENILE
JUSTICE SYSTEM ARE NEARLY
2X AS LIKELY AS BOYS TO
REPORT HAVING EXPERIENCED
**5 OR MORE FORMS OF ABUSE
AND TRAUMA.**

Race and Health

- In November 2020, the American Medical Association recognized racism as a public health threat

“The AMA recognizes that racism negatively impacts and exacerbates health inequities among historically marginalized communities. Without systemic and structural-level change, health inequities will continue to exist, and the overall health of the nation will suffer”

Where We Fail:

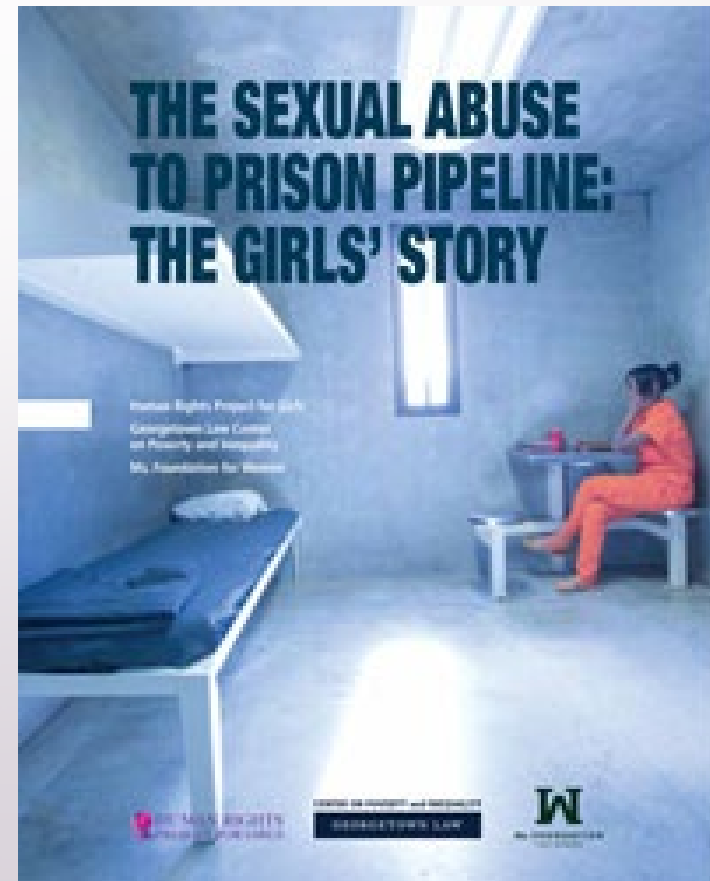
Responses To Sexual Violence

When survivors are not met with a trauma-informed response, they:

- Engage in self-harm
- Engage in substance abuse as a form of self-medication
- Have difficulty identifying safe and positive adults
- Engage in avoidance behavior such as running away
- Engage in other risky behaviors
- Perpetrate harm against others as a form of protection

Abuse to Prison Pipeline

The pathways of gender-based violence that funnel girls, **particularly girls of color**, into the juvenile justice system as a direct consequence of suffering violence or exploitation.



Drivers of Legal System Involvement For Girls

- Disproportionate Criminalization for Status Offenses
- Crossover/Dual Jacketed Youth
- Domestic Child Sex Trafficking
- Conflict in the Home

Disproportionate Criminalization For Status Offenses

- Behaviors that are only prohibited for those under age 18
- E.g., running away and truancy
- Common responses to trauma

Crossover from Child Welfare

- Crossover from child welfare to delinquency can stem from:
 - Conflicts in child welfare placement
 - Failure to address behavioral health issues stemming from trauma
 - Increased vulnerability to child sex trafficking, which can lead to system involvement



**GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE
ARE 3X MORE LIKELY TO
BE INCARCERATED THAN
GIRLS WITH NO CHILD
WELFARE INVOLVEMENT.**

LET HER LEARN: STOPPING SCHOOL PUSHOUT FOR
GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE - NWLC



**57% of girls
in foster care
are girls of color**



LET HER LEARN: STOPPING SCHOOL PUSHOUT
FOR GIRLS IN FOSTER CARE - NWLC



Domestic Child Sex Trafficking

- Under federal law, anyone **under age 18** who exchanges sex for **anything of value** is a survivor of child sex trafficking
- Girls are still arrested on prostitution charges in some jurisdictions
- Girls are also arrested for behaviors directly tied to their exploitation

- In King County, WA **84%** of child sex trafficking survivors are **girls**
- **Black girls** are only **1%** of the general population



IN KING COUNTY,
WA **52%** OF ALL
CHILD SEX
TRAFFICKING
VICTIMS ARE **BLACK
CHILDREN**, WHILE
80% OF SEX BUYERS
ARE **WHITE MEN**.

