INTRODUCTION FROM THE MANAGING EDITORS

Shining Some Light in Dark Places

Justin Piché and Kevin Walby

In historical (e.g. Sykes, 1958) and contemporary literature on pains of imprisonment (e.g. Crewe, 2011), the focus tends to be on the harms of human captivity that come in the form of the loss of liberty, access to goods and services, desired sexual relationships, autonomy, and security. It has long been documented that such physical losses experienced by captives translate into mortifications of the self that generate coping strategies or modes of adaptation resulting in further deviation from the accepted behavioural norms that total institutions seek to engender in their objects of 'correction' (Goffman, 1961).

An additional, overlooked pain of imprisonment is social obscurity and invisibility. This has been a pulsating theme found within the pages of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) over the years, where many writers have documented institutional efforts to silence them through censorship (e.g. Wright, 1999), the confiscation of writing materials (e.g. McMaster, 1999) and reprisals (e.g. Richard and Ross, 2004) when they have sought to garner positive social recognition through producing knowledge about punishment and society. Not finding allies in the publishing world to share their written works with others has a similar effect (Hassine, 1999).

Not being seen or heard in a meaningful way is more ephemeral than experiencing physical pains of imprisonment, but perhaps for that reason can permeate far deeper into the self. Imprisoned persons are reduced to numbers and pressed through the carceral grinder with little to no access to positive recognition that is essential to living a meaningful human life. Mental and physical health can disintegrate under these conditions (De Viggiani, 2007; Scraton and Moore, 2006). What other than despair can remain in such a context of obscurity and invisibility? The consequences continue to scar even long after one's release from the prison's grasp and gaze (Aresti *et al*., 2010). Sometimes, when release from imprisonment does not appear to be on the horizon, the despair kills (see Gaucher, 2008).

Like a curse or epidemic, the despair spreads to families and friends on the outside (Comfort, 2008). Criminalized persons and their families are less likely to engage with social institutions because of the stigma and social pressure associated with their involvement with the penal system

(Brayne, 2014). The 'criminal justice' system collects information about the families and friends of criminalized persons, leveraging it in harmful ways (Silverstein, 2001). Clear (2009) has shown how imprisonment sends damaging ripples through communities, with generational effects. The despair is often also gendered and racialized (Baldry *et al*., 2015), intensifying the despair for many.

In this volume of *JPP*, there are many accounts that describe this despair, this darkness, and the toll it takes on the self. Richard Arterberry examines abuses of power and institutional opacity that exist within the Ohio prison system in the long shadow cast by the Lucasville uprising (also see Lynd, 2011). Charles Diorio reflects on the despair and torment he experienced in a "special management unit" in a Massachusetts prison. Kyle Hedquist examines issues of dying and death behind bars drawing on his experiences as a volunteer in the Oregon State Penitentiary hospice program. Souheil Benslimane and David Moffette show how this obscurity, despair and invisibility is actively produced as part of exclusionary migration border politics, notably through immigration bail, detention, and deportation.

The intensity of the despair and darkness is only brought into relief by some attempt to create a positive form of visualization. This can come from prisoners themselves, in incredible feats of solidarity and mutual aid (see, for example, Bissonnette, 2008). It can also come in part from the outside in the form of prison education like Inside-Out and Walls-to-Bridges classes, which bring inside and outside students together to examine social issues and learn from each other's stories and experiences (Sferrazza, 2018; Fayter, 2016; Pollack, 2016; Maclaren, 2015; Pollack and Eldridge, 2015). It is also possible to conduct participatory research in prisons in ways that can empower prisoners and give voice to their ideas (Aresti *et al.*, 2016; Fine and Torre, 2006; Bosworth *et al*., 2005). This volume of *JPP* provides examples of such endeavours that try to keep people alive in systematized conditions of deprivation and harm. Justin Thrasher, Erik Maloney, Shaun Mills, Johnny House, Timm Wroe and Varrone White examine the role that collaborative prison research can play in shining a light on the constraints and possibilities within carceral spaces. Education and collaborative research can foster closeness, dialogue and mutual understanding (Chandler, 2018). Clinging to these disparate beams of light is sometimes the only way to survive. Humour too has a place in the prison (Nielsen, 2011). It can diffuse tense situations and help to create meaning in a place that is otherwise

desolate. Maxwell Houghton's contribution shows how important humour and satire can be in illuminating the absurdity of imprisonment as a means of keeping one's spirits up.

Unfortunately, these forms of light that shine in dark places are only ever temporary. While we demand transparency to be able to illuminate what takes place behind bars and generate positive recognition of those subject to carceral violence (Turnbull *et al*., 2018), we must also generate pathways to reimagine the carceral past, present and future (McLeod, 2016). In the *Response* for this issue, Linda Mussell reflects on the efforts of the P4W Memorial Collective based in Kingston, Ontario, Canada to do just this by organizing to acknowledge the atrocities that took place at the Prison for Women in its years of operation from 1934 to 2001 (see Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

Every single day that passes sees the time, potential, and lives of friends and family members lost to the carceral machine. This issue is dedicated to one such member of the prison justice and abolition community, Tiyo Salah-El, who – as documented by Lois Ahrens in this issue – recently passed away after more than a half-century behind the walls. In the face of actors who work to naturalize the violence of incarceration (see Piché *et al*., 2019; Shook *et al*., 2018), "counter-inscriptions" to dominant accounts offered by prisoners and their allies (Gaucher, 2002), including those featured in this issue, remain a necessary resource to fuel the struggle towards "de-carceral futures".*

ENDNOTES

* This term was the title of a workshop held at Queen's University in May 2019 aimed at "Bridging Prison and Immigration Justice" organized by Sharry Aiken, Lisa Guenther and Stephanie J. Silverman (see https://law.queensu.ca/events/de-carceral-futures).

