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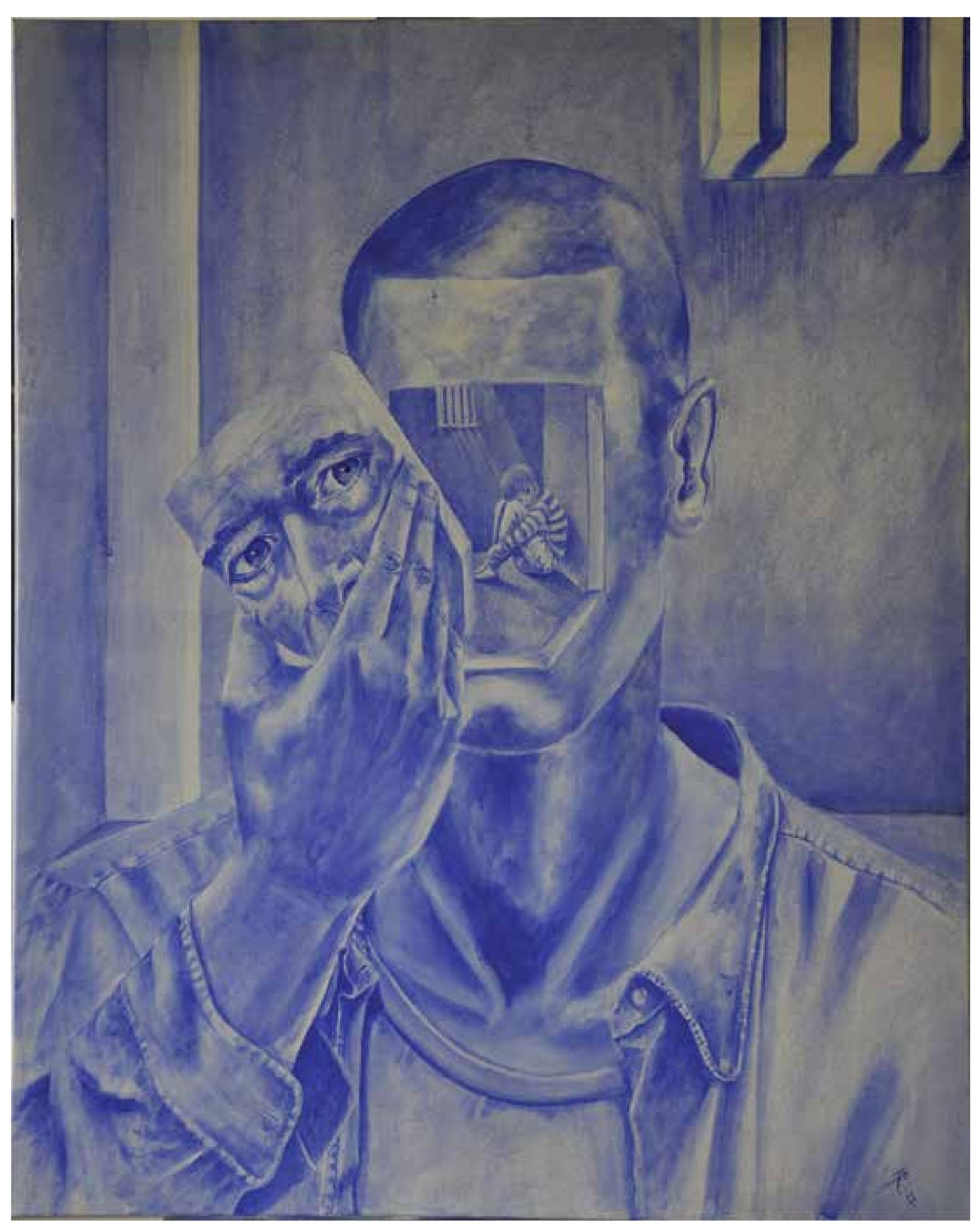

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons

... allowing our experiences and analysis to be added to the forum that will constitute public opinion could help halt the disastrous trend toward building more fortresses of fear which will become in the 21st century this generation's monuments to failure.

Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988)

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS

Feeling the Carceral: Emotions and the Affective Politics of Incarceration

Jennifer M. Kilty, Rachel Fayter and Justin Piché

The 'emotional turn' has been felt throughout the social sciences, including in the fields of cultural studies (Ahmed, 2004), geography (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Bondi et al., 2005; Horton & Kraftl, 2009), law (Abrams, 2011; Bandes, 2009; Freiberg & Carson, 2010; Nussbaum, 2004, 2001; Welch, 1997), philosophy (Massumi, 1995, 2002; Protevi, 2009), political theory (Connolly, 2002; Elster, 1999; Kingston & Ferry, 2008), political and moral psychology (Alderman et al., 2010; Marcus, 2002; Westen, 2007), and sociology (Barbalet, 2011, 2001; Gould, 2009; Goodwin et al., 2001; Summers-Effler, 2010; Turner & Stets, 2005). Criminologists have largely taken up the call to consider emotions, which Karstedt (2002, p. 301) describes as "the re-emotionalization of law" across two fronts: "the emotionalization of public discourse about crime and criminal justice, and the implementation of sanctions in the criminal justice system that are explicitly based on – or designed to arouse – emotions". Given that case law, legislation, and harsher penal practices like mandatory minimum sentences, the ongoing war on drugs, and other efforts that shore up carceral expansion are often enacted in and through the mobilization of emotional socio-political discourse (Alderman et al., 2010; Freiberg & Carson, 2010; Welch, 1997), it is important to study how feelings and emotions shape the carceral field.

To begin, we should conceptualize the difference between emotions, feelings and affects. Emotions are the expressions, gestures, and linguistic motions of affects that are structured by the interplay between social convention and culture, interpersonal and environmental dynamics and intrapsychic scripts. The expression of complex moral emotions such as compassion, disgust, fear, or anger reveals how we attach certain principled ideas to our ability to express emotions (Jasper, 2006). For example, we might feel shameful about expressing anger. Affects are unconscious but registered embodied experiences in response to different stimuli (Massumi, 1995, 2002), meaning, affect is what makes us *feel* emotions. Feelings capture the phenomenon of affect and emotions connote bodily, felt experiences (Gould, 2009).

More than these conceptual differences, it is important to understand how emotions are mediated in and through place and space. For example, the pleasure and well-being that is experienced when spending time outdoors in nature, the different ways in which intimacy is felt and expressed in different parts of the home or between the home and public spaces (Bachelard, 1994), or the ways in which certain spaces can produce feelings of distress and anxiety (e.g. the courtroom, prison or hospital). The spatiality of emotion requires examining how the setting, experience of time, non-human material objects, human interactions, and affects (embodied feelings) structure our feelings (Bachelard, 1994; Bondi et al., 2014).

Building on Foucault's (1977) historiography of the prison, research in the fields of carceral geography and emotional geography study the spatial distribution of carceral institutions (Gilmore, 2007) and the ways in which different prison spaces manifest different feelings (Crewe et al., 2014; Lachapelle & Kilty, 2023a, 2023b; Moran, 2015). Prisons are highly structured multi-use spaces. They are simultaneously public and private spaces, 'home' environments (Comfort et al., 2005; Turner, 2013), labour sites (Wacquant, 2010), spaces of surveillance (Foucault, 1977), zones of exclusion demarcated by the loss of human rights (Moran, 2012a, 2014), and described as mental health clinics (Jordan, 2011; Wright et al., 2014). Anger, distress and sadness are commonly felt in exclusionary spaces (Moran, 2012a, 2014), where specific places (e.g. segregation cells) are used for physical and symbolic rejection and punishment (Lachapelle & Kilty, 2023a; Martel, 2006; Schliehe, 2014; Sibley 1995).

The prison is also an 'anti-place' (Stoller, 2003), where the architectural design and use of space constitute the prisoner as a 'depersonalized unit' with little autonomy (Dirsuweit, 1999). Incarceration restricts mobility within space and limits socialization both within prison and between the inside and outside of the institution (Crewe et al. 2014; Fayter & Kilty, 2023; Moran, 2012a, 2014, 2015). Drawing on Bachelard, (1994), Stoller (2003) refers to the cell as a 'nesting place' that is emotionally distinct from the prison itself. While the cell is a primary space of control and surveillance (Dirsuweit, 1999; Foucault, 1977; Schliehe, 2014), it is also where imprisoned people make their 'home', keep their possessions and maintain a semblance of privacy (Turner, 2013). In nesting places (e.g. the cell, clinic or visiting room), the rules of emotional display can shift so that emotions that are typically hidden become condoned (Crewe et al., 2014; Fayter & Kilty, 2023). In this way, spaces shape feelings, especially in total institutions like

prisons (Goffman, 1961) with their strict feeling rules and emotional display rules. Empirical research demonstrates that the appropriate expression of emotion in prison settings includes the suppression of both negative (e.g. aggression, sadness, distress) and positive (e.g. care, empathy) feelings and emotions (Bogosavljevic & Kilty, 2024; Crewe et al., 2014; Fayter & Kilty, 2023), which Sykes (1958) described as the "silent stoicism" of the code among the imprisoned.

Presenting the material experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated people, this special issue helps to map the feeling and display rules that constitute the emotion culture(s) of different carceral spaces. This work also entails considering the affective experience – a 'felt' geography (Davidson & Milligan, 2004), for example, where the confined body acts as a canvas for the inscription of identity, social relations, and experience (Moran, 2012a, 2012b), such as when the scars from self-harm act as a visible signifier of emotion (Kilty, 2012a, 2012b). In this way, "law [and the prison] 'takes hold of' bodies in order to make them its text" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 139). Space also shapes how time is experienced (Lefebvre, 1991). As prison exhibits a 'drudgery of place' (Urry, 2014) where time stagnates, prisoners often feel suspended in time, increasing their feelings of detachment and loneliness (Guenther, 2013; Martel, 2006; Moran, 2012b; Stoller, 2003). Studying how emotions shape the organization and management of carceral spaces and how carceral spaces shape feelings and emotions contributes to rethinking the affective politics of these environments.

As confinement evokes intense emotional responses and behaviour from both prisoners and prison staff (Bogosavljevic & Kilty, 2024), this special issue of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (*JPP*) aims to nuance assumptions about how and why different carceral actors express themselves emotionally in different carceral settings. Notably, the contributions to this special issue examine how incarceration, through its isolating and disciplining forces, shapes the emotional and affective experiences of imprisoned people. Carceral space is neither uniform nor orderly, and emotions are felt differently depending upon the specific setting, be it segregation, counselling spaces, the medical unit, programming and educational spaces, or an individual cell. Studying how emotions are ordered and expressed in carceral spaces requires documenting the feeling and display rules (Hochschild, 1979, 1983) that structure the prison's different emotion culture(s). Such emotion culture(s) also include the penal policy context, for example, considering how emotions and feelings structure the implementation of harm reduction

programs (e.g. needle exchange), which allows us to explore how feelings are organizing sites of political agency (Kilty & Orsini, 2024).

THIS ISSUE

This issue of the *JPP* contains discussions and considerations of how the disciplinary, socially isolating, and punitive structures of carceral spaces – from prison classrooms, cells, solitary confinement, and program spaces to halfway houses and the challenges of community re-entry – shape incarcerated people's social and emotional relations over time.

"Emotional Perspectives from Carceral Spaces and Beyond" by Ronnice Giscombe, Wes Guzylak, Ogo Esenwah, Varina Gurdyal and Nadia Judunath is based on a series of conversations between 'inside' and 'outside' students from a Walls to Bridges (W2B) prison education class. The authors explore the challenges of managing and expressing difficult emotions in prison and how this contributes to or hinders the development of resilience. Through an analysis of different coping strategies and social interactions, primarily within non-Correctional Service of Canada generated programs and informal activities, the authors highlight how both the social and physical environment of prison shapes emotional expression among imprisoned people. They assert the need for humanizing and compassionate spaces within oppressive penal environments.

In "Education, Gossip, and Social Carcerality: Contesting the Liminal Spaces Between Incarcerated Body and Incarcerated Mind" by Billie Cates and Gerty B., the authors indicate how carceral conditions facilitate gossip and the weakening of social networks. Juxtaposing the harmful prison environment where prisoners live under "layers of surveillance", with the humanizing and safe space of a W2B classroom where prisoners are "just students", the authors contend that education can be an act of abolition by disrupting statist social control.

In "À fleur de peau: An In-depth Look at Two Strategies of Handling Emotion in French Prisons" by Y.E., Hannah Davis and H.W. – which is based on a dialogue among two formerly incarcerated people and a W2B instructor from the American University in Paris – the authors reflect on the emotions elicited by imprisonment, along with various strategies for managing these emotions. By invoking the French metaphor of "*à fleur de peau*" the authors examine the hypersensitivity that imprisoned people experience in terms of heightened emotions and reactionary responses. Reflecting on the "social

mask" or emotional shell that prisoners develop to enable their survival, the authors explore two distinct individual strategies of emotion work by mobilizing Hochschild's (1979, p. 561) conceptualizations of "fronting" and "masking". The authors demonstrate how incarcerated people can reshape their relationship to emotion through internal (e.g. meditation) and external (e.g. tougher, self-protective social relations) processes of transformation.

"The Power of Meaning" by Star Morrison, is a reflective essay blending lived expertise with relevant literature from a strengths-based perspective. By drawing on the work of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1959) and others, the author describes their search for meaning and purpose amongst tragedy and suffering. This heartfelt and authentic reflection examines complex emotions related to imprisonment by exploring phases of their carceral experience: intake, settlement, and pre-release, along with various coping strategies. The author asserts that mobilizing strengths and focusing on positive activities such as writing, art, exercise, yoga, and meditation, while building community with fellow prisoners, can help mediate the harmful stressors of the oppressive prison environment.

In "A PAWSitive Connection", Todd Ramsum provides a hopeful personal narrative based on an oral presentation, highlighting the healing power of a dog therapy program in prison. The author describes his struggles with addiction and a near overdose while in custody, which led to serious health problems, but also a new outlook on life. By connecting with a volunteer-led dog program in which prisoners care for and train their canine friends, he felt unconditional love from the dogs, which helped him to let his guard down, open-up emotionally, and feel safe. Based on this extremely positive experience, the author advocates for increased access to dog therapy and other similar non-Correctional Service Canada generated programs for prisoners, along with better access to health and mental health care, and transitional supports for re-entry, underscoring the value of meaningful social supports for criminalized people.

In "Emotions are Ours as Humans: The No Apology, Apology", Cathee shares an intimate emotional narrative of survival in a halfway house, which she likens to experiencing imprisonment. In halfway houses, she argues that constant surveillance, social control, and scrutiny of every word and emotion that is evoked by residents, can be weaponized against them by staff who have the power to send people back to prison for "suspicious behaviour". Focusing on the emotionally exhausting nature of this community carceral experience, she describes how emotions such as anger, sadness, and even

anxiety and excitement can be used against a person on parole. The author recounts an unjust interaction with halfway house staff, describing in detail her physiological affective state in which she felt like she was imploding due to consciously suppressing her emotions and maintaining neutral "non-threatening" body language, despite staff encroaching on her personal space.

"Prison is a Trap" by K WooDZ, provides a personal essay reflecting on being entangled in the oppressive, racist, federal penitentiary system as a young, Black, queer person. Asserting that systemic racism is inherent to the penal system, the author describes the dehumanizing treatment of prisoners, which makes them feel like caged, wounded animals. Reflecting on the harmful impacts of incarceration, such as self-harm, addiction, and institutionalization in a setting that lacks opportunities for "rehabilitation" or transitional supports, the author stresses that upon release people are returned to the same conditions that led to their initial criminalization.

This issue also offers a *Response* entitled "Carceral Power and Emotions: A Reflection", by Kevin Walby. This paper reflects on the value of critically examining emotions in carceral spaces by drawing on the contributions in this issue, along with his own research and prisoner solidarity efforts. Specifically, this piece highlights how carceral power pathologizes prisoners' emotions as a mechanism of social control. Despite this deprivation of human dignity, the author asserts that incarcerated people continue to challenge carceral power by developing initiatives, advocating for change, and fostering social connections.

The *Prisoners' Struggles* section for this issue outlines a "Call for Contributions: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Prisoners' Justice Day" facilitated by the Abolition Coalition, inviting testimonials and demands from currently incarcerated people concerning their conditions of confinement. This will be shared during the sixth edition of PJD TV that will air on August 10, 2025, from 6:00pm to 11:00pm ET on the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project's Facebook page (@CPEPgroup).

There are also several critical and engaging book reviews in this issue. These book reviews examine topics ranging from writing in prison, resistance, power, and adaptation in prison, to racialization, street "gangs", identity, and conflict in urban settings.

As guest editors for this special issue, it has been a privilege to work with the diverse minds who contributed to these important emotional dialogues. The prison is not an ideal space for healing or emotional discovery. It is not a place where feelings and emotional expression are often encouraged or

nurtured. We acknowledge the tenacity of contributors to this collection, celebrate their accomplishments, and in editing this issue have learned a great deal from them. For if we are concerned about individual and collective accountability for harms done and we wish to live in a safer, kinder world, it is essential to consider the state inflicted harms that are born through processes of criminalization and incarceration.

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ARTICLES

Emotional Perspectives from Carceral Spaces and Beyond

Ronnice Giscombe, Wes Guzylak, Ogo Esenwah, Varina Gurdyal and Nadia Judunath

INTRODUCTION

To provide context for this work, it is first important to understand a bit about the authors that have written this piece. Wes and Ron are incarcerated at Warkworth Institution, which is situated approximately 200 kilometers east of Toronto in Trent Hills, Ontario, Canada. The other three authors – Nadia, Ogo, and Varina – were students at Durham College who participated in the Walls to Bridges (W2B) program through an elective course. Walls to Bridges courses bring together inside students, those who are incarcerated, and outside students, from a university or college, to learn together as a collective (see Pollack and Mayor, 2023). This unique program is only possible due to the diligent efforts of the students, along with Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) staff that support the initiative and, in the context of the course the authors completed, Durham College Professor Dale Burt.

A W2B classroom is comprised of students who are there to learn from and with one another with no preconceived notions or privileges being held over each other. In this instance, the classroom quickly became a safe space for students to learn and discuss ideas without judgment or fear. The overarching theme for this class was "Resilience in Society" – the ability to persevere, overcome adversities, and "bounce back" after facing challenges and hardships. The experiences the authors faced in this classroom together and the issues discussed from various readings by authors such as Viktor Frankl (2006) and Carol Dweck (2008), gave insight into many emotions and challenges that are faced within incarcerated spaces, as well as an understanding of how such challenges contribute to or hinder one's resilience.

The concept of emotions in carceral spaces aligns perfectly with the theme of resilience as we discuss key features, including growth mindset, motivation, and a support system, along with the importance of regulating emotional barriers to resilience such as guilt, fear, and shame. We discussed these topics both during our W2B class and for the purposes of this article, the focus of which is the emotions incarcerated individuals experience throughout various parts of their sentence. The article discusses the personal

experiences of the inside authors during their incarceration and highlights the struggles they encounter whilst trying to understand, embrace, and interact with positive and negative emotions. From this, ultimately, one can gain a deeper understanding of how emotions are felt, expressed, and coped with inside institutionalized spaces.

Due to the inside/outside dynamic of the group from the W2B classroom, the following work was completed as part interview and part research conducted through phone calls, the occasional video call, and emails with the help of individuals within Warkworth Institution. During the writing of this piece the inside authors experienced a lockdown, which meant communication was impossible. As a result, we were not able to complete the interviews in their entirety, but all the authors initial thoughts and ideas are included herein. Through our virtual meetings, we were able to express our thoughts, emotions and feelings, which we share in this piece.

EXPRESSING AND FEELING EMOTIONS

In gaining understanding of emotions in carceral spaces, it is first necessary to see if expressing an individual's emotions are welcomed whether through sharing emotions with or amongst other incarcerated individuals, CSC staff, or friends and family that may visit or call.

Nadia: What does it feel like for you to feel and express emotions in your environment?

Wes: It's difficult to feel emotions in here other than what's necessary to get through each day. If you feel fear, don't show it. If the time calls for it, show I'm not scared to die. Although I don't want to live this way anymore, the fact is I'm in a place where you can't look weak no matter what, cause you don't know who's watching or plotting. The only emotions safe to show in here are anger and frustration. Anything else makes you look weak and to be weak makes you an automatic target. If you need to express emotions, share it with a mental health professional. I had a friend who has since been released, but he told me a few times if I needed to talk to come to his cell, so I guess if you have a true friend, share with them, otherwise keep the softer side to yourself.

Ron: It doesn't feel like anything for me. I'm not sure if there's a stigma with expressing emotions. I'm sure if I wanted to tell another prisoner I'm sad, I'm sure I could. But it's not an environment where you could get the right feedback that could satisfy my emotional state. I also don't think it helps to dwell on things here, it's best to ignore and compartmentalize. I once was getting down and sad when I first got in the system and a Hells Angel[1] member told me to try not to get too down in a place like this because in his experience, it's extremely hard to pull yourself out. That was sound advice. I think I feel more stigma to show all my true feelings to my family, friends and community supports. I feel like people don't really want to hear you grovel no matter how much they ask me. And I think they're more at peace knowing I'm in good spirits.

During our research we found that this idea of hiding emotions or only sharing with those you most trust, such as a close friend or a mental health professional was also studied by Crewe, Wart, Bennett, and Smith (2014), whose incarcerated participants noted that "protective functions of emotional self-control" such as anger, was necessary to save or protect themselves from being exploited or teased by others. As Wes mentioned, displaying emotions such as fear is often seen as a weakness, in turn making you a potential target for violence. Exhibiting emotions such as anger would prove to others that you are able to protect yourself, or hiding your emotions altogether would perhaps reveal that you are indifferent or disinterested with the environment or events around you.

Stamatakis and Burnett (2021) suggest that prisoners can struggle emotionally as they are pressured to adhere to social norms through restricting emotional expression. This is why it may be easier to not show any emotion as Viktor Frankl (2006) mentions a symptom or rather "mechanism of self-defense" is apathy. As he explains his own experiences, he repeatedly mentions apathy in that "all efforts and all emotions were centered on one task: preserving one's own life and that of the other fellow" (Frankl, 2006, p. 28). Being angry or apathetic to protect oneself or our emotions coincides with Hochschild's (1979) concept of "feeling rules", which she explains are social guidelines that govern how we should feel in different social contexts. For instance, the idea that fear equates to weakness in prison and anger demonstrates strength. Considering how carefully emotions are expressed or withheld inside

carceral spaces in order to protect oneself from violence or ridicule, led us to look at how emotions are managed.

Varina: What practices or sources of support do you draw on to help manage your emotions?

Ron: I draw on phone calls and letters with friends or writing of any kind. Also, I rely on anything creative such as writing TV or movie scripts and memoirs or making homemade birthday cards and collages from magazine scraps.

Wes: I'm, and continue to learn to be, open-minded and open my heart. I'm learning to listen. I've taken up yoga and I practice meditation. I'm learning to share my emotions and talk about mental health. The cultural centre, going to sweats and listening to elders are what I practice. Also listening to elders and listening in general and talking, I think are starting to help a lot. I also have a really good P.O. and CX2,[2] my mom is a huge support, doing W2B, grief and loss, going to AA, and just trying to listen.

From our discussions, we established how a carceral environment generally affects emotional stimulation and expression. It is clear that the fluid nature of emotions calls for proper regulation in order to influence healthy outcomes. Crewe and Laws (2016) believe that prisoners have a degree of autonomy over their emotions, and can utilize internal and external resources to adequately affect such emotions if they choose to. They also assert that when prisoners divert their feelings toward educational and religious activities such as art classes, reading books, praying and the like that it helps them control factors that stimulate unhealthy emotions in prison (Crewe & Laws, 2016). This reflects what Wes explains in terms of his involvement with the cultural centre and practicing meditation to help stay open-minded and open-hearted, and Ron's explanation of how his creative writing and craftsmanship help keep his emotions afloat. Despite the benefits of these practices, some things may be unavoidable that make it difficult to regulate your emotions, such as events like lockdowns or interactions with certain people.

Varina: How do interactions with other individuals play a role in affecting your emotions on a daily basis?

Ron: Boy it does! The ignorance and selfishness – it's strange, it's less of the violence that seems to be a major problem. It's more the selfishness of everyone – literally only looking out for themselves. But most people are pretty open when and if you need to talk to someone.

Wes: Interactions can play both a positive and negative role in affecting my emotions in here. I truly want to change and become better. Anyone in here who wants to do the same has to deal with the subculture, as well as the staff and guards who want to tear us down. Sometimes you come across a small percentage of staff, CXs, P.O.s, volunteers, or program coordinators who want to help us change and want to see us succeed. I've been fortunate for the most part in having support. I'm also very selective in who I interact with – guards, staff, and prisoners alike – because not everyone in here is willing to support and help you. Within the general population people hate on you and can be envious when they see you doing well. There's a lot of politics within this system.

Given the diversity of individuals with differing values, principles, goals or expectations in prison, it becomes essential for prisoners who wish to stay attuned to their emotions to be mindful of the kind of interactions they have. While some prisoners or authors, may believe that being in prison warrants specific standards of emotional expression or behaviour (Laws, 2016), others, such as Haney (2001) are cognizant of the fact that one's emotions and mindset are malleable and are impacted by their interactions, thus necessitating the need to filter out some unwanted relations. It is not only these, more social aspects of carceral spaces, that can be a factor in feeling and expressing emotions, but also the physical environment.

EMOTIONS AND PHYSICAL SPACES

Understanding that culture and interactions with various people have a significant influence on how an individual experiences emotion, it is necessary to consider the impact of physical spaces. Crewe and colleagues (2014) mention that prisoners enter a "temporary limbo" between the time they enter and the time they leave – there are a different set of rules and practices in prison. Carceral spaces are their own worlds separate from

the outside world, experiencing not only different practices and rules, but different experiences of time and space as well.

Ogo: How do different physical spaces affect your emotional state?

Wes: I would say most physical spaces will, or at least can, find a way to impact my emotional state in a negative way. But with a certain mindset I can look for the good in the bad. The physical spaces in prison are not exactly motivating when you look around. Right down to the colour of paint used within prisons. They have an aura of oppression and depression. It's up to us – we have to be willing to grow mentally and emotionally, even spiritually, and physically to impact our emotional state in a positive way. This takes willingness to have a growth mindset within these walls. Even the ones who are tasked with helping us make the corrections we need to, they're also the same ones trying to keep us down a lot of the time.