REDUCING DEMAND FOR THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION OF MINORS IN YOUR COMMUNITY



DCST Racial & Gender Disparities

- *Compare data on survivors with data on sex buyers:*
 - In King County, WA **80%** of the buyers were **white men**
 - In Minnesota, the **majority** of sex buyers are **white men**

SEX TRAFFICKING
SURVIVORS ARE
DISPROPORTIONATELY
WOMEN AND GIRLS OF
COLOR BUT **85% OF
MEN WHO BUY SEX
ONLINE ARE WHITE**

Conflict In The Home

- Unintended consequence of pro/mandatory arrest laws
- Girls are often arrested despite not being the primary aggressor in the home
- Often involve no injury or a minor injury

I was locked up ten different times within a two year period. Inside juvie I met other girls like myself who were there for prostitution, running away, and truancy. All of us were from the same neighborhoods, poor families, and seemed to have the same disposition of trauma, anger mixed with hopelessness. We were not violent girls. We were girls who were hurting. Being confined to a tiny cement room was one of the hardest things I have ever had to experience. Being locked up all I could do was reflect on my life but it didn't seem to help. I became even more withdrawn and angry.”

— Nadiyah Shereff

Girls of Color are Disproportionately Impacted by These Responses

- Girls of color are disproportionately impacted at all stages of the system
- Black girls are 2.5 times as likely to be referred to the legal system as white girls
- Black, Native, and Latinx girls are 10-20% less likely than white girls to receive diversion



**NATIVE AMERICAN
GIRLS ARE OVER 4
TIMES MORE LIKELY
THAN WHITE GIRLS
TO BE CONFINED TO
A DETENTION
FACILITY.**

Girls of color account for approximately **24%** of the youth population but comprise approximately **62%** of girls who are incarcerated.

Racial and Gender Disparities and Prostitution Charges

- Black children comprise only **14%** of the youth population, but account for **38%** all juvenile prostitution arrests
- In Pennsylvania, **70%** of prostitution charges are for selling sex, while only **30%** of charges are for purchasing sex



How Does Our Delinquency System Exacerbate Trauma?

- Shackling/restraints
- Searches, including strip searches
- Room confinement
- Decisions about where you will go, when you can eat, etc.
- Loud Noises

Keiana Aldrich



Consequences of Criminalization

Stuck with arrest/adjudication records that inhibit their ability to access housing, job opportunities, or education

