

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### Knowing Inside: Contributions from Within/Beyond the Walls *Justin Piché*

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In a period where there are more than 10 million human beings warehoused in jails, prisons and penitentiaries across the world (Walmsley, 2013), it is surprising that much of what takes place behind the walls continues to be invisible and that research on the lived realities of incarceration remains relatively scarce (Reiter, 2014). If this invisibility maintained by corporate and state actors allows for “the moral legitimacy that underwrites mass complicity” in state repression to assert itself, than “[i]mages of human suffering and human fragility play a big role in creating... moments of delegitimation” (Simon, 2014). It is in these instances of visibility that radical change (e.g. the elimination of structures of mass violence like the militarized police brutality that has come to light in Ferguson, Missouri in the wake Michael Brown’s death) becomes possible (ibid). Although this is certainly not assured in the face of the “penal machinery” that is in place in the United States (De Giorgi, 2014) and elsewhere. Seen in this light, a counter-visual ethnography that “rehabilitates our ocular vantages to see what is not there but which structures the present carceral moment by illuminating the invisible, excavating the underground, revealing the inscribed landscape, and raising the ephemeral ghoulish presence” is integral “to envision and presage a counter-carceral future” (Schept, 2014, p. 218).

Given their direct and sustained experience of state repression, prisoners should have a central role in creating these counter-inscriptions that “could help halt the disastrous trend toward building more fortresses of fear which will become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this generation’s monuments to failure” (Mayhew, 1988). A recent debate on how to do “prison research differently” – that is differently than doing ethnographic work inside carceral facilities as seemingly detached and unemotional scholars – has renewed discussions on how this can be done (see Jewkes, 2014). Convict Criminology – particularly in its autoethnographic form – whereby former prisoners turned academics integrate their carceral experiences into their research is one approach proposed (see Newbold *et al.*, 2014). Having academics and prisoners collaborate together in research teams is another (see Ross *et al.*, 2014). Encouraging the development of more ethnographic work conducted by prisoners, like the kind facilitated through the efforts of those involved

in the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP), has also been suggested (see Piché *et al.*, 2014).

In this issue of the *JPP*, readers will find these three kinds of contributions that, although in written form, offer alternative images that make visible that which takes place inside otherwise opaque prisons. In “From the Depths I Will Rise: On Being Buried Alive and Survival”, Anonymous’ prisoner ethnography recounts the violence of solitary confinement and how he survived the isolation. From there, Michael Johnson Jr. provides an autoethnographic account informed by *Convict Criminology* entitled “Institutionalized Indifference: Rape with a View”, which explores the sexual violence that takes place in carceral facilities. Research team Robert “Diesel” Shoemaker, Brandon “B” Willis and Angela Bryant then explain how the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program offers a way to counter the austerity and brutality of imprisonment in “We Are the Products of Our Experiences: The Role Higher Education Plays in Prisons”. Offering another example of the team research approach, Daniel Luff and Greg Newbold discuss the pitfalls of risk management and prediction in “Risk Assessment in New Zealand Prisons: Questioning Experiential Outcomes”. The article section concludes with a paper entitled “Seeing Shame: Prison Work and the Problem of Self-exclusion” by Alan Mobley that reflects upon the enduring consequences that incarceration has on the lives of former prisoners. Following a *Response* by *JPP* Editorial Board member Kevin Walby, the issue concludes with a prisoners’ struggles piece by the John Howard Society of Ontario that explores their penal reform efforts in their near century of existence.

Book-ended by the art of Ronnie Goodman, this volume is the first issue of the *JPP* that will be fully available online as a free download on our website [www.jpp.org](http://www.jpp.org). While readers are encouraged to continue purchasing subscriptions and hard copies of the journal where possible as sales sustain the publication, we encourage everyone to read and circulate the articles posted online widely. Perhaps when confronted by the images of penalty offered in these pieces more conversations about how to think about and respond to violence in all of its forms will bloom, fostering transformative change (Morris, 2000) rather than more of the same (Cohen, 1985).

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