During our W2B class, we often discussed the importance of having a growth mindset to help encourage perseverance and resiliency. Carol Dweck's (2008) book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, explains two different mindsets: the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. The growth mindset we are speaking about here entails developing and transforming through learning and overcoming challenges, which is a basis for resiliency. Dweck (2008) states that an individual with a growth mindset will view success as stretching themselves, as opposed to limiting oneself to only the things they are good at to ensure success. A growth mindset is about "learning something over time: confronting a challenge and making progress" (Dweck, 2008, p. 24). Growing mentally and emotionally by utilizing a growth mindset, can help one cope with the "oppression and depression" that the physical spaces of the institution impose. Institutional environments are not meant to be welcoming or warm, often making it difficult to be positive and make constructive changes, in addition to being hard to cope with.

Ron: Being confined to small spaces like these four walls is very depressing, more so when you must share a space – lack of privacy for obvious reasons but also a lack of space for emotional reasons. Sometimes you're unable to create your own routine. Metal doors versus a regular wooden door and a doorknob can make one feel like an animal in a zoo.

Carceral spaces are governed by rules, practices and routines that people on the outside are not used to obeying. This is a jarring change that can make individuals feel dehumanized. As Ron mentions, the lack of privacy and your own space can lead to negative emotions. However, in visitation rooms or classrooms there may be a different atmosphere where different emotions can be seen, providing small areas for positivity. Crewe and colleagues (2014) observe that in a visitation room for instance, there is often warmth, tenderness, and vulnerability as people are talking with their family or sharing hugs. Similarly, in classrooms, there can be pride, generosity, and camaraderie between students as they help and encourage each other to accomplish different tasks (Crewe et al., 2014; Fayter, 2016; Kilty & Lehalle, 2018).

Nadia: How does involvement in different programs, such as W2B or any other educational or work programs, affect your emotional state?

Wes: Education and work programs can help improve my emotional state because I feel like I'm doing something productive. It also helps occupy my mind from everyday life in here and keep you out of trouble. If we're open minded and open hearted, some programming in here can help but the system can use improvements to say the least, and that's putting it lightly.

Ron: It motivates me more than anything to not slip up. It simply makes my mood better and I feel special. It's almost addicting. Almost wish there were more meaningful programs. Also, I would equate programs to work as well, but I work in the kitchen. I wish I could work in a trade department or even plumbing where I can learn something new, but you can only work a job if you have qualifications. This isn't a place where you can learn new crafts. I think that [having the opportunity to learn a new handiwork] would have a drastic positive impact on my and our [i.e. other prisoners] emotional states.

As discussed above, the physical space of prison adds to prisoners' struggles, as they navigate their feelings and emotions of being within the four walls of "oppression". These feelings and emotions are mixed, as each day poses a new challenge.

EMOTIONS AND THE SELF

As our final focus, it was paramount to consider each inside author's personal feelings regarding their own journeys and experiences. Since their incarceration, the inside authors have experienced a rollercoaster of different emotions ranging from fear to pain, regret, guilt, and indifference which have impacted how they face their sentence.

Varina: What are some of the emotions that you've experienced from the beginning of your sentence up until now?

Ron: My emotional state has changed a great deal from sentencing until now. When I was presented with the number of years [I would be inside] it was paralyzing. Mainly because most of my fears laid in anticipation of what was to unknowingly become. What the cold cells would be like, the correctional officers, the prisoners, death and violence. Would they turn on me because of my charges? Would they believe me in terms of my innocence or naivete regarding the circumstances of my crime and charges? But the absolutely most dire feeling was that of sadness of not seeing my daughter for six years and who had just turned three, four days before my sentencing. I was terrified overall and deeply angry. I was mentally ready for any fight that presented itself. My emotional state has changed, however, for the better.

Nadia: Was this a similar experience for you Wes?

Wes: The emotions that I've experienced in the beginning of my sentence, throughout pretrial custody, was almost numb due to so many years of alcohol abuse. Almost a year had passed when I started to truly process and realize the impact of my actions. I grew up in a world where it was helpful to be cold like ice and remain on cruise control. The clearer my head became, the more I was able to reflect and feel, but it wasn't until the exact day I was sentenced that my emotions started changing for the better. But at the same time feeling so much shame, guilt, regret, and heartache. On the day of my sentencing, I started to see light at the end of the tunnel. From the day of my arrest in 2017 until this very day, I've had no choice but to feel my emotions, acknowledge them, process all that comes with choosing to

remain sober, and do what I have to do to honour my spirit and the spirits of all those affected by my choices of the past that caused so much pain.

Ogo: Would you say your emotions, or emotional state in general, has changed for the better or worse?

Wes: My emotions have changed for the better, but my emotional state is very up and down as I've been diagnosed with severe depression. Dealing with my problems rather than drinking them is new to me. I learned to think, reach and live in a certain way for so long, and I know it won't happen overnight, but as I continue to learn, to feel, to deal with, and solve my problems, instead of drinking them away. I'd say my emotions in general continue to change for the better. But in a place where I'm trying to build myself up and so many people that we interact with try to tear us down, the struggle is real to maintain a "for the better" emotional state.

Nadia: How have your values, goals, or identity changed since being incarcerated?

Wes: Since I've been incarcerated, I've been trying to figure out who I am without alcohol. As long as I can remember alcohol and violence wasn't something I did, it was who I was. I never had goals. Today, I want to help myself so one day I can help another. I want to be more compassionate and understanding. I don't really know who or what my identity is, but I'm trying new things I wouldn't have attempted in the past. I care more about others and myself than in the past. I learned I'm sensitive and, if I'm not paying attention, can be loyal to a fault. I think most importantly I'm learning life is a lifelong journey of learning and like a great elder said, if you know everything, you can't learn anything. So, for me learning to listen is a very important skill. If I keep my mouth shut sometimes, and keep my eyes and ears open all the time, I can learn a thing or two about a thing or two.

Ron: My values haven't changed per se but some goals have changed, as has my identity. I'm now a quote, un-quote convict. I can't work in TV or be a host. The company I helped start – I can't be publicly a part of. The potential to be deported and I've been here since I was seven years old. I can't travel. I wish there was a rehabilitation program for travel.

The unique nature of the prison environment is a major driving force behind one's ability to thoroughly process their emotions, to reflect on past and/or present actions, and to be proactive about personal growth, future goals, and development. Through this experience, it is obvious that the inside authors of this piece exhibit the resilience and perseverance we discussed in our W2B class.

REFLECTION

Before concluding, the authors wanted to reflect on their time working together. After learning and growing together for months, it felt essential to discuss the importance of our time together and what we had been feeling.

Ogo: Does participating in this article bring up any emotions for you?

Wes: This article brings on emotional frustration. What landed me in prison is hard to let go of, but each day I have to try. Doing things like working on this article is a way to kind of let go of the past, but not completely close the door on it. My past doesn't have to be my future. I'm not my crimes. My criminal history doesn't define me. There's also a lot of emotional frustration because of the everyday nonsense that goes on in here and although I'm sure anyone who is locked up tries to let go of the things that aren't good to hold on to, it starts again each day. What made you want to do this article?

Nadia: I know there are more than two sides to a story. I like to hear directly from the horse's mouth and don't like to cast judgment upon people. I think each and every one of us has choices to make in life. Should we be condemned for the choices we make whether good or bad? For me, I feel everyone should have an opportunity to be heard and get to tell their side of the story, which is why I was excited to be a part of this great venture with my former classmates.

Varina: Much like Nadia, I thought it was a really amazing opportunity. Both the W2B program and this article were something incredibly interesting that I'ave never experienced before, and it was definitely something I wanted to be a part of and contribute to. Collaborating on this article gives us the chance to continue to work together and learn

from each other, which I also think is really important to understanding different perspectives and experiences.

Ogo: The W2B program provided me with some understanding of the different dynamics in the prison environment. Through our ice breaker sessions, side conversations, and other activities in class, I got firsthand insight into the mental and emotional state of all my classmates. I also observed how the inside students felt at ease when sharing fragments of their story in class. I was excited at the idea of extending my learning experience through this article, while also concretizing the inside students' stories and perspectives in written form.

Wes: What are your thoughts on it now?

Nadia: I feel this is a great experience so far. It has provided us with more insight and understanding. It has allowed us to see that there definitely are gaps within the prison system and rehabilitation seems to be more than a stone's throw away. I think it is important for readers to understand this. Eventually, individuals will be released from prison and integrated back into society. How can they become productive members of society if all they are being taught is how to survive in prison? They're being stunted and shunned for their wrongdoings, rather than helped or 'corrected' in a correctional facility, is what it seems like to me.

Ogo: It has been a wholesome and unique experience for me, and I'm grateful that I opted to be a part of it.

Varina: I think this article is so much more than I expected it to be. It really proves just how resilient you guys are and how hard you work. I'm so proud of all that we accomplished with this, and I think it's an amazing opportunity to share this knowledge and experience with others.

Wes: Do you think people can change?

Nadia: I think people can change to a certain degree. I think once you get to a certain age, people may be stuck in their ways and it's hard for them to conform to change or medication. Physical deterioration of the mind

or illness towards the mind can halt a person from changing. However, in general, I believe anyone is capable of changing – change is within everyone, it starts with a choice to change, followed by the will to change.

Varina: I think people can change if they're willing to. We learned in our class about how different mindsets and having support from people can affect us, and I think it is entirely possible for people to change with the right mindset and help. You've even explained how much you 've changed and how hard you work, and I think that is a perfect example of someone wanting to change and working to make it possible.

Ogo: Yes, I believe human beings are generally built to evolve physically, mentally, emotionally, and otherwise. Change, however, requires intentionality and discipline which as Nadia alluded to.

CONCLUSION

From our short time together in the W2B classroom, it was clear to see the growth everyone had made in terms of newfound thoughts about their ability to be resilient and utilize the resources not only in their mind, but from the supports around them. Our Walls to Bridges classroom was filled with kindness, supportiveness, vulnerability and creativity. We would not have had it any other way. This educational space gave us all the chance to grow and learn outside of our typical social environments. Outside of our classroom, it is clear that carceral spaces are not typically welcoming of all emotions. Despite the common feelings of fear, anger, shame or other emotions that exist amongst incarcerated people, it is still necessary to mask or 'front' to protect oneself.

Creating spaces that are humanizing and compassionate within such a dehumanizing environment can make all the difference in terms of personal and emotional growth and development. Much like our small W2B classroom or COs, POs and CXs that want to see you succeed, these supports are motivating and can be calming after being constantly surrounded by others where you can show no fear or weakness. The common theme that came up in all our discussions regarding not only emotions in prisons, but how people can change within them, was about wanting correctional spaces to truly be about correcting people's behaviours and helping mindsets change.

A growth mindset is important for an individual to develop but is not always enough on its own. After our conversations about resilience, we determined that having a community and support is just as important as having traits such as grit or courage. While carceral spaces can be traumatic, it is clear that Wes and Ron do their best to overcome this and they continue to do their best for their futures. We are all more resilient than we know and W2B encourages students to continue to overcome all the challenges that are thrown their way.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC) is the largest international outlaw motorcycle club in the world. Members typically ride Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

[2] P.O. refers to a Parole Officer, whose role is monitoring how sentenced people progress through their correctional plan to make recommendations for release, institutional adjustment, and other similar needs. A CX2 refers to a Correctional Officer II, who is a part of the case management team for an incarcerated individual who is typically involved in providing orientation, information about available programs, monitoring behaviours and progress, providing security within a unit, in addition to numerous other tasks.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ronnice Giscombe is a father to an amazing daughter who he loves very much. After completing the Walls to Bridges program, writing for the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* gave him another opportunity to continue to be creative and work with great people. As a person who has always enjoyed writing and being creative, he wants to be able to share his story, especially for his daughter.

Wes Guzylak's spirit name is Thunderman, only recently given to him by the elder at Warkworth Institution. He is 37 years old, serving life – 14 years and 9 months. He just completed a Walls to Bridges program course and when presented with the 'emotions in carceral spaces' theme for the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* felt it was relevant, but also a good opportunity to share and gain knowledge from others. Publications on these topics should be put out into the world for this reason – to further knowledge and understanding.

Ogo Esenwah is an international Lawyer with over four years of experience of law practice in Nigeria. She is registered with the Law Society of Ontario and is currently training to become a licensed lawyer in Canada. She is also a recent alumna of Durham College, where she took the Walls to Bridges course and other mediation courses. Ogo enjoys swimming, wine tasting, spending time with family, and sunbathing. She loves to learn and is very enthusiastic about personal development. She is fluent in English, French, Pidgin (native), Ibo (native), and Yoruba (native).

Varina Gurdyal recently completed Durham College's Conflict Resolution and Mediation graduate certificate program and also has a B.A. in

Criminology from Wilfrid Laurier University. With a passion for restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution, she hopes to find future work that involves restorative justice practices to help people grow in a welcoming and creative space much like W2B classrooms. Participating in the Walls to Bridges program only furthered this interest as she got to listen and learn from the inside students about their hopes for the future and the goals they have set for themselves. She truly believes she has learned more from listening to peers in W2B circle discussions than she has in any other class and is forever grateful to be a part of such a special group of individuals.

Nadia Judunath is a Student Paralegal who recently graduated from Centennial College in the Courts and Tribunal Paralegal program and graduated from Durham College Conflict Resolution and Mediation certificate program, where she took the Walls to Bridges course. Nadia has a West Indian background and is fluent in English. She has various personal interests including the arts, music, event management and a love for the outdoors. Nadia is actively involved within her community and, when she is not spending time with her young family, she volunteers her time toward various educational causes within the Toronto District School Board, advocating as a Ward 22 representative and a co-chair of her children's elementary school parent council.

Education, Gossip and Social Carcerality: Contesting the Liminal Spaces Between Incarcerated Body and Incarcerated Mind

Billie Cates and Gerty B.

ABSTRACT

A prison's social geography is secondary to the maintenance of its built landscape but is still a product of intentional design. State apparatuses used to incarcerate create environments for gossip and the weakening of social networks. Gossip feeds distrust as a means of social control. Post-secondary education in prison provides opportunities, reduces recidivism, normalizes behaviours, but also exposes the shadows created by gossip. In the 'inside' classroom, truth is contested rather than manufactured, and relationships between 'inside' bodies and 'outside' bodies emerge. Education can be an intentional act of abolition, one that displaces gossip and disrupts statist social control.

INTRODUCTION

Our paper seeks to explore the social geography of the prison and our abolitionist intervention through a prison post-secondary classroom. The maintenance of a prison's social geography is secondary to the maintenance of its built landscape, but it is every bit a product of intentional design. The same state apparatuses used to incarcerate bodies – the cells, walls, gates, threat of force, segregation – create a fertile ecosystem for gossip and for the weakening of social networks.

The authors, Gerty and Billie, a formerly incarcerated student and university instructor, met in a prison classroom in 2021. After our university course came to an end, we wanted to stay connected and write together. With a small research grant, we set out to explore what the experiences of being in that prison classroom had meant to us. It was important to both of us to continue to break down imposed hierarchies between us and to work across our differences. Importantly, we wanted to validate the lived experience knowledge of Gerty as equal to any other kind of knowledge. Thus, the *process* of writing this paper together was as important to us as the *outcome* of this paper.

Our meetings took place on Zoom – after Gerty's release, she went back to her home province. We began by writing to each other about our

experiences of a semester spent in a Canadian federal prison classroom. The second time we met, we exchanged what we had each written. In subsequent meetings we began taking turns interviewing each other about what we had written for the other. Thus, began our iterative and dialogic approach to our research and writing. Over the next several months we recorded and transcribed our conversations about the prison classroom, about prison life, about getting to know one another and about the dynamics amongst inside and outside students and the instructor. Our friendship deepened along the way.

The italicized excerpts throughout the paper reflect the lived experience/knowledge and insights of Gerty and it was these insights that drove the topic for this paper. We therefore seek to understand the function of gossip in prison, along with its subsequent disruption created by participation in post-secondary education. We felt that we came away with a better understanding of how to enact an abolitionist practice within the total institution of the prison.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Not everyone comes into prison with strong social networks but for those that do, maintaining contact with family and/or friends on the 'outside' (i.e. the non-incarcerated public) is very important. Social networks amongst imprisoned folks are critical for psychological health, particularly if they are maintaining relationships with people who are otherwise healthy on the outside, as this helps set patterns of normalcy and acceptance. Ongoing relationships are the hardest to maintain and to build in carceral settings, but are even more critical given the forced disconnections and isolations that folks inside must endure. This is especially so in a setting where relationships are highly controlled. Retaining those relationships is important so that prisoners have a means to transition back outside and to do so in a supportive way. These relationships would also serve to remind the person who is incarcerated that they themselves are more than just an 'offender' – they have value to other people.

Over time, however, the longer someone is 'inside', the more difficult it can be to maintain those social networks – in part due to the high costs of phone calls and correspondence (i.e. stamps, envelopes and paper) relative to one's prison 'wages'. Invariably, these social networks break

down or start to fade. Friendships and relationships on the 'inside' become increasingly important, and in some cases can be a matter of survival. The isolation and insulation from the outside that occurs for imprisoned folks, however, can also make one increasingly vulnerable to those inside social networks and to inside gossip.

In this paper, we explore the intersections between the physical and the socio-psychological conditions of the prison, between disinformation and education. In doing so, we illustrate how social stress and gossip extends the punishing conditions of carcerality and devalues human connections. Gerty reflects on her experience in prison and in particular how people are treated by staff that contributes to low self-esteem while inside:

> It's not even just what you did, it's the way you are treated every day. They act as if you're contagious and diseased. They don't touch you or your belongings without gloves, and their attitude is if you're lucky, we might be able to fix you, and you might be able to leave here and have a chance at not returning. This messaging is reinforced, over and over, and that's just one example of how depressing this place can be.

As we note in the introduction, conditions of confinement create an environment that fosters gossip and weakens social networks. In the next section, we examine our pedagogical approach. Because of this pedagogy, we found ways to disrupt statist social control as we created a respectful, non-hierarchical space in the prison. The employment of affective pedagogies (Ainsworth & Bell, 2020) within an inside classroom offers a powerful way to disrupt these cycles by creating opportunities for emotional and social connection that cannot be obtained otherwise. Affective pedagogies are ones that recognize the importance of cultivating emotional competency in the learning space. Adapting the Indigenous sharing circle allowed for significant connections across differences (incarcerated/non-incarcerated, instructor/student) to emerge and for deep sharing. Because of this deep sharing in circle, we argue that education can be an intentional act of abolition, one that displaces gossip and disrupts statist social control over the social and emotional lives of the incarcerated.

WAREHOUSING THE MIND AND BODY

Everyone who enters prison has experienced some sort of trauma. The majority of people in prison are poor or lower working class, are survivors of abuse and/or structural oppression, and have very little education (Boe, 2015, n.p.). Not only are people bringing trauma in, but the prison itself is a traumatizing institution that causes harm where those 'doing time' experience isolation, boredom, and lack of connection (Hansen, 2018; Horii, 1994; OCI, 2021). Imprisonment is a layered experience. Prisoners are sentenced, confined and, then while in prison, are punished again via conditions that warehouse (under stressful conditions), that lack stimulation (especially in prisons designated for women), and that severs bodies from social networks beyond the prison wall. Gerty reflects on the sense of boredom and how gossip is part of the culture of jail:

> Gossip is a truly formidable adversary in prison, boredom is wrestled with daily, and gossip can be addictive. It can bully and shame, and it can lead to violence. It is also shamefully enjoyable when there's simply nothing else going on. With little to do and almost nothing productive to do, opportunities to use your mind for anything expansive like creative thinking are non-existent. So, you allow yourself to get caught up in it. You need to keep your mind entertained to get through the day. Inevitably it starts to sicken you. You can pledge to stop participating in it, but, within a short period of time you'll catch yourself enjoying a good tongue wag. The micro community of the prison climate breeds gossip.

Inside, gossip foments and feeds on the absence of truth and the lack of autonomy. A prison's social geography is secondary to the maintenance of its built landscape, but is still a product of intentional design. State apparatuses used to incarcerate create an environment for gossip and the weakening of social networks. Gossip feeds distrust as a means of social control. Gossip feeds on the absence of truth and the lack of autonomy. Rumours and innuendo, mis-information and disinformation result from and contribute to disconnection, boredom, and lack of purpose. More illusory of truth than truth, gossip reinforces and reproduces carcerality.

Despite the stated objectives of imprisonment (see CSC, 2014), prisons are a brutal instrument of warehousing for already vulnerabalized folks

(Mathiesen, 2006). Lives are suspended and time is arrested (see Halberstam, 2005; Luk, 2018) – 'doing time' is not meant to be 'productive'. Altered notions of time (and space) are central to the prisoners' experience where time is regimented, controlled, permitted, stolen, lost, extended, uncertain, and meaningless. Given the isolation of imprisonment, prisoners lose connections with families, communities and with technology, contributing to a sense of being warehoused, purposelessness, and boredom. Gerty experienced that sense of purposeless and boredom first-hand. She distinguishes between absolute time that is marked by weeks, months and years, and her sense of relative time – a more intangible sense of time not moving forward.

> Time passes differently in prison – you try not to count the days. You want to ignore the calendar. You try to stay positive and keep your head up, but it's a lot harder than it seems. It's a mental marathon. It's a weird world in there because every day is exactly the same. You wake up, make your coffee, go to work… Life becomes this nightmarish, "Groundhog Day" thing, and you try to get lost in it, because you want time to pass quickly. We have events that serve as time markers, for us every Thursday we got our groceries for the week so, in your mind, you know that weeks are passing and spring will come again soon.

It is interesting how various seemingly non-descriptive events on the outside, become actual markers of time passing – grocery deliveries highlight an event almost like a clock for prisoners.

Another marker of time passing and of one's isolation from the outside is when a prisoner must deal with the death of a loved one. Gerty recalls that "*in one case, there was the death of a sister, in another, it was the death of a child*". Gerty tells me, however, that there's no guarantee that one can attend a loved one's memorial/funeral. *"Only in some cases – if the funeral is in the same area and not too far from where the prison is – one may be allowed to attend a funeral. But if it's too far, like in another province, you'll not be allowed to go"*. For Gerty, this represented "*a serious breach of connection with one's family"*. This has greater resonance for women who are housed in federal Canadian prisons often far from home or traditional territories. Gerty goes on to say:

> …the fact that you're living in a separate world where time is standing still is most evident when you experience the death of a family member or friend. You don't get a sense that they're gone, you're not there to see the flowers, the funeral, or the tears. You don't get to see that they're missing from the place they once were. It isn't a real death for you until you get out and you're able to see that they're gone from the world.

This speaks to the surreal environment that is prison and the way folks experience removal from their lives.

The built landscape of the prison also impacts one's body. Studies have found that traumatic brain injuries and other forms of neurological conditions such as intellectual and learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD), and developmental disabilities (i.e. cognitive and adaptive functioning) are more common among incarcerated people than the public (e.g. Han & Nath, 2022). These are often associated with other negative health outcomes such as heart disease and obesity. "Sleep disorders, and overall difficulties with obtaining adequate sleep, are a common problem within prisons" (Han &Nath, 2022, p 2). Writing from the Pennsylvania State Prison, Younker (2023), who suffers from major neurological distress, tells us that the loud clamouring can trigger a seizure episode.

Chronic exposure to noise and light keeps the stress response activated continuously and eventually, it starts to wear the body down, causing mental and physical health problems. Excessive noise and light are reproduced deliberately and according to Gerty, are inescapable.

> If we know that dim lighting and silence can relieve stress and help us to relax then obviously the opposite must also be true – those halogen/fluorescent lights and constant loud noise must produce feelings of depression, anxiety, and anger. Is this a deliberate assault on our senses? Not only is my body locked away but my mind… is being punished as well.

Gerty describes the noise inside:

> Prison is a noisy place, cell doors are slamming shut, announcements are constant, some guards yell into the intercom on purpose as a gesture – of power and control over you. Life in jail is never quiet, never dark, and never private… it gets to you and the pressure affects your emotions.

> It creates angst, bitterness, frustration, and irritability. A lot of people develop very short fuses.

This is echoed by Hann and Nat (2022, p. 2) who suggest that in adults, a lack of quality sleep may be associated with increased rates of aggressive behaviours. Gerty remembers her time in prison and how the noisy environment became somewhat normal.

> The constant announcements are something that takes some getting used to and compounds the pressure you're under. But you have to realize that in prison it's happening all day long in your home. There's an intercom in the hallway outside your room and in the kitchen… everywhere. And every few minutes, someone is called to go to healthcare or visiting. They call movement time, count or lock up. It's something you learn to tune out, but from 7am to 10pm it's constant. After a while you learn to tune it out, but you are working to suppress it whether you're conscious of it or not.

The stated goal of prisons is rehabilitation. According to those with lived prison experience however, they have felt unprepared, for release and for *survival in the real world* (see Jackson *et al.,* 2022; Hansen, 2018; Law, 2021). The 'rehabilitation' Correctional Service Canada (CSC) claims to offer is coerced and creates widespread cynicism. Most programs make sure that prisoners revisit their crime and crime cycle – and one is forced to relive what is usually a traumatic time in one's life. For Gerty (and others), this played on her sense of self.

> It's not really possible to have self-esteem while incarcerated, and if you did have any, by the time you get out, it's gone… they certainly don't do anything to help you gain a positive sense of self, they just go over your crime cycle, your trauma, your abusers. They don't try to find those things about you that you gave up when things started to get hard. They don't say "what did you really love to do before you started down this path?" They want everyone to keep their crime in mind, that's still who you are, who you're always going to be, you're never going to be anything but that person who did that thing.

This focus erases the part of your life that existed before your crime cycle began, even what was positive.

Women in prison are considered 'too few to count' (Adelberg & Currie, 1990), and are thus provided with very few resources and programs. The absence of creative outlets and stimulation create a fertile ecosystem for gossip. Gerty describes this ecosystem as death-like.

> Being warehoused feels like a premature death, you're not living, you're just in purgatory. Inside, women lead apathetic lives gossiping and eating in order to subdue their frustrations and dissatisfaction with this dull and tedious routine. For entertainment we make pizza and bake cakes competitively, and engage in trying to one up each other with our delusions of grandeur, regurgitating stories of how successful we were in our lives of crime.

Gerty critiques the sense of being warehoused.

> We have nothing going on and no opportunities. There's no hope that there will be anything interesting to participate in… no access to real education… so everyone just talks about who is eating what and who is doing who… we just sit around and wait. I was seeking justice for this stolen time in which I was supposed to be paying my debt to society, but what's society really gaining if I return to their streets the same person that left? Surely there's a better use for this wasted time in which nothing is being accomplished except that my BMI is gaining momentum by leaps and bounds.

