

The Forum

Dedicated to the advancement of carceral interpretation for public benefit.

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Featured Site

In 1982, William "Bud" Soper discovered an old wooden jail in Hot Springs, South Dakota, believed to have been built between 1885 and 1888. Soper donated it to the city, who moved the building to its present location on N. River Street. Although old jail records are lost, newspaper reports from 1895 indicate that Martha Jane Cannary (aka "Calamity Jane") may have spent a night in the jail. Potential escapees would be disappointed, as heavy-gauge wire was added to prevent jailbreakers from sawing through the walls. Historical markers on the site indicate that the building is the oldest extant wooden jail in South Dakota and possibly the United States.

Information courtesy of Atlas Obscura.



Photograph of the historic 1888 jail in Hot Springs, South Dakota. Courtesy of Atlas Obscura.

Monthly Meet-Up

The ACSM hosts monthly meetings for practitioners, scholars, and others involved with or interested in historic prison museums, and/or carceral sites. Meetings take place via Zoom on the second Monday of each month at 3:00 PM EST and cover a wide range of topics, including interpretation, community engagement strategies, and collaborative practices. Contact us at thecarceral@gmail.com to sign-up in order to attend. We hope to see you there!

Carceral Trends

The number of jails in Indian Country has increased by 25% since 2000.

A national report released by the MacArthur Foundation earlier this year shows Native Americans are incarcerated at rates up to seven times more than white people in states where there are higher Indigenous populations.

The report also found that Natives are sentenced more harshly than other ethnicities and are overrepresented in the prison population in 19 states compared with any other race.

"Overincarceration of Indigenous people is intimately tied to colonial violence and upheld by policies throughout the years," said Dr. Ciara Hansen (Shawnee/Cherokee), author of the report.

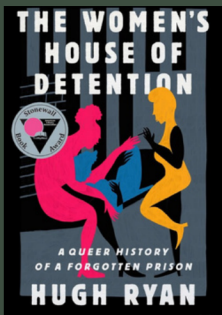
Contributed by Frank Vaisvilas of the [Green Bay Press-Gazette](#) (January 10, 2023).

Book Club!

The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison By Hugh Ryan (Bold Type Books, 2022)

The Women's House of Detention, a landmark that ushered in the modern era of women's imprisonment, is now largely forgotten. But when it stood in New York City's Greenwich Village, from 1929 to 1974, it was a nexus for the

tens of thousands of women, transgender men, and gender-nonconforming people who inhabited its crowded cells. Today, approximately 40% of the people in women's prisons identify as queer; in earlier decades, that percentage was almost certainly higher. Historian Hugh Ryan explores the roots of this crisis and reconstructs the little-known lives of incarcerated New Yorkers, making a unique case for prison abolition—and demonstrating that by queering the Village, the House of Detention helped defined queerness for the rest of America.



Prison Resort

The 'Mexican Alcatraz' Opens its Doors to Tourism

Much of Islas Marias is surrounded by jagged cliffs and shark-infested water. Photo courtesy of Nathaniel Janowitz for Vice News.



An image of Nelson Mandela, the emblem of freedom in the world, welcomes visitors to the new tourist center Islas Marías, known as the Mexican Alcatraz, which served as a prison from 1905 until 2019.

Now it has been declared a Natural Protected Area. This new tourist attraction located on the coasts of the Mexican state of Nayarit, in the Pacific Ocean, is part of an archipelago made up of islands. Maria Magdalena, Maria Cleofas, and San Juanito were declared a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 2010.

To reach the Islas Marías resort, travelers board a modern ferry from the port of Mazatlán, or San Blas, Nayarit, which takes three hours to reach Puerto Balleto, the site of the vacation center operated by the Mexican Navy.

