

# Prison History & Theory

## Research into Prison in America

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world.

In 1972 300,000 people were incarcerated in the US;  
Now there are over 2.3 million.

What accounts for this increase?

## Notes from: *Prisons in America*, McShane

What makes punishment effective?

How we react to crime tells us a great deal about ourselves and our society.

Rationales for Punishment:

1. Vengeance
2. Retribution
3. Incapacitation
  - a. collective
  - b. selective
4. Deterrence
  - a. specific
  - b. general
5. Rehabilitation

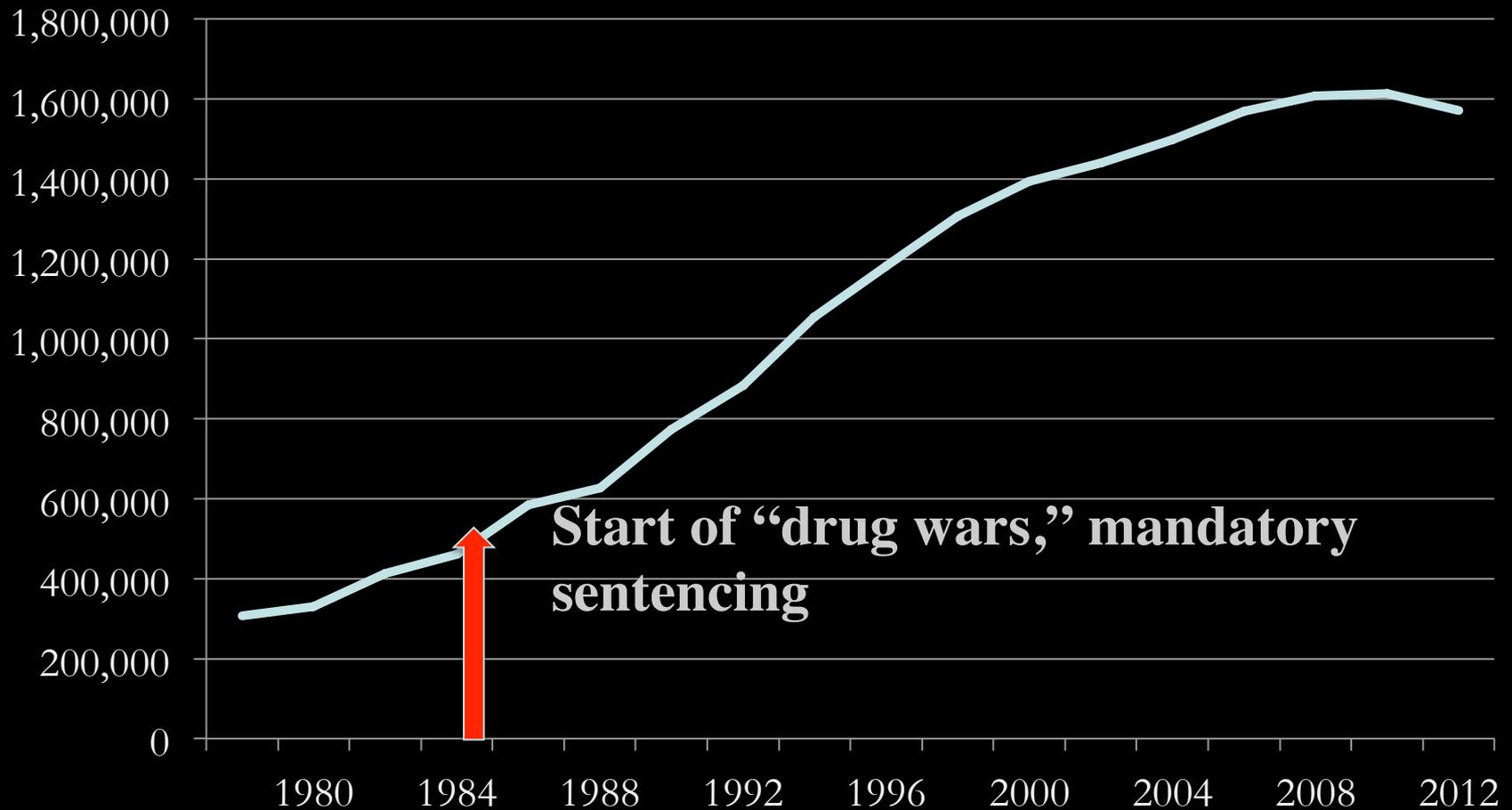
Every year more than 600,000 persons are released from state and federal prisons. Without some form of rehabilitation, either psychological, occupational, educational, behavioral, or otherwise, many (at least 39%) are reincarcerated.

