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# **The Prison Industrial Complex, How the PIC Impacts Women, and PIC Abolition**

# History of the PIC

Since 1980, the number of women entering U.S. prisons has increased by approximately 500% (Council on Criminal Justice). The term Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC), coined by Angela Davis, describes a system in which surveillance, policing, and imprisonment function as profit-driven solutions to economic, social, and political problems through partnerships between government and private industry. Historically, the PIC is rooted in colonial systems of control that criminalized marginalized populations, particularly through the legacy of slavery and the dispossession of Native Americans. Early U.S. policing developed to uphold racial hierarchies, with institutions such as the Washington, D.C. police emerging from slave-catchers. After emancipation, the 13th Amendment's exception allowing slavery as punishment for crime enabled new forms of racial control through Black Codes and mass imprisonment. In the modern era, policies like the War on Drugs accelerated incarceration and deepened racial disparities. African Americans are incarcerated at over five times the rate of white people, receive drug-related prison sentences at nearly six times the rate of white people, and Black women are imprisoned at twice the rate of white women. For example, nowadays, one in three Black boys born in the U.S. can expect to be imprisoned, compared to one in six Latino boys and one in seventeen white boys (NAACP). In conclusion, the PIC is not an isolated modern phenomenon but the result of ingrained historical systems of colonialism, slavery, and racial control that continue to shape mass incarceration.

# How The PIC Impacts Women

## **Impacts on Transgender Women:**

- Not placed in the correct facilities based on their gender
- Restricted access to medical care - gender affirming care
- Forced into solitary confinement under the false pretense that it is for their "own safety."
- Accused of being violent when in reality transgender prisoners disproportionately face violence in prison

## **Sexual Violence in Prisons:**

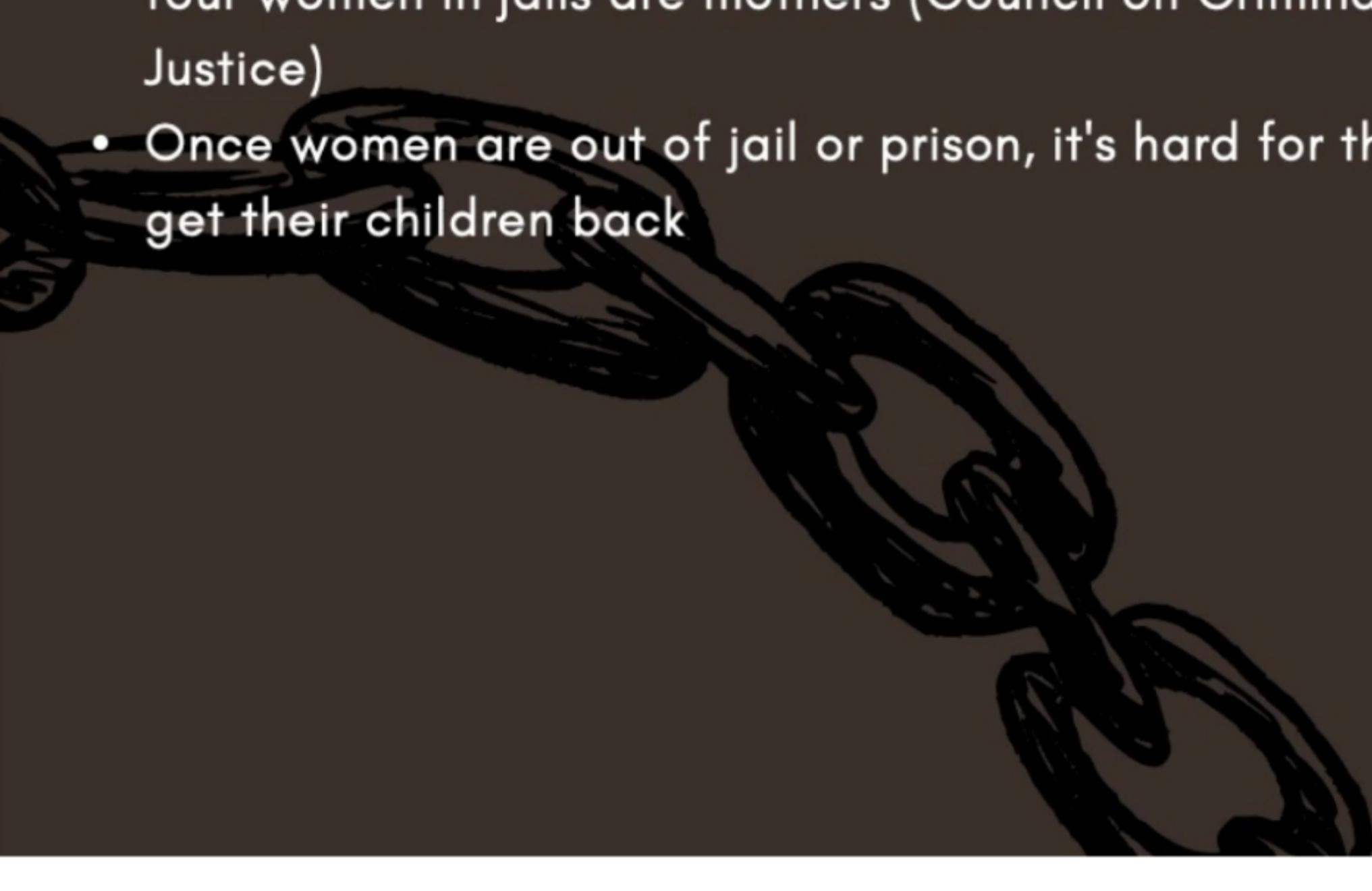
- Guards allow inmates to sexually abuse other inmates as a way to keep prisoners in line
- Sexual violence is significantly more prevalent inside prisons than outside of prisons
- Strip searches are basically legalized sexual assault (forced to get naked, and guards put their hands inside of you)