The state actively and passively creates conditions of social as well as physical disconnection, with few meaningful avenues in which to counteract the social violence within prisons. For instance, despite the importance for prisoners to build connections outside the prison – especially as their release date approaches, this is not given priority. Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs) are part of one's release plan and they tend to be limited to attending (Christian) church or Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous groups. Gerty comments on working towards her release:

> I worked hard to gain the privilege of having several ETAs a week. Unfortunately, the only options were for support groups or church, which is too bad because it would be nice to make community connections with groups that foster new interests and provide a sense that you're working

> towards building a new life upon release. However, after earning the privilege of being able to leave the prison for outings, they were often never actually provided. There was always a shortage of volunteers to escort us or some other excuse.

While, in the absence of alternatives, self-improvement groups mean a lot, their messaging is that prisoners are deficient. The lack of possibilities for going outside of the prison makes building community connections next to impossible despite this being an essential part of one's release plan.

Despite the importance of connecting with the outside community, this is not supported, as Gerty explains:

> …out of three ETAs a week I think I went on maybe two a month, and sometimes months would go by without being called up at all. ETAs should provide prisoners with the opportunity to build a new life after release, make connections with groups or classes that are fun and enjoyable like art classes or jiu-jitsu. We should be encouraging people to think about life after jail and helping them to build that life. If you're released into the community and you still identify as a prisoner or drug addict, then you will no doubt return to that lifestyle. We need to help people find their new identity, as a student, or artist or writer – whatever it is.

Furthermore, the state actively weakens social networks for prisoners – paying for phone cards is expensive, letters are processed slowly and sometimes withheld, people are put in the SHU/solitary. People are punished even for establishing seemingly normal relationships with one another, as well as for sharing clothes and other resources. Over time prisoners slowly lose the ability to engage with those on the outside and thus their disappearance becomes more complete. At the same time, the limits on relationship-building inside reduce the potential to develop trust in one another, creating fertile grounds for rumour and innuendo. Gerty explains how she survived in this difficult environment.

> 'Inside' gossip is inescapable, you can't get away from it, it's part of every conversation, and you hear and it's everywhere you go… it suffocates you. You have to watch what you say to people – any information spreads instantly. No matter what you say it gets around, so you learn to mind your

> own business, live your own life. If you're lucky you end up with a small circle of friends you trust. After a certain point you have to stop caring what people think. When you first get in it takes a while to learn who to stay away from.

Gossip is ubiquitous in prison and, according to Gerty, it does more than fill the void left when there is so little connection to the outside world. Gerty asserts that gossip serves as a tool for checking each other's social power and for surveillance. Gerty remembers what it means to live under layers of continual surveillance.

> You're under surveillance not only by the prison, by the guards and the cameras, but also by other prisoners. People are always judging you by your associations and actions, by all that you do. It all compounds, all the little things and all the big things… After a while, you get used to it and you don't notice because you're living under different levels of surveillance.

Gerty explains how this surveillance of one another works inside.

> If you go out for a walk with someone new, everybody's talking about it. Why are they walking together? Everyone's asking if you've slept together. Are you together now? You may think it's absurd or say, "Who cares? Let them talk", but I've known women who were violently attacked because of rumours. If the person you're talking to is in a relationship and you're seen laughing together or going into a house together, all of a sudden there's this rumour. Next thing you know, they roll into your house and break your jaw. Because of a rumour. We're under surveillance all the time, by the institution and by each other. It's a layered system of surveillance.

The anti-relational logics of the prison produce an environment in which gossip foments. Gerty asserts that this is intentional and by design.

> It's like a bubble of toxic air – the atmosphere inside is stale – no fresh ideas, nothing new or interesting. All the same old shit. If you deprive people of love and affection and information, they need to feed on something. There's no emotional or intellectual stimulation, and the only

> information you get is what they allow you to see. When you deprive people of meaningful social and emotional interactions/connection it can lead to violence, suicide, mental decay.

THE 'INSIDE' CLASSROOM

Looking back on her time inside, Gerty explains how easy it is to become institutionalized: "*I only served 4 years out of my 10-year sentence, but I had already started to view the prison as my home and started to question my ability to reintegrate into society successfully*". The ease with which Gerty started to become institutionalized in a relatively short time speaks to the importance of post-secondary education within the prison.

Multiple authors have looked at the evolution of prison post-secondary education in the Canadian context (e.g. Duguid, 2000; Munn & Clarkson, 2021). Particularly when compared to more expansive post-secondary opportunities offered in facilities south of the border, access to post-secondary education within carceral systems has been relatively limited in Canada – especially so for women. These initiatives have been marked by periods of growth followed by contraction. Models of post-secondary education that have dominated prisons since the 1970s have played into the 'rehabilitation' of prisoners through enlightened education, only to be followed by a focus on 'punishment' and restricted opportunities.

More recently, small-scale, somewhat disparate post-secondary initiatives have emerged in Canada's federal and provincial prison systems. These range from programs contracted by the prisons themselves, such as in trades and high school completion, to individual courses developed by colleges and universities that integrate students from outside and inside prison into a common classroom.

In 2021, Billie piloted a first-year course at a federal prison. This pilot built upon previous efforts that delivered non-credit learning opportunities (e.g. guest talks and workshops) inside. The piloted course emerged only after years of relationship-building within the carceral system. The pilot course involved 'outside' university students to study alongside 'inside' prisoners' students for one semester. Multiple prison education organizations have adopted this as a model for delivery, most notably Inside/Out, although this pilot course was aligned with a Canadian organization instead. Outside students underwent clearance checks and joined the inside students in the

prison, each week for three hours. Gerty describes what it means for a prisoner to go to a university class, despite still being in prison.

> The classroom was a space that upon entering I shed my 'offender' status and became just a person with a thirst for using my God given right to learn, listen, share, and think creatively. This space is in between the University and the prison, for me it exists outside of my daily world, it is a unique space where I feel safe to express my opinions and feelings without being afraid of their consequences. I even relate to my fellow inside students differently than I do in the yard. In this place we are just students, without the layers of surveillance from the institution and the ones we subject each other to. We can breathe easier in this place and we listen to each other with open minds, eager to absorb everything because we will take it back with us. We will revisit these lessons and readings, we will reflect on them and our conversations, using them to take up as much of our "free" time as possible. For us, this is a precious opportunity to fill our time with something fresh and clean, and new.

Our pedagogical approach drew in part on the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) who developed techniques for giving voice to those on the margins of society. Given the variety of learners and abilities in one class, traditional instructional models of lecture-style presentations would not be as effective in learning and in engaging learners. Instead, in a supportive environment students worked through theoretical readings in various ways: small group projects, artwork and in the larger circle. The circle meant a lot to Gerty.

> In a normal class you have the students who always share and have the answers, and you have the students who prefer to keep their ideas to themselves. In our class that was not the case. We go around the circle and everyone gives their impressions on the theory/lesson. The circle requires everyone to share their thoughts and perspective. Even if you don't understand or really have a grasp on the subject, you express something. This allows you to get to know everyone quite intimately. You also get a lot of different interpretations. Sometimes I started out having a certain opinion of the lesson we were discussing, but after going around the circle and hearing everyone's perspectives, my mind had many different

> opinions on the subject. It gave me the opportunity to understand that everyone thinks differently and to appreciate it. That is the beautiful part of the classroom, you're not what you did or what was done to you, they don't even know your real name and they don't care. They listen and care about what you have to share, and they base their opinions on the here and now. Only the person who shows up to class – only the real you.

The most innovative and change-directed education employs affective and decolonized pedagogies. The creation of affective states for learning is borne from broader efforts to decolonize post-secondary education and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing.

Post-secondary education in prison provides opportunities, reduces recidivism, normalizes behaviours and works towards any of the other expressed goals often used by the state for expanding access (Davis, 2019; Duguid, 2000; Fayter, 2016; Kerr & Bondoux 2019). It can also expose the shadows created by gossip. Education can be an intentional act of abolition, one that displaces gossip and disrupts statist social control. Education – especially non-hierarchical, relational, and Indigenized education (see Fiola 2015; Kovach 2021; Wall-Kimmerer 2013) – claims the right to occupy the liminal space between the incarcerated body and the incarcerated mind. In the inside classroom, truth is contested rather than manufactured, and relationships between inside bodies and outside bodies emerge. For Gerty, the antidote for the toxic culture of gossip is affective pedagogies used in the classroom. She explains:

> …it would be a place of ideas and sharing, of new thoughts to be explored. A sacred space where your jail self can be left at the door, and you can enter as a person who wants to purely be inspired and make connections with other knowledge keepers. Also, to be able to share without fear that it will be held against you at some later date when someone finds the perfect opportunity to blackmail you with your own words.

We used the Indigenous sharing circle to structure our classes. The sharing circle is borrowed from Indigenous pedagogy (Kovach, 2021; Winters, n.d.) and is also part of the model developed by a national organization. Sharing circles are an important structure in Indigenous world views, an essential part

of the oral tradition of Indigenous communities (Raven Speaks, 2012), and can provide openings for deeper sharing. Gerty comments on how the physical space of the circle breeds a closeness among inside and outside students, and it erased the differences and broke down the walls between students.

> The circle allowed us to see everyone. If someone is struggling at that moment or on that day, it's very apparent. Sometimes we talked about things that got very personal and there were very intense emotions involved. After several classes we got more comfortable with each other. We got to know each other very well, and that's when the class really started to take on this quality that we were doing something special. People started opening-up and sharing personal experiences. Some students shared stories that brought laughter and some had the whole class in tears. We experienced things together in that class because of the circle. It allowed us to share from the heart. It also fostered a feeling of acceptance and closeness that I've never experienced before in a classroom. Especially not in jail, where you always have to be on guard and pretend to be strong. We started to feel like a little family because of the emotional connections we were making. I felt like I could trust everyone. I felt safe. We were all very aware that this was a unique experience.

Affective pedagogies (Ainsworth & Bell, 2020) recognize that emotional well-being and learning are interconnected, which are at odds with the lived experiences of prison. The prison environment is designed to produce docile (i.e. law abiding) subjects and to discipline bodies who are deemed non-compliant (Foucault, 1977). Questioning and critique are punishable. That emotional and social health are actively manipulated as an extension of state surveillance and control, contrasts sharply with the intentions of the sharing circles. Winters (n.d.) suggests that the sharing circle's basic purpose is to create a safe, non-judgmental place where each participant can contribute to the discussions, as well as provide a safe place for connection and dialogue. Circle processes are based upon equality between participants – the principle of sharing power with one another replaces having power over one another (Raven Speaks, 2012). Gerty articulates how the circle works against the punitive, and anti-relational and hierarchical logics of prison.

> Taking a class of this nature in prison is so much more than just taking the class. It's the excitement when you see the posting that the class is being offered. The anxiety and effort put into writing your letter of application – hoping that you will get the opportunity to be a part of it. The joy of finding out you've been accepted. The anticipation and wonder of what will be included in the course. The trepidation when you think about the outside students, will they look at us differently? Will they accept us for who we are? Being in the class is exhilarating. Coursework done outside the classroom is a welcomed change to the monotony of regular jail life. The reading and writing of papers involve many hours of reflection and conversation with others who are taking the class and sometimes those who are not. The feeling of pride when handing in your work. Waiting to see what mark you will receive. It's an all-encompassing experience. It spills out into all of the areas of your life, and it's a marvelous way to spend your time inside. Also, is it not the best way you can repay your debt to society? By bettering yourself so that when you do return, you return not as a struggling drug addict, but as an educated member of society ready to contribute.

The circle helped us create a supportive setting in the prison space. In prison, vulnerability is dangerous, yet in the circle we all become vulnerable. It was important to try to foster emotional safety because without it, it would be difficult to create a sense of connection between inside and outside students. The circle requires students to develop emotional competence and for 'inside' students this meant extra work as some live together, some conflict with each other and cannot ever quite separate from one another the way the 'outside' students could. This process required a level of maturity to be able to leave conflicts at the classroom door. For Gerty, the class put a wedge between herself and the prison, something that seldom occurs.

> Once you've experienced the sacred space of the classroom, you open your mind to the possibility that you're more than just what's referred to as an 'offender'. There's much more available and possible, and it can be a turning point for anyone who has had this experience. The grasp of the institution becomes thinner and more decayed, it no longer has a stronghold on you. You're moving away from this place if only at first in your mind. It's the beginning of leaving the carceral system for good.

EDUCATION AS INTENTIONAL ACT OF ABOLITION

> …is abolition a metaphor for love?
>
> – Hartman, 2020

Carrier and Piché (2015) suggest that abolitionist objectives have become broader and include not just the prison and criminal justice institutions, but also include the goal of eradicating immigration detention, camps, and mass surveillance. Abolitionist struggles, however, come in different forms and scales, and it is not always about the more ambitious tearing down of the capitalist prison industrial complex (Gilmore, 2007) or about the abolition of the capitalist state (Davis, 2003). Gerty and Billie realized that just as imprisonment is a layered experience, so too is abolition. We saw our growing friendship as a type of abolition. Gerty reflects on this point.

> When it's all said and done, the one thing that's made the biggest difference in my life, isn't the facts or the knowledge from the material, it's the connections with the people that I met in that class. But we had to fight to stay connected. The institution puts so much emphasis on telling us to create supports in the community, but don't support it. As our friendship grew throughout the class, all we really wanted was to continue to communicate until my release, but we were being told it was against policy. You cannot be friends. If university students and professors aren't appropriate community contacts, then who the hell is?

Our abolition was congruent with that of Critical Resistance (n.d.) in that we can enact abolition "in the here-and-now through collective movement, community building, solidarity, art, teaching, and thinking".

Prior to beginning the class, outside students were discouraged from getting too close to incarcerated students. Initially, students were nervous about sitting in a room with strangers in a relatively intimate space. Imprisoned students were concerned about the stigmatization associated with being a prisoner from society at large and about being judged by outside students.

The relationship between academia and those who are studied is fraught to the point that communities have a deep suspicion of, and alienation from, academics (Kovach, 2021). In considering these uneven power dynamics,

our pedagogy took seriously the challenges of working across difference and valourizing the knowledge of everyone involved. Importantly, outside students were not there to 'help' or advise inside students – rather everyone learned together, including the instructor.

Like Harney and Moten (2014, p. 26), we were able to "sneak in… and steal what one can" from the institution. We began to 'steal' what was not meant to be ours: a type of space in the prison; the social relations as we shifted the prison space into a caring, 'safer', sharing space; the focus on differences and the 'us' versus 'them' approach was minimized as we found common ground between prisoner and non-prisoner. Gerty saw the classroom as a type of sacred space, noting:

> The space of our classroom became our meeting place, and we took the time and the space the prison gave us, and we created a network of friends. We did this under the radar and we did this quietly. We knew we wanted to stay in contact, and we knew no matter what they said we were going to. To start connecting people with community – teaching them to think for the future… it can't just all be about what you did wrong…and what your issues were before jail….it has to be more about what will pull people through and past jail… creating a new identity for prisoners is so important (student, artist, writer etc). Jail doesn't prepare you for life after jail. We need to start rehabilitating people to think beyond their prison time… we need people to evolve from this experience, past their identity of offender.

Our 'theft' was strategic – our pedagogy sought to validate 'survival knowledge' of prisoners as critical knowledge and to undermine 'offender' identities in exchange for being 'critical knowers'. By using the sharing circle, it allowed us to create mutual understanding and lay the groundwork for deeper, more meaningful discussion and understanding of one another. We challenged the hierarchies embedded within academia and we inserted emotionality into the academy (hooks, 2003). Thus, we did not just steal a certain kind of space in prison but also in higher education - we stole from both. 'Stealing the space' became an important idea for Gerty.

> We can't get folks out of prison – but we can build them up so that when they're released, they won't feel that they don't belong in the outside world… some people really feel lost when they get out of prison. Inside

> you're surrounded by people all the time but when you get out it's easy to feel alone in the world. We need to make connections before folks get out so they're excited about getting out and having opportunities and things to do.

The role of the instructor can contribute to 'stealing' the space of the prison. In the context of our course, Gerty appreciated the instructor's approach.

> You were friendly and warm. The part that impressed me most about you [instructor] was that if you didn't have the answer, you admitted it, you were down to earth and you seemed to be on our level. It gave a sense of togetherness. You did not act like you worked for THEM. It was just such an easy, relaxed atmosphere and we all connected so easily because of it. I obviously knew that you had things to teach and that I had a lot to learn from you. But I never had the feeling that you thought that you were better than us.

Educators in prison do not necessarily identify with abolitionist struggles, but rather think of themselves as teaching a skill. How is it then that post-secondary education can be an intentional act of abolition? Post-secondary education can strip the ability of the prison to control people emotionally and thus reduce the reach of the state in controlling the emotional landscape. It can claim the right to occupy the liminal space of the incarcerated body and the incarcerated mind.

> I don't think you can have a teacher by profession in this position, you must have a teacher by passion. They have to actually care about their students on a personal level. They have to want to sabotage the stigma surrounding prisoners. People experiencing incarceration are in a very different situation than regular students. For them, this class is most likely the only access to post-secondary they've ever had and for them to like it and want to continue with their education it has to be a positive experience. The teacher must be more concerned with connecting and inspiring their students than following the rules of the prison to a fault.

Gerty recognized the importance of the instructor in the totalizing prison environment.

> Instructors in prison have to be willing to give their students the gift of educating them beyond the reach of the carceral system. When you show incarcerated students the path away from prison, they're no longer so easily controlled. A teacher in this position has the power to change the way their students see themselves and, ultimately, they can change the course of their lives if they take the time to connect with them on an emotional level. You can't be fake in a class like this. You have to lead with your heart and follow with your mind. You have to be an abolitionist.

Prison is not absolute, nor is abolition. We created space for prisoners to exercise autonomy. We stole what we could as we shifted the emotional landscape of the prison and reduced the reach of the state. There was no place for gossip in the sharing circle. More than the material in class or promise of university credits – it was the connections that contributed to the survival of prisoner bodies on several levels: emotional care and friendship. It meant a lot to all of us to stay connected. Gerty articulates why it was important even when she was released.

> When I got out you guys really supported me and cheered me on to continue with post-secondary. You were patient and understood it wasn't something I could take on right away, but you never stopped saying, "you should be doing this, you can do this, and people need to hear what you have to say".

CONCLUSION

Some of the most powerful acts of abolition are small and seemingly insignificant as a warm smile, a promise of friendship, a letter of support at a parole hearing or a ride when you get released. It is also an ambitious political project. Both interim and revolutionary goals are at work, sometimes in ways that create tensions and challenges to maintain abolitionist visions and ways of relating to one another. When we take the university inside the prison, it does improve the prison, which is not the goal of abolition. And yet if we did not go inside, more people would disappear. Seemingly small acts of abolition become intensely radical within the confines of the prison. Abolition is about providing support, connection and friendship. Abolition

is about reducing the control the prison has over people and showing them how to take their power back.

Not everyone comes into prison with strong social networks. However, for those that do, maintaining contact with family and/or friends on the 'outside' (i.e. the non-incarcerated public) is very important. Social networks amongst imprisoned folks are critical for psychological health, particularly if they are maintaining relationships with people who are otherwise healthy on the outside, as this helps set patterns of normalcy and acceptance. Ongoing relationships are the hardest to maintain and to build in carceral settings, but are even more critical given the forced disconnections and isolations that folks inside must endure. This is especially so in a setting where relationships are highly controlled. Retaining those relationships is important so that prisoners have a means to transition back outside and are able to do so in a supportive way. These relationships would also serve to remind the person who is incarcerated, that they themselves are more than just an 'offender', but they have value to other people.

Gerty recognizes that "*the longer you spend inside, the greater the distance your connection to the outside world becomes"*. The longer someone is 'inside', the more difficult it can be to maintain those social networks and eventually they break down or start to fade.

> You start to feel like you don't belong in society anymore and start to question how to find your place in it again. Many people experience major anxiety upon release because of this. Some people even prolong their sentence because they don't feel like they can assimilate. After years in prison all your supports are in prison, all your friends and "family" are inside. The idea of building a whole new life from scratch becomes too daunting. When you're released, you feel lost and alone, and miss the safety and security of prison. This disconnection causes people to do whatever they need to, to be sent back, consciously or subconsciously.

Our work together is grounded in the recognition that our relational networks take shape through power hierarchies which are maintained by the prison system and university system. As Gerty observes "*creating meaningful connections and a sense of belonging with people in the community would be an easy fix for this problem"*. Our methodology for this paper reflects our

efforts to flatten the hierarchies between us and to centre the knowledge of those with lived experience.

Although seemingly a small gesture, Gerty reflects on how putting a wedge between the prisoner and the prison for a few hours a week, is actually life-changing for some.

> Once you have a bit of education, you start seeking a better life for yourself. You want to be something other than an ex-inmate. The prison loses its stronghold on you. In many ways, some more subtle than others, the prison makes you believe that you're always going to be an 'ex-offender'. This class was when I stopped thinking of myself as an ex-offender, and started thinking of myself as a student, researcher, academic writer… if you believe good things are possible for yourself it makes you more free… it's all about your state of mind. During and after my experience in this classroom I became surer of myself, and started to look forward to and plan for my release. I wasn't caught up in the negativity of the yard, in some ways I was above it. It didn't affect me as much and it didn't have as much power over me. My classmates made me feel normal… they helped me to liberate my mind from the prison. My thoughts and actions each day were more focused on my future and not on the gossip that surrounded me.

Abolition is for liberation. Prison post-secondary education can be an intentional act of abolition, one that can displace gossip, and disrupt statist social control. Non-hierarchical models that use the sharing circle can work against anti-relational logics of the prison system and allow for creating bonds across difference as a basis for struggle. Gerty speaks to the importance and value of relationality to emotional wellbeing upon release and thus as central to resistance to carceral harms.

> I think more than anything when people get out, they need emotional support and connection. They need people cheering them on saying you can do this – I believe in you. You deserve to do this, you're smart enough, you're capable. More than anything, people getting out of jail need to be shown that they don't need to go back to what they were doing. They can do better, they can be better. You have to be able to think you can do it, because that's the only thing stopping you from doing anything that you want, it's thinking that you can do it.

The state's reach into our lives is diminishing as we continue to deepen our friendship. Our friendship across differences goes well beyond the classroom experience. We continue to work, write and teach together. Not only do we tend to our relationality, but we support folks coming out of women's prisons and we continue to establish relations of equality with those with lived experience and attending to breaking down hierarchical structures that organize us.

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À fleur de peau: An In-depth Look at Two Strategies of Handling Emotion in French Prisons

Y.E., Hannah Davis Taieb and H.W.

INTRODUCTION

> Everything can be taken from a person but the last of the human freedoms, the freedom to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances – to choose one's own way.
>
> – Viktor Frankl, 1959, p. 66

> [T]he fight against Prisonisation is subtle and complex: "It is a silent battle, not with a recognizable enemy, but with our minds… If we lose our minds, we lose ourselves and the battle. It is a battle I will not lose".
>
> – Personal correspondence cited in Anita Wilson, 2000, p. 64

This article is based on a conversation among three people: H.W. and Y.E., French people looking back at their experience of incarceration, and Hannah Davis Taieb, a teacher at the American University of Paris who facilitates classes at La Santé prison inspired by the Walls to Bridges model. All three of us are active in the non-profit Dialogue & Transformation, which proposes workshops led and co-led by system-impacted people.

Looking back, H.W. and Y.E. recalled not only the emotions felt during incarceration, but the internal work they each did to suppress, hide, dissimulate or transform those emotions, and the interpersonal work of handling complex emotional challenges with others. While relating what could be considered to be successful strategies of managing emotion, they each brought-up counter-examples of people they had observed around them, who were presented as demonstrating the dangers and problems emerging when emotion is not handled well. Thus, our conversation both paints two detailed pictures of the emotions evoked by incarceration, while also bringing to light the question of strategies for handling or managing emotion (Laws, 2016). By looking in depth at two people's strategies, and by choosing to transmit here the conversation in full (translated from French), we seek to contribute to recent scholarship that brings out the agency of each social actor in navigating the emotions occurring during incarceration, as well as deepen our understanding of the transformative process of "emotion work" (Hochschild, 1973, 1983).

The choices faced in prison may seem unbearably limited, the emotion work inside like “walking on a tightrope” (Fayter and Kilty, 2024). This balancing act may involve the contradictory demands of conflicting emotion culture(s), necessitating a careful equilibrium between expressivity and restraint (Fayter & Kilty, 2024, p. 407) or may correspond to the “impression management” of striking a perfect midpoint between “excessive passivity and needless aggressivity” (Crewe et al., 2014, p. 63).

Here, Y.E. and H.W. describe similarly complex balancing acts. There is the difficult and subtle process of masking emotions while functioning in an environment in which emotions are heightened. Y.E. describes herself while in prison as being “*à fleur de peau*” – a French phrase, literally “on the flower of the skin”, which refers to a hypersensitivity as delicate as the involuntary shiver one experiences at a very light touch. H.W. describes a different kind of emotional heightening, for he sees the containment and boredom of prison as a multiplier, with anger passing from person to person like a ball that grows as it is passed on. Both of them, in very different ways, find ways to balance the contradictions of the situation, using their own personal resources and their differing abilities to find and use the resources around them.

Our in-depth conversational approach also opens-up the possibility of sharing the evocative personal metaphors, the individuated vocabulary of Y.E. and H.W. as they describe emotional processes. H.W. developed the metaphor of the “bubble within a bubble within a bubble” – the creation of an inner space of refuge, where anger could be transcended through meditation. Y.E. emphasized her learning of a new way of interacting with others, affirmative and yet not aggressive, a hyper-alertness that kept her vital and changed her. Through including these detailed and telling evocations, we highlight and value the particular ways that each individual negotiates and formulates their subjective experience of prison. As Jewkes and Laws (2021, p. 365) put it, this allows for an extension of “the focus on scholarly attention from themes relevant to [prisoners] status as emotional – yet emotionally limited – subjects, to agents with a full repertoire of emotions that are pertinent to the dynamics of incarceration”.

During the conversation, Hannah Davis Taieb, hereafter referred to as H.D.T., played the role of moderator and interviewer. Based on the idea that full respect for each person’s experience necessitates full presence of all participants, H.D.T. asked questions but also shared reactions and maintained reflexive involvement. We have included some thematic headings. We repeat the initials of the speaker where this might cause confusion.

SURVIVAL MODE

H.D.T.: What were the main issues in terms of emotion when you were incarcerated?

