EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The First Dime and Nickel of Convict Criminology Stephen C. Richards and Michael Lenza

In prison convicts learn a lot of lingo. They have their own language to discuss how sentences add up. A person is lucky to have sentences run concurrent, compared to consecutive, which is "running wild". Years ago old-time convicts, when asked about how much time they had to serve in prison, would talk of doing nickels, dimes and quarters. They might say they have three convictions, for example five years for burglary, ten years for a felony with a firearm and twenty-five years for murder. This meant they were pulling a train, with two boxcars and a caboose. They would go to the parole board first for the nickel, then the dime, then the quarter. Each sentence served independently was a pocket full of change if they were still alive to tell the tale.

DEDICATION OF THIS ISSUE

We decided to dedicate this issue to two Convict Criminologists that devoted their professional careers to helping convicts, some of whom have served the kinds of sentences noted above, each in their own way. John Irwin and Thomas Bernard were professors that encouraged the publication of convicts and ex-convicts, while contributing to the Convict Criminology (CC) Perspective themselves.

John Irwin

John Irwin, Professor of Sociology and Criminology at San Francisco State University, passed away in 2010. John was an ex-convict who served time in California. In 1957, he got out of prison and attended San Francisco State University, graduating from UCLA in 1961. He then completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at UC Berkeley in 1968. He was a professor for twenty-seven years.

For forty years he wrote about prisons. The main themes he explored included convict culture, prisoner typologies, conditions of confinement, political manipulation of the public's fear of crime and the creation of a felony underclass in the United States. He is best known for his ethnographies of prison life and innovative typologies of convict roles and identities. Richards (2009a, p. 176) notes:

In all of Irwin's books he writes about people, the folks you meet in prison. In The Rogue (unfinished memoir) he wrote about his own experience in prison as a convict in the 1950's [...] His analytical invention of prisoner typologies began with his own incarceration and became more refined in each book.

His typologies included thieves, hustlers, dope fiends, heads, disorganized criminals, state-raised youth, man in the lower class, square johns, petty hustlers, derelicts, junkies, crazies, cornerboys, lowriders, aliens, gays, thugs, gangbangers, outlaws, state-raised prisoners, crazies and sex offenders. John's books include *The Felon* (1970), *Prisons In Turmoil* (1980), *The Jail* (1985), *It's About Time* (1994, with James Austin), *The Warehouse Prison* (2005), Lifers (2009) and *The Rogue* (unfinished memoir). He was also a major contributor in *Struggle for Justice* (1971) and *Scenes* (1977).

John Irwin was one of the founders of CC. For many of us in the CC Group, John served as a mentor, confidant and friend. At the annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) John Irwin had the academic reputation and connections to join in discussions with any group he choose to, yet one could almost always find him sitting at a table with one or two ex-convict graduate students or professors. Richards (2009a, pp. 173-174) observes:

Every year, at conferences and events, before or after Convict Criminology sessions, I introduce John to new felons, most of them graduate students struggling to complete their degrees, and wondering when they might exit the closet and publicly announce their personal truth. John helps them to prepare for their "coming out", where they introduce themselves to the audience by relating their criminal activity, convictions, and prison time, to their research. Once they step out of the closet they are members of the Convict Criminology Group.

John takes them aside, engages them in conversation, and gives each one personal attention. He is very straight forward, as he tests their transparency, their courage to retain their own identity, despite the stigma they suffer, and the temptation to conceal their past. Irwin understands that most felons prefer not to talk about their crimes, convictions, and time in prison, especially in public. The problem is the charade may become an

elaborate subterfuge; the ex-convict slides into respectability, and then becomes a prisoner again of the secrets they keep. Their professional lie becomes a performance that inhibits their work and limits their ability to write about the subject they are determined to bury.

John had little patience for pretence. He would ask very direct questions: What was your crime? Where did you do time? What do you miss about prison?

Thomas Bernard

Thomas Bernard, a Professor of Criminal Justice and Sociology at the Pennsylvania State University, died in 2009. He received his B.A. in Mathematics at the University of Notre Dame in 1968, M.S. in Administration of Justice at Southern Illinois University in 1975 and Ph.D. in Criminal Justice at the State University of New York at Albany in 1981. Tom was a non-con member of the CC Group. Over the years he attended and participated in many of our sessions at conferences. He is best known for his books *Vold's Theoretical Criminology* (2002), *Consensus-Conflict Debate* (1983) and *The Cycle of Juvenile Justice* (2010).

We especially remember Tom for the many books he edited or coauthored with convict authors. He is responsible for developing the talents of many and helping to get their writing published including K. C. Carceral's *Behind a Convict's Eyes* (2003) and *Prison, Inc.* (2005), James Paluch's *Life for a Life* (2003), Victor Hassine's *Life Without Parole: Living and Dying in Prison* (2011), as well as others. Tom was especially interested in publishing the work of convicts doing long or life sentences. He recruited a crew of academic colleagues, including Robert Johnson, Leanne Fiftal Alarid, Bruce Bikle, Alene Bikle, John Irwin, and Stephen Richards to help with the editing, revising and publications of numerous convict authors.