Tourists are provided with guides who take them to the various areas of interest of the former prison. The tour to the cemetery stands out, where visitors can see the graves of important characters who lived imprisoned in the Mexican Alcatraz; for example, the "Toad," a serial killer who, legend has it, murdered more than a hundred people. Tourists can also visit the Temple of Guadalupe, where they'll find images made by prisoners and relics of the work done by evangelists sent to this site during the era in which it served as a fearsome prison.

One of the points of interest on the tour is the remains of a Maximum Security Prison abandoned in 2013. Visitors can walk through the cells, showers and the eating and exercising areas used by Mexico's most dangerous criminals.

Written by Valentin Fuentes and originally published via Travel Pulse on April 9, 2023.



Sea-Cell

From Convict Ship to Traveling Museum

Success was a 621-ton ship constructed in 1840 at Moulmein, Burma, then under the yoke of the British Empire. It initially served as a merchantman vessel moving goods and migrating people between Britain, Australia, and throughout the Indian Ocean until the early 1850s.

To accommodate rising criminal populations, the Victorian government purchased and refit Success as a convict hulk near Melbourne. There, Success floated stationary in Port Phillip, relieving the overflowing jails on shore.

Although Success ceased to function as a male convict prison by the late 1850s, it confined women and then boys through the 1860s, after which it functioned as a storage hulk.

Sold by the Victorian Government to a private owner in 1890, the vessel became a traveling museum, albeit a highly embellished one. More fictive than fact, the Success was a spectacle. It showcased a history as a convict hulk for audiences in Australia (1890-1895), Great Britain (1895-1912), and the United States (1912-1946). Success eventually caught fire and sank in Ohio in 1946.

Research courtesy of Kathryn L. Cooper, East Carolina University (May 2014).



Above: Photograph of Success, created by Bain News Service, ca. 1910-1915. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Below: Photograph of the convict ship, "The Success," ca. 1907. Courtesy of Eastern Kentucky University, Digital Collections.