The “hyper-incarceration” since 1980s, coincides with “war on drugs” and increasing punitiveness with 2.3 million sentenced in prisons and jails (1.6 in prisons).

95% return to society with little to no rehabilitation (1800 per day).

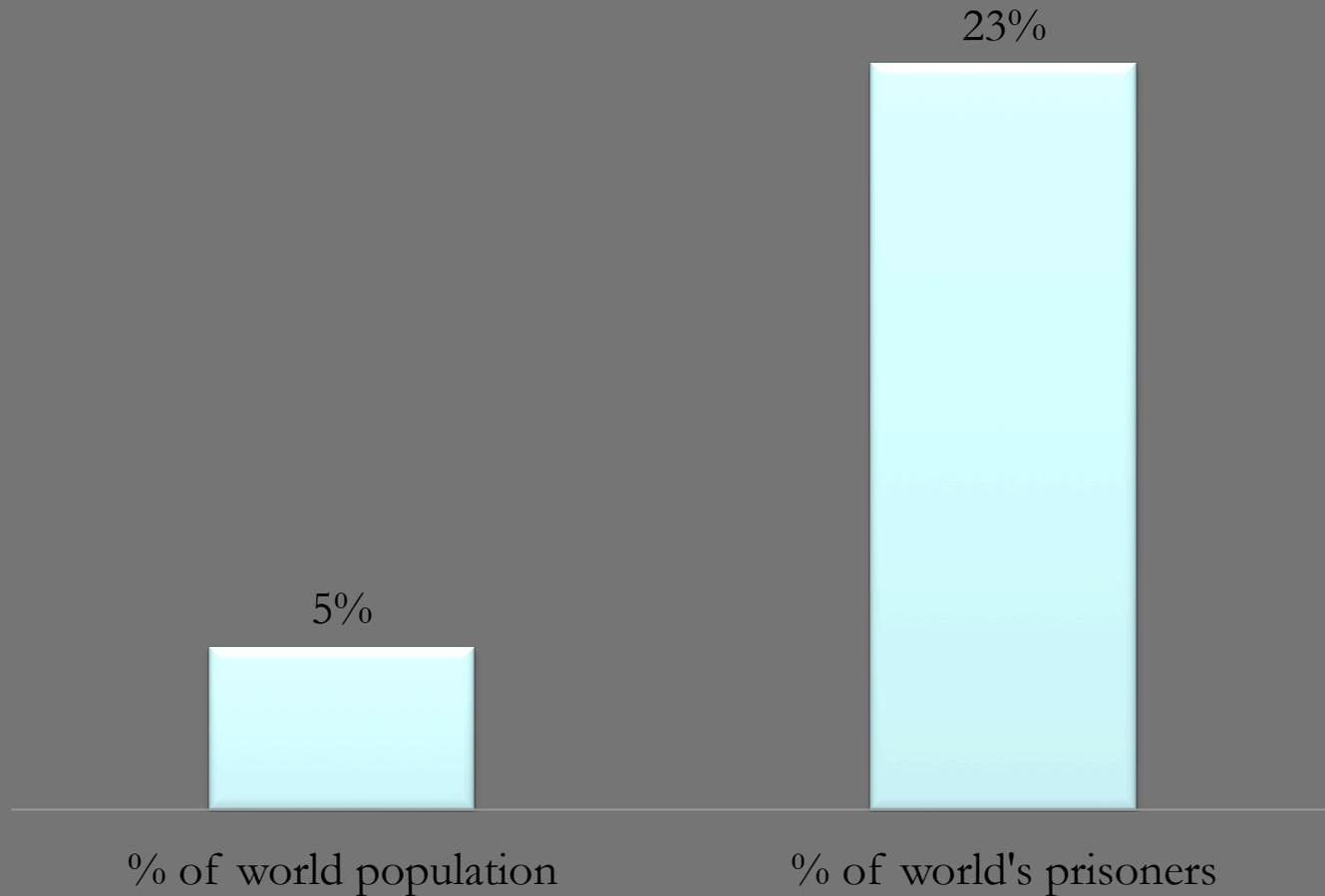
# Hyper-incarceration and increased punitiveness