Y.E.: At first, the main thing was fear of the unknown… Then once I came inside I felt, "that's it". I was already in a world apart. You're going to turn your brain off, turn your emotions off, you're going to try not to think too much about your family, not to cry too much… "I've got no one to count on, okay, I won't show my weaknesses, I'll be stoic, don't let anything show"... You do that right away to begin to understand a bit about the surroundings, to understand where one is. That's the survival mode that comes into play at the beginning.

And then you go through all kinds of emotions. The day is too repetitive, you get up at the same time, you shower at the same time, there's nothing new, you see the same faces, the same people... It becomes tiring and then comes depression.

Some people cloister themselves, don't go out much, don't get in touch with others. As for me, I love human beings in any case and so I needed to talk, even if it was to people who weren't from the same milieu as I am. I went out of my cell all the time, I tried to integrate into the group, to exchange, to connect.

H.D.T.: Some people cloistered themselves?

Y.E.: I had one cellmate… She was also from Paris. I was in prison far away – I was in Guadeloupe. This girl was also from Paris, they thought we'd get along, they put her with me. That girl, she didn't go out. She was a bit sad.

Sores appeared on her body. It was her body demonstrating that things weren't okay. She had itching, like psoriasis. She didn't have that before, it appeared just like that. We thought it was maybe because she was in a different and stressful environment.

She went for medical help, but they didn't give her antibiotics or anything, they gave her something for itching and told her to wait and it would go away. We did have medical care, but it was minimal. It has to be really serious to get real care. Otherwise, they give you basic things. She managed with that.

H.D.T.: You thought it was due to her emotional state?

Y.E.: Yes, because she never went out. I could never do that. I put myself in danger, but I went out. Going out, seeing people – well, there'll be certain people who'll take advantage of that to bully you, you're a godsend to them. But I couldn't stay inside, never see the day. It helps even to move around a little! To walk!

H.D.T.: I have the impression you're saying that for you, connection with others is worth risking certain dangers, is that right?

Y.E.: It was and will always be worth the risk.

CELLMATES

H.W.: I've had lots of cellmates. I had 19 cellmates in 27 months. Your story made me think about one of them.

Once I was coming back from solitary and when I came back down I had changed cells. Actually, whenever you go to solitary, almost as a rule they change your cell, so you come back to a new cellmate.

When you arrive in a cell, there's always one who comes before the other. The one who's there first, it's his place. He sets-up his rules, he'll say "you have to clean so many times per day", and so on. When you receive someone or you go to someone else's, there's an observation period. A few days. If you don't get along you can change cells.

When you go to solitary you lose your place. I came back to someone else's. The guard opened the door and it was totally dark. Like a cave. I smelled an odour... it stunk. The guy on the bed, he was under the covers. It was daytime, it was super nice out.

I sit down. He doesn't move. I start to speak to him. I tell myself he's in a depression. I try to figure out how to improve his condition. Because your cellmate, he's the person with whom you share your days. He becomes your friend, your confidant. 23 hours out of 24 you're going to be with this person. If you don't get along with him, you better change cells right away. Otherwise, this person will have aggressive thoughts towards you, you'll have aggressive thoughts towards him, you're going to feel that all the time, you're not going to be well.

In general, prison is an environment where you feel assaulted from all sides, there's an enormous amount of anger. If on top of that there's anger in the place you're going to spend 23 out of 24 hours of your day, if you add that on top of everything, frankly it's intolerable.

To go back to my cellmate. I went into the shower. There was no light there either. The lightbulb was broken. Everything was filthy. The next week I had the lightbulb changed and the shower repainted. I stayed with this guy for two months. The guy was 20-years-old. I was 32. He was a child.

NO OUTLET

H.W.: In prison, people are bored, so everything is multiplied. Outside, we can be angry with each other, then I'll go home, you'll go home, go to the movies… the anger will go away. When you're locked-up, you have no outlet and then things blow-up.

Because they're bored, people talk a lot. There are lots of rumours, false stories… like playing telephone, but all the time. It's difficult in that context to handle your emotions.

It's like you're not in charge of your emotions. Your emotions are in charge of you. A guard will be angry at his wife, he'll take it out on you – he'll say you can't go to the visiting room. He'll multiply it by 10 and you'll feel it by 100, and who'll be next? It's like a ball of anger that's passed from one person to the next… Or maybe it starts with me, I have a bad conversation with someone in the visitor's room. I'm on edge. I run into another prisoner, he had the same thing, maybe a bad conversation with his girlfriend. I say to him, "why are you looking at me like?" He speaks badly to a guard. The guard goes into a cell and yells at a prisoner. The prisoner takes it out on his cellmate. Passes the ball of anger onto him. And on and on, getting bigger all the time. I've never seen anything like it.

In prison, there's very little information. I'm someone who asks a lot of questions. I gave the guards a headache. How does this work, what am I allowed to do, what am I not allowed to do, how does that work, when does this happen? In the end I knew more than they did. I talked to lots of people. It's as if nobody knows how it really works.

There are a lot of undocumented migrants in prison. Some guys didn't speak French, they couldn't read or write, they just knew a few words in French. When they get there, they don't understand anything that's happening to them. For a French person, you don't understand everything

– it takes time, but for them, they're scared... When you don't speak a word of French, it's the worst.

Some guys go crazy. They're under stress. They lose it. They can't handle the pressure. One guy – he was an Algerian – he broke his arm to get to the hospital. He wanted to get out of the prison. But the guards said, "you're not going to the hospital". He didn't speak French and he didn't know his rights. He couldn't speak, he couldn't assert his rights. So he plugged-up the cell sink with paper. Then he let the water run. He flooded the whole floor, our bags were floating, there was water everywhere, all our stuff was ruined. This guy would cry at night, I could hear him screaming.

I'm not sure if it's the same person or another – one guy just started running down the hall, there's lots and lots of doors, of gates, and he ran… bells were ringing, they locked down everything, lots of guards came and caught him… it was like, the guy, it was as if he didn't even understand that he couldn't get out. There are doors! I would never try something that's impossible for me. I can't go through the bars. Some people, under the pressure, do things that are completely illogical. It's not insanity per se, it's intense distress. It comes up inside them, the person has a need for freedom, people aren't made to be locked-up, and they lose it all of the sudden.

THE SHOT

Y.E.: What he's describing about people who exteriorize their emotions… it reminds me of something that I had forgotten.

When I came into my cell the first time, the first thing I felt was the walls coming towards me. It was like claustrophobia. I had a very powerful anxiety attack. I started tapping the chair on the ground and screaming. And my pretext was that I needed a phone call, to call my parents, to tell them where I was, and that I was okay. But I think that was just an excuse, I just needed to vent.

After a while, the guards heard me and they came in. In circumstances like that the only way to calm someone, for them, is to medicate them. My cell door opened and I saw someone in a white coat with a syringe. I was surrounded by six colossi. Beefy, big strong men and women… and they said, "keep that up and it's the shot". So, I calmed down. I stopped. I took it upon myself.

We don't have a way to handle our emotions, and they [the staff] don't know how to handle them either. So, they come with the shot and the colossi.

H.D.T.: "I took it upon myself" – this to me is the survival mode, the stoicism… there's no outlet, so "*on prend sur soi*", you suck it up, you take it upon yourself.

Y.E.: You have to, you can't exteriorize. You stop yourself because what will come next will not be pretty.

H.W.: You have to avoid those shots. What they give you is very powerful. I don't want that in my body. I saw a guy, a big Black guy, bigger than me. I saw him arrive, when he came he was normal. He talked, he went around… Then I heard that there had been a problem with a guard, he had hit a guard and they gave him a shot. The guy, I saw him again, he wasn't the same.

I've never understood if it was the shot or some kind of psychological problem, but he had started talking to himself. He walked along and talked to the air. Then he started to come down with shaving cream on his face, all white, talking to himself.

Once he was walking next to me and he had on several layers of clothes, two pairs of jeans… I'm thinking, "what's going on?" Then I saw him hide in a corner, and when we all went up, he didn't come back up. I could see down into the courtyard from my cell. He had tied a knot in his jeans and thrown them up over the fence. He went right up over the arms of the guard. Everyone started to yell, "Go ahead, go go!"

But it was out of despair. Even if he got over the wall, there's another wall, and then another wall… He was crazy… there's no outlet, so things blow-up.

After that, he went on a special promenade for prisoners who are protected, they're called the "*vulnerables*" – the pedophiles, all the LGBTQ, people who get bullied…

On the main promenade, where I was, we were 100 or 200 – that's a lot of people. There are fights every day or every other day. The fights go far. People can die.

So, this guy, the one who went crazy, he didn't go on the promenade with us anymore, he was with the "*vulnerables*". I saw this guy, he had started taking his clothes off. He was completely naked. Everybody started to yell at him, "what are you doing?" And this is a guy who was normal at the beginning and he became someone who walks around completely naked. That guy, he'll finish his sentence, then he'll spend five years in a psychiatric hospital. He was normal when he arrived.

It was the shot that did that. I talked to a lot of people about it. Everyone is scared of the shot. You can spend 10 years in prison, you can get out, it's part of your life experience, you'll have your traumas, you'll deal with them as best you can. But if you get those shots, there's no coming back from it. If you get those shots, you can't get over it. The stuff in those shots, they mess-up your brain. It's worse than crack, forget it. The people who get the shots, it's notorious, everyone knows it. You lose your mind so to speak. So, among the [prisoners], there's this fear. And we don't go past certain limits because we know that's there behind. It's very scary.

THE SOCIAL MASK

H.W.: I observed so many things in prison. It was really interesting sociologically and in terms of human behaviour.

In life, in general, we all have a social mask. With certain people, we'll start to open-up to tell the story of our lives, what we like, what we don't like. It depends on the individual, but most people will open-up at one time or another. Then you'll come in, you'll come into the person.

In prison, the mask is very strong. Everybody wears a mask, and people will tell very little about their lives. They'll talk about what they did, their delinquent or criminal career, they'll try to develop a certain status, but they'll talk very little about personal things. Relationships stay on the surface. Even your cellmates, there'll be a limit. It may be conscious or unconscious, but we don't open-up entirely.

My last cellmate, he never created this shell. He was there for failure to insure his car and driving without a permit. This had been 10 years previously. He had moved and never got the summons. They gave him one year without possibility of parole. He should never have been in there. He was in shock. He never got over it. He was very anxious, anguished. He didn't know the [prisoner] codes.

I explained everything to him. Your cellmate is your partner. If he's not doing well, it'll reach you too. If he's depressed, you have no one to talk to. This guy never got to the point of creating the mask. I watched him, I saw how he was being seen. Everyone saw him as prey. They came up to him and they wanted to take his running shoes. Leave him barefoot. I came up, I said, "He's my cellmate, so no". He kept his shoes.

You have to create this shell. It's a survival mechanism. You can't give the person across from you the ammunition to attack you. Outside, if you

tell your partner something, they might bring it up later in an argument. Inside, if you give yourself away, the person across from you might use that information to do you wrong. They may tell your story to others. Stories are very often twisted and deformed as I mentioned before. There might be people who are jealous. There are people who are bad, who want to hurt others. Outside, those people, you'll distance yourself from them. Inside, you're with them.

CONNECTION AND RISK

H.D.T.: Y.E., you mentioned that for you it was important to create connection with others. How do you respond to what H.W. is saying?

Y.E.: I've always had the tendency to create connections, but I've also always had the tendency to surround myself with bad people, just in order to have that connection. In prison it's not necessarily the best connections you can find.

In prison I was connected with people who wanted to hurt me. I faced racism because I was in another context [i.e. Guadeloupe] – I was in a minority, I was the only Arab. I was placed in danger by those people with whom I had created connections or people I had forgiven, and then recreated connection afterwards.

Prison makes you hypersensitive, on edge. And the group effect is very strong. All it takes is one big shot in the prison who wants to hurt someone and almost everyone else in the prison will go along with her opinion so as not to be in danger themselves – the group effect or even just for fun. Bad things constantly happen. It's a place where the only things that can happen are bad.

H.D.T.: You started out saying that you didn't stay in your cell, you went towards people… you found people, created connection… now the story sounds a bit different.

Y.E.: I had some beautiful relationships, like with my cellmate from Paris, with whom I created a very strong connection, and we still see each other sometimes.

But the other girls, at one time or another they wanted to hurt me, to hit me, to steal from me. Not just to me, to all the other girls as well. There are fewer

demonstrations of solidarity and affection, it's more about imposing yourself, who has the power… we're surrounded by people who are dangerous, who have nothing to lose, who are going to get out when they are 50-years-old or people who grew-up and lived in violence, who had very difficult lives and childhoods, and who are brought together. We're all brought together with our baggage, our pasts, so it explodes. It's no picnic. [laughing]

H.D.T.: Yet you laugh.

Y.E.: Yes, I can laugh, because it's over. And I'm a believer, I tell myself I have a lucky star. But I went through things I never thought I would go through – never thought I could be the central actor in things like that. It's violence condensed. The violence can come from the prisoners or from the guards.

There was one racist guard who called me a "dirty Arab" because I wasn't going fast enough for her in the shower. We had different groups who went in one by one in the shower and you have to go fast. So, she insulted me. I responded in kind. She wrote-up a whole report on me saying that I was bad, that I answered back. I was very close to going before the commission to go to solitary. Solitary – it's the worst of the worst. You have no light, you're really put there to be bored.

The spirit needs to work at something, to have projects, to reflect on something. The day you have nothing to give to your mind to do, your mind eats you. It hurts you. What happened, what you've done, you're ugly. Prison was already complicated enough, but solitary is where you can't even read a book – you have no light, you have to follow the light of the sun. They're places that are very dirty, there's a constant nauseating odour. There are people there who shouldn't be in prison, they should be in psychiatric hospitals. They don't live well and they often go to solitary. Luckily, I never went there. I managed to avoid it.

I have a lucky star. I was often threatened, but I have a lucky star. For example, once I was alone in my cell, because there weren't that many women in the prison. Then they brought me a new arrival. She was addicted to crack. I woke-up in the middle of the night and she was standing over me. I tried to go back to sleep, but I slept with one eye open. In prison you have to stay alert. Aggression can come from anywhere, even your cellmate. Maybe she doesn't feel well, she thinks you're her enemy, she's in withdrawal. We went through several days like that.

Now, I understand English. There were many people there from the Dominican Republic who spoke in English, rather than in Creole. In prison, you can understand what'll happen tomorrow by listening to the blah blah. When there's a problem coming, you can hear about it.

One girl says to the new girl, "Beat-up the white girl tonight and I'll give you some weed". I was the only white girl. The new girl looks at me. I look at her. I say, "If you're going to do something, do it now. If you're going to hit me, hit me now, not during the night".

I was very scared because I wasn't ready, I was only 18 when I went to prison and back. But I have a lucky star, she looked at me and she said, "No, I won't do anything". I don't know if it's because I had welcomed her, when she arrived I had given her some cigarettes and some food… I said, "if you need it, it's here…" I don't know if that's why, but she didn't listen to them.

H.D.T.: I'm also struck that you were very present. You said, "if you're going to hit me, hit me now".

Y.E.: I was in survival mode. I don't know if I was like that basically. I was in survival mode, you don't show your weaknesses, you don't show your tears. You show you're strong, even if you don't know how to fight, if you must fight, you fight… these are details that give you reputation.

One girl took my lighter. We all had lighters and we all wrote our initials on them. We were on promenade and I put down my lighter, and a girl took it. I said, "Give me back my lighter, you took it". She said, "no, it's mine".

There, I had two choices. Either I insist and I go into a conflict, and it might turn out that I lose or, I don't insist and tomorrow it might turn out that someone comes into my cell and steals my things.

So, I insisted, though I was scared of the woman and everything. I said, "No, it's my lighter, it has Y on it, give me back my lighter". She looked at me for a long time and then she gave it to me.

H.D.T.: You kept things in balance. You stood up for yourself without being aggressive, if I understand you correctly. In both cases.

Y.E.: Right. It depends on the person. Some people grew-up in violence and are more violent. In prison you have to be on edge, reactive. Every detail is important.

À FLEUR DE PEAU

H.D.T.: What seems like a hard thing to experience is the contradiction between on the one hand being stoic, having to harden oneself, which means not to feel, and at the same time, being on edge, reactive, hyper-sensitive, feeling everything.

Y.E.: In prison one is “à fleur de peau” [We have chosen to leave this phrase in French. Literally it means, “on the flower of the skin”. It refers to a state of extreme sensitivity, as if the slightest touch made one react]. You can be very touchy, very sad as well, your emotions are felt more strongly, heightened. In real life you have other things to do, you feel things less, you have more room for rationality. In prison there’s no rationality. Instead, each person responds according to their feelings, their pasts. You have to deal with it. There are no social rules.

H.D.T.: It reminds me of what H.W. said. Outside, someone might make a comment you don’t like, but as the day goes on you talk to your co-worker, you go for a walk, you forget your irritation because you do other things. Inside, the same little thing, it gets bigger. On the one hand there’s no outlet, so everything swells-up. But at the same time, you can’t show anything. It’s both at the same time: you get more stoic and tougher, and also more and more fragile.

Y.E.: It’s a ball of violence, like H.W. said. You understand it from the beginning. Even if you don’t want to be in survival mode, after a few days you might watch a fight, wake-up in the morning, and find out that someone died in the night… and you understand that you’re not in a place where you are protected.

I became friends with a girl there that wasn’t liked. The other girls got together and came to me and said, “if you keep hanging out with her, we’re going to beat you up”. Same as before, I had the two choices, whether to give in or to stand-up to them and gain respect. So, I was afraid and I went to the head guard. The head guard said, “Don’t worry, they bark but they don’t bite”. This was a way of saying, “I can’t do anything for you. If they hurt you, I won’t be there. You’re on your own”.

Because they don't just bark. I've seen some traumatizing scenes. Once I was in the shower, we're all almost completely naked, we're very vulnerable. And a girl comes in wearing her jogging suit, which is weird because the morning shower we come down to it in our pyjamas. She comes in and she has a piece of bread, and in the bread she has her fork. Hidden. She pulls out the fork and starts to stab another girl. In front of me. And I'm there taking my shower. The guard came but didn't endanger herself. She didn't intervene, she preferred to wait for reinforcements. That's why we're alone. If someone attacks me, the guard will not intervene, she'll wait for reinforcements. And a lot can happen to me while she's waiting.

H.D.T.: So, what happened when these girls told you not to hang out with that girl?

Y.E.: I decided to stand-up to them. It worked in the sense that they didn't attack me. They had threatened to cut me with a knife. In the end, they all got together and they attacked her, the poor thing.

H.D.T.: I have the impression you developed a way of being – maybe you're not like that outside, I don't know – but you found a kind of solution, a way of being that was standing-up to them, but without being aggressive.

Y.E.: Yes, by nature I'm not aggressive, but I decided to impose myself because I saw that the weak were hurt first.

H.D.T.: Did it work as a strategy?

Y.E.: Yes, in the sense that I was never stolen from. If someone comes into my cell and looks at everything I have, if she's staring at my sugar, my cookies, I say "out". I won't let her go shopping with her eyes. I had no one to watch over me.

H.D.T.: Did that change your character?

Y.E.: Yes. There's always a before and after. H.W. too. You lose your innocence. You see the worst of life. You see people in distress. You see people with very different life experiences. People let you know why they're there, "I opened-up someone's stomach fourteen centimetres…"

You imagine these scenes, it takes away your naïveté, the world is beautiful, the world is pretty… There are people who do evil and you talk to those people sometimes. In real life as well. You talk to people without knowing what they do.
When you get out, you're less naïve. I'm less talkative. I observe more. I used to love to laugh and I was very sociable. Getting out of prison, now, when I'm in a group, I speak the least and observe the most.

H.D.T.: Are you happy about this change?

Y.E.: No, it was better before. Now, I'm always paying attention. "Who's this guy? What is he?"

H.D.T.: At the same time, I would've said, you developed a strength. When you describe these situations, where you asked yourself, should I give in or stand-up, and you stood-up for yourself, I admire you for that when I listen to you. For example, when you said "out" to the person staring at your things. It made me think, I should develop that. You had very little, but you protected it.

Y.E.: Yes, but you have much less faith in society. You develop your feelings against the system. I felt mistreated. Not necessarily in prison, but even before. When I was four days in detention. We're not allowed to shower. And the police are into psychology and their only goal is to bring in the most people possible into this story. "You will get 20 years in prison if you don't give us the names". They brought me in front of the shower and someone said, "You'll get the right to a shower, if you talk. You'll get a burger from McDonald's, if you talk. You'll get a cigarette, if you talk".

I didn't feel supported. I felt like a piece of meat. They brought me before the judge, and they put me in prison. It was because I was a danger for their investigation. They're not doing social work. They're focusing on their investigation.

H.D.T.: So, there was a certain dehumanization, when you say, "they treated me like a piece of meat"?

Y.E.: I wasn't a human being. When I got out of the courtroom and I knew I would go to prison, I was sad. I was crying. I was thinking, "okay, this

is it. I'm going". A cop came and said, "When you get back to [mainland] France, if you have problems paying your rent, don't worry, come to the police station, and inform. We'll pay your rent".

H.D.T.: He said that to you while you were crying?

Y.E.: Yes. It wasn't the moment, first of all. And second of all, who's going to protect me? Policemen are protected, but a random girl like me, you throw me out into pasture, for your interests, to find the bad guys, for your numbers…

When you get out, you're more closed in. More paranoid… More in real life.

THE BUBBLE WITHIN THE BUBBLE WITHIN THE BUBBLE

H.D.T.: What about you, H.W.? Did you have a before and after?

H.W.: I had a before and after inside. In terms of emotions, when you're outside, you have the choice. You have the choice of who you talk to. And when emotions come-up, you have the choice – you can externalize them, you can internalize them, you can transform them into something positive… Inside you are subjugated, you have no choice. So, it all depends on the capacity of the individual to transcend his emotions.

H.D.T.: What do you mean by "transcend your emotions"?

H.W.: Transcendence. When I went to solitary, it wasn't like for Y.E. For me, it was like a bubble of liberty. Because I found myself in silence. I wasn't happy because I'd lost my cell and all that. But I took advantage of it to meditate, to reflect, I took books with me.

Y.E.: Books, okay, but did you have light? We didn't have light in solitary.

H.W.: Even within [mainland] France, prisons are very different. There are prisons that are decrepit, other prisons that have just been renovated…

Y.E.: Was there a smell in solitary?

H.W.: No. Where I was, it used to be like you're describing, there was no light, there was vomit and piss everywhere… since then, it's been renovated.

H.D.T.: Could you continue about the question of what you mean by transcendence?

H.W.: At one point I had a very great anger. And I felt it was going to eat me up. Anger was taking me over. I managed to transcend my anger. I managed to free myself from my emotions. To control them. To no longer be subjugated to prison. From that time on, even if people were angry near me or were going to be violent with me, I could centre myself inside of myself. I could feel it as exterior to me. I don't have to let it penetrate me. I can keep it at a distance. I created a bubble inside the bubble inside the bubble.

H.D.T.: Can you explain the three bubbles?

H.W.: The first bubble is the prison, the micro-society. There's a certain kind of solidarity. You have to understand the rules, understand your rights.

The second bubble is the mask you have to create – the shell you have to create around yourself. You have to separate from yourself and create a character, a false personality, in order to survive.

The third bubble is the internal world – a refuge. You go there to reinforce yourself. Only you can get in. You can think about your family, friends, your real self. But you can't tell anyone about it.

I had a before and after inside. When I transcended my anger. From that moment on, I'd go out on promenade, I"d be in a meditative state as if I were alone.

Y.E.: You escaped from what was around you?

H.W.: I recentered myself. I had been in the energy of anger since I was little. And it just grew and grew and grew. After that day, it went away.

What happened that day was this. I found out I was betrayed by my best friend. I felt more angry than I've ever felt in my life. I was there in my cell thinking, "when I get out, I'll kill him". But then I thought to myself, "if I do that, he'll have won". In the end, even if he's gone and I'm locked away for life, he's still driving my behaviour.

And I had seen guys in the prison who had killed people. They were like errant souls, phantoms. They had lost something, a kind of sensitivity. I didn't want to end-up like that.

So, I had to figure out how to deal with my anger. I had a book on meditation that my mother gave me, *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle (1997). Emotion isn't you. You can get attached to it or you can just let it go through you. And I thought, I might as well try it, I have nothing to lose. So, I did it.

I was lying down. I started by looking at the anger, visualizing it and feeling it inside me, inside my body. Then I saw it coming out. It was as if my anger was floating above my body. I looked at it, it was outside me. Then I let it go. Some people say you can blow on it and blow it away. After that I started a whole program of meditation.

Anger is magnetic. If you have anger inside yourself, that hasn't been treated, you'll attract all the people around you who have anger inside them. And in prison, that's all there is. Sometimes there'll be confusing fights starting and you're afraid it'll come towards you. You weren't in that story, but you're afraid it'll come towards you because you have that same energy inside you, you're afraid you'll attract that energy towards you.

But after that, after I started meditating, it slipped right off me. I could go out on promenade, go past two guys who were fighting, I'd broken my connection with that energy. From that day on, my experience was very different.

And I realized that outside, I never would have done all that. Outside, you always think "I'll start later, when I'm ready…" but there I had no choice. I thought, "I don't want to go crazy, I don't want to become a psychopath". And so, I did it.

And that's transcendence. I broke my connection from that energy. It's how you're going to take an emotion and turn it into something positive.

H.D.T.: What's your reaction, Y.E.? How do you react to what H.W. has said, how he created a third bubble inside himself, how he transcended his emotion? You started out saying your movement was towards others and finding a way to be respected. Does what he said resonate with you or was it very different?

Y.E.: In contrast to H.W., I went towards people. I knew what could be positive and what could be negative. I knew I had to stay super alert, know what was going on in the prison, who's yelling, who's fighting with who, how does the wind blow… I had to be informed, to not be in danger, and to be able to continue going out, getting a breath of fresh air, talking, exchanging

ideas with people. So, I lived through it more in hyper-alertness. As each day went on, I put an X on it. I wasn't sure when I'd get out, but I just said to myself, onward, onward.

And the smallest thing could seem marvelous to me. Like a plant growing under my window. It was crazy, I looked at it every day, go for it, grow, grow… When the guy came to mow the lawn I felt like crying, it was crazy… that's the hyper-sensitive side, à fleur de peau. The plant made me see that life goes on.

When you get out, the most wonderful thing I found, is freedom. To be able to do what you yourself want to do. In prison, they put you where they want to put you. You're subjugated. *Sous main de justice*, under the hands of justice, under judicial control. When you get out, you get back your hope, you think, *I have the right to do what I want*. The price of freedom. This was a beautiful lesson for me and this was also the challenge.

