PREGNANT AND IMPRISONED: BEARING THE WEIGHT OF THE CYCLE

By Lourdes Knox & Dilaame Lintiso
Throughout American history and still today, marginalized populations such as blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be incarcerated. U.S. prisons are notorious for having inhumane conditions and treating inmates poorly. Vulnerable populations who are imprisoned are at the forefront of this mistreatment, with pregnant individuals at the most risk. With such a harsh treatment of felons it is even more imperative that extra care is given to pregnant convicted people due to their vulnerability. A common theme among each of our sources is incarceration and pregnancy. A seamless fit into our topic on the treatment of Black pregnant women who are also incarcerated.

Racial disparities in prison incarceration rates, by sex, 2018

Number of men and women incarcerated in state and federal prisons per 100,000 population in each category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2,272</td>
<td>1,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per 100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2018 Table 10
Pregnancy within a healthy environment comes with a lot of strain on its own, let alone in environments where mothers are not provided the necessary resources and support for prenatal care. For the prison system to implement changes, there needs to be policy changes which will come about when there is a greater awareness of this issue. Which is why our research relied on not only clinical data and numerical analysis, but the stories of individuals who have felt the effects first hand. We have recognized that numerical data isn’t enough when studying the experiences of Black women.
We are often left out of research completely, which is why speaking of our experiences is so important. Using first hand stories does not only give a voice to black women who have been silenced, but moves away from the European imperialist method of acquiring data. Information is often deemed obsolete if proper sources were not used in research. Although this does apply to many instances, and statistical data is still vital to research, trusting the word of black women is what keeps our subculture alive.

"Using first hand stories does not only give a voice to black women who have been silenced, but moves away from the European imperialist method of acquiring data."
We are bringing awareness to those like Erica Thompson, a Black pregnant woman who was arrested for violating a traffic citation probation, and lost her child in the Alachua County Jail due to a lack of proper prenatal care. And, Tammy Jackson, a 35 year old Black woman who was forced to birth her child by herself in the Broward County Jail as her screams were ignored.
ERICA THOMPSON recalls those last moments with her child. “I basically held my baby all night, until she died, until she turned blue,” she said.

“[In] Her time of extreme need and vulnerability, [the Broward Sheriff’s Office] neglected to provide Ms. Jackson with the assistance and medical care all mothers need and deserve,” – Howard Finkelstein, Public Defender
Giving these women a chance to be heard that will catapult the change the prison system so desperately needs.