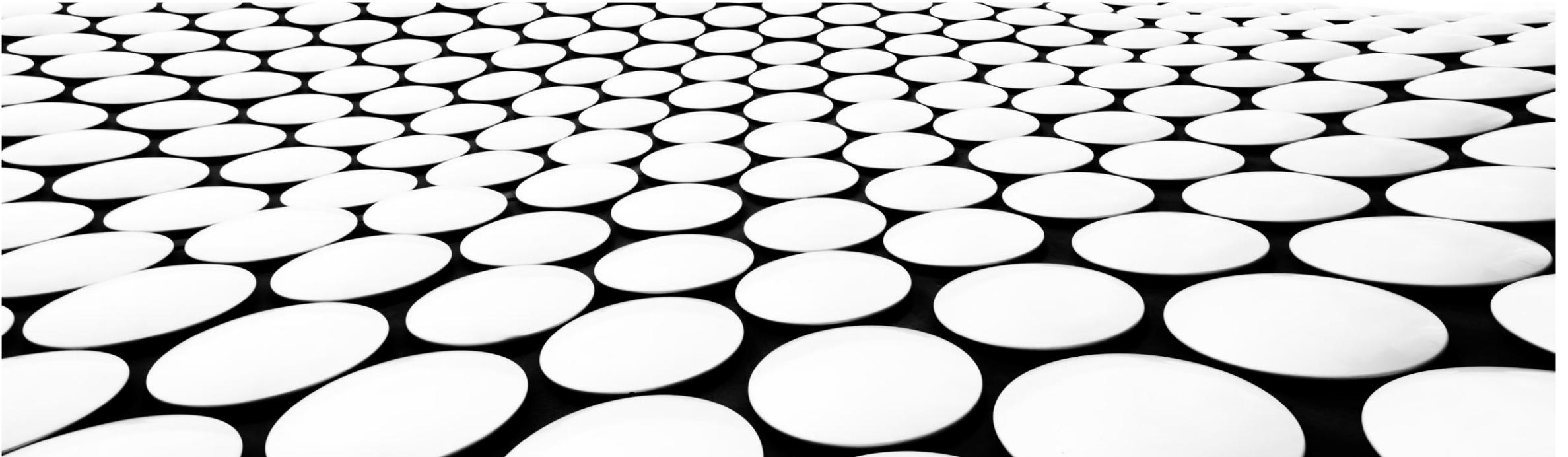


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# **BRAVE CHURCH – HARD TOPICS**

THE AMERICAN PRISON SYSTEM, WEEK 1 OF 3

RACE & THE PRISON SYSTEM



## BC/HT COVENANT

**BRAVE  
CHURCH**

TACKLING TOUGH TOPICS  
TOGETHER

ELIZABETH HAGAN

We will...

accept conflict and commit to the way of kindness.

take responsibility for how our words are received.

ask permission before we challenge someone's views on a subject.

show respect for one another and graciously receive feedback if someone feels disrespected.

use 'I' instead of 'you' statements. We will not accuse or attack.

give everyone who wants to speak an opportunity to do so.

## AS WE BEGIN... SHARE ON THE WHITEBOARD

- What concerns you about the U.S. prison system?
- What questions do you bring to this topic?



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## LANGUAGE MATTERS- CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS OF TERMS

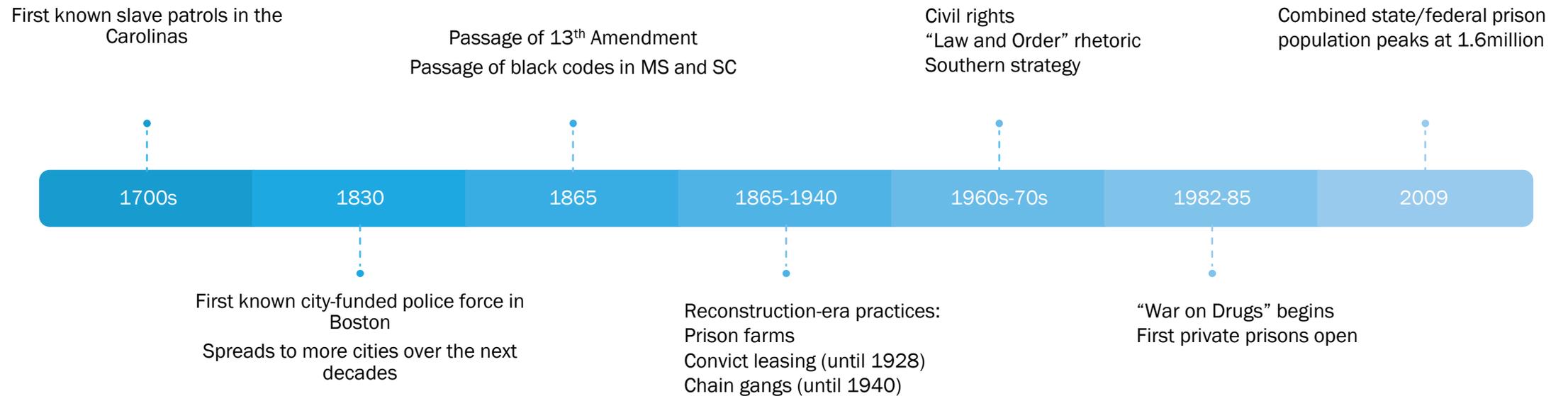
### What do we call the system?