H.D.T.: One final thought. I found listening to you both that my intention focused on the notion of solutions to handling emotion inside, successful strategies that worked. I kept looking for answers – reaching out to others – solidarity; meditation… But the two of you seemed to be coming at this from a different point of view. I'm the one who kept bringing-up "what works".

Y.E.: It's survival instinct. You don't think about anything, you're in the moment, totally in the present moment, in action, so as to preserve yourself as much as possible.

H.D.T.: And yet – you *did* each have strategies to survive. And you *did* survive.

Y.E.: To this very day, I don't know how.

CONCLUSIONS

As we explained in the introduction, our intention here was to allow our conversation to flow, to explore in an open way the subjective experiences of prison, and to bring to the reader the particular ways in which each speaker formulates and transmits their experience. We see emerging two pictures of the emotional experience of prison and two distinct individual strategies

for managing emotion inside. The details related deepen and extend our understanding of the process of this particular kind of emotion work.

The Recognition of the Need to Control Emotion

Y.E. and H.W. describe the recognition of the intensity of emotional response that could emerge, and the importance of mobilizing to mask and manage it. This is seen partly through counter-examples. The dangers of uncontrolled emotion emerge clearly in stories like that of H.W.'s fellow prisoner who could be heard crying and screaming, who "lost it", or another who was "normal at the beginning" and ended-up in a state that H.W. judged to suggest permanent psychic damage. Even more telling is Y.E.'s story of her own moment of "venting". When she was told "keep that up and it's the shot", she went through a rapid process of self-regulation: "I calmed down. I stopped. I took it upon myself". This suggests the nature of the moment of choice and the beginning of a new relationship with the emotions.

Isolation, Solidarity and Contact with Others

Y.E. and H.W. distinguish themselves from each, focusing on Y.E.'s extroversion and desire to make contact, and H.W.'s interest in seclusion, reflection, and meditation. One might see this as related to gender norms and practices. For instance, citing research in other contexts, Fayter and Kilty (2024: 26) have suggested there is declining mutual aid and solidarity in men's prisons, contrasting with an "ethic of care" for women. However, H.W. and Y.E. linked their approaches not to gender, but to the ways of being they had developed in life prior to prison. Y.E. describes herself as "always having a tendency to create connections", adding that this does not necessarily always work to her benefit. H.W. describes himself as someone with a natural tendency to need little social contact. Comparing himself to Y.E., he notes that he needs fewer "strokes per day", referring to Eric Berne's (1964) use of the word "stroke" as "units of social action" demonstrating recognition from others.

Furthermore, there are more similarities in H.W's and Y.E.'s approaches than at first appear. H.W. and Y.E. were in agreement that complete isolation from others was to be avoided, distinguishing themselves from others who suffered from their seclusion. Y.E.'s cellmate "cloistered" herself – the difficulty coming from this approach manifested itself in her body's somatic response (also see Laws, 2018). H.W. described another isolated person, a cellmate who lived in darkness, without emerging from under the covers.

Y.E. focused on connection with others, not only with an "ethic of care", but also with assertiveness and resistance to potential danger. By contrast, H.W. can be seen as demonstrating his own "ethic of care". Despite "needing fewer strokes" in social life in general, he nonetheless had a conscious strategy of care for his cellmates. This could be seen in context of Crewe and colleagues' (2014, p. 67) research in a medium-security men's prison in the U.K. where prisoners "publicly denied they had close prison friendships", but engaged in daily practices like "waking each other up with cups of tea, knocking on cell walls to communicate goodnight wishes". Similarly, H.W. cleaned the cell for his cellmate who was depressed, and defended a cellmate in danger of being bullied, all in an explicit attempt to make the cell "where you're going to spend 23 out of 24 hours of your day" into a place of some respite – the cell being known as "*la grotte*", the cave.

Emotion Work and Transformation

With these detailed stories presented here, we hope to contribute to the deepening of our understanding of the nature of "emotion work". Crewe and colleagues (2014, p. 64) bring out the useful distinction made by Hochschild (1979, p. 561) between 'fronting', which can be defined as evoking a desired feeling which is absent, and 'masking', defined as suppressing an undesired feeling that is present. Our reflection here evokes these two kinds of "emotion work" and shows how these processes can be transformative on a deeper level.

H.W. describes in detail how he reshaped his relationship to emotion through meditation, sensing and then "transcending" the way he experienced anger as inside (and then moving outside) of his body. Y.E. describes mobilizing aspects of her previous way of being – her extroversion, wanting to be with others – and developing a new kind of tougher, more self-protective extroversion. She was aware of her fear and did not display it (the mask), creating an outer self (front) that was able to bluff and win ("if you're going to beat me up, I prefer you do it during the day").

These transformations are described by them as arriving at key moments of shock and desperation. H.W. describes a kind of moment of truth, the coming to a crossroads that led him to do the deeper emotional work that led to his changing his relationship to anger. Y.E. describes several such moments of truth when she found herself able to mobilize herself in new ways to survive. These moments of desperation led each to find new ways.

These new capacities had lasting effects on their lives. Y.E. relates that she is now less talkative, more observant, “always paying attention”. H.W. says there was a “before and after” in terms of his relationship to anger. These changes, emerging at moments of truth, are transformative in ways that are suggestive for our understanding of “deep” emotion work.

Survival Instinct or Choice?

Y.E. describes herself as having no choice – having acted by “survival instinct”. Throughout our conversation, we experienced a tension between the questions and reactions of H.D.T. – emphasizing that choices were being made, strategies carried-out – and the formulations of Y.E. and H.W., who often focused on survival, desperation, absence of choice leading to action. We are choosing to leave this tension visible in the end result. We find it suggestive for further reflection on agency and strategy.

À fleur de peau

We have also chosen to highlight here the evocative ways H.W. and Y.E. described the emotional world around them during incarceration. We leave you with their metaphors and turns of phrase: H.W.’s “ball of anger” gathering and growing as it passes from one person to another; and Y.E.’s image of living in hyper-alertness, hiding much of one’s emotional response and feigning others, all the while living “*à fleur de peau*”.

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Y.E. was incarcerated for four months in Bae-Mahault prison in Guadeloupe. This part of her life has made her understand that there is a lot that can be done for prisoners. She has been working in human resources and thanks to her experience of incarceration, she sees things in a new way – when recruiting candidates she does not judge them on their past and she seeks to help with reintegration.

Hannah Davis Taieb leads workshops bringing together people detained at La Santé prison in Paris and students from the American University of Paris, with an approach inspired by Walls to Bridges. She is the president of the non-profit Dialogue & Transformation. Hannah is connected to questions of prison through her memories of her own father's incarceration during the McCarthy period in the USA. She has a PhD in anthropology and is a Gestalt practitioner.

H.W. was incarcerated for 27 months in the Fleury-Mérogis prison. This experience deeply marked him, and he is determined to counter the myth of prison and all the clichés that are attached to it. Prison is not an obligatory passage for young people from the neighbourhoods and does not make them stronger. He would like to break this vicious cycle by inventing tools and liberating methodologies for youth. He is an active member of the non-profit Dialogue & Transformation where he leads workshops and training activities for students and youth.

A LITTLE ABOUT ME

> The greatest task for any person is to find meaning in their life.
>
> – Viktor Frankl, 2006, p. 109

Up until about a decade ago, I spent my life on and off the streets, and in and out of jails, hospitals, and treatment centres. Due to trauma, emotional distress and having little or no positive coping mechanisms, I started using substances at a very young age. As a result, I have spent the majority of my life trying my hardest to stop. It took 20 years of efforts and finding an entheogenic plant medicine called Ibogaine[1] before I was finally able to detach from my dependency on opiates. It is a controversial treatment and largely unaccepted by the current medical establishment for a variety of reasons, including its powerful psychoactive properties. It was a difficult transition from living a life that centred around my substance use to one devoted to learning how to become the best version of myself, which is an ongoing, life-long process. When I did stop abusing substances, I found myself at one of the lowest points in my life, desperate and suicidal. Despite no longer being physically dependent on substances, I found myself in an existential crisis. I did not know who I was, who I was supposed to be or what I was supposed to do with my life. I continued to suffer emotionally and then I found a life raft. The book by Viktor Frankl (2006), *Man's Search for Meaning*, came into my life during this time and had a profound effect on me. I believe his message helped to shape the way I approach suffering in my life, including my current incarceration. There is a loss of control that occurs during incarceration that is reminiscent of a similar lack of control that arises during periods of substance dependence.

Frankl is both a concentration camp survivor and the founder of logotherapy, an existential-humanistic approach to psychotherapy. Friedman and Schustack (2012) define logotherapy as the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. Frankl was a peer and colleague of both Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler, who are credited with being the founders of the First and Second Viennese schools of Psychotherapy, respectively. Frankl differed in his primary foundational belief that "life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, as Freud believed, or a quest for power, as Alfred Adler taught,

but a quest for meaning" (Kushner, 2006). Frankl believed in the power of personal choice and stressed that the potential for self-fulfillment can come from finding meaning in suffering (2006). Meaning is derived from three potential sources, "in work (doing something significant), in love (caring for another person), and in courage during difficult times" (Kushner, 2006). Courage comes from the attitude an individual takes in the face of suffering.

Although I struggled, I continued to work on my own development – it was with self-love and determination that I started a new life off the street. At this time, I began working with Ibogaine as a Compassionate Withdrawal Management Facilitator and later, as a Treatment After-Care Co-ordinator and Peer Counsellor. I found great meaning and purpose in my work, supporting individuals struggling with problematic substance use and mental health concerns. After six successful years of this work, there was a tragic incident during an Ibogaine treatment resulting in a client's death. Health Canada's re-classification of Ibogaine,[2] coupled with the death of my client and related mitigating factors, resulted in my current incarceration. I was devastated, by both my client's tragic death and the charges that followed. Again, I found myself in existential crisis and, again, I turned to Viktor Frankl's work. Once more, Frankl's work became relevant and influential in my life. I decided that I had choice. I could let my emotions take over and wallow in depression, self-pity and suffering or I could try to find meaning. I chose the latter, embracing Frankl's meaning making triumvirate of work, love and courage in the face of suffering. I began utilizing this support infrastructure to navigate the transitional journey from intake to release.

INTRODUCTION

Incarceration is a naturally emotion-provoking situation and it would be easy to solely discuss its negative aspects. This paper, however, approaches this subject not from a typical deficit standpoint, but from a cautiously optimistic perspective. As a currently incarcerated woman, I am well placed to examine the complex and myriad emotions that arise from incarceration. The carceral experience follows a common path that includes three distinct phases: *intake, settlement* and *pre-release*. These phases are similar to the three stages in the Model of Transition created by Bridges and Bridges (2009): 'letting go', 'the neutral zone' and 'new beginnings'. A third intersection to

these first two groupings involves three key pillars of support: personal, institutional and external. These three supportive networks can be used as resources throughout the carceral experience. Using Bridges and Bridges (2009) Model of Transition as a framework, I examine how each phase corresponds to a stage of transition and discuss how the pillars of support interrelate. This paper demonstrates how these three different components combine to offer opportunities for setting goals and making meaning within a carceral setting. The personal and individual nature of each experience must be acknowledged. However, I believe that incarceration and the many emotional challenges that are faced, can create a transformative, productive, and cathartic experience for many incarcerated individuals. While many environs and circumstances may allow for comparable transformations, I have found that the restrictive, oppressive, and confining nature of the carceral setting provokes a uniquely profound opportunity. There is the possibility for positivity despite this environment. Frankl (2006, p. 131) said that man "decides whether he gives into conditions or stands up to them". By creating my own meaning, I am making my stand.

STAGES OF TRANSITION

> Transition starts with an ending and ends with new beginnings.
>
> – Bridges and Bridges, 2009, p. 5

Bridges and Bridges (2009) Model of Transition acts as a framework for examining the phases of incarceration and the inherent potential for growth that successful navigation offers. Bridges and Bridges discern the difference between change and transition, explaining that change is an external event while transition is the emotional, psychological, and sometimes spiritual impact that change has on an individual. In this case, the change event is sentencing, and arrival at the institution and transition is the process of incarceration. Bridges and Bridges identify three distinct stages of transition an individual must traverse to adapt successfully to whatever change has occurred: 'letting go', 'the neutral zone' and 'new beginnings'.

'Letting go' is an ending of what was. It is a loss of old ways of doing or being. Acknowledging the loss that occurs at this time is important according to Bridges and Bridges (2009). During this stage, it is also important to identify what we need to let go of and what is beneficial to keep. Recognizing and releasing negative behaviours and/or relationships

that no longer serve an individual can create space for new experiences and growth. Celebrating personal strengths and maintaining effective practices that are supportive during transition is also beneficial. Often, ‘letting go’ can be an emotionally turbulent time as an individual grieves what is being lost and prepares to engage in a new way of being.

The next stage is ‘the neutral zone’ where old beliefs, personal values and ways of being begin to shift in preparation for ‘new beginnings’. This stage can be fraught with confusion and frustration as an individual learns to resolve the many differences that accompany the change event. However, it is also during ‘the neutral zone’ phase that significant opportunities for personal growth occur. By setting goals, an individual creates the opportunity for meaning-making.

Lastly, in ‘new beginnings’, individuals have developed new ways of thinking and being that are in alignment with their situation. Positivity, confidence and hope are common emotions. The learning and growth, which has accompanied the change event, is integrated.

PHASES OF INCARCERATION

Several key sequences occur during incarceration: *intake*, *settlement* and *pre-release*. These correspond with Bridges and Bridges (2009) stages of transition and offer a series of emotional challenges, as well as opportunities to maximize the potential for personal growth and minimize stressors. The general timelines can vary drastically depending on the incarcerated individual, their motivations and their sentence length. However, I will offer these differentiations. *Intake* includes the arrival to the institution and the subsequent months wherein the intake assessments and procedures required by the institution are completed. *Settlement* is the interim period after intake and before *pre-release*. During settlement individuals begin to navigate life within an institution whereby housing, programming, work, recreation and social interaction combine to offer each individual the opportunity to create their own agenda. *Pre-release* begins when an individual actively engages in release planning and preparation. Throughout these phases, it is necessary to access available supports to enhance meaning-making and ease transition.

Pillars of Support

To successfully manoeuvre transition, Bridges and Bridges (2009) note the necessity for proper internal and external supports. Developing and

accessing these supports is essential to success. There are three main pillars of support in the carceral environment – the personal, institutional and external – that can act as potentially powerful resources. The first component of this infrastructure is the personal, internal, aspect. An individual's attitude, fortitude and intentions are key elements. Developing the personal dimension of support requires a certain amount of emotional and behavioural self-awareness, along with a willingness to engage in self-reflection. The second element is institutional and includes the resources that are available to an individual during their incarceration. Engaging in the process of self-directed exploration and personal advocacy is necessary to take full advantage of the institutional resources at hand. External supports constitute the final element of the infrastructure, which include positive people and places that incarcerated people can rely on both during incarceration and post-release. Maximizing potential by using these supports, while navigating the emotionally charged journey of incarceration can afford an individual the unique opportunity for emotional growth and meaning-making within the carceral setting.

Putting It All Together

> We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into an achievement.
>
> – Frankl, 2006, p. 112

I now explore how the triads of Bridges and Bridges (2009) phases of transition, the stages of incarceration and pillars of support interrelate, as well as provide opportunity for finding meaning. This includes aspects of my own emotional experience traversing the carceral setting at Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVIW). It is critical to clarify that this paper focuses on a very particular carceral setting, GVIW – a federal institution with a multitude of established programs and resources. I offer only my own experience and belief in the possibility for positivity and meaning making which exists if, and only if, one decides to pursue it.

Intake and "letting go"

Carceral settings can be fraught with hopelessness and ennui. Often, i*ntake* is the most challenging period for many individuals. This phase corresponds to Bridges and Bridges (2009) 'letting go' stage and relies heavily on the personal component of the support infrastructure. Bridges and Bridges (2009) note that there can be a great sense of loss during the 'letting go' phase, when it is important to consciously acknowledge forfeiture of the past. Individuals must release what no longer serves them and shift from old belief systems, values, relationships, and ways of being. As mentioned earlier, this can be a frightening process. However, it does offer the opportunity to be courageous. Choosing the attitude of courage, despite what may seem to be hopeless and overwhelming circumstances, is something Frankl (2006) believes creates the space for meaning to arise. Individuals tend to try to make sense of their experience using an external frame of reference that is no longer applicable, a hindrance to growth within a paradigm that has shifted dramatically upon incarceration. I definitely felt the loss Bridges and Bridges (2009) allude to. Frustration, confusion and anger were prominent emotions, all of which are part of grieving. In my experience, I had to acknowledge the loss of my freedom, access to friends and family, livelihood, and many of the rights and privileges that accompanied life before incarceration. My previous experience with incarceration was outdated and vastly different from my current reality in the federal institution at GVIW. Around 20 years ago, when I was unhealthy, struggling with substance dependence and mental health concerns, I was in and out of provincial jail, and spent time in a Super Max facility in the United States where access to programs, community resources and supports was non-existent. My life was drastically different back then and my behaviour, mental health, values, and goals cannot compare to my current circumstances. Therefore, any preconceived notions or expectations of what jail life would be like, were useless. I am such a different person, physically, emotionally and spiritually, and in a very different stage of life, so those outdated notions no longer applied to my current situation.

There are many challenges in this first stage/phase – one must learn to navigate the system, access resources, and learn both the official, institutional rules and procedures, as well as the underlying social rules developed by the prison populace. I faced several unforeseen challenges during *intake*: lack of proper mental health support, including the cessation of all my mental health medications despite life-long documented proof

of prescriptions; lack of communication with loved ones, as getting phone access is an unnecessarily complicated and lengthy process at GVIW;[3] confusing administrative procedures and requirements; and, finally, the general learning curve of institutional life. For me, everything was unknown and uncertain, and I found myself bouncing around emotionally between anger, intense frustration, depression, high levels of anxiety, and hopelessness. Self-reflection became a critical practice throughout this period, helping me identify what strengths I had, as well as what negative feelings and thoughts to release. Transitions are stressful. Many internal and external factors contribute to stress levels. Attempting to decrease stress with manageable and controllable practices is vital. Exercise, yoga, meditation and proper nutrition are tools I have frequently used to help decrease stress in my life, so I implemented a daily regime to take advantage of their benefits. Self-study, writing, art, and journaling were tools I knew supported my well-being and helped to process some of the more difficult thoughts and feelings bombarding me, and so I made sure to include them in my daily schedule as well. Frustration, unhappiness, apathy and anger threatened to overtake me. I used the above-mentioned tools to enhance my personal strengths and keep negative emotions at bay. Typically, I am a positive, social person, who is adaptable, friendly, compassionate, outgoing and challenge-oriented. These are some of the strengths I needed to tap into to survive mentally. The willingness to embrace change, set goals and utilize resources is paramount for any successful transition, especially in a carceral setting. During the *intake* and 'letting go' phase I found it important to set small, highly achievable goals in order to build confidence and a sense of accomplishment. I used a tool developed by Jack Canfield (2005), The Rule of Five, which consists of setting five daily achievable goals. This is a particularly useful method for developing positive behaviours and I have used it since ceasing the use of problematic substances over 10 years ago. Here is an example of one of my Rule of Five lists. I attempt to accomplish all five every day and keep track of my success.

Star's Rule of Five:

1. Meditation (at least 20 mins)
2. Write/Journal
3. Create something (bead, paint, crochet, bake, etc.)
4. Exercise
5. Read

Using Canfield's resource as a tool can help to create daily structure and meaning. I choose goals that can assist me with managing my emotions and/or act as an outlet if I am feeling angry, frustrated, sad, or overwhelmed. I formulate my goals to ensure that my mind, body and spirit are addressed, and each day offers a new chance to accomplish these goals. This helps to enhance my self-worth, as well as nurture positive thoughts and behaviours.

Neutral Zone and Settlement

The 'neutral zone' and *settlement* phase allows for further growth and opportunities to find meaning. After making it through the turbulent and uncertain *intake* and 'letting go' phase I started to relax and feel more confident. I was achieving my daily goals and using self-reflection to monitor my emotional well-being. I knew more about what was expected of me socially and institutionally, learned what my correctional plan entailed, and settled into the rhythm of everyday institutional life. I no longer felt so overwhelmed. I made a conscious decision to further insulate myself from negative stressors and improve my quality of life by continuing to develop the personal tools I carry with me while beginning to access available institutional resources. I set new goals that encompassed broader objectives including employment and education. There is a variety of employment and education opportunities, as well as supplementary programs available in many federal institutions. These can be tailored to suit an individual's goals. My experience shows that it is in the quest of these options that meaning arises. I pursued multiple education opportunities, finishing two year-long college courses, three university credits and multiple in-house training sessions. I found institutional employment as a photographer, a position that allows me to do something I love while giving back to others. I am also learning to play the guitar, a life-long goal. These pursuits prove and further solidify the work and love aspects of Frankl's (2006) meaning-making triad. It is during the *settlement* and 'in between' phase that I chose to create additional meaning by sharing my passion for meditation, yoga, and fitness with fellow prisoners. I took the initiative to form several groups, teaching meditation and yoga respectively. I also started a fitness club, where women come together to share their experience each week, track their progress, and share recipes and workouts. I try my best to establish some modicum of routine and actively search for ways to spend my time productively. While I am not always successful and struggle to maintain motivation and discipline, courage and diligence keep me moving forward. I am constantly,

actively, involved in creating meaning in my life. When I am exercising, practicing yoga and meditation, learning, working and giving back to my community, I feel good about myself. I am calm, content and joyful. These actions operate as a buffer against what is often an oppressive and negative environment. The *settlement* or 'in between' process of setting goals, taking advantage of resources and using supports offers a wealth of options incarcerated people can access. Operationalized with courage, this becomes a catalyst for accomplishment, growth and self-development. I find that as time moves forward, the values, belief systems, and ways of being from the 'letting go' and *intake* phase have shifted, and I am ready to move into 'new beginnings' and prepare for my release.

New Beginnings

'New beginnings' is the third stage in Bridges and Bridges (2009) model and correlates with *pre-release*. The initial shock of *intake* / 'letting go' followed by the productive *settlement* / 'neutral zone' can prepare an individual for the final stages of *pre-release* / 'new beginnings'. This is the time when all the work an individual has put into their personal-growth, development and meaning making comes to fruition. New thoughts, behaviours and attitudes are integrated during this stage. As I await my upcoming parole date my emotional state is stable and positive – I feel confident and accomplished. My external supports, which I have cultivated throughout my incarceration experience, are in place to assist my reintegration into society. These supports include caring and healthy family members and friends, as well as external institutional supports and community resources. Setting new goals and preparing for the next major change event of release will flow more easily. Personally, I feel well prepared to move toward 'new beginnings' / *pre-release*. Through an awareness of the process, resources and the potential for meaning making, I have used the carceral experience to evolve.

CONCLUSION

> Even the victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may grow beyond himself, and by doing so change himself, he may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph.
>
> – Frankl, 2006, p. 146

It is the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering that matters most. Frankl (2006) called the ability to rise above hopeless situations courage. Incarcerated individuals are in a situation that cannot immediately change, therefore, we can choose to adopt an attitude that is positive and productive or we can give up and allow the circumstances to destroy us. As Frankl (2006, p. 112) observes, "When faced with unavoidable suffering, we are challenged to change ourselves". I chose to challenge myself throughout my incarceration and continue to do so by pursuing education fully, engaging in meaningful employment, accomplishing goals I set, and taking advantage of opportunities. I give back to my community by sharing my knowledge and experience in areas I am passionate about. This has created profound meaning for me during a difficult emotional time and space. Despite living in this rigid carceral environment, which seems designed to inhibit healthy emotional expression, I have attempted to be as positive and productive as possible. By focusing on supporting my mind, body, and spirit to manage my emotions and build self-esteem, I have reinforced practices that will advance my effectiveness and success upon release. I have done my best to take advantage of the available resources and, when more growth was needed, I created my own resources and made them available to others. I achieve the goals I set for myself, while assisting others in the creation and achievement of their own goals. Within the depths of my carceral situation, I hold tight to Frankl's (2006, p. 137) words, "*life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable"*, and in this I have created profound meaning.

ENDNOTES

[1] Ibogaine is a progressive treatment for substance dependence, traditionally used by the Bwiti tribe in Gabon, Africa as a sacrament. It has been adapted and used clinically in the treatment of substance use disorder (Brown, 2013).

[2] Ibogaine's longstanding status as a legal, natural health-care product, was changed in May 2017 when it was placed on the Prescription Drug List (PDL) without any formal notification to Canadian Ibogaine Providers. Until such a time as clinical trials have been completed, Ibogaine remains inaccessible for prescription in Canada. Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and the Bahamas are among some of the countries where Ibogaine therapy remains a viable option for those suffering from substance dependence issues (Government of Canada, 2017).

[3] Upon arrival at the institution, money must be uploaded to your phone account. If you had money in your provincial account, you must request to have it transferred to a phone account. This can take a week or more. After it arrives in your phone account

there is a phone upload every second Friday. If you miss the upload, you must wait another two weeks. If you did not have money in your account and are depending on someone sending money to you for the phone, they must be approved by the Institution via your parole officer. This can take a week or more. When an approved money order arrives, it must be processed through finance and then approved by your parole officer for deposit into your savings account. This can take a week or more. Then, you must send another request to have money moved from your savings account to your phone account. Meanwhile, you must submit a request to have individuals added to your phone list. Each person must be contacted by the institution and is approved only after verbal confirmation of your relationship. If no contact is made after three attempts, you must resubmit another request for that individual. In my own experience, it took two months before I was able to communicate freely with my family and friends.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Star Morrison is 48-year-old writer, artist, life-long learner and advocate. Her lived experience provides a rich and unique lens on the complexities of mental health, substance use, and the penal system. Her incarceration gave her the opportunity to reflect and apply frameworks for understanding the challenge of transitioning through different phases of imprisonment and how women struggle through them. Currently, Star is completing her Master's in Counselling Psychology with the goal to integrate her learnings and support others.

A PAWSitive Connection

Todd Ramsum

To give you a little background on me, I'm a drug addict who's coming up to being six years sober. I'm an ex-convict who has spent 10 years plus in prisons and in jails. I choose to use these words today to describe myself.

I started with petty crimes, and moved up to running drugs and getting involved with gangs. Thinking back, the only thing that was consistent with that lifestyle was being an addict. As soon as my drug use stopped, so did my way of thinking. I got sober in prison and not for just one reason. There were a couple of big ones.