Formula: send more in, do more time



Number of adults in state and federal prisons 1978-2012, not including sentences to local jails (Source: Carson & Gonnelli, 2013)

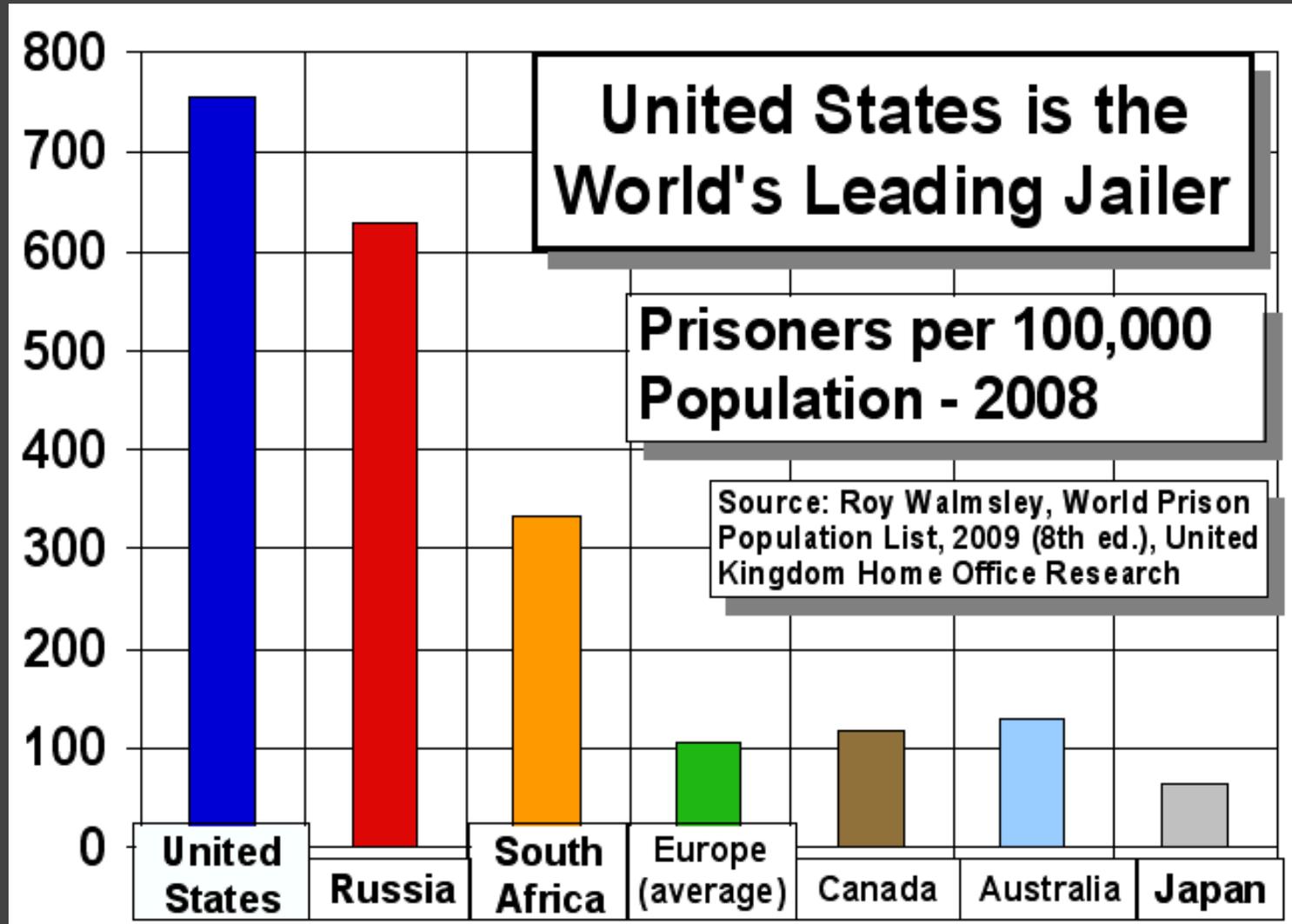
In 2011, The United States had approximately:



The global disproportionality of prison as punishment

Sources: Walmsely; [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

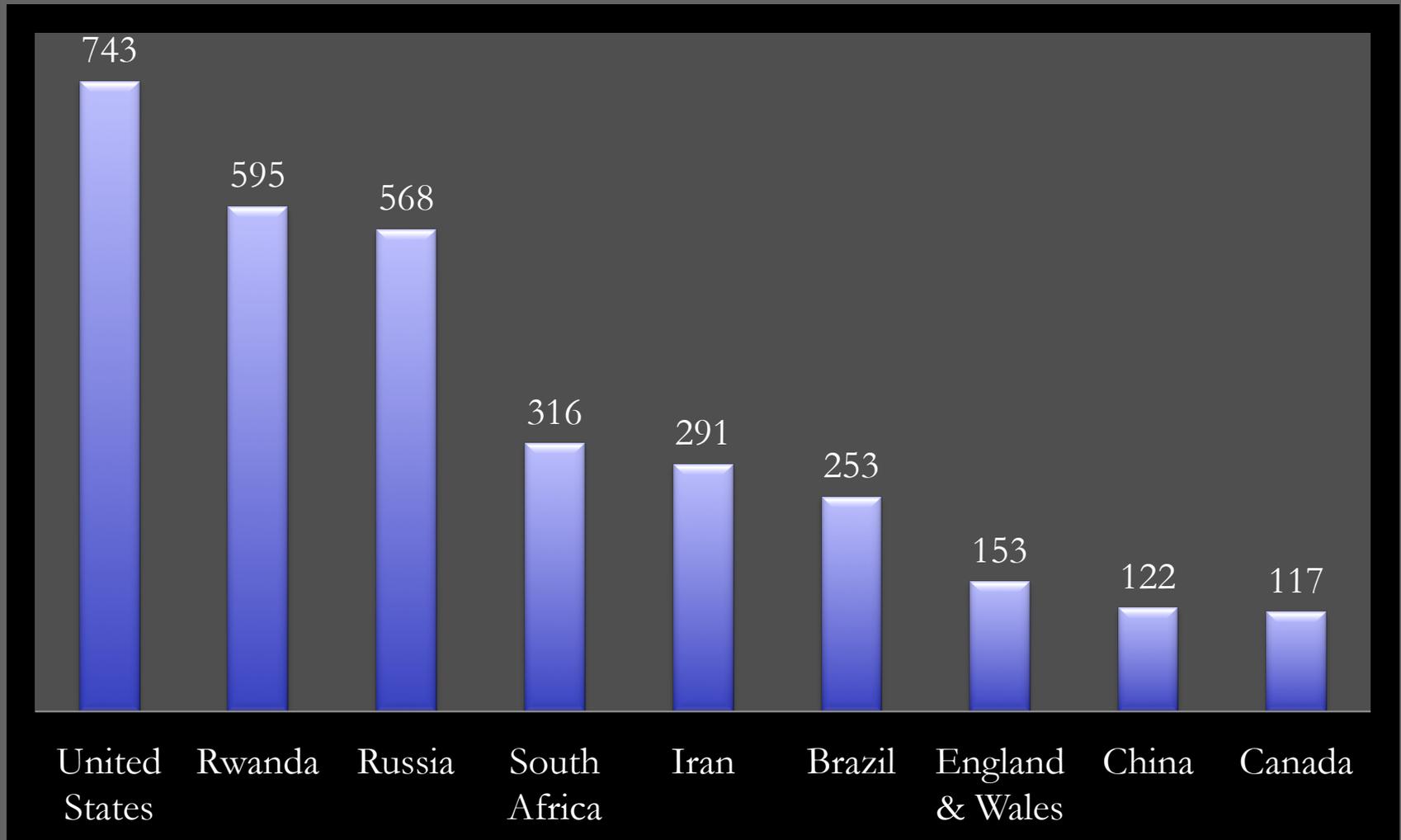
# Some Context for Prisons in America



The stats source is the World Prison Population List. 8th edition.  
Prisoners per 100,000 population