THE BIRTH OF CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

CC was born of the frustration ex-convict professors and graduate students felt when reading the academic literature on prisons. In our view, most academic textbooks and journal articles reflected the ideas of prison administrators, while largely ignoring what convicts knew about the day-to-day realities of imprisonment. Instead, these works tended to gloss over the horrors of prison, inventing a sanitized presentation, without the smell

of fear and noise of desperation known so well by the men and women that live in cages. Ross *et al.* (2012, p. 160) elaborate on this critique noting:

Many prison studies tended to approach the subject abstractly, or from secondary data sources, with little detail or differentiation among security levels, state or federal systems, or regional jurisdictions. When details were provided, for example on prison conditions or subculture within a prison, the data and sources were often outdated. Most studies were conducted without even entering the prison concerned or interviewing the prisoners.

In reply, these former prisoners now academics working at universities teaching sociology, criminology, criminal justice, social work and related disciplines developed a new criminological perspective to better represent the reality they knew in prison before they entered university.

We have related the long story of how CC began in previous publications (see Richards and Ross, 2001; Ross and Richards, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2009; Ross *et al.*, 2012). The short story is that in 1997 a small group of ex-convict professors gave papers on a panel at the ASC conference. This session was entitled "Convicts Critique Criminology: The Last Seminar". Ross *et al.* (2012, p. 162) note:

This was the first time a collection of ex-convict academics had appeared openly on the same panel at a national conference. The session drew a large audience including national media. That evening, over dinner, James Austin, John Irwin, Stephen Richards, and Chuck Terry discussed the importance and possibilities of ex-con professors working together to conduct "inside studies" of prisons and other criminological matters. This group and the scholarly work they produced eventually became known as "convict criminology".

The papers presented at this first conference and those thereafter led to the book *Convict Criminology* (2003). Ross *et al.* (2012, pp. 162-163) note:

In the spring of 1998, Richards spoke with Jeffrey Ian Ross, a former prison worker currently with the University of Baltimore, about the possibility of editing a book using manuscripts produced by ex-con academics. Almost

immediately, Ross and Richards sent out formal invitations to ex-convict professors and graduate students, and well-known critical authors of work on corrections. In short order, a proposal was written that would eventually result in the book, *Convict Criminology* (Ross & Richards, 2003). This was the first time ex-convict academics had appeared in a book together that included discussion of the authors' own criminal convictions, their time in prison, and their experiences in graduate school and as university professors.

Since 1997, the CC Group has organized nearly fifty sessions, panels, roundtables and workshops at numerous academic events in the United States and abroad. These appearances have included plenary sessions at the meetings of the American Society of Criminology, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences and the American Correctional Association. For example, in 2008, an ASC Presidential Plenary Session on Convict Criminology was held, featuring Dave Curry, John Irwin, Stephen Richards and Jeffrey Ian Ross.

THE FIRST DIME AND NICKEL

The first fifteen years of CC was very productive based on the number of research studies conducted and published. These include books, journal articles, and chapters in edited books. In general the work has been critical of the criminal justice system, especially the treatment of prisoners and parolees. Writing as a collective, with different combinations of co-authors, the Convict Criminologists have critiqued and challenged existing policies and practices, as they built their own "New School of Convict Criminology" (Richards and Ross, 2001, 2004; Ross and Richards, 2003; Richards *et al.*, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2009; Ross *et al.*, 2010, 2012).

The CC Group has also been very active examining and analyzing existing public policy concerning a wide array of criminal justice issues concerning felons, convicts and ex-convicts. Numerous CC essays have been published with policy recommendations, including this issue (see Richards *et al.*; Grigsby; Murphy *et al.*; Oliver; Ekunwe and Jones). Authors have discussed prison conditions (Irwin, 1970, 1980, 2005, 2009; Richards, 1995; Jones and Schmid, 2000; Austin *et al.*, 2001; Ross and Richards, 2003, 2004; Terry, 2003; Tregea and Larmour, 2009; Richards *et al.*, 2010; Austin and Irwin, 2012), jails (Irwin, 1985), private prisons (Hogan and Richards, 2006), the classification of prisoners (Richards and Ross, 2003),

violence in prison (Austin et al., 2001; Carceral, 2003, 2005: Carceral et al., 2008; Hassine, 2011), medical care in prisons (Murphy 2003, 2005), and super max prisons (Richards, 2008). We have also published pieces on the death penalty (Lenza, 2005), prisoner reentry to the community (Richards, 1995; Richards and Jones, 1997, 2004; Ross and Richards, 2009; Leyva and Bickel, 2010; Richards et al., 2011, 2012), the mass incarceration movement in the United States (Rose et al., 2010), ethnography and autoethnographic research (Irwin, 1987; Lenza, 2011), money, policies and crime (Lenza and Jones, 2010), women guarding men (Richards et al., 2002; Murphy et al., 2008), folk knowledge of medical marijuana use for alcoholism (Lenza, 2007), medical marijuana (Lenza, 2012), community punishments (Richards, 1998, 2009), as well as ex-cons applying for university faculty positions (Ross et al., 2010). Additional essays and research have included employment barriers for felons (Murphy et al., 2011, 2012), felon disenfranchisement in America (Murphy et al., 2006), prisons (Newbold 1982, 1989, 2007) and crime (Newbold, 1992, 2000) in New Zealand, controlling state crime in the United States (Richards and Avery, 2000), and many related topics (see the CC website at http://www. convicteriminology.org).

THIS ISSUE

Building on the contributions noted above and introducing new voices emerging within the CC Group, this issue is divided into three parts. *Part I: Defining Convict Criminology* leads with a group statement by Stephen C. Richards, Jeffrey Ian Ross, Greg Newbold, Michael Lenza, Richard S. Jones, Daniel S. Murphy, and Robert S. Grigsby entitled "Convict Criminology, Prisoner Reentry