




MOTHER BEHIND BARS

Sentence: 5 years, 4 months for selling small quantities of drugs from her home.

Lidieth, 45, is a single mother. She says she sold cocaine and crack from her home to support her children.

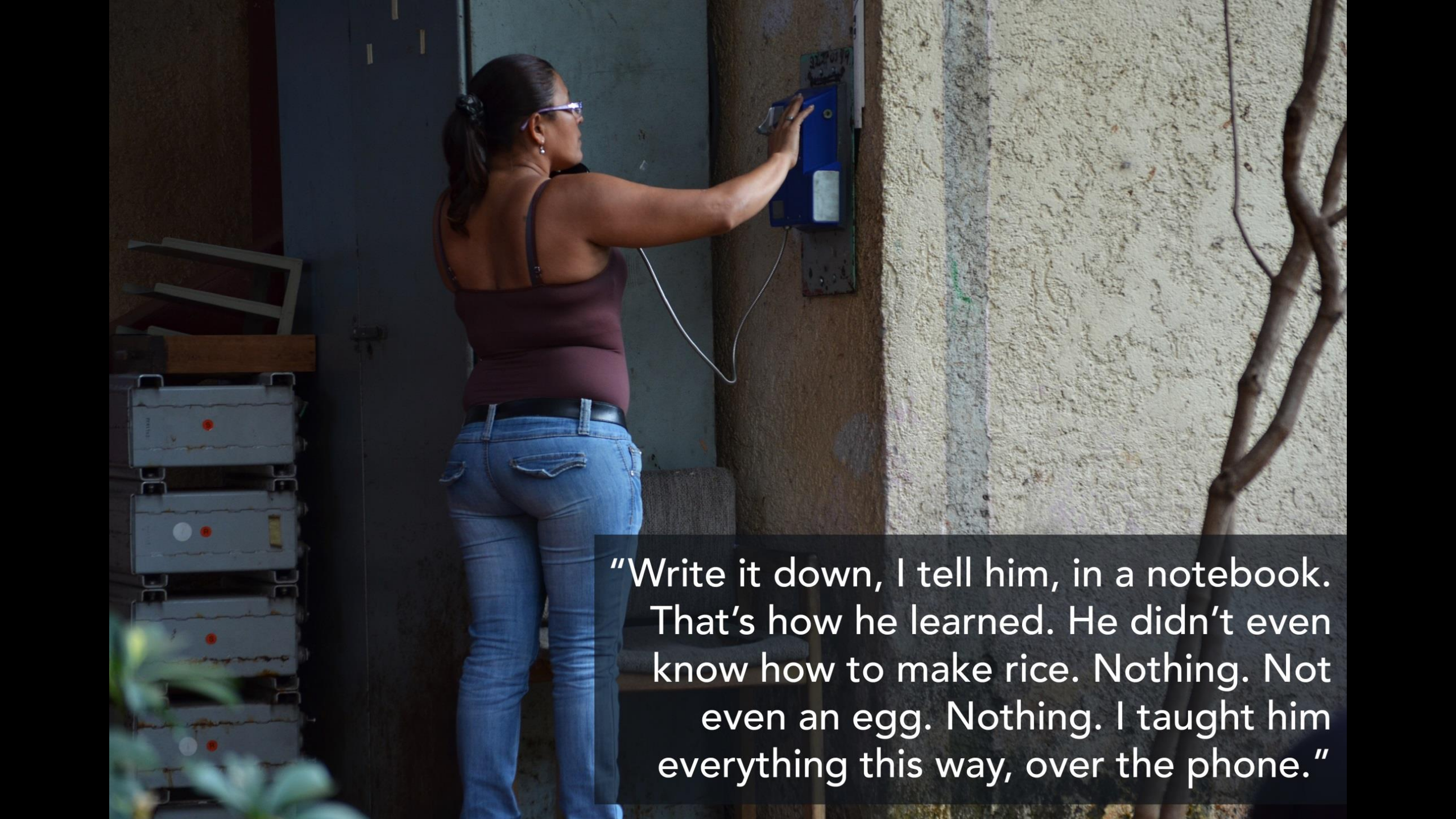
Her son and daughter, ages 24 and 20, are in prison because they were implicated with their mother. Her youngest son, who was underage at the time, went to live with a friend in the neighborhood after their arrest.

Lidieth also has a younger daughter, age five, who currently lives with her father and his girlfriend.

A woman with dark hair tied back in a ponytail with a blue scrunchie is shown in profile, looking down with a somber expression. She is wearing a black tank top and a small pearl earring. In the background, another woman with dark hair is visible, also looking down. The setting appears to be an indoor space with a light blue wall and a light switch.

"I was the one who committed the crime.
I got my children involved, and I wanted
their sentences to be added to mine.
But that could never be."

Even from jail, Lidieth is desperately trying to take care of her children. She uses her limited phone calls to teach her youngest son to cook.



"Write it down, I tell him, in a notebook. That's how he learned. He didn't even know how to make rice. Nothing. Not even an egg. Nothing. I taught him everything this way, over the phone."

Lidieth waited an entire year for her trial.
She says that when the police finally came to
arrest her, they did so with full force.