First, I almost died on the floor of the prison, where there were so many overdoses in such a short period of time, they didn't have any Narcan® left to use on me. Luckily, a guard gave me CPR until the ambulance arrived. Afterward, even though I threw up into my lungs, giving me aspirated pneumonia to go along with my freshly broken ribs, I was happy to be alive.

Second, is the reason I'm standing here today. That is, the Dog Therapy program that came to Drumheller, offered by Drs. Colleen Dell and Darlene Chalmers. It wasn't long after my overdose that three dogs, along with the activities we did in the dog therapy program, changed the mind set you get into in a place like prison.

The therapy dog interactions were relaxed, loving and genuine. The closest thing I could relate this to was being with family or friends and getting that necessary support. The unique thing about the support they provided as dogs, compared to humans, was it felt 100 percent unconditional. It didn't matter what I looked like or where I was, like in prison. They didn't know my past and didn't care. They didn't instantly judge me. So, I felt connected to them, connected in a way that helped me feel unconditionally loved and relaxed. No pressure. I could say absolutely anything to them, they didn't care what I said and I felt they cared about me.

The program supported me through my remaining two plus years in prison and ever since with letters and pictures, written by the dogs of course. This was important to my wellness. It made me feel that I still had the dogs in my corner and the therapy dog handlers in my corner too. Sometimes pictures would arrive when I wasn't having the best day or week and it would just remind me of how far I have come. It fueled my spirit by reassuring me that everything that I was working on, whether it was getting sober or whatever, I had support for. The dogs were a constant in my life when I didn't have many constants, except for being locked-up.

It was important to have a program in the prison that was based in the community because the handlers and the dogs didn't have to be there. They chose to be there. This was important because it isn't a required Correctional Service Canada (CSC) program. It isn't a 'cookie cutter program' you take as you're getting 'pushed through the factory system'. Instead, it's a human and animal-based program that is made for you and that has caring at its foundation. I didn't have to be there. It wasn't a CSC mandated program. I didn't think it counted toward my parole or anything like that. I wanted to be there. I stayed sober inside during the rest of my time and have maintained my sobriety since then, which is nearly four years ago.

Since I've gotten out, I've stayed in contact and even began working with Dr. Mela, Dr. Dell and others to do my part – to try to help them help others. Unfortunately, my story is few and far between. Once you have hit prison it's rock bottom or at least it feels like it. That's why there needs to be more of this type of program – providing unconditional support and where you can be who you really are and feel what you really feel.

Having outside programs come into the prison breaks down that barrier of staff versus prisoners, and I believe all people respond better. Staff can have empathy in prison and care about you, and there are staff that are genuinely helpful, but they're there to do a job. Like I said, the therapy dog program didn't have to be there, they didn't have to support me and that makes a difference. Having the dogs support me, alongside their owners, made me feel like somebody else actually cared. Coming to that dangerous environment, and wanting to help us get better and see value in our lives. It was the real thing.

Many of us who find ourselves in prison have had traumatic histories and, too often, not filled with kindness and love. The prison environment does not help with this – it's isolating. It isolates you from your supports, if you have them, and your true self. There are always expectations in prison too. The animals only have one – that you show them kindness and love. It's a safe place to be in, to be with the animals, in a generally unsafe place. This helps with feeling again – feeling like you matter – to yourself and to others.

I also believe one of the main reasons people fail to break the cycle is that many come into prison and have no everyday life skills. Something as simple as finding a family doctor, doing laundry or cooking a proper meal is challenging if they've never been taught. These men and women also need more work skills to succeed. I know it'll be said that there's a metal shop

and textiles, and the like that you can get involved in, but if you count the actual number of people who get to go through those programs you'll see what I mean.

We're never going to stop people from going to prison, I don't think, but once they make it there the first time, they need to be given a real chance instead of going out worse off than when they went in, which is often the case. I feel this way because I've been through it too many times myself. We need to help build them back-up, their self-confidence, not the opposite. For me, it was nice to let my guard down and be around an animal that is honest, accepting, and loves unconditionally. With my guard down, I could focus on healing. I could feel what it feels like to be me – the happiness, the sadness and the pain.

The staff needs to bridge connections, and be more sympathetic and empathetic. Corrections needs to realize that every case is different. This means we can't just be pushed through the cookie cutter programs and expect things to be different on the other end. There needs to be more psychiatrists and psychologists to help 'broken people' stop using drugs and come back. The majority of prisoners are in there for doing something while high or to get high. From experience it could take up to six months to see a doctor in prison.

I know personally from the cycle that I was in, it was because I did not care about myself. I was basically committing social suicide slowly. Sometimes I wondered if it'd be helpful if convicts met victims of similar types of crimes they've been convicted for. If they saw the human damage and how it affected the victims, it might change how they thought.

This leads me to my last topic, making that transition out of prison. People think when you get released you have all these resources, but most of the time you're kicked out with $100 to your name and nowhere to turn. In many cases you can't go back to your home and family because of the location where you were criminalized and you end-up in a place where you don't have anyone. This is never good.

I think getting released starts inside. People need help reconnecting with families and working on forgiveness, while finding the proper continued community support. These things can happen with help through a parole officer or coordinator inside prison before a person is released.

What really helped me was the support from the therapy dog program, because it didn't end when they left the prison! They still cared long after I

was out and still do to this day. I remember calls and receiving pictures at the halfway house, sharing in the dogs' lives and even their deaths. It was an opportunity to connect and feel. If we could find that support for people we would have more people standing here today, alongside me, outside the prison walls.

Having that support made me want to reconnect with my family who I'd pushed away from the shame I felt. What connecting with the therapy dogs specifically did for me in reconnecting with my family was first, it gave me a little bit of confidence. Then, you want to get that unconditional love from your family that they are supposed to give you. You experienced it a bit with the dogs and you want more. You want it with your family. It was a rolling hill effect. You want to continue that relationship whether it was with the dog or your family. Like I said, you want more.

I love those dogs – they hold a special place in my heart for sure. I learned from them that I was lovable. It goes back to the self-worth you don't feel in prison or while using drugs – you don't care about yourself. Thinking about the dogs as family makes you realize and remember one time you had connections, at least it did for me, and I wanted to experience them again.

Today, I have many human and animal supports in my life. It feels good, and real. Getting sober played a major part in me breaking the cycle. If we give people hope at a life when they get out and better chances they will stay sober, then they won't want to lose what they have. At least that's how it was for me. I now have a job taking care of commercial properties, with employees and a lot of responsibilities. Can you believe they gave me keys to all these stores? Just kidding!

One positive connection was built off of another. Now, I have a network around me that keeps me from falling back. This includes my dog Winnie. We're hoping to become a therapy dog team in our community when she turns one. She's such an angel and so well behaved. Everyone loves her! So many people offer to watch her when I need somebody. If I can help other people with her that would be fantastic. I know she would love it!

I have family members, friends and others who rely on me, and that I rely on to help keep me straight and healthy. Feeling cared for and caring for others is something that should come naturally, it's essential to successful reintegration for prisoners. After being inside for so many years, it's lonely

and as I said isolating. Being a 'nobody' just becomes a part of who you are. But you, I, everyone, deserves more.

You need to try safe ways to reconnect with others. Caring for and feeling cared for by the animals helped promote my reintegration. It helped me to feel my emotions, go through them and practice them, in a safe way. And this is going to sound cheesy, but what's made me want to live free is the love and support I've built around me. It's what has kept me enjoying life and keeps me going. Thank you again Dr. Mela, Dr. Dell, Dr. Chalmers and the therapy dogs, those past and present. You believed in me, so thank you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Todd Ramsum has had a whirlwind of a life. It has been full of trauma and choices, both contributing to a cycle of addiction and federal incarceration. During his last prison term, Todd stopped caring about his life and whether he lived or died, until he overdosed and nearly lost his life. This was the start of his recovery journey. He attended various programs, the most impactful of which was the PAWSitive Support prison program. The program reminded him of his love for dogs, demonstrated to him that he was still capable of love, and the dogs loved him in return. Today, Todd is reunited with his estranged childhood family, lives with two amazing dogs, and has a beautiful family that takes care of him and he them. Todd attributes his healthy lifestyle today to the support of both humans and animals alike.

Emotions Are Ours as Humans: The No Apology, Apology

Cathee

The moment I saw the look on my caseworker's face, after just hours ago she sat in front of me beaming with pride of knowledge, unrequited, brand-new gossip about another client in my halfway house, I knew something was wrong. Having to read the energy in my space was a survival technique I learned in prison and now… it was useful to prepare to protect myself from a breach of parole. I will refer to her as "Staff" for the remainder of my story.

Earlier in the day, this sunny, gossipy, news spreading staff member was joyfully engaging in a storytelling session with me. As I took my medication, Staff launched into an emotionally charged diatribe regarding how one of my cohorts on parole had missed several call-ins and that person's parole officer (P.O.) had yelled at her. I said as little as possible as again. My anxiety about being the person Staff was regaling this tale to, meant that I had to look interested and grateful for the information. As she confided in me, while taking and signing for my medication, I wanted to get out of there as fast as I could. I needed her not to notice that I was rushing, which may alert her to possible dissension in her ranks, a disapproval of her breach of privacy. Staff was also my caseworker. She had the power and flexed it constantly.

My emotions were weaponized in this environment, by those who hold the power to abjectly affect my parole. They were used to control me, keep me wondering what would happen next and had me fearing the possibility of being sent back to prison. The surveillance is such that I am constantly watched so as, like a competition, the winner could report my alleged wrongdoings and use it against me. If I was angry, it was inappropriate with the promise of the sacred phrase "what could you have done differently?" produced with a veiled threat of calling my P.O. If I was sad, staff needed to know why and assessed my stability as varying from "baseline". Being excited is suspicious as I could be over-inflating the experience only to be let down. Staff intervention was warranted, in their opinion, in these instances as they do not want to "set me up for a fall"... any joy quelled and paranoia, front and centre. It is a complicated game of compartmentalization and manipulation, used to seem "stable" in the eyes of the halfway house and by proxy, Correctional Service Canada (CSC). I could feel the anxiety vomit rising in my diaphragm and it hurt. It still hurts. After all those years in prison and assuming that the burning of fear would stop when I was

released, was a delusion of the Nth degree. Halfway houses continue the party line. That was a bummer.

The office in the halfway house sits directly off the living room and kitchen. There is no privacy. We take meds in that office, our names and curfews are posted in that office, people's real names are announced constantly, even after a legal name change has been purchased. There is a sense of walking on eggshells and every conversation is personally surveilled. You cannot say "trigger" or staff will call you in for wanting to use drugs. You cannot talk about your plans, dreams and hopes as they will be recorded, scrutinized, and recategorized into something never said. Going to the office, kitchen or living room is a place where I am on guard. I feel like I am in the prison yard on a bad day, where the energy is off, the laughter is tight and sporadic, and the talking heads are listening – always listening.

In the kitchen on the day I am highlighting, I was talking to one of my friends. She told me that one of the girls we were on parole with, was on TV. She had gone on the run and they had shown her mugshot on the news. I remember it was close to Valentine's Day, 2022. The news had showcased several parolees that were on the run and flashed their mugshots under the heading *Least Wanted Valentines of 2022,* or something of that nature. I said my piece about how disgusting the media can be with their sensationalism of pain and desperation, and went to my room.

Sometime later, Staff entered my room. I was behind the door hanging my clothing and she scrunched my toe with the door. This person did not knock. She never knocked. I was instantly upset. I had not had a place to belong in such a long time and this was not it either. This room was theirs, not mine, to the point of Staff feeling entitled enough to walk in without a knock. I used to cry about this. I am no one and have nowhere. I still cry about this. I am crying about this now. I am wondering how long it will be before I can go to the bathroom and use the toilet or have a shower without someone knocking, yelling "doing checks". My heart physically tightens because the thought of that answer being "forever" is a suicidal ideation inducing prospect.

This time, when Staff came into my room, I knew something serious was happening by the look on her face and her semi-lethal, toxic energy wafting about her person. I took several steps away from her and became very aware of my body. My brain instantly bolted into action. Neutral expression on

my face. OK. Check. No balled-up hands. OK. Check. Even breathing and relaxed looking shoulders. OK. Check. Am I a threat? I do not think so. OK. Check. Emotional and physical regulation are crucial. I have been called aggressive for leaning in during a conversation. Cue internal rage and external nothingness of personal presence available for scrutiny. OK. I was ready.

Staff entered my room and closed my door. We were alone. OK. Not ready. Panic set in and I kept doing my internal checklist of my external impression over and over while she talked. She stood in front of my closed door giving me no way out of my room, while seeming to fill the space with her power and authority. She could say I did anything, said anything and "they" would believe her. My brain was scanning the room mourning the loss of the things I had acquired and the smell of my perfume, the tint of my soft green light. My heart felt the devastating thud of having to tell my mom I was breached and I am back inside for whatever Staff was going to make up about me, if I did not handle the following conversation in a manner becoming of a contrite parolee. I could feel the back of my tongue starting to twitch and concentrated on not having that movement betray the steadiness of my jaw. I was so scared.

She proceeded to tell me there was a zero-tolerance policy for gossiping as gossiping leads to a toxic environment in the house. OK. I had no idea what she was talking about. I thought she was trying to ask me not to repeat what she said about the parolee and her parole officer. I was so confused. The confusion turned into disbelief and disgust when Staff said that my conversation regarding the Valentine's Day news story was inappropriate. She said "We don't act like that here. I'd advise you to scrape the prison off of you, now". I was devastated. The irony was massive and obvious, yet Staff still came into my room, shut the door, and spoke those words with authority and conviction. Do you know what I said?

"I'm sorry".

She carried on for a bit longer as I tried to control my tears. It felt like the biggest gaslighting experience I have had in a while was taking place in a room I could not get out of. I had a powerful person who could send me back to jail in a snap of her beautifully manicured fingers after having a casual conversation in the kitchen of the halfway house and I was imploding

inside. My throat was eating my heart which was sliding into my tummy, and it all was a mess and why did I get out anyway and how stupid was I to think that I would matter and speak freely sometimes, and the world is a lie, and I hate it here and I'm going to jump in front of the SkyTrain now. She left. She left and I cried. I cried and I cried, and I had a shower, did my makeup (in case I survived), got dressed and signed-out to ride the SkyTrain. Earlier in the year, I got permission to ride the train from end to end because it was the only place that I was anonymous. It calmed me. It still does. Luckily. Because that day, I was not going to ride the SkyTrain. I was going to die by the SkyTrain.

I did not die that day. I did not have the courage to end my life. I am grateful now as I am wiser to the ways of the house and limit my engagement as much as possible. I see the new women come to reside and I see some of them go back. I do not voice my opinions and I keep my existence as quiet as possible. There is no safe way to live there, only strategies to mitigate the damage that emotions can cause to my wellbeing and freedom. Nausea reigns supreme as the mental, emotional and physical stress of hiding is excruciating and makes me physically ill. I must tell myself there may be an end to this someday. I do not believe that, but I tell myself anyway.

I have trouble writing these things sometimes because I am convinced that I am sensitive or dramatic or the plethora of other things that prison and halfway house people use to discredit and abuse me through my natural human emotions. I would like to not apologize for my emotions, while saying sorry to everyone that has experienced our emotions being weaponized. Brilliant tactic really. Sometimes people do not make it and the government saves some money. Huzzah.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathee is a researcher, public speaker, facilitator and a solution-oriented thinker. She is passionate about guiding attitudes away from long standing stigmas regarding marginalized people through education. Cathee has over two decades of lived experience with the Canadian prison system. She uses this experience to knowledge share and advocate in her work.

Prison is a Trap

K WooDZ

As a 19-year-old Black, queer, young adult – because I was a kid at that time mentally, I had no understanding about anything with respect to my rights or how the federal prison system operates. I was thrown into a federal prison with many barriers already, such as systemic racism, oppression and mental health to name a few. I was left to swim or drown depending on how I operated as an "inmate". This was my first charge at that. Yes, I did the crime and was punished by the law. When you are raised in a low-income neighbourhood with barely any community resources or jobs available to you, the survival instinct kicks into place to sustain and feed yourself. I could go on and on about what it means to be a Black, queer, woman in Canada or the world for that matter, but I will not.

I never expected to come out of prison a few years later as a drug addict, institutionalized, scarred from self-harming and just completely lost. There was no rehabilitation or reform for that matter. I was another statistic in the prison system. I was released and completely fell-down, flat on my face, set-up to violate my parole, reoffend and end right back where I was just released from. If you cannot control them, hey, why not cage them like animals?

I was more educated on how to further self-destruct. I had no support to get a job with a federal criminal record or to find a place to live. I was told to do anger management as a part of my parole as I was a danger to "society", but no one considered my mental health nor was I aware I was suffering from mental health issues and addiction, or even offered support or direction to sustain myself. I had a federal criminal record with violence, but was I violent? Absolutely not. I was a young adult, growing-up in poverty and was a product of my environment. I was trying to find a way to survive and made the wrong choices. If I did not have my family putting up with my shit for the next few years, I would be dead or back in jail – and that's exactly where I ended up, back in jail. Where is the rehabilitation for incarcerated people that offers sustainability once we are released?

Black and Indigenous people are mass incarcerated in Canada. This is borne out in the statistics, which in 2020-2021 revealed that "9% of offenders under federal jurisdiction (in custody or under community supervision) were Black, despite only representing about 4% of adults in Canada", while "Indigenous people make up about 32 per cent of the federal prison population, despite accounting for less than five per cent of the total

population" (Zinger, 2021). That year, Indigenous women accounted "for 48 per cent of the population in women's prisons" (Zinger, 2021).

The systemic racist system targets Black and Indigenous people, who in Canada are marginalized, oppressed and in poverty, with the government enforcing extreme measures to house us in prison. For example, examine the history of the Prison for Women (P4W) where seven women died by suicide between 1988-1993, due to the harsh conditions inside. Six of the seven women were Indigenous (Arbour, 1997; Hansen, 2018). We can also examine the police murdering Black and Indigenous people – the same police who lock-up Black and Indigenous people they are killing them (Maynard, 2017). This is the same system that has racially oppressed us for over 400 years and this is the same people who control and run the prison system!? Who do these slave masters answer to? No one, but themselves. Who do the correctional officers answer to when a situation happens? What is the policy and procedure when a prisoner suffers from mental health issues and is killed at the hands of "corrections"? Who is held accountable for the fragile at-risk lives of these human beings who are incarcerated?

I was targeted upon arrival to prison. Another statistic set-up for failure. The prison had no Black culture representation groups, classes or education at the time. If I ordered too many Black hair products for my hair we would get raided and the dogs would come in, assuming we had drugs. I was randomly piss tested for being high all the time until eventually I started to become what they wanted me to be. They projected and I accepted – again the "trap". Set-up for the colour of my skin assuming the worst and acting upon it. I had institutional charges coming out my ass. I had my visits and phone calls taken away at one point, until I stopped communicating with the outside world that I was no longer a part of. If they could not use that against me, they could not control my mind and my spirit. I became young Black and did not give a fuck. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) was trained to breakdown the mind and spirit of those locked-up by doing the bare minimum to support them, while treating them like animals.

They did not even have the respect to call you by your first name, like the ADULT they classified you as upon conviction and sentencing. These harmful treatments break the spirit and control the mind, if you allow it. They did not care if you had lived in poverty or had addictions and had been abused, raped, starved, and lacked education as to why you ended up there in the first place. To them you were just another number. They opened

those wounds you came in with and spit on them to force you to become worse. They did not see you as a human being. You were on the other side, and you were there to be controlled and punished by an outdated model of prison rehabilitation.

The dehumanizing treatment by CSC made us feel like caged animals. This treatment created a danger of turning a wounded animal into a predator upon release. The system and especially the prison system has always been a trap designed to keep the oppressed poor, lost, and on the road to death. The attitude seems to be "just lock them up and hide them from society", instead of finding an inclusive equal solution for all people and not just the wealthiest one percent. The prison system that is enforced by the judicial and police institutions is designed to keep people in poverty, deeming them as a threat to society. The common adage is "You do the crime, you do the time", but what about the effects of trauma, segregation, institutionalization, marginalization and isolation? Is the prison system not contributing to the trauma, mental health issues, addiction and psychological, mental, physical, and emotional abuse of those it is locking-up? If the purpose of locking-up an individual that is convicted for a crime is to punish them while removing them from society if they are considered a threat, how does it make any logical sense to inflict more trauma upon the individual without reform or rehabilitation?

How do CSC cognitive behavioural programs, lack of cultural programs and limited employment inside a Canadian prison help an individual's reintegration back into society? Without the necessary therapeutic healing, education and economic support until people gain employment and eventually secure a record suspension, community re-entry is extremely challenging. Without these crucial steps for survival, an individual is set up for failure and returned to a pattern of the same cycles of poverty and crimes of survival that led them to prison.

Prison is a trap for you to return to that cage. In 2024, prison is like modern day slavery. Nothing has changed from 400 years ago until now. As Malcolm X once said (cited in Clarke, 1995):

> If you're born in America with a Black skin, you're born in prison, and the masses of Black people in America today are beginning to regard our plight or predicament in this society as one of a prison inmate… While I was in prison, I was indulging in all types of vice, right within the prison.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kamilah "K WooDZ" Haywood is an active speaker, panelist and facilitator. Writing is part of their purpose, having published four books with Kya Publishing since 2014. K WooDZ is co-founder of The International Writers Workshop, Find Your Voice and Warrior Women Winning workshops with Toronto Urban Book Expo. Find Your Voice is currently being facilitated in the correctional institution Grand Valley Institution for Women as a literature program for the women currently incarcerated there. They are also founder of W.A.R productions as a Producer and Director with five music videos to date. In 2023, K WooDZ released their first song "Drowning", a song about suffering with addiction and mental health, featuring Kalyssa. Their second single was released in 2023 called "I can't breathe", which is a song about suffocating from mental health, addiction and suicide. Currently, they are a member of the board of directors at both Rittenhouse and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto, as well as the Canadian Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee based at the University of Ottawa. As a person with lived experience of mental health, addiction, homelessness, incarceration and trauma, K WooDZ uses their work as a form of therapy, expression, and to raise awareness and give a voice to anyone who has or is living with these social issues.

RESPONSE

Carceral Power and Emotions: A Reflection

Kevin Walby

Focusing on emotions in research and writing can help to reveal moments of injustice and legacies of inequity in our society. Despite the importance of emotions to meaning and wellbeing, there are many mechanisms of control in everyday life that discourage us from sharing emotions or talking about them. This kind of silencing or muting effect when it comes to emotions are experienced tenfold inside the prison walls. It is therefore hugely important to examine emotions in carceral spaces, as well as in response to criminalization. What the writings in this special issue show is that carceral spaces are a mechanism of hyper-control, one that discourages people from being their whole selves (also see Fayter, 2023). The prison pathologizes emotions as a main mechanism for reproducing its institutional power and justifying countless punitive 'get tough' laws and policies. Focusing on emotions in carceral spaces and control of emotions or pathologization of emotions is therefore crucial for critical inquiry, as it reveals the injustices of carceral power and the inequality that prison and jails foment.

I am not someone who has personally experienced criminalization or incarceration. I have been active with the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) for about 15 years. Before that, I was active with Books 2 Prisoners. And for the last decade I have been involved in Walls to Bridges education in Winnipeg on Treaty One Territory. Walls to Bridges, Inside-Out, and other programs like this offering post-secondary classes inside carceral spaces are really doing transformative work with education. In these different roles over the years, I have encountered the carceral effect on emotions in person, in class, on the phone, in letters. Reading this issue, I have thought of those moments, some that had slipped my mind, and I am thankful to these authors for surfacing those memories. This is the background I bring to understanding this topic and that I brought to engaging with the articles in this *JPP* issue.

In my career as a researcher, I have also written a little bit about emotions. In my research I have found that emotions can motivate people to undertake difficult tasks and do important work in their communities (Enkhtugs & Walby, 2024). I have found that emotions can help bind people together

and foster solidarity (Walby & Spencer, 2018). The emotions that people experience are also felt in relation to places and objects (Walby & Spencer, 2012a). I have learned that people are asked to perform emotions in certain settings according to specific feeling rules in those sites (Walby & Spencer, 2020; Goodrum & Stafford, 2003) and that this experience is germane to people in capitalist societies across the globe. I have also explored the intersection of prisoner peer mentoring and emotions in a Canadian prison (Walby & Cole, 2021, 2019). However, emotions in relation to criminal justice are most often part of panics that feed into forms of regulation and social control (Walby & Spencer, 2012b; Karstedt, 2002; De Haan & Loader, 2002). Often, emotions are turned against people who the state and corporations treat as outcasts or 'others' – the 'monsters'. There is a lot of scapegoating of criminalized people and there is a lot of hate projected toward incarcerated people, which continues to animate policing and punitive law across Canada and the United States (see Persak, 2019; Bandes, 2016; Canton, 2015; Freiberg & Carson, 2010; Pillsbury, 1988).

As the issue editors note in their introduction, there are numerous definitions of emotions in scholarly literature, but one constant is that space and place shape how emotions are understood and experienced. Space and place provide certain conditions and rules for how emotions can be experienced and shared. When one realizes that the prison really is a site of extreme deprivation and isolation, almost an anti-place (also see Horii, 1989), one starts to understand that emotions are experienced and treated very different within carceral sites. One other point that is important to note is that most of the literature in this research area of prisons and emotions focuses on guards and staff, hence the importance of platforming the perspectives of people with lived experience of criminalization and incarceration.

Examining the intersection of emotions and carceral space is a main theme of this issue. The paper "Emotional Perspectives from Carceral Spaces and Beyond" by Ronnice Giscombe, Wes Guzylak, Ogo Esenwah, Varina Gurdyal and Nadia Judunath analyzes how space and place shape the expression of emotions inside carceral sites. It becomes clear that prisons are spaces that deter emotions, that emotions can attract harm from staff or other folks doing time, and so the suppression of emotion becomes an essential means of survival inside (also see Laws & Crewe, 2016). The authors also reflect on Walls to Bridges as a platform for personal

and emotional growth. The voices of people who have experienced the emotionally paralyzing effects of the criminal justice apparatus ring true in this piece and throughout the other papers as well.

Another paper showing this effect that the prison has on emotions is "Education, Gossip and Social Carcerality: Contesting the Liminal Spaces Between Incarcerated Body and Incarcerated Mind" by Billie Cates and Gerty B. The authors focus on the segmentation and sequestration of the prison and the effect this has on social networks and emotions. Poor treatment by staff leads to low self-worth among imprisoned people (also see Bourque, 1988). Among the most egregious forms of isolation the prison exacts on the people it warehouses is banning of mourning of the death of a loved one outside. The authors argue that institutionalization leads to alienation from the self. Carceral spaces do not encourage people to have a healthy relationship with their own emotions and punish people further if they do show emotion. The authors argue that prison education provides a reprieve from the isolation and deprivation, and therefore the politics of prison education can be seen as critical and abolitionist insofar as they provide an alternative to the barren emotional landscape of the prison.