## **Cycle of Violence:**

- Many women in prison were abused as children, experienced intimate partner violence, and then also experienced violence while in prison.

## **Family Systems and Reunification:**

- More than half of the women in prison are parents to minor children, and estimates suggest that at least three out of four women in jails are mothers (Council on Criminal Justice)
- Once women are out of jail or prison, it's hard for them to get their children back



# Prison Abolition

**"PIC abolition is more than just prison abolition. This is really important because the prison industrial complex are these interlocking systems of government, industry that hold up an oppressive social structure. The analysis that the PIC offers is that the suppressive social structure cannot exist without the use of state violence, which takes the form of criminalization, policing, imprisonment, surveillance. I know it seems utopian, a world without prisons, a world without police, but abolition isn't just some utopian dream in the future. It's actually a practical organizing strategy in the present. So if you're convinced by these ideas or if you share this political alignment, there are things that people can be doing right now to chip away at the scope and scale of the prison industrial complex, and the only way we do that is by organizing in groups."** (Mar Golub, Scripps College Professor)

## Statistics

- Around 200,000 adults per year are sexually abused behind bars (Understanding Rape in Prison, Martyniuk)
- Women only made up 13% of jail populations, but account for 67% of victims of staff-on-inmate sexual abuse (Bureau of Justice Statistics)
- In the US population, roughly 3.4% women are LGTBQ, and 40% of incarcerated people are LGBTQ (Inside/Outside)
- The makeup of the population of women of color in the US is  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the women in prison are women of color (Inside/Outside)
- 1 and 6 trans people report having been incarcerated and sexual assault rates are higher for trans people compared to the general prison population (Inside/Outside)
- The United States has the highest rate of incarceration of any nation on Earth: We represent 4 percent of the planet's population but 22 percent of the world's imprisoned population (New York Times)

# Get Involved

**5c Prison Abolition Club (PrisAb):**

**Instagram - 5cprisonabolition**

**Email - 5cprisonabolition@gmail.com**

**PrisAb has different working groups, which work on planning educational events on campus, hosting incarcerated speaker events, getting involved with external organizations in LA and the Inland Empire, and collaborating with other leftist orgs on campus.**

**“Getting involved means coming to the clubs themselves. Coming to our events is a really good way to get plugged in. Even coming to a meeting and asking as many questions as you want to, we're trying to make sure that this is a safe space where everybody feels comfortable asking questions and not knowing stuff. We're willing to help people learn and that's what the space is.” (PrisAb member)**