REFERENCES

Aresti, Andreas, Sacha Darke and David Manlow (2016) "Bridging the Gap: Giving Public Voice to Prisoners and Former Prisoners through Research Activism", *Prison Service Journal*, 224: 3-13.

Aresti, Andreas, Virginia Eatough and Belinda Brooks-Gordon (2010) "Doing Time after Time: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Reformed Ex-prisoners' Experiences of Self-change, Identity and Career Opportunities", *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 16(3): 169-190.

Baldry, Eileen, Brie Carlton, and Chris Cunneen (2015) "Abolitionism and the Paradox of Penal Reform in Australia: Indigenous Women, Colonial Patriarchy, and Co-option", *Social Justice*, 41(3): 168-189.

Bissonnette, Jamie (2008) *When the Prisoners Ran Walpole: A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition*, Cambridge (MA): South End Press.

Bosworth, Mary, Debi Campbell, Bonita Demby, Seth Ferranti and Michael Santos (2005) "Doing Prison Research: Views from Inside", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(2): 249-264.

Brayne, Sarah (2014) "Surveillance and System Avoidance: Criminal Justice Contact and Institutional Attachment", *American Sociological Review*, 79(3): 367-391.

Chandler, Susan (2018) "Social Work, Feminism, and Prison Abolition", *Affilia*, 33(1): 5–7.

Clear, Todd (2009) *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Comfort, Megan (2008) *Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crewe, Ben (2011) "Depth, Weight, Tightness: Revisiting the Pains of Imprisonment", *Punishment & Society*, 13(5): 509-529.

De Viggiani, Nick (2007) "Unhealthy Prisons: Exploring Structural Determinants of Prison Health", *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 29(1): 115-135.

Fayter, Rachel (2016) "Social Justice Praxis within the Walls to Bridges Program: Pedagogy of Oppressed Federally Sentenced Women", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 25(2): 56-71.

Fine, Michelle and Maria Elena Torre (2006) "Intimate Details: Participatory Action Research in Prison", *Action Research*, 4(3), 253-269.

Gaucher, Bob (2008) "Dedication for Victor Hassine", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 17(1): 1-3.

Gaucher, Bob (ed.) (2002) *Writing as Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons Anthology (1988-2002)*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Goffman, Erving (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, New York: Anchor Books.

Hannah-Moffat, Kelly (2001) *Punishment in Disguise: Penal Governance and Federal Imprisonment of Women in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hassine, Victor (1999) "Letter to Joanna", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 10(1&2): 40-45.

Lynd, Staughton (2011) *Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising* (second edition), Oakland: PM Press.

Maclaren, Kym (2015) "The Magic Happens Inside Out: A Reflection on the Transformative Power of Self-expression and Dialogical Inquiry in Inside-Out Prison Exchange Courses", *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 22(4): 371-385.

McLeod, Allegra M (2016) "Beyond the Carceral State", *Texas Law Review*, 95: 651-706.

McMaster, Gregory J (1999) "Maximum Ink", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 10(1&2): 46-52.

Nielsen, Malene (2011) "On Humour in Prison", *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(6): 500-514.

Piché, Justin, Matthew Ferguson and Kevin Walby (2019) "A 'win-win for everyone involved…' Except for Prisoners: Kingston Penitentiary Tours as an Exercise in Staff, Media and Public Relations", *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research*, 8: 91-119.

Pollack, Shoshana (2016) "Building Bridges: Experiential and Integrative Learning in a Canadian Women's Prison", *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 36(5): 503-518.

Pollack, Shoshana and Tina Eldridge (2015) "Complicity and Redemption: Beyond the Insider/Outsider Research Dichotomy", *Social Justice*, 42(2): 132-145.

Richards, Stephen C. and Jeffrey I. Ross (2004) "Introducing the New School of Convict Criminology", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 13: 60-73.

Scraton, Phil and Linda Moore (2006) "Degradation, Harm and Survival in a Women's Prison", *Social Policy and Society*, 5(1): 67-78.

Shook, Jarrod, Justin Piché and Kevin Walby (2018) "Getting "Beyond the Fence": Interrogating the Backstage Production, Marketing and Evaluation of CSC's Virtual Tour", *Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research*, 7: 406-440.

Sferrazza, Anna (2018) "The Nature of the Space: Walls to Bridges as Transformative Learning", *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*, 4(1): 241-250.

Silverstein, Martin (2001) "The Ties that Bind: Family Surveillance of Canadian Parolees", *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42(3): 395-420.

Sykes, Gresham (2007[1958]) *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Turnbull, Sarah, Joane Martel, Debra Parkes and Dawn Moore (2018) "Introduction: Critical Prison Studies, Carceral Ethnography and Human Rights: From Lived Experience to Global Action", *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 8(2): 225-246.

Wright, Paul (1999) "The History of the Prison Legal News: The Samizdat of the American Gulag", *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 10(1&2): 53-62.