"They came to my house, ... knocked down doors, ... I had my daughter with me. She said something I'll never forget: 'Mom, they're going to kill us.' It was an experience that I pray to God never to go through again in my life."

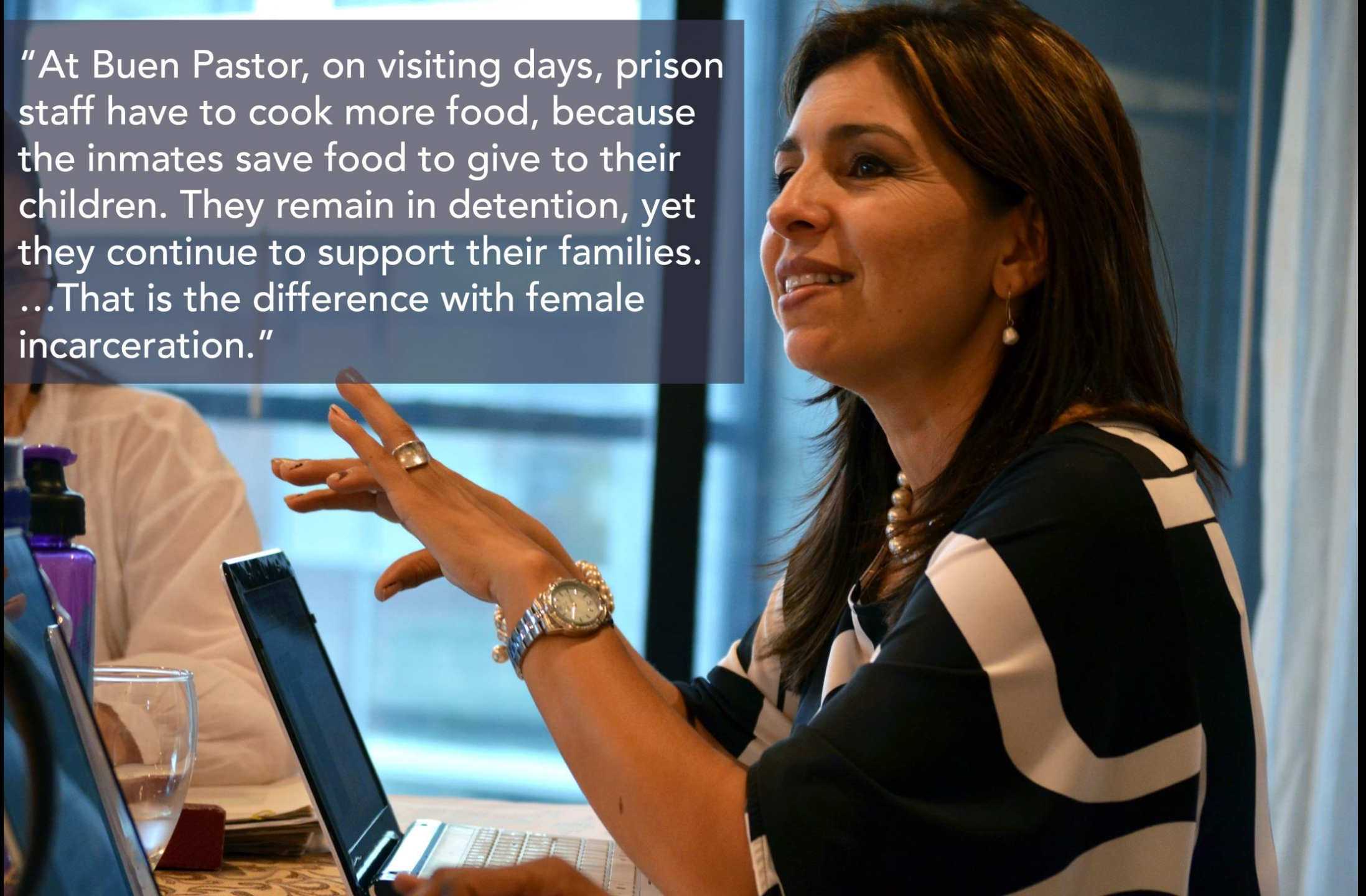
Lidieth's five-year-old daughter lives with her father, his girlfriend, and her son. She's very worried about her, and has asked social workers to intervene on her daughter's behalf to ensure her safety.



"I began to tell her father that this boy comes and touches my baby in the night. I told him all the things that my daughter had told me. It was all very bad, and because he didn't pay attention, I turned to the social workers for help."

Zhuyem Molina is a Supervisor in the Support Unit of the Public Defender's Office in charge of the Criminal Gender Unit. She has worked as a public defender in Costa Rica for 15 years, and although she has not been involved in Lidieth's case, she has spent the past five years monitoring cases of women in conflict with the law.

"At Buen Pastor, on visiting days, prison staff have to cook more food, because the inmates save food to give to their children. They remain in detention, yet they continue to support their families. ...That is the difference with female incarceration."



This photo series was produced by the
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
with support from the Open Society Foundations.

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Special Thanks to
Buen Pastor Prison, San José, Costa Rica