# Incarceration rate per 100,000 residents in 2011

(source: Walmsley, World Population List, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, ICPS)



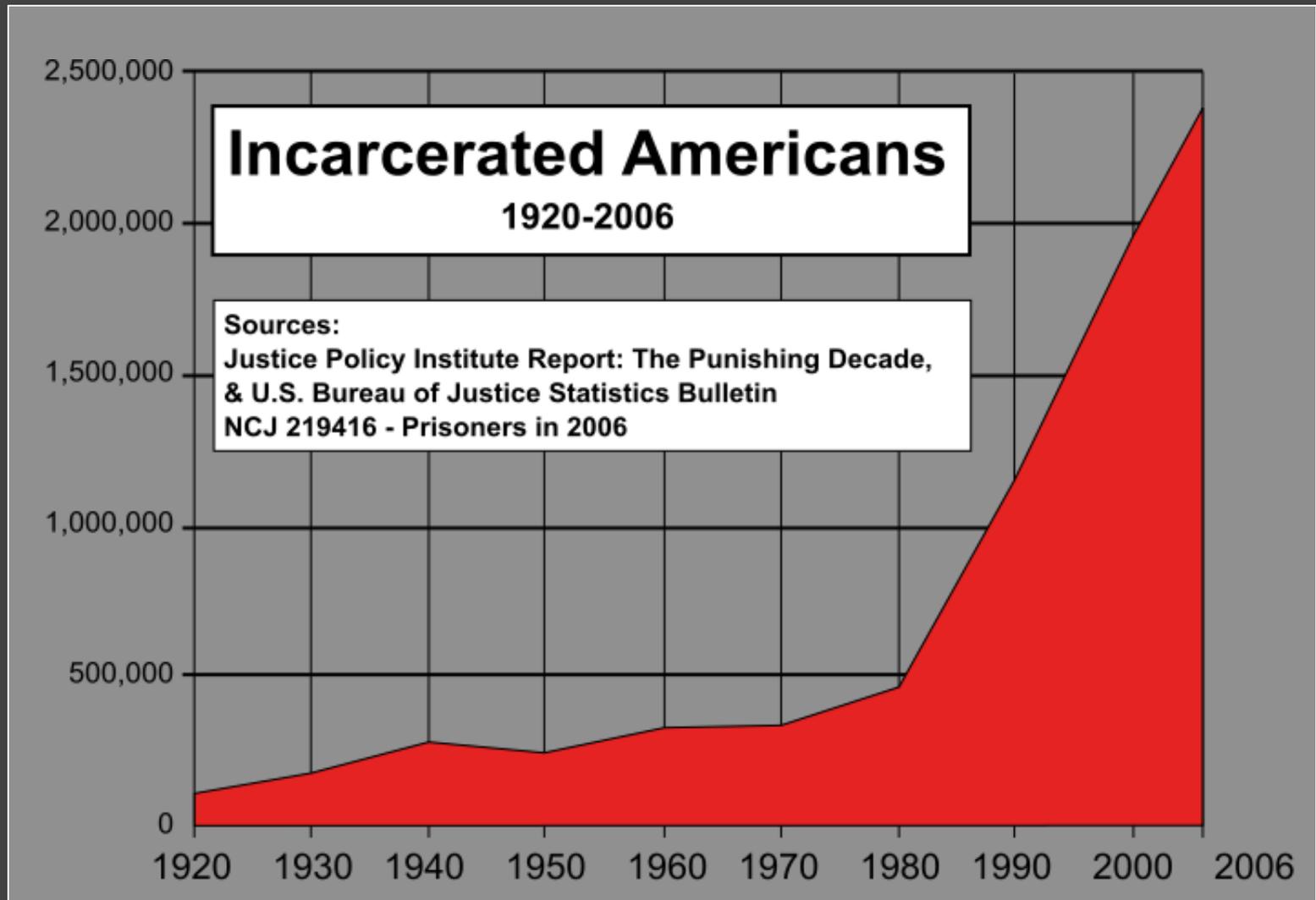
The United States is the world's incarceration leader

U.S. is the world's leading jailer about 5% of the world's population and 23% of its prisoners. World's highest incarceration rate, surpassing "more punitive" countries (South Africa, Rwanda, Russia, Iran)

Prisons are big business: states spend about \$53 billion in 2012; nearly \$60 billion with federal. This despite evidence that prison incapacitation does not lower crime as well as education and living wage jobs, may backfire.