History in Brief

AMERICAN HISTORY, RACE, AND PRISON

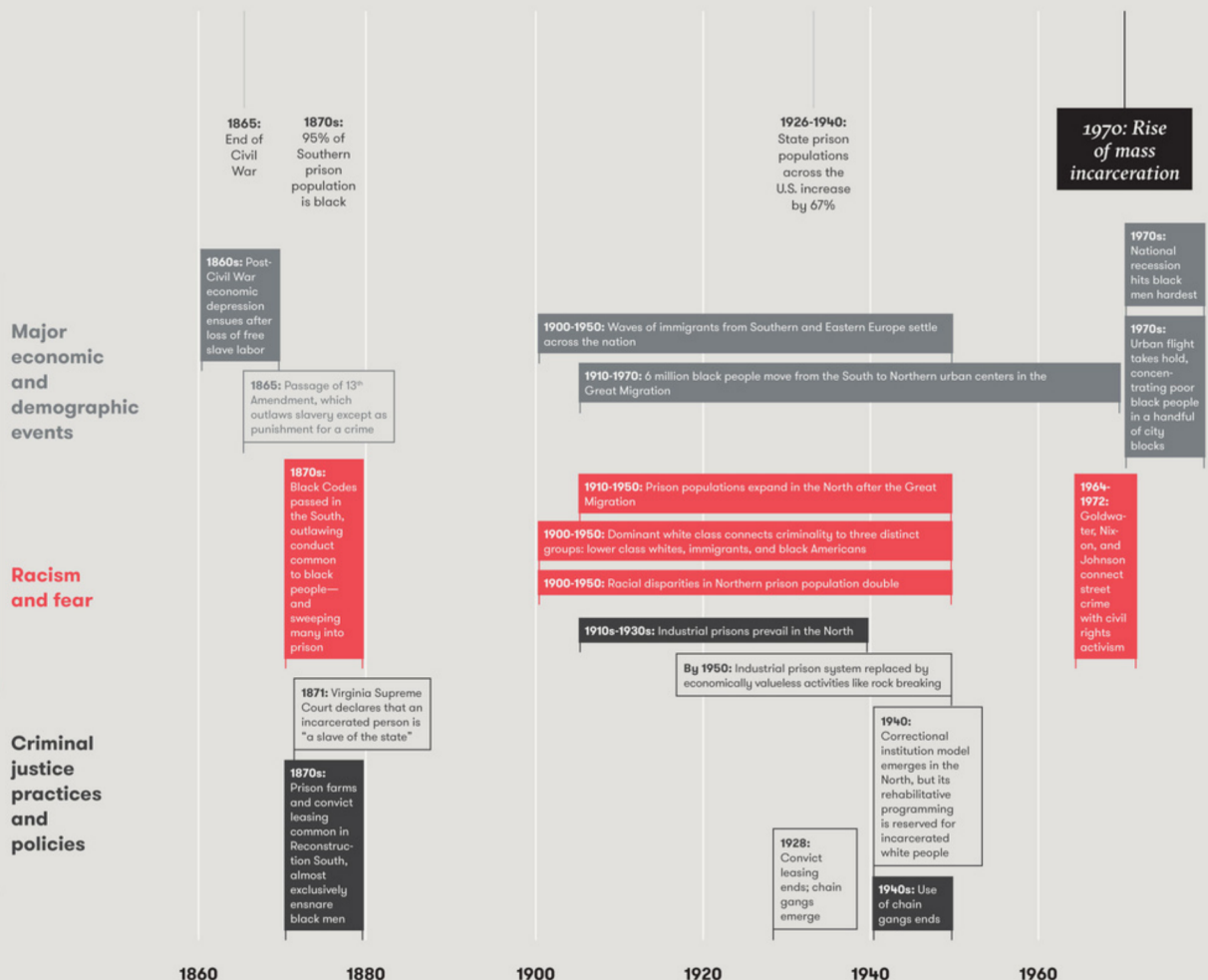
In 1970, the era of mass incarceration began. This growth in the nation's prison population was a deliberate policy. It was inflamed by campaign rhetoric that focused on an uptick in crime and orchestrated by people in power, including legislators who demanded stricter sentencing laws, state and local executives who ordered law enforcement officers to be tougher on crime, and prison administrators who were forced to house a growing population with limited resources.

Although the unprecedented increase in prison populations during this period may seem like an aberration, the ground was fertile for this growth long before 1970. Certainly the number of people sent to prison was far greater during the era of mass incarceration than in any other time period, but the policies that fueled that growth stemmed from a familiar narrative: one involving public anxiety about both actual and alleged criminal behavior by racial and ethnic minorities and the use of state punishment to control them.

American history, race, and prison: A timeline (1860s-1970s)

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Inequitable treatment has its roots in the correctional eras that came before it: each one building on the last and leading to the prison landscape we face today.



It is a narrative that repeats itself throughout this country's history. From America's founding to the present, there are stories of crime waves or criminal behavior and then patterns of disproportionate imprisonment of those on the margins of society: black people, immigrants, Native Americans, refugees, and others with outsider status. The result has been the persistent and disproportionate impact of incarceration on these groups.

