



I AM NOT
A CRIMINAL


6 years for bringing drugs into a prison.

Ángela is 24 years old, a mother of three, and has completed four of her six-year sentence.



Her story is one of violence and discrimination. She remembers her childhood with sadness; her mother mistreated her. At 13, she became pregnant from a 21-year-old man.

Even while pregnant, she continued suffering her mother's violence. She spent time under the care of the state, on the street, and in her grandmother's house.

A close-up, profile shot of a young Black woman looking downwards. Her expression is somber and reflective. She has dark hair pulled back, and her eyes are cast down. The lighting is soft, highlighting the contours of her face. A semi-transparent dark box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

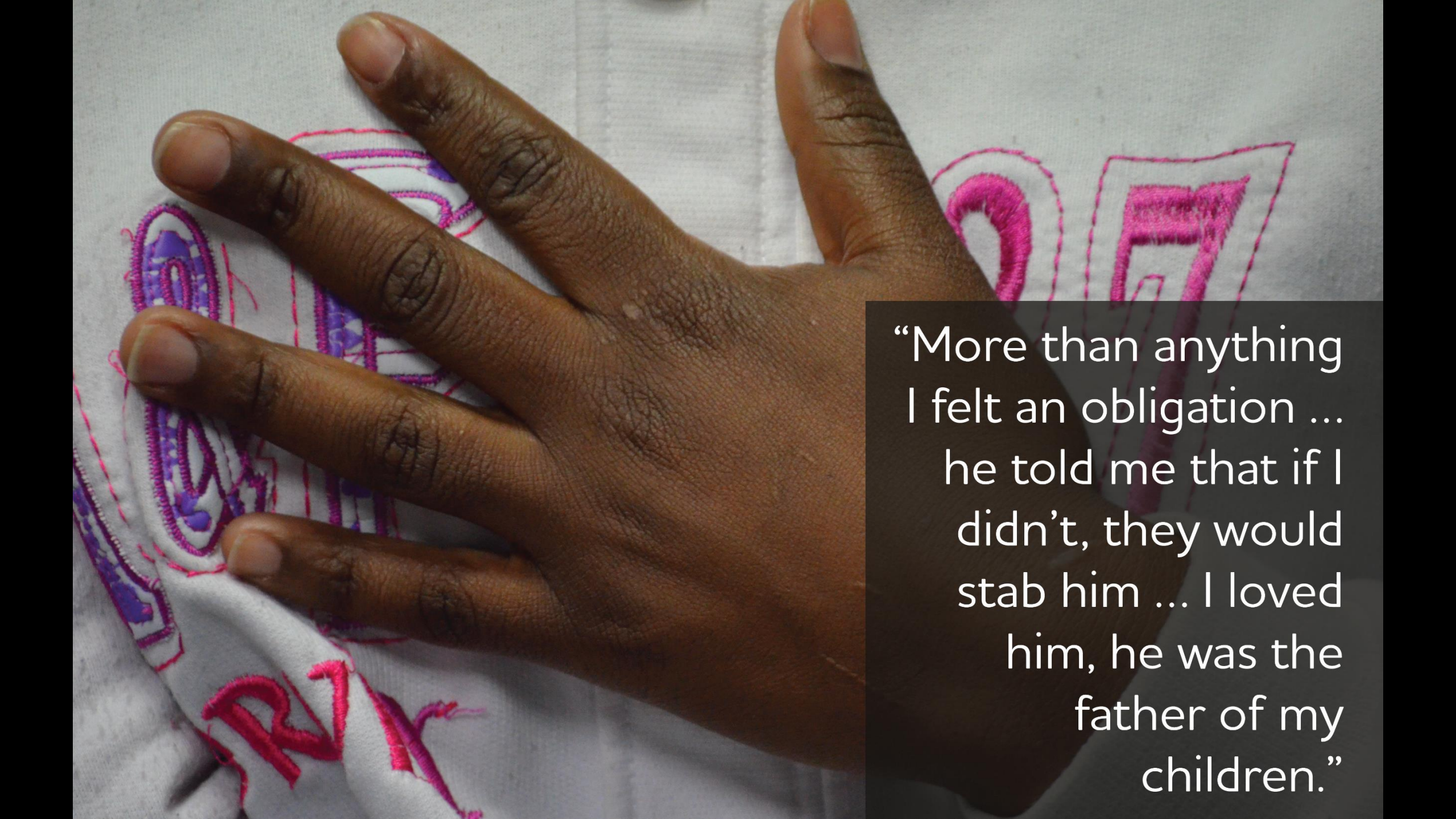
At 15, she
met another
much older
man.

Desperate to find a safe place to live so she would not have to live on the street, she went to live with him. She had her second child at 16, her third at 18.

This man also hit her, and once stabbed her.

The man was eventually arrested and
imprisoned for robbery.

He pressured her into bringing drugs into the
Acacias prison in Meta, Colombia.



“More than anything
I felt an obligation ...
he told me that if I
didn’t, they would
stab him ... I loved
him, he was the
father of my
children.”



In a 2011 visit to the prison, dogs detected the drugs she was carrying in her body, and was incarcerated.