Stigmatization and marginalization

Reinforces narrative survivors are told by abusers

HOW I SEE MYSELF



HOW THE SYSTEM SEES ME

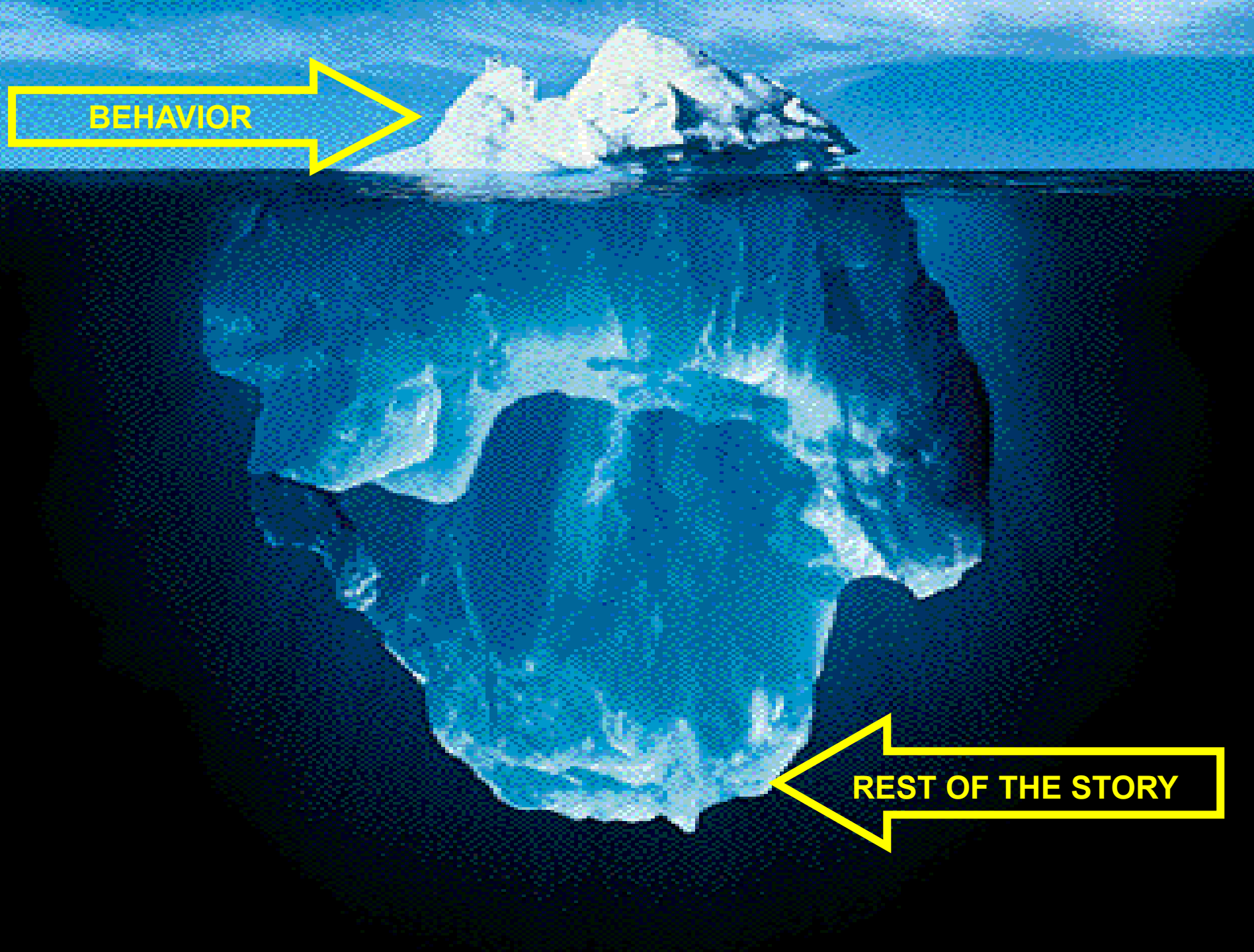


ARTIST: ANONYMOUS

Why Does the Abuse to Prison Pipeline Exist?

- **Mythologies** about Girls of Color
- Lack of **Data**
- Refusal to **Prioritize** the Lives of **Marginalized Girls**
- **Pervasive Rape Culture** that glamorizes exploitation and criticizes exploited girls while condoning behavior of adult sex buyers





BEHAVIOR

REST OF THE STORY

Ways to Dismantle the Pipeline

- End practices that **criminalize** survivors and instead **hold exploiters, abusers, and traffickers accountable**
- Change the **conversation** with colleagues and with community about who our girls are, healthy masculinity, and healthy relationships
- **Identify** when girls are experiencing sexual violence, abuse and trafficking and connect them to supports and services that are **gender responsive and culturally sensitive**
 - This includes the provision of training on the dynamics of different forms of violence, how trauma manifests in girls and addressing implicit bias

Ways to Dismantle the Pipeline

- Create and implement **prevention and intervention programming** in the community
- Provide **comprehensive and accessible healthcare** services for marginalized populations and a recognition that trauma and mental health are **public health issues**
- Assess programs, practices and policies with both a **race and a gender lens**
- Use a **trauma informed, strength-based approach** when interacting with female clients: empower them to make their own decisions, advocate against practices that may be re-traumatizing (e.g. shackling, strip searches, etc.), only ask your client questions pertinent to their case, etc.
- Make **alternatives to detention and criminalization** the standard practice rather than an alternative

TELL THEM

TELL THEM THAT I FROWN BUT I REFUSE
TO DROP MY CROWN
TELL THEM I'M IN PAIN, I'M HURT
FEELING LIKE I'M 6 FEET BURIED IN THE DIRT
TELL THEM THAT I'M ME AND ALWAYS
WILL BE ME

-JORDAN C.
THE REAL MVP

#IAMTHEVOICE



Contact Information

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