- Prison system/ carceral system
- Penal system
- Justice system
- Judicial system

### What do we call affected people?

- Criminals
- Convicts
- People who are incarcerated
- Ex-offenders
- Returning citizens/residents
- People coming home from incarceration

# A SELECTED HISTORY OF RACE & INCARCERATION IN AMERICA



Sources: [American Bar Association](#), [Vera](#), [Michelle Alexander's \*The New Jim Crow\*](#), [Harvard International Review](#), [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

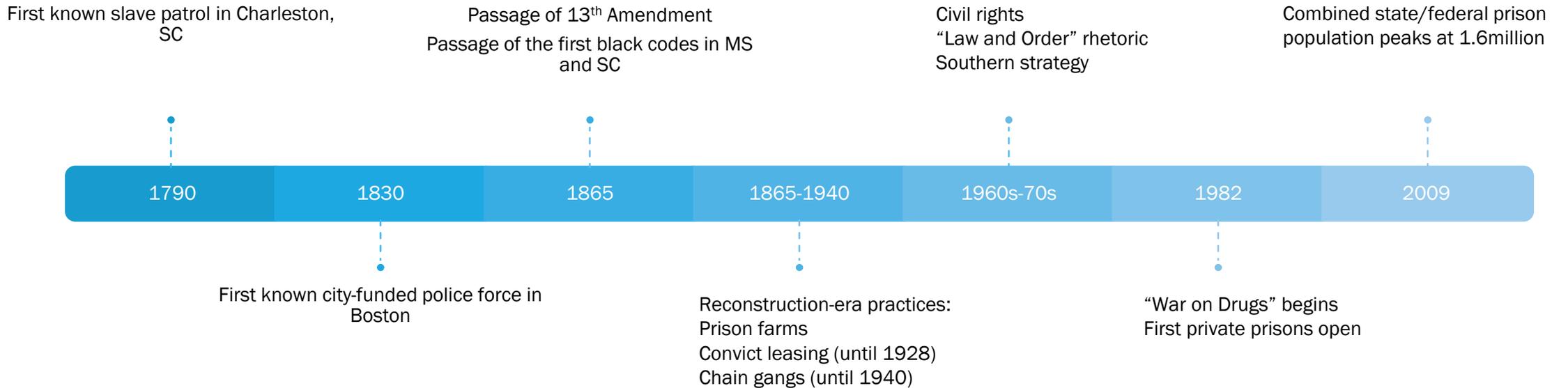
## 13<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT: 1865