The skillful analysis of emotions in carceral sites continues with "À fleur de peau: An In-depth Look at Two Strategies of Handling Emotion in French Prisons" by Y.E., Hannah Davis and H.W. The authors communicate the palpable fear that most people experience inside, as well as reflect on the physical and mental health ramifications of that fear. There is almost no outlet for expressing emotions other than those that the prison itself will pathologize. Under these conditions, anger can mount and circulate. People must wear an emotional mask or perform emotion work to cope under these austere conditions. These authors also describe how making connections or showing care carries risk in the prison space, including risks of reprisal and risks of pathologization from staff. For this reason, people inside are on edge and extremely sensitive at all times.

The experience of emotions in carceral spaces is full of ups and downs. Reflecting on this cycle in "The Power of Meaning", the author – Star Morrison – traces out the role of emotions throughout the multiple stages of imprisonment, from intake to settlement to pre-release. There are many tricky moments of arbitrary control throughout the system (also see Lauzon, 1989). Star Morrison shares some techniques for navigating this system and techniques for being settled in a system that is fundamentally designed to unsettle the self. This is a call for life and hope against all the mechanisms

of the criminal justice apparatus that seek to dampen life and hope. The author argues that people inside need to find ways of making meaning, which is difficult in carceral spaces designed to inhibit life and meaning.

It is a political and policy choice of the executives and middle managers to make the prison so austere. Proof of this, the paper "A PAWSitive Connection" by Todd Ramsum, provides details on a program organized by volunteers and offered in select prisons. This is the dog or canine therapy program. This program allows people who have been inside, sometimes for decades, to interact with dogs, sharing affection and care with them. This is a healing experience. The emotions we share with animals are as positive and efficacious as those we share with humans (Walby & Doyle, 2009). The author describes the effect of the therapy dog program as helping him to feel again. It is a humanizing experience in a carceral space that is purposefully designed to be dehumanizing. The author argues this program is helpful in allowing people to feel like whole persons again that it should be expanded and offered everywhere.

The damage that carceral sites inflict on people and communities can never really be undone. Reflecting on this, in the paper "Emotions Are Ours as Humans: The No Apology, Apology", the author Cathee focuses on how emotions are weaponized in the carceral environment. In biographic detail, the author describes how weaponization of emotions leads to personal damage that lingers on for years even after release. The conditions of experience of emotions inside persist and permeate the self, and become a form of trauma one must wrestle with for the rest of their lives.

Another important issue is that emotions are treated differently depending on who is expressing them (Ahmed, 2014). "Prison is a Trap" by K WooDZ examines the intersection of race and emotions in Canadian prisons. At many carceral sites, race continues to be at the centre of disputes and abject abuse from staff. As a Black prisoner, the author was targeted for reprisals and further punishment in ways that layered trauma upon their experience of inequity from growing up in poverty and experiencing police profiling for years. It is a story of surviving the racism of the criminal justice apparatus. It is also an account that will be all too familiar for Black and Indigenous peoples in Canada who have been subjected to abuse inside carceral sites as a mechanism of control. Furthermore, what it reveals is that the physical and emotional damage that the criminal justice apparatus does to Black and Indigenous peoples is and always has been the main facet of settler colonialism.

I am thankful to the authors for sharing their critical and provocative writings. What we learn is immense. We learn that the carceral power of the state relies on harvesting emotions of criminalized people, to pathologize them, to further animate the caricatures and stereotypes of the ‘risky’, the ‘criminal’, the ‘dangerous’ that the criminal justice apparatus requires to justify its existence. It is a cycle, and the pathologization of emotions by carceral entities as well as their psychologists feeds both the cycle and the system. We hear that the criminal justice apparatus continues to deprive people of basic human connections and dignity. We learn the imprisoned people must perform emotion work to simply survive one day to the next (also see Greer, 2002). We learn that guards seek to exact extra-judicial punishment on prisoners simply for the expression of emotion. And we learn that there are some people who have not given up, who offer unique programs and initiatives, who seek to foster connections, solidarity, and personal growth. Emotions are pivotal in this too.

I am especially thankful to the authors for doing the work of being brave enough to share their emotions in carceral spaces that prey on punishing vulnerability. I have seen many times that imprisoned people and even prison staff inside who demonstrate that they care, are further punished by the system, further segregated, further dehumanized. The demonizing of emotions behind bars operates to replicate the whole penal institution and the broader criminal justice apparatus. May these writings here contribute to a non-carceral future for all.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Walby, PhD is Professor of Criminal Justice and Director of the Centre for Access to Information and Justice (CAIJ) at the University of Winnipeg. He is co-author of *Police Funding, Dark Money, and the Greedy Institution* (Routledge, 2022), as well as co-editor of *Disarm, Defund, Dismantle: Police Abolition in Canada* (BTL Press, 2022) and *Changing of the Guards: Private Influences, Privatization, and Criminal Justice in Canada* (UBC Press, 2022). Kevin is also Co-editor of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*.

Call for Contributions: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Prisoners' Justice Day

Abolition Coalition

Eddie Nalon died alone in a segregation cell in Millhaven maximum-security penitentiary located in Kingston, Ontario, Canada on August 10th, 1974. A year later, Prison Justice Day (PJD) was first observed by imprisoned people held in the same Canadian federal penitentiary who engaged in a one-day hunger and work strike in support of their demands to end solitary confinement and other injustices behind bars (Gaucher, 1991). Since then, PJD – now more commonly known as Prisoners' Justice Day (see, for example, "Petey", 2011) – has been marked by people inside and outside prison walls across the world who are demanding change.

To commemorate the lives lost to human caging, take stock of the current deadly situation in sites of confinement, and organize for change in solidarity for justice and abolition across prison walls, PJD will be commemorated for the 50th time on August 10th, 2025. To mark this milestone in prisoner solidarity organizing, the Abolition Coalition invites testimonials and demands for change from imprisoned people that will be shared during the sixth edition of PJD TV that will air that day from 6:00pm to 11:00pm ET on the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project's Facebook page (@CPEPgroup). The event will also feature live and recorded footage from local PJD events across the country, as well as interviews with criminalized people and community organizers to raise awareness about the violence of imprisonment and alternatives to human caging that, when resourced adequately, can help us keep each other safe.

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PJD TESTIMONIAL AND DEMAND SUBMISSIONS

Via email to jpp@uottawa.ca or by mail to the address below:

Abolition Coalition
c/o Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
120 University Private – Room 14049
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
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BOOK REVIEWS

The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting a Writer's Life in Prison by Caits Meissner (2022) Chicago: Haymarket Books, 339 pp.

Reviewed by David Morales Zenquis

To some, the art of writing is not new. To others, it is an unfathomable being. People within the system attempting to pursue the craft know that in a volatile environment like prison, there is no effective way to achieve this unless there is an instructor available or a mailroom-approved piece of literature – and this is where Caits Meissner's book comes in.

The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting a Writer's Life in Prison is the latest installment from PEN America, one of the nation's largest organizations that advocates for literature, free expression and human rights. It is an overhaul of its revered predecessor, *Handbook for Writers in Prison* (PEN America, 2010). This new 2022 version bares the same creative writing concepts along with their imperative theoretical foundations – poetry, fiction, nonfiction screen writing, drama, rewriting /revision, grammar/ punctuation, and resources – while bringing its own concepts to the mix such as a chapter on journalism that contains its own writing techniques and guidance on pitching ideas to magazines and other outlets, as well as a chapter on graphics narrative detailing the art of comics as a storytelling medium. These chapters are a valuable addition to the existing entourage of lessons, giving insight to the reader on a visual art medium that can be used for self-expression and an ever-growing field in the writing world that can become a working opportunity if the reader gives it dedication.

Where this book really thrives, though, is in Meissner's ability to ensure that each section is weaved with the power of storytelling – the same power she wants the reader to learn. Each chapter is composed by a dedicated author who has interacted with the Criminal Justice System in some way (e.g. formerly incarcerated, currently incarcerated, or outside volunteer/ advocate), and they describe their selected writing category in an easy-to-understand step-by-step process, allowing readers of any educational background to participate and give hope a chance. Yet the second part of the book, *Crafting a Writer's Life in Prison*, is the heart (and title) of this innovative work. This section contains detailed accounts on how the authors managed to be published inside prison, outside of prison, how they battle

the stigma of a criminal record, how to compose manuscripts, how to use writing for grieving and advocacy, and more. This is where *The Sentences That Create Us* excels – in showing incarcerated readers the triumphs of those similarly situated and how creative writing can become a lifeline.

Overall, this latest installment goes beyond the scope of its predecessor. It demonstrates the basics (and then some) of creative writing affluently, with various examples and exercises along the way, all from the voices of the oppressed and sympathizers – it details how these people made their success possible through the art of writing. If there is anything it lacks, is the demand and usage by the free community. For instance, upon reading the "Editor's Note" we discover that Spoon Jackson – one of the authors – directed a poetry class to school students via his prison's telephone system. This is no small feat. Spoon had to acquire funds to make the call; he had to coordinate when to call; he had to ensure a phone was available at that time; and solve any other predicament he faced while incarcerated. Despite this, the students and Spoon were willing to sustain any obstacles. This is how *The Sentences That Create Us* should be used – to conjoin the free community and the oppressed so we can heal, learn, and grow together through the craft of writing. This is a book I highly recommend to incarcerated individuals, but even more so to the broader public, for this is an era in dire need of restorative justice and rehabilitation – so should we not we read together?

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The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison by Ben Crewe (2009) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 519 pp.

Reviewed by Mohammad Jahirul Islam

Professor Ben Crewe's book *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison* is an excellent example of insightful criminology and penology scholarship, where the study of a particular prison illustrates how penal policy changes in late modern society are impacting life behind bars. Using ethnographic methods in a C-category medium-security prison in England, the book explores how power is exercised between prison authorities and prisoners within a complex institution, as well as how the latter adapt and engage in resistance. Managerialism in the late modern period is explored based on the thinking of earlier sociologist-criminologists who are considered to be the pioneers of contemporary prison sociology, such as David Garland, Loïc Wacquant, and Alison Liebling. This book examines the changing prison system through institutional politics, prison culture, and power mechanisms. Similar to the methodological basis of other classical ethnographies, this study was mainly conducted in a prison named HMP Wellingborough through observations, in-depth interviews and life history studies of various categories of prisoners, prison staff, prison medical staff (namely doctors and nurses), and other personnel such as counsellors and psychologists. The nuanced analysis of power, adaptation, and resistance within prisons through prison experiences and their early life stories has become an indispensable classic reading for researchers in prison sociology and anthropology as a whole, both in and beyond the United Kingdom.

The book is divided into a total of nine chapters, including a short concluding remarks chapter. The first three chapters mainly discuss the researcher's theoretical and historical framework. Each of the first three chapters contextualizes penal policies in England, its changes, and the historical issues of HMP Wellingborough. In doing so, each chapter critically analyzes the sociology of punishment and theoretical interpretations of prison published to date.

Chapters four through six are largely driven by Crewe's empirical data, with a focus on power, adaptation and resistance. Chapter 4 describes the superordination-subordination power mechanisms within prisons among prison authorities, specialized groups (especially psychologists and doctors), and prisoners. How different categories of prisoners take different

paths, strategies and methods of adaptation based on their socio-economic background, type of crimes and punishment, and social position and family backgrounds, is described and explained in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, Crewe examines resistance in authoritarian and subjugated total institutions such as prisons, where prisoners riot, strike or, in cases where serious overt resistance is limited, how they use alternative ways of covert resistance to survive, which extends earlier research undertaken by Crewe (2007). Chapters seven and eight describe the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional relationship between the prisoners and the drug business inside the prison and its internal mechanisms.

This book's most important strength and contribution is that it comprehensively reviews key academic debates and issues explored in prison sociology and the sociology of punishment, imprisonment (importation and deprivation model), structure versus agency, and individual versus society. As a doctoral researcher examining the change of penal governance in postcolonial countries such as Bangladesh, I found the way Crewe tackles prison literature that are classics in the field written by the likes of Clemmer, Sykes, Goffman, Carrabine, Wacquant, Sparks, Garland, and Liebling is immensely insightful. Considering power and resistance questions in prisons and how Indigenous subalternities act as influencers beyond age, class, and gender is another crucial aspect of my research topic. So, after reading this book, I also see the need to comprehensively examine power and resistance, negotiation, and strategic intervention in prison as it relates to class, gender, social status, race and ethnicity.

Another significant contribution of this book is Crewe's description of the methodology, which can solve any of the complex issues of earlier classical ethnography, especially the debates about subject choice, as well as gaining access and trust in prisons, which he describes in the appendix. In so doing, the reader can see how such research can be pragmatic and objective. He did not use information from official registers to avoid prejudicial adverse treatment of prisoners and never accepted the statements of prison authorities about prisoners at face value. Due to this, in terms of positionality, he developed trust and respected relationships with prisoners, guards and officials. According to him, "I also learned that the prison was a safe environment, that it was not necessary to clutch my bag tightly, and that the most valuable research tools were sincerity and respect" (p. 466). Drugs act as a significant barrier to rapport building and trust building in prison research. Prison authorities

often seek information on drugs from researchers because of their position in the power structure. Because of this, researchers have to live in a kind of ethical dilemma, which can hinder research trust and relationships. He wrote, "as someone who we treated with the skepticism that we treat every outsider with, but who has earned our respect... I had some practical concerns about maintaining neutrality in such a binary environment" (p. 475). To address this, Professor Crewe worked outside his research category and social position, which can be emulated by new researchers. I firmly believe that this book is not only a model for rapport and trust building, but also about how to go about sample selection, interviewing, data management and analysis, while navigating ethical issues, which is of relevance to emerging and seasoned researchers alike.

The typology of power as it relates to prisoners is another contribution distinguishing Ben Crewe from other prison researchers. Among earlier researchers, Foucault (1977) worked with a threefold understanding of power (sovereign, disciplinary, and bio-political power). He illustrates how prison power levels shift from the body to the soul and become part of contemporary statistical exercises. Crewe pushes the envelope further by detailing how power is created, reproduced and transformed among prison administrators, prisoners, and other actors within prisons. An essential aspect of Ben Crewe's scholarship is that he presents in a very objective manner the transition from authoritarian power structures to neo-paternalist ones, along with the late modern bureaucracy and its philosophy of domination and subjugation within the prison. Compare the two contexts in the following ways. The captives were given clearly defined restrictions under the authoritarian government, but were free to behave however they wished within those restrictions because oversight was exercised by personnel in the background, which encouraged excesses. On the other hand, coming out of Max Weberian paternalism and neo-paternalistic thinking, neo-paternalist power, in contrast, relies on prisoners interacting with the system based on rewards and (primary) release progress, and is sustained by individuals who are not easily accessible to prisoners. Instead of only punishing the inappropriate action, all behaviours are examined for any signs of potential involvement.

Similarly, Crewe contributes to our understanding of how the classification of prisoners is informed by resistance. As noted in Chapter 5, we see how those who seek to turn from their former criminal behaviour and

transform into better versions of themselves if they have the opportunity to do so in prison. Typically, young and short-sentenced prisoners are those characterized as ‘pragmatists’ who are primarily concerned with how to quickly get the sentence over with and submit themselves to the power mechanisms of prison. ‘Stoics’, on the other hand, are long-termers under punishment for prolonged periods who are aware of their cynical behaviour and accustomed to the unwelcome aspect of neo-paternalism. Moreover, those who have been deemed to be drug addicts with a history of several convictions and who identify as ‘retreatists’ typically see prison as a vacation from their outside lives, where they feel under the grip of drugs. From the point of view of rebellion and resistance, the most crucial class of prisoners in the prison are the ‘players’ who are aware of their power, which they exploit along with their masculinity for their gain. They are sometimes directly and outwardly opposed to the prison authorities and think that this will lead to prison reforms that will drive the prison to progress – actors which prison authorities have characterized as incorrigible or unruly (McCoy, 2009).

Although this prison ethnography examines the historical linkages with prison policies and strategies in the particular settings of HMP Wellingborough with attention paid to the minute details of prisoners’ power, adaptation and resistance, from my perspective, the book could have delved more deeply into how class, ethnicity and social position shapes the prison experience, which would help advance literatures on habitus (Bourdieu, 2018), structure-agency (Giddens, 2014) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2013). Given that Crewe is affiliated with the University of Cambridge and the Prison Research Center, one also wonders whether similar work can be undertaken by novice prison researchers like me, in a postcolonial society where access to prisons, offices and data collection opportunities, not to mention ethics review hurdles, are significant.

Despite a couple of small criticisms, the many contributions of Ben Crewe’s book make it a classic ethnography in the sociology of punishment and prison studies, with the depth and breadth of analysis one would find in past classic ethnographies. As such, it is indispensable to researchers and students, as well as a must-read for prison ethnographers dealing with complex issues of prison research that make it challenging to conduct objective and impartial research in the late modern period.

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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Out to Defend Ourselves: A History of Montreal's First Haitian Street Gang by Maxime Aurélien and Ted Rutland (2023) Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 170 pp.

Reviewed by Sacha Alfonzo V.

Out to Defend Ourselves, a collaboration between Maxime Aurélien – a former leader in the Haitian gang, les Bélanger – and Ted Rutland – a university professor – advocates for a more nuanced understanding of the formation of gangs, including problematizing the origins and application of the term "gang" itself. The authors skillfully tackle complex themes through a "constructed perspective" (p. 13) written primarily from Maxine's viewpoint. His stories of childhood through young adulthood are examined within the broader landscape of immigration, racism, and poverty and their effects on integration for young Haitian men during the 1980s and 1990s in Montreal. The authors explore how these conditions led to the birth of (so-called) Haitian gangs.

The authors locate the emergence of les Bélanger as an act of resistance against the racism and violence perpetrated against the Haitian community and examine how those actions contributed to the solidification of a group identity. Additionally, they draw attention to the way amplified consumerism and soaring unemployment rates impacted on rates of poverty among new Haitian immigrants. This reality, coupled with pervasive racism and discrimination, led the same groups of friends to participate in petty crime. However, the authors assert that this "was something [they] did on the side to support [themselves], not the reason [they] came together" (p. 87).

The authors argue that the formation of les Bélanger "bears little resemblance to the stories shown in movies, popularized in the media, or discussed by the police" (p. 42). This aligns with Stanley Cohen's (1972) work, which argued that media plays a significant role in amplifying certain issues, inflating public concern to disproportionate levels. Aurélien and Rutland expose how racist media representations and prejudice within the Montreal police force created a moral panic. For example, the authors discuss the ways in which immigration was depicted as a threat to white, francophone, Quebec culture. They also demonstrate how an increased concern over AIDS, led Canadian Blood services to add Haitians to the list of those banned from donating blood, along with "homosexuals, hemophiliacs [and] heroin users […] the so-called Four H Club" (p. 70), further stigmatizing the Haitian community. Additionally, the authors

consider how media misinformation became a catalyst for the creation of a “special street gang squad” (p. 124), which targeted the Haitian community and was responsible for the arrests of hundreds of Haitian youths during its first year of operation.

The book describes how the new category of “street gang” or “gang de rue” (p. 109) emerged from a desire to manage the groups of young Haitian men that the police had come to define as criminal gangs. The authors argue that, in Montreal, “‘street gang’ came to be almost synonymous with ‘Haitian’” (p. 112). The defining of gangs in Canada is problematic as the vagueness of language creates a catch-all that can be leveraged to target associates.[1] Regardless, the implications of the label are real. In this case, the authors contend that the group transitioned from friends to being labeled as a “street gang”, resulting in increased police surveillance, profuse racial profiling, police violence, and criminalization. This point is important as it draws the reader’s attention to the problematic nature of labelling and how, drawing on the work of sociologist Howard Becker (1963), we can understand how the ‘gang’ designation imposed by agents of control, transformed the young men from associates to deviants and reframed their activities as deviant behaviour. There is a palpable tension with the word “gang” itself throughout the book. At times the word appears in quotations, while other times it is taken up and used in self-descriptions.[2]

The authors resist a singular narrative of “gangs” by examining the positive impacts that the solidarity and actions of les Bélanger had, particularly in reducing the attacks experienced by the Haitian community and other Black communities, at the hands of white Quebeckers. Additionally, they explore not just the sensationalized or climactic events, but also the quotidian moments of Maxime, his friends, and his community, and demonstrate the important role that both basketball and hip hop had in their social world. Aurélien and Rutland work to contextualize how the city’s geography – its “complex landscape of racism and violence” (p. 47) – conditioned the experiences of the group, including a map of Montreal neighbourhoods and transit system in the 1980s as an important visual reference for readers. The inclusion of Maxime’s personal photos also provides a conduit for a deeper connection with those featured in this story.

The book concludes by describing Maxime’s departure from the gang and its eventual dissolution. They discuss the complex reasons, including a shift from youth to adulthood, the changing priorities of members, the pursuit

of other endeavours and a change in leadership which altered the vision, purpose, and direction of the gang, that led to a change in the composition of the group. An epilogue, "What Is a Gang?", attends to the definitions and histories of gangs, how the term is applied, almost exclusively, to Black people and looks at the roots of their formation. Furthermore, this section provides a brief update on Maxime's life since his departure from les Bélanger. While this is an appreciated inclusion, one that augments the overall narrative, I suggest that the update may have been better situated in a separate section. Unfortunately, it feels almost hidden under the title of "What Is a Gang?"

In *Out to Defend Ourselves,* the authors skillfully weave together the histories of les Bélanger, the city of Montreal, Haiti, immigration, politics, sports, and music into a compelling narrative, providing readers with an intimate look into the genesis of Haitian gangs in Montreal. The collaborative approach to this book facilitates a multifaceted analysis, integrating firsthand accounts with contextual factors, such as societal dynamics and physical geography, advancing a more sophisticated understanding of the topic, while still remaining accessible and engaging for both academic and general audiences. The authors note that the book "is about the past, but for the present […] what occurred in the past and what […] needs to occur in the present" (p. 13). Given the ongoing crisis with the (over) policing of Black and other racialized communities (Maynard, 2017) and the persistence of racism throughout society today, this thought-provoking and powerful historical account is an important addition to the limited discourse on Haitian street gangs in Montreal (see Tremblay et al., 2016; Décary-Secours, 2020) and provides a much-needed perspective which not only analyzes but humanizes, while unsettling the contexts in which these "gangs" and the term itself emerged.

ENDNOTES

1. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2008) defines the term as "a more or less structured group of adolescents, young adults and/or adults who use intimidation and violence to commit criminal acts on a regular basis, in order to obtain power and recognition and/or control specific areas of criminal activities".
2. This same tension in language use can be noted in my own, incongruent, use of the term.

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Sacha Alfonzo V. is an undergraduate student majoring in sociology at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. Her ongoing research seeks to amplify silenced voices, carve out space for counter-narratives, and examine the intricate connections between creative expression and social justice. She has worked, in collaboration, on multiple public dissemination projects centred around prisoner-produced publications, poetry, and art. She is grateful to live, work, and study on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan People.

Divide and Conquer: Race, Gangs, Identity and Conflict by Robert D. Weide (2022) Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 284 pp.

Reviewed by Gary J. Kowaluk

Robert D. Weide is an Associate Professor of Sociology at California State University in Los Angeles. In 2023, he was the recipient of the American Society of Criminology's Division on Critical Criminology and Social Justice's (DCCSJ) Jock Young Imagination Book Award for *Divide & Conquer: Race, Gangs, Identity, and Conflict*. In *Divide and Conquer*, Weide furthers Jock Young's theme that we have moved from an inclusionary society to one that socioeconomically excludes people with his theoretically informed ethnography of Los Angeles gangs. Synthesizing classical Marxist theory with anarchist criticisms of ethnonationalism, Weide uses interviews from 67 active L.A. gang members to support his argument that the root cause of interracial gang violence, both in and out of prison, is the capitalist labour management system's "divide and conquer" strategy that involves controlling gangs by coercing members to take on racialized identities.

Weide begins *Divide and Conquer* by discussing his own experience with interracial gang violence, relating a story to readers about how a high school friend of his was senselessly murdered by an African American man from the Black P Stones (Bloods) gang who had mistaken him for a member of a Chicano gang. Growing up on the Westside of Los Angeles, Weide is very familiar with gangs and gang violence. Relying on his own experience with gangs, Weide crosses racial boundaries to conduct what he calls an "insider participant observation" ethnography that involves interviews with active Sureno-affiliated, Blood and Crip gang members.

He begins Chapter One with the criticism that failing to consider the historical development of gangs too often results in villainizing gangs through the hegemonic lens of the existing capitalist economic, social and political order. Seeking a less biased view of gangs, Weide argues that the three pillars of modern civilization – capitalism, the race concept, and nationalism – provide the historical foundation from which contemporary gang identities emerge. For Weide, capitalism came before the race concept, which came before nationalism. To support his argument that capitalism preceded race, Weide briefly presents historical evidence showing that our current racial consciousness grew out of agrarian capitalism and 17th century

American planters need to maximize profits from farm labour through the enslavement of African Americans. Noting that bigotry had not existed before the mid-seventeenth century, Weide argues that capitalism was the only motive to enslave people of African origin.

He continues Chapter One by discussing how the capital labour management's "divide and conquer" strategy to control races first began in response to Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. Briefly, in what historians consider to be America's first rebellion, Nathaniel Bacon led a band of mostly Black and white former indentured servants against Virginia's Governor Berkeley for his refusal to drive Native Americans out of Virginia (American History Central, 2024). After looting Jamestown and driving Berkeley out of the city, Weide maintains that to prevent future rebellions, the Virginia elite invented the race concept and "divide and conquer" strategy to control labour by outlawing indentured servitude and passing slave codes that turned the white population against the Black population to create a racialized system of self-regulating labour management. For Weide, the race concept took on a life of its own after Bacon's Rebellion in the 18th and 19th centuries, to provide the foundation for our current labour management and social control system.