Even then, Pew (2014) states with decrease in prison population they saw crime decrease.

# Some Context for Prisons in America



Number of inmates. 1920 to 2006. (*absolute numbers*) General US population grew 2.8 times in the same period. The number of inmates increased more than 20 times.

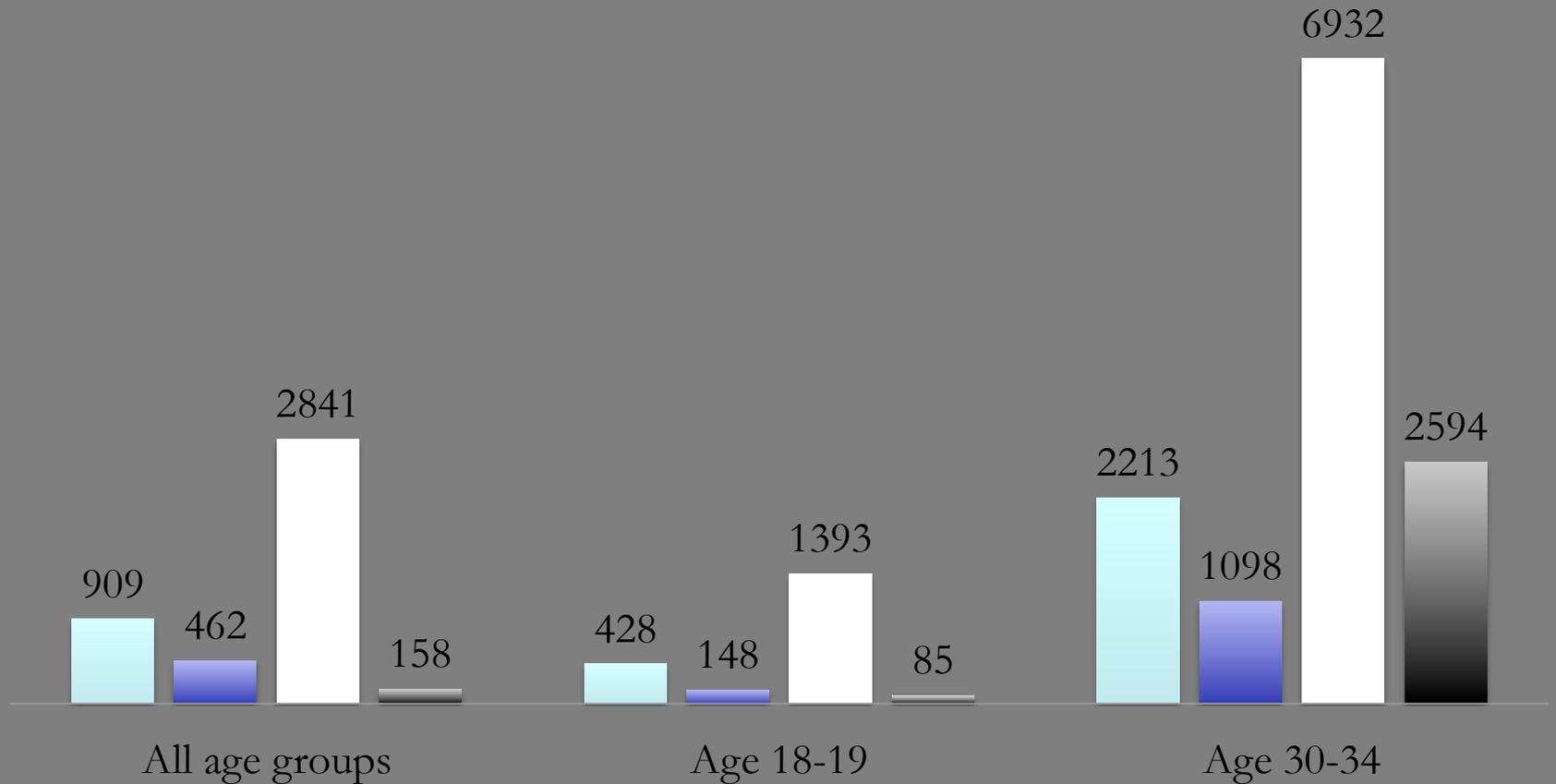
**Significant disproportions** in who we incarcerate – black men penalized far more heavily than whites, lifetime consequences for opportunities, health of communities of color (overlap) and stigma.