## Resources

- **Documentaries:**

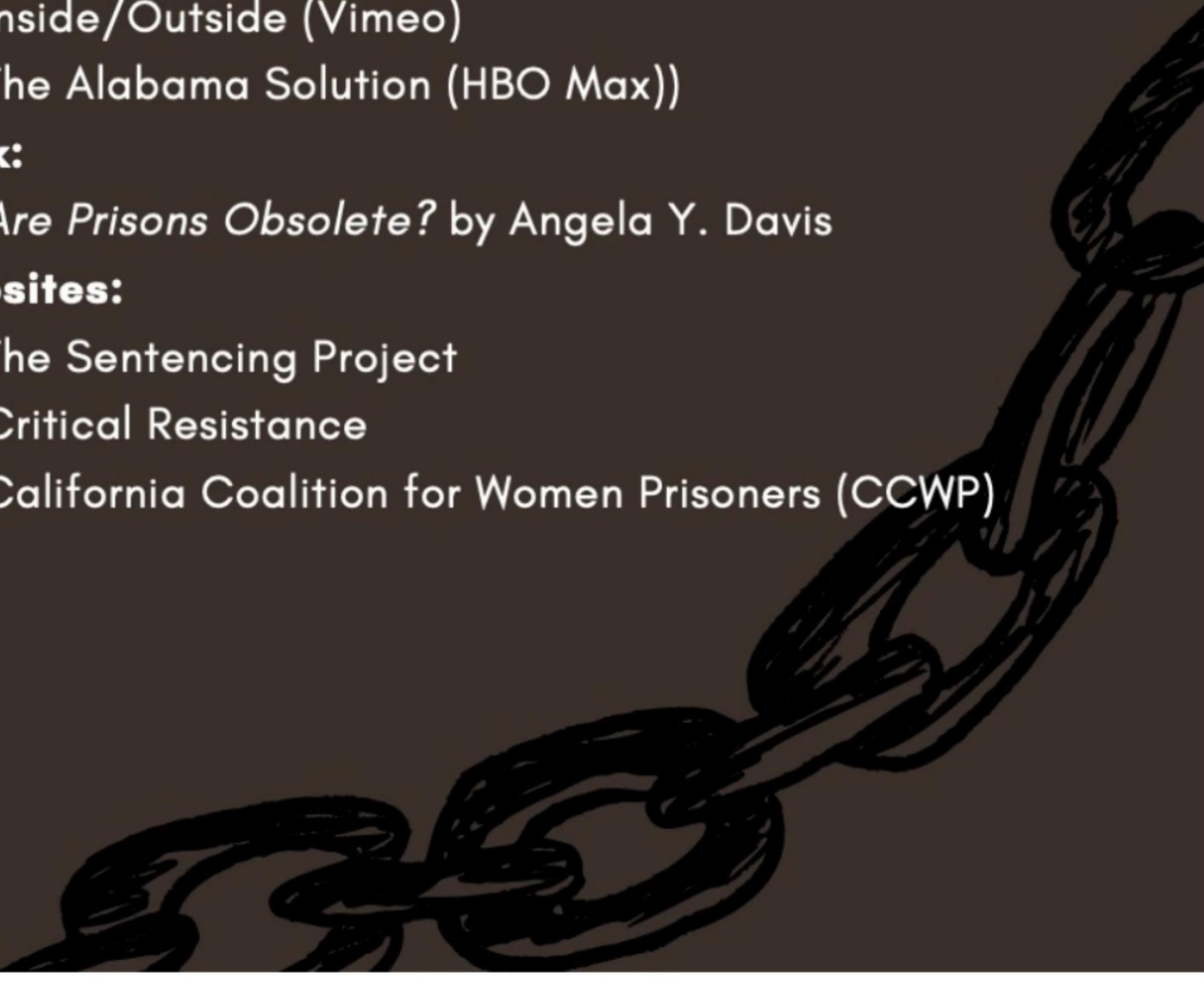
- Inside/Outside (Vimeo)
- The Alabama Solution (HBO Max))

- **Book:**

- *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Y. Davis

- **Websites:**

- The Sentencing Project
- Critical Resistance
- California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP)





**“If people want to understand prisons and policing, they should stop talking about crime.”**

**(Angela Y. Davis)**

**“People shouldn't be in cages.”**

**(5c Prison Abolition Club member)**

**“The analysis behind PIC abolition is premised in the idea that the prison system is not actually broken. It's actually working exactly the way that it was intended to work because its purpose is to uphold suppressive social structures.”**

**(Mar Golub, Scripps College Professor)**

**“Prisons themselves are, by design, spaces of sexual abuse.” ( Mar Golub, Scripps College Professor)**