Weide closes Chapter One with a discussion of nationalism, which he identifies as the third pillar of modern civilization, showing how nationalist ideologies were invented in the 18th century by modern nation-states to further the capitalistic race concept developed in the previous century. Pointing out that modern nation states such as England, France, Spain, Italy and Germany formed after the breakup of large 16th century empires such as The Hapsburg and Holy Roman Empires, Weide discusses how the new nation states invented racialized national identities to give them a coherent identity. Criticizing that the newly created state identities were not factual, he depicts them as pseudo-histories proliferated by printed material to create coherent racialized national identities that included a shared national language, common names, symbols, and cultural inheritances. For Weide, the English, the French, Italian, and German, and as the new world was colonized, the American and the Mexican identities, are all grounded more in myth than fact. He closes Chapter One presenting evidence that that in the 20th century, stateless nationalism is also based in myth, emerging from the nationalistic identities to shape current white, African American and Chicano gang identities.

In Chapter Two Weide discusses the second theoretical perspective he employs to support his overall theory: anarchism. He begins by presenting early anarchist attempts in the 19th and 20th century to debunk and expose the newly formed nation-states' nationalist identities as more fiction than fact through their efforts to organize workers across racial lines in unions. He then moves the discussion to the 1960s and 1970s, presenting evidence on how the F.B.I. formed an alliance with Black nationalists to murder Black Panther Party leaders and foil their attempt to unify workers economically across races. Weide ends his discussion of the Black Panthers by arguing that our current system of identity politics and racialized polices emerged after their downfall. Overall, his presentation on the F.B.I.'s murders of the Black Panthers and their support for Black nationalist leaders is his strongest evidence in support of his overall argument that an intentional "divide and conquer" strategy exists in government to control the races.

In Chapters Three through Six, Weide presents his ethnography of African American and Chicano gangs, using evidence from 67 interviews of active gang members to support his argument that the Los Angeles gangs have taken on racialized identities as a result of hegemonic identity politics that pit the races against one another. In Chapter Three, Weide uses evidence from the interviews to show how both African American and Chicano gangs maintain and pressure other gang members to take on racialized identities through the clothes they wear, the hairstyles they adopt, the language and symbols they use to communicate with one another, the music they listen to, and the cars they drive. In Chapter Four, Weide demonstrates how the gang members police one another into adopting and maintaining their racial identities by holding biases among the African American and Chicano gang against interracial dating, against living in the same neighbourhoods and housing complexes, working with one another for the same companies, and racial differences in how they conduct themselves while hanging out. In Chapter Five, Weide uses evidence from the interviews to show how the racialized gang identities erupt into gang violence, providing the reader with a unique insight into how gang members perceive interracial gang violence, harassment, drive-by shootings, retaliation killings, and the killings of innocent bystanders. In Chapter Six, Weide closes his ethnography by discussing how some gang members manage to cross racial boundaries despite all the pressure not to. However, in doing so, Weide points out that gang members must still adopt the racialized identity of the gang they are crossing over to.

Weide closes *Divide and Conquer* with strategies for ending the capitalist labour management effort to control races. Asserting that minority community and gang members contribute to their own oppression by taking on the fictional ethnonationalist identities forced on them, inspired by the early Anarchists' attempts to challenge the capitalist systems, and skeptical that government agencies will institute change, he calls upon the gang member themselves to unite with one another across racial boundaries in economic solidarity to end the hostilities they maintain toward one another. To show the viability of his recommendation, he devotes much of Chapter Seven to discussing how, from 2011-2015, members of the four major prison gangs at the Pelican Bay State Prison – the Mexican Mafia, the Black Guerrilla Family, the Nuestra Family, and the Aryan Brotherhood – took it upon themselves to form an alliance to end interracial prison violence and successfully change the Pelican Bay gang intervention strategy of keeping the gang members in indefinite solitary confinement.

Overall, Weide supports his argument that the government employs a racial "divide and conquer" strategy to control gangs well. However, his best evidence indicating that an intentional government policy is in place to control gangs by forcing them into racialized identities, occurred over fifty years ago when the Marxist Black Panther Party was dismantled by the F.B.I. to promote policies supporting Black nationalism. While current gang control strategies were first set in motion by the F.B.I.'s war against the Black Panthers, with no evidence of government support of nationalism since, they may be better described as policies in need of reform that are passed down through generations of police officials with no plan to change them, rather than as intentional policies aimed at controlling gangs by splitting and dividing them racially. While I do not share Weide's skepticism that the current government and business structure will work to end racialized gang control strategies policies in favour of economic solutions, I applaud him for his work in *Divide and Conquer*. Before change can occur, we need to know what to change, and *Divide and Conquer* clearly lets us know what is wrong with current gang control strategies.

REFERENCE

American History Central (2024) "Bacon's Rebellion 1676-1677" – July 17. Retrieved from https://www.americanhistorycentral.com/entries/bacons-rebellion/

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr. Gary Kowaluk has a J.D. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. He is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and the Social and Behavioral Science Department Chair at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. He also teaches college courses to adult male prisoners at the Jefferson City Correctional Center with Lincoln University's Teaching in Prison Program. You can write to him at:

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Available Titles and Call for Book Reviews

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons

The *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (*JPP*) welcomes book review submissions. Book reviews range from 800 to 1,200 words. Interested reviewers should contact the *JPP* with a request for one of the available titles (listed below). Should the book still be available, it will be mailed immediately.

For publishers: If you would like to have your new titles reviewed in the *JPP*, please send these to the address below for consideration.

Book Reviews – Journal of Prisoners on Prisons
c/o Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
120 University Private – Room 13020
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1N 6N5

AVAILABLE TITLES

Bourgeois, Louis (ed.) (2022) *Mississippi Prison Writing*, Oxford (MS): Vox Press, 267 pages.

Boyd, Susan (2022) *Heroin: An Illustrated History*, Halifax: Fernwood, 256 pages.

Correia, David & Tyler Wall (2021) *Violent Order: Essays on the Nature of Police*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 222 pages.

Davis, Angela Y. (2022) *Angela Davis: An Autobiography,* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 420 pages.

Effinger, Elizabeth (ed.) (2024) *Erasing Frankenstein: Remaking the Monster – A Public Humanities Prison Arts Project*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 340 pages.

Hill, Marc Lamont (2020) *We Still Here: Pandemic, Policing, Protest, and Possibility,* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 128 pages.

House, Jordan & Asaf Rashid (2022) *Solidarity Beyond Bars: Unionizing Prison Labour,* Halifax: Fernwood, 180 pages.

Jones, El (2022) *Abolitionist Intimacies*, Halifax: Fernwood, 192 pages.

Larson, Doran (ed.) (2024) *Inside Knowledge: Incarcerated People on the Failures of the American Prison*, New York: NYU Press, 328 pages.

Martel, Joane (2023) *Femmes incarcérées : Inertie institutionnelle dans l'emprisonnement au Canada et au Québec*, Québec : Presses de l'Université de Laval.

Martel, Joane (2023) *Too Few to Matter: Institutional Inertia in the Prisoning of Women in Canada and Quebec*, Quebec: Presses de l'Université de Laval.

Milward, David (2022) *Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice: A Search for Ways Forward,* Halifax: Fernwood, 240 pages.

Nagel, Mecke (2023) *Ludic Ubuntu Ethics: Decolonizing Justice*, New York: Routledge, 242 pages.

Paynter, Martha (2022) *Abortion to Abolition: Reproductive Health and Justice in Canada*, Halifax: Fernwood, 176 pages.

Reinisch, Deiter (2022) *Learning Behind Bars: How IRA Prisoners Shaped the Peace Process in Ireland*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 240 pages.

Wilkerson, George T. & Robert Johnson (2022) *Bone Orchard: Reflections on Life Under Sentence of Death,* Honeoye Falls (NY): Bleak House Books, 138 pages.

UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES – CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Profiling and Carceral States | Les profilages et les états carcéral

Justin Piché and Sandra Lehalle / Observatoire des profilages

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SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS | DIRECTEURS DE L'ÉDITION SPÉCIALE

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Observatoire des profilages
www.observatoiredesprofilages.ca

SPECIAL ISSUE THEME | THÉMATIQUE DE L'ÉDITION SPÉCIALE

Carceral states routinely engages in profiling of people pushed to the margins by colonialism, racism and white supremacy, capitalism and classism, patriarchy and heteronormativity, ableism, and other violent structures. This is evident in who is targeted, harmed, and killed by policing, imprisonment, immigration, child apprehension, health, social services and assistance, and other carceral institutions. The *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* invites contributions by current and former prisoners, their loved ones, and grassroots community organizations that document, critique, and propose alternatives to profiling evident in carceral practices and experiences. Prospective contributors can also submit pieces examining resistance efforts behind and beyond bars to build decarceral futures.

Les profilages des personnes marginalisées par le colonialisme, le racisme et la suprématie blanche, le capitalisme et le classisme, le patriarcat et l'hétéronormativité, le capacitisme et d'autres structures violentes est une pratique récurrente chez les États carcérals. Cela est évident lorsqu'on observe qui est ciblé, blessé et tué par les services de police, l'emprisonnement, l'immigration, l'appréhension d'enfants, de santé, ainsi que d'autres institutions carcérales. Le *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* invite des contributions de prisonniers actuels and anciens, de leurs proches et d'organisations communautaires qui documentent, critiquent et proposent des alternatives au profilage évident dans les pratiques et expériences carcérales dont ils/elles ont vécu. Les contributeurs potentiels peuvent également soumettre des contributions portant sur les efforts de résistance derrière et au-delà des barreaux qui ont pour but de bâtir un avenir décarcéral.

CONTRIBUTION – FORMATS – CONTRIBUTIONS

This special issue welcomes contributions from a wide range of scholarly work including:

- Auto-ethnographic accounts that examine experiences of imprisonment to illuminate broader issues faced by incarcerated people;
- Theoretical, critical and analytical essays;
- Scholarly research articles based on quantitative, qualitative, arts-based and/or mixed- methods research;
- Book reviews;
- Artistic content – photo or graphic essays, digital art, poetry, etc.;
- Interviews or discussions transcribed from recordings; or
- Commentaries.

Ce numéro spécial accueille les contributions d'un large éventail de travaux universitaires, notamment:

- Récits auto-ethnographiques qui examinent les expériences d'emprisonnement pour éclairer les problèmes plus larges rencontrés par les personnes incarcérées ;
- Essais théoriques, critiques et analytiques ;

- Articles de recherche scientifique basés sur des recherches quantitatives, qualitatives, basées sur les arts et/ou utilisant des méthodes mixtes ;
- Revues de livres ;
- Contenu artistique – essais photographiques ou graphiques, art numérique, poésie, etc. ;
- Entrevues ou discussions retranscrites à partir d'enregistrements ; ou
- Commentaires.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES | DIRECTIVES DE SOUMISSION

At the *JPP,* we support incarcerated people's right to exercise freedom of expression pursuant to section 2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and embedded in national constitutions elsewhere across the world. We believe that publishing the writing of incarcerated people is a necessary tool to facilitate transparency in carceral settings. We welcome submissions from all current and former prisoners, and are eager to hear your input on the above-mentioned issues. Please share this notice with anyone who may be interested in contributing to our journal. We ask that those who choose to submit include a short biographical statement and let us know if you would like to be published anonymously. We look forward to reviewing your submissions that follow the journal's guidelines below and hope to hear from you soon.

- The Journal will not publish any subject matter that advocates hatred, sexism, racism, violence or that supports the death penalty.
- The Journal does not publish material that usually focuses on the writer's own legal case, although the use of the writer's personal experiences as an illustration of a broader topic is encouraged.
- The Journal does not usually publish fiction and does not generally publish poetry. Illustrations, drawings and paintings may be submitted as potential cover art.
- Articles should be no longer than 20 pages typed and double-spaced or legibly handwritten. Electronic submissions are gratefully received.

- Writers may elect to write anonymously or under a pseudonym.
- For references cited in an article, writers should attempt to provide the necessary bibliographic information. Refer to the references cited in past issues for examples.
- Editors look for developed pieces that address topics substantially. Manuscripts go through a preliminary reading and then are sent to review by the Editorial Board. Those that are of suitable interest are returned to the author with comments or suggestions. Editors work with writers on composition and form, and where necessary may help the author with referencing and bibliographic information, not readily available in prisons. Selected articles are returned to authors for their approval before publication. Papers not selected are returned with comments from the editor. Revised papers may be resubmitted.
- Please submit biographical and contact information, to be published alongside articles unless otherwise indicated.

Au *JPP*, nous soutenons le droit des personnes incarcérées à exercer leur liberté d'expression conformément à l'article 2 de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés* et enchâssé dans les constitutions nationales ailleurs dans le monde. Nous croyons que la publication des écrits des personnes incarcérées est un outil nécessaire pour faciliter la transparence en milieu carcéral. Nous accueillons les soumissions de tous les prisonniers actuels et anciens, et sommes impatients d'entendre vos commentaires sur les questions mentionnées ci-dessus. Veuillez partager cet avis avec toute personne qui pourrait être intéressée à contribuer à notre revue. Nous demandons à ceux et celles qui choisissent de soumettre une courte notice biographique et de nous faire savoir si vous souhaitez être publié de manière anonyme. Nous sommes impatients d'examiner vos soumissions qui suivent les directives de la revue ci-dessous et espérons avoir de vos nouvelles bientôt.

- Le Journal ne publiera aucun sujet faisant l'apologie de la haine, du sexisme, du racisme, de la violence ou soutenant la peine de mort.
- Le Journal ne publie pas de matériel qui se concentre généralement sur le cas juridique de l'auteur, bien que l'utilisation des expériences personnelles de l'auteur comme illustration d'un sujet plus large soit encouragée.

- Le Journal ne publie généralement pas de fiction et ne publie généralement pas de poésie. Des illustrations, des dessins et des peintures peuvent être soumis comme couvertures potentielles.
- Les articles ne doivent pas dépasser 20 pages dactylographiées et en double interligne ou lisibles à la main. Les soumissions électroniques sont les bienvenues.
- Les auteurs peuvent choisir d'écrire de manière anonyme ou sous un pseudonyme.
- Pour les références citées dans un article, les auteurs doivent s'efforcer de fournir les informations bibliographiques nécessaires. Reportez-vous aux références citées dans les numéros précédents pour des exemples.
- Les éditeurs recherchent des articles développés qui abordent des sujets de manière substantielle. Les manuscrits font l'objet d'une lecture préliminaire, puis sont envoyés pour examen par le comité de rédaction. Ceux qui présentent un intérêt approprié sont renvoyés à l'auteur avec des commentaires ou des suggestions. Les éditeurs travaillent avec les auteurs sur la composition et la forme et, si nécessaire, peuvent aider l'auteur avec des références et des informations bibliographiques, qui ne sont pas facilement disponibles dans les prisons. Les articles sélectionnés sont retournés aux auteurs pour approbation avant publication. Les articles non sélectionnés sont retournés avec les commentaires de l'éditeur. Les articles révisés peuvent être resoumis.
- Veuillez soumettre des informations biographiques et de contact, à publier avec les articles, sauf indication contraire.

IMPORTANT – DATES – IMPORTANTES

Submissions by authors | soumissions par auteurs :	30 April | avril 2025
Editorial decision and reviewer comments to authors | décision éditoriale et commentaires aux auteurs :	1 July | juillet 2025
Revised manuscripts | manuscripts révisés :	1 October | octobre 2025

Final editorial decision to authors | décision éditoriale finale aux auteurs :	1 November | novembre 2025
Publication date | date de publication :	2026

SUBMISSIONS | SOUMISSIONS

Via email to jpp@uottawa.ca or by mail to the address below:

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons
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University of Ottawa
120 University Private – Room 14049
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K1N 6N5

Par email to jpp@uottawa.ca ou par la poste à l'adresse suivante :

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons
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University d'Ottawa
120 Université – Salle 14049
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P4W 25 Years Later: Memory, Art and Action

Linda Mussell, Rachel Fayter and Wendy Johanne Bariteau

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SPECIAL ISSUE THEME

The Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario was Canada's only federal prison for women from 1934-2000. Just four years after P4W opened in 1934, the Archambault Report recommended its closure due to "disgraceful conditions", yet it remained open until the year 2000. Since the closure of P4W, several federal women's prisons have been opened across the country.

We invite submissions reflecting on questions raised by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the closure of P4W.

1. Have you done time in a prison or healing lodge for women? Would you like to share art and/or write about the current conditions inside?
2. In your experience, what role does art play in survival and resistance within and outside women's prisons in Canada?
3. If you were inside P4W, what do you remember and what do you try to forget? What has changed in women's prisons since the closure of P4W and what has remained the same?

We especially invite contributions to this special issue from people who have been imprisoned in women's prisons in Canada. We particularly invite people who were imprisoned at P4W and Kingston Penitentiary (e.g. Regional Treatment Centre) to send in submissions. We also encourage collaborative essays or dialogues between current/former prisoners and from people on the outside. If you are interested but want to chat first, please feel welcome to reach out to us (see contact information below.

These questions are especially pressing, given the sale of P4W to a private developer who plans to turn the prison into a mixture of residential, office and retail space. While P4W has been designated as a "recognized heritage building", there has been little formal recognition of the site's social history and its enduring impact on the lives of people who were imprisoned there.

CONTRIBUTION FORMATS

This special issue welcomes contributions in a wide range of formats, including:

- Art
- Poetry
- Photos
- Interviews or discussions
- Essays
- Scholarly research articles
- Book reviews

We welcome shorter written submissions (around 800 words, which is 1.5 pages, double-spaced and typed), lengthier written submissions (up to 5,000 words, which is 20 pages, double-spaced and typed), and everything in between. Poetry can be much shorter than 800 words. Art can include drawings, paintings, collages, beading, and more.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

At the *JPP,* we support incarcerated people's right to exercise freedom of expression pursuant to section 2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and embedded in national constitutions elsewhere across the world. We believe that publishing the writing of incarcerated people is a

necessary tool to facilitate transparency in carceral settings. We welcome submissions from all current and former prisoners, and are eager to hear your input on the above-mentioned issues. Please share this notice with anyone who may be interested in contributing to our journal. We ask that those who choose to submit include a short biographical statement and let us know if you would like to be published anonymously. We look forward to reviewing your submissions that follow the journal's guidelines below and hope to hear from you soon.

- The Journal will not publish any subject matter that advocates hatred, sexism, racism, violence or that supports the death penalty.
- The Journal does not publish material that usually focuses on the writer's own legal case, although the use of the writer's personal experiences as an illustration of a broader topic is encouraged.
- The Journal does not usually publish fiction and does not generally publish poetry. Illustrations, drawings and paintings may be submitted as potential cover art.
- Articles should be no longer than 20 pages typed and double-spaced or legibly handwritten. Electronic submissions are gratefully received.
- Writers may elect to write anonymously or under a pseudonym.
- For references cited in an article, writers should attempt to provide the necessary bibliographic information. Refer to the references cited in past issues for examples.
- Editors look for developed pieces that address topics substantially. Manuscripts go through a preliminary reading and then are sent to review by the Editorial Board. Those that are of suitable interest are returned to the author with comments or suggestions. Editors work with writers on composition and form, and where necessary may help the author with referencing and bibliographic information, not readily available in prisons. Selected articles are returned to authors for their approval before publication. Papers not selected are returned with comments from the editor. Revised papers may be resubmitted.
- Please submit biographical and contact information, to be published alongside articles unless otherwise indicated.

IMPORTANT DATES

Submissions by authors:	1 January 2025
Editorial decision and reviewer comments to authors:	1 February 2025
Revised manuscripts:	1 May 2025
Final editorial decision to authors:	15 July 2025
Publication date:	2025-2026

SUBMISSIONS

Via email to p4w25years@gmail.com or by mail to the address below:

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons
Special Issue on P4W
c/o Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
120 University Private – Room 13020
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
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CALL FOR WRITING & ART

P4W 25 YEARS LATER

–HAVE YOU DONE TIME IN A PRISON OR HEALING LODGE FOR WOMEN? WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE ART AND/OR WRITE ABOUT THE CURRENT CONDITIONS INSIDE?

–IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ROLE DOES ART PLAY IN SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE WOMEN'S PRISONS IN CANADA?

–IF YOU WERE INSIDE P4W, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER, AND WHAT DO YOU TRY TO FORGET? WHAT HAS CHANGED IN WOMEN'S PRISONS SINCE THE CLOSURE OF P4W, AND WHAT HAS REMAINED THE SAME?

P4W25YEARS@GMAIL.COM

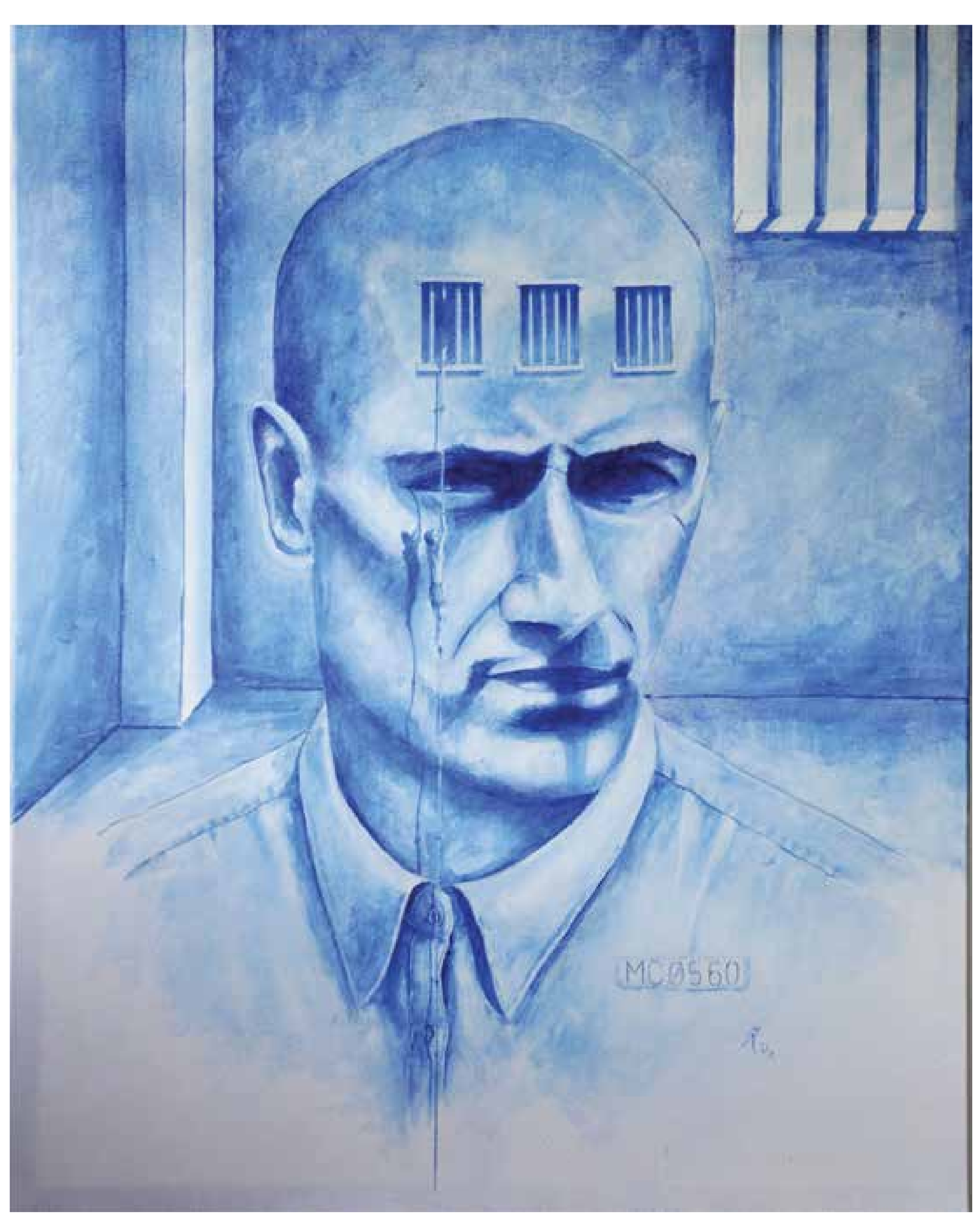
Having spent a lot of time in isolation armed with little more than a pencil, a good eye for detail and the imagination born of bare stone walls, I have had to think outside the box (quite literally). I have always tried to approach my work from a position of individuality and my attitude towards art is a fearless one of trial and error. If I do not or cannot achieve what I am after, I absorb the learning curve and move onto something new. The 'something new' always fills me with a sense of excitement and nothing ever gets truly left behind. During these long years of confinement, art has been my one constant companion. Without its loyalty I would experience more of the pain and fear that shaped my life from a young age. I am no longer the product of my crime, but of my creativity. I survived the past, I am thankful for the present, and I now have a future. Fortunately, with the permission of the Governor, I have been afforded the opportunity to build a website (see https://steeldoorstudios.com). It is our desire that this project becomes a beneficial platform for myself and other imprisoned people to find their creative voices, be able to share, connect and maybe one day return to the outside world, not as a tainted outcast but as a useful and valued member of society with something to offer.

"Blue Boy" (front cover)
Steel Door Studios
2024

The years I spent in therapy evoked many nights of internal angst. It became my practice to keep a pencil near at hand even whilst in bed I needed only to reach out in order to either write or sketch out an idea. This particular piece began life as an ink drawing titled "It's an Inside Job". Alongside the work our artist in residence was doing in relation to masks and toxic masculinity I was thinking about how much of my life consisted of avoiding what lies beneath the multitude of masks I felt the need to wear. Am I brave enough to not only scrutinise, but actually share with the wider world that scared little boy who spent as lifetime incarcerated? Even as I look upon the image whilst writing this, I feel a whole host of emotions ranging from sadness and shame to anger and resentment. The difference today is I am no longer beholden to the core belief that I should not feel this way and certainly must not let anybody know I might experience emotions. I feel what I feel and that is okay with me. Embracing vulnerability has given me a newfound strength in both my life and my artwork.

"Blue Boy 4" (back cover)
Steel Door Studios
2024

Conceptualising and executing this series has had quite a cathartic effect upon me, so the more I share of myself and the angst ridden history I have experienced the much greater the identification with vulnerability being strength rather than a weakness I come to acknowledge. This painting is much more that an individual's desire to escape his carceral surroundings. It represents a yearning, a need, to break out of that pigeonhole they had been boxed into by years of oppressive voices reiterating the defects of character they pertain to witness in you. Given enough time a person will eventually come to believe this is an absolute truth. You 'aren't worthy', 'you are bad'. The cloak of shame I have worn throughout my life weighed heavy upon my soul until I learnt one simple lesson, the difference between guilt and shame. Guilt… I have done something bad. Shame… I am bad. Nobody can live a healthy fulfilling life believing they are defective. No matter what label somebody insists on applying to you, remember you are a human being. You can make mistakes and you can make amends, but never make yourself a prisoner.



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