Racialization of prison – drug war and tough sentencing policies, exacerbated existing structural inequalities of race and class.

Exposure to prisons and prisoners to help students comprehend race-based punishment and its lasting impacts.

# Racial Disproportions in U.S. Incarceration Rate

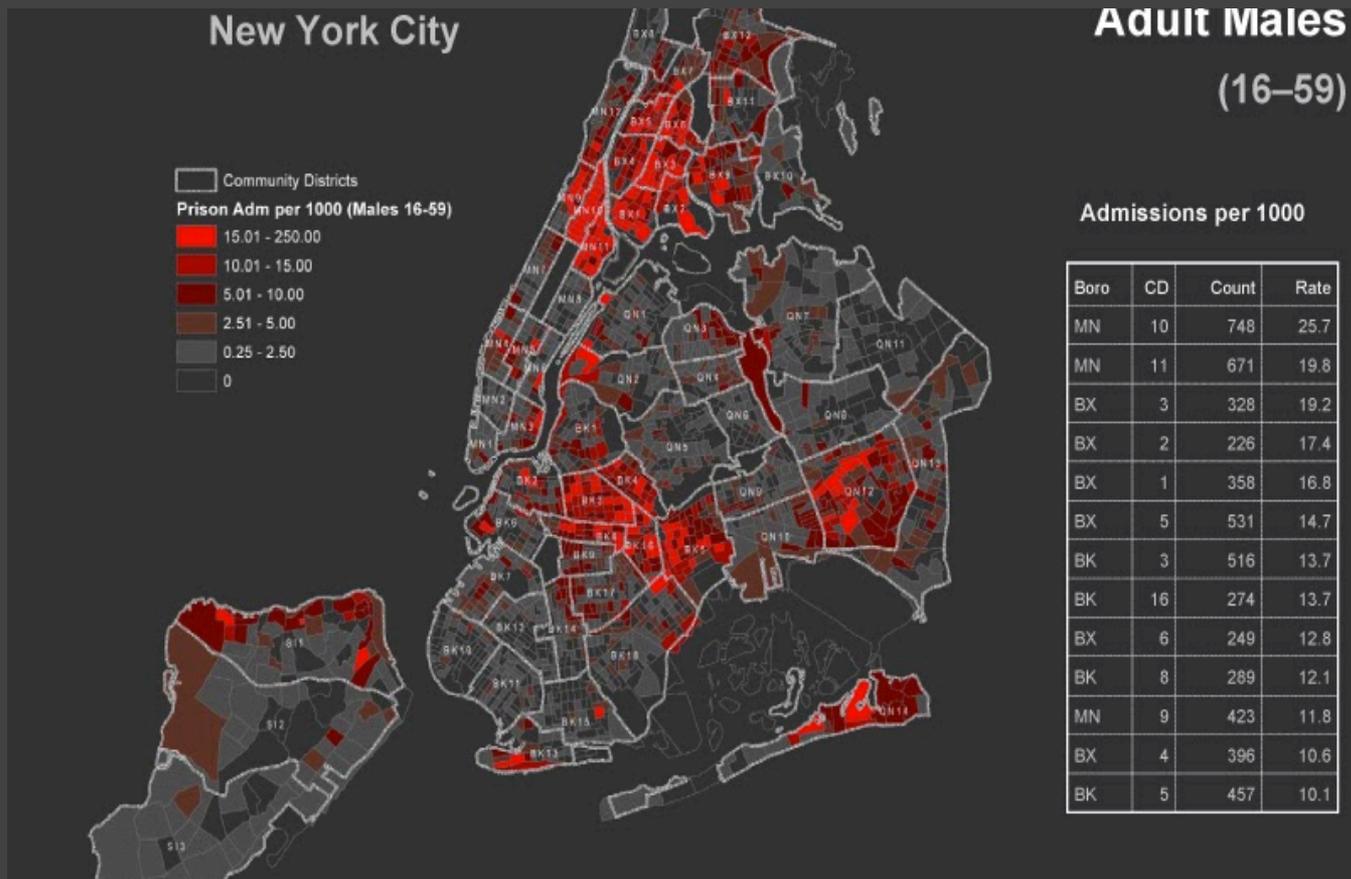
■ All males   ■ White males   ■ Black Males   ■ Hispanic Males



**Incarceration rate per 100,000 residents of each race and age group  
12/31/12 Source: Carson & Golnelli, 2013**

# Concentration of Disadvantage: Inmates come from Few Neighborhoods

Source: Justice Mapping Center 2006



Certain neighborhoods send disproportionately large numbers of young males to prison – costing millions of dollars per year – these same neighborhoods have many dependent on social welfare (TANF) and kids in foster care. This means there may be extenuating social issues related to crime.

Visit: <http://www.justicemapping.org/expertise/>

By constructing views of punishment in representations of prison and prisoners, cultural industries construct policy and influence our compassion, the way we treat prisoners and releasees.



**Image from Oz, HBO**

Important to counter: rethink who commits crime, who we punish and how we punish them.

Cultural representations, stereotypes of prisons and prisoners shape public views and influence policy and practice involving the incarcerated and those released.

Most beliefs shaped by media representations – Oz, Prison Break, Shawshank.

# Some reason for increase Incarceration

This increase in prison population is not because of an explosion in crime but because of:

- “The War on Drugs”
- Three strikes sentencing
- Mandatory Minimums

According to a study by The Sentencing Project, a **black male** born in 2001 has a **32% chance** of spending time in prison at some point in his life, compared to 17% for Hispanic males and **6% for white males.**

# Prison Industrial Complex

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.

copied from the [Critical Resistance Website](#)

# Prison Industrial Complex

Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other privileges.

There are many ways this power is collected and maintained through the PIC, including creating mass media images that keep alive stereotypes of people of color, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth, and other oppressed communities as criminal, delinquent, or deviant.

This power is also maintained by earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces; helping earn political gains for “tough on crime” politicians; increasing the influence of prison guard and police unions; and eliminating social and political dissent by oppressed communities that make demands for self-determination and reorganization of power in the US.

# Some things to consider

African Americans make up 13% of the US population and 38% of the population in US prisons and jails.

A black man in California has a higher chance of going to prison than to a state college. States such as Pennsylvania and Arizona decide on how many prisons to build based on such policies such as how many black children are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

Our system treats you better if your rich and guilty than if you are poor and innocent.

There are no rich people on Death Row.

Error rate for death row:  
for every 9 people on death row, one has been exonerated.

# Some Context for the Death Penalty

1. We are the only Western democratic country in the world to still practice capital punishment.
2. Other countries with the death penalty –Syria, Iran, Somalia, Pakistan, North Korea, China
3. The states with the death penalty have 35% more murder per capita than ones that do not. New York State outlawed the death penalty in 2004. The last person executed in New York was in 1963 at Sing Sing.
4. The US has the highest rate of incarceration in the world
  - 1972 300,000 people were incarcerated in the US
  - 2006 over 2.3 million

There are varied views on incarceration in the US. With a commitment to social justice through awareness and exposure let's analyze the current Penal System:

How Prison is used as punishment

Prisons are big business

Prisoners are stereotyped

Race and Class play a factor in Judicial System

Criminal justice professionals believe it is critical to confer credentials upon ex-inmates so they can work and become productive citizens. Not return to crime.

While Prisons are designed for many reasons and through the history of the Penal system we can witness changes and similarities over time, our concern is with how to rethink our preexisting ideas regarding all.

How can we protect society from dangerous individuals and at the same time advocate for Social Justice?

In this class we are using Art as an excuse to examine complex social, political and economic situations that affect our justice system.

One of the longest and most successful Art in Prison program is the Prison Creative Art Project developed at the University of Michigan.



## **Prison Creative Arts Project:** University of Michigan

The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) was founded in 1990 with the mission to collaborate with incarcerated adults, incarcerated youth, urban youth and the formerly incarcerated to strengthen our community through creative expression.

With arts programming and events year round, the organization serves as a creative hub for those with links to the criminal justice system, community volunteers, faculty, students, and university staff.