She has been subjected to racist abuse and discrimination by the guards and other prisoners.

“[The guard] called me black slave, a disgusting black woman ... [and my fellow prisoners] called me soot-colored ... a gorilla, an ape.”





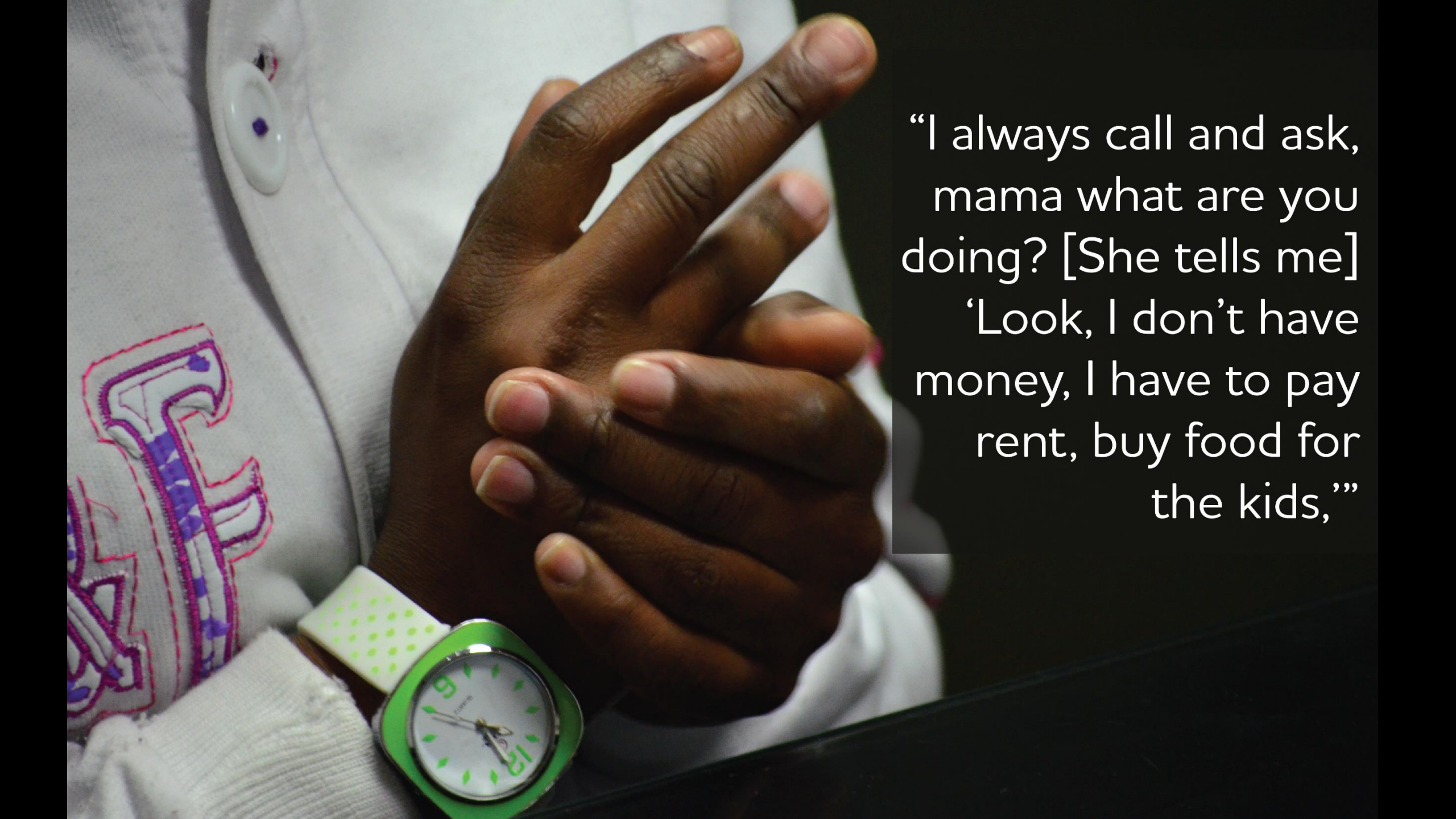
“You feel horrible, tiny and despised ...
they treated me like I was the worst.”

Sergio Chaparro is a lead researcher at Dejusticia, a Colombian NGO that documents and advocates for actions to counter discrimination. He says that the experience of Afro-Colombians—as well as other minorities—is particularly harsh in Colombia.




“The discrimination suffered by ethnic minorities in Colombia is exacerbated in prison. The discrimination they suffer for being women is made even worse for being Afro-Colombian or indigenous.”





“I always call and ask,
mama what are you
doing? [She tells me]
‘Look, I don’t have
money, I have to pay
rent, buy food for
the kids,’”



“And what do I do? ...
Ay, you feel powerless,
because you
can’t do anything.”

“My mom came five months ago, she’s been the only one in my family [to visit]... it depresses me...I want to see her, I miss her, [I want] her to give me a hug.”



“I don’t consider myself a criminal, because I’m not one. It was for love ... that I did what I did.”





Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas

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