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

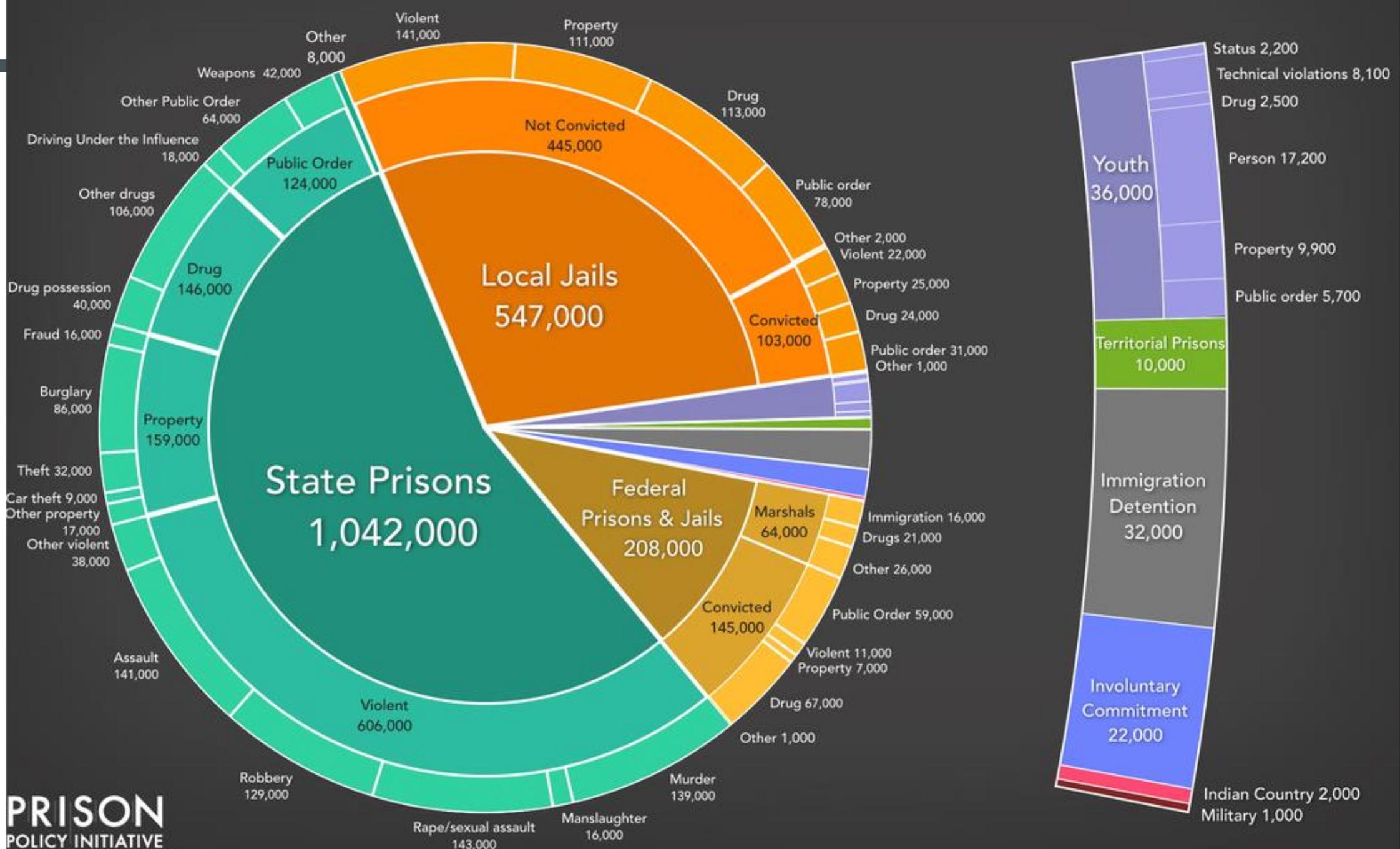
## VA SUPREME COURT: 1871

“A convicted felon...has, as a consequence of his crime, not only forfeited his liberty, but all his personal rights except those which the law in its humanity accords to him. **He is for the time being a slave of the state.**”

# A SELECTED HISTORY OF RACE & INCARCERATION IN AMERICA



Sources: [American Bar Association](#), [Vera](#), [Michelle Alexander's \*The New Jim Crow\*](#), [Harvard International Review](#), [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)



## SPECIFIC IMPACTS

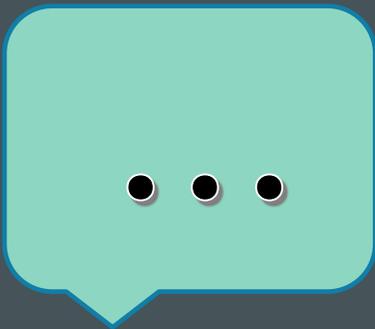
### Racial impacts

- Blacks are incarcerated at 5x rate of whites
- 1 in 9 black children has had a parent in prison
- At current rates, 1 in 3 black boys born today is likely to be incarcerated in their lifetime
- 3 in 4 incarcerated blacks were first arrested before age 19
- Black students are 3x as likely as white to be suspended/expelled

### Other over-represented demographics:

- Native American & Latinx
- Lower income & less educated
- Disabled, serious mental illness, substance abuse
- Those with trauma/abuse history
- Women
  - U.S. locks up 1/3 of the world's incarcerated women, despite representing 4% of world's population.

# Quick Response

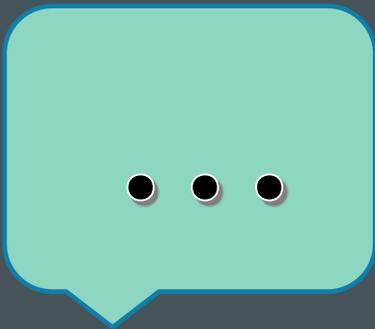


**WHOA. THAT WAS A LOT.**

What stands out to you?

What are you unsure about?

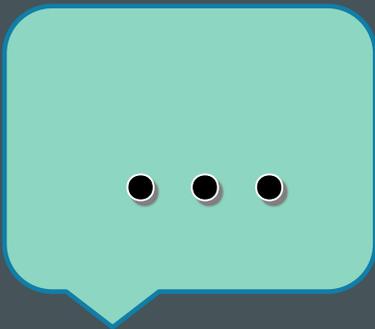
What do  
you think?



## BOLD PROVOCATIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Our judicial system was born from *white fear* and built on the *control and surveillance* of people of color. Racial discrimination, fear, and control remains core to the system today.
- White people in particular are responsible to deconstruct the current system, from schools to policing to prisons to post-incarceration.
- Jesus, as an unjustly-arrested ethnic minority (Jew) executed by the state (Rome) gives Christians a particular story to draw on

# What do you think?



## **BOLD PROVOCATIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- Reform needs to go beyond the “low-hanging fruit” of reforming sentencing around nonviolent drug offenders.
  - Divert arrests to crisis services (MH, SA)
  - Reduce/eliminate pre-trial detention (bail)
  - Reduce/eliminate re-incarceration for probation & parole violations
  - Reduce stigma against “violent” offenders
  - Reduce pretextual traffic stops
  - Reform school discipline, youth offenses, misdemeanors

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## **A FRANCISCAN BENEDECTION**

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within the heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor. Amen.