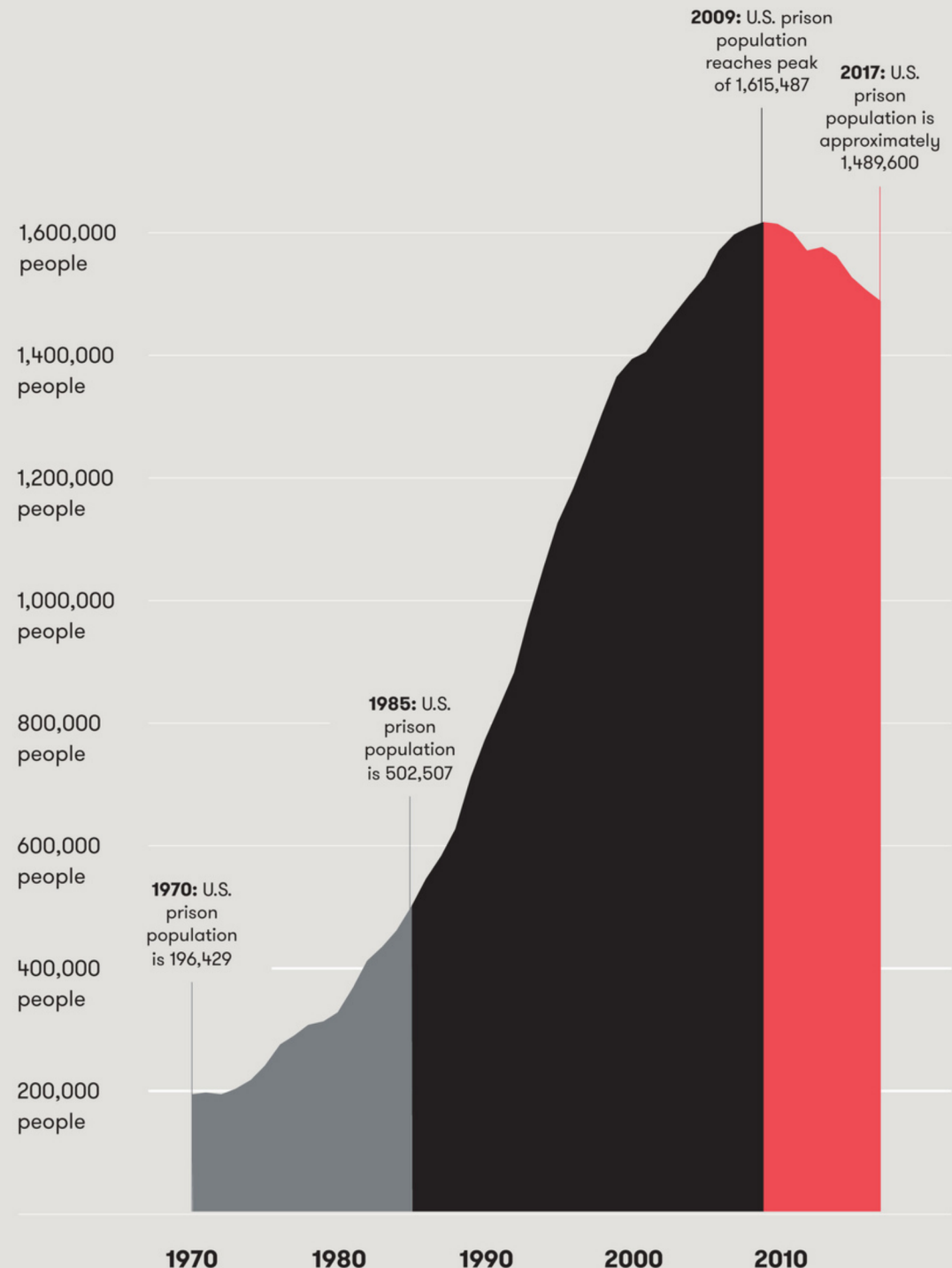
From 1850 to 1940, racial and ethnic minorities—including foreign-born and non-English speaking European immigrants—made up 40% to 50% of the prison population. In 2015, about 55% of people imprisoned in federal or state prisons were Black or Latino.

Mass incarceration is an era marked by significant encroachment on the freedoms of racial and ethnic minorities, most notably Black Americans. But this inequitable treatment has its roots in the correctional eras that came before it: each one building on the last and leading to the prison landscape we face today.



Information and images courtesy of Vera Institute of Justice. Learn more at www.vera.org.

Rise of mass incarceration



Source: For the prison populations from 1970-2016, see the Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoners series. For the prison population in 2017, see Oliver Hinds, Jacob Kang-Brown, and Olive Lu, *People in Prison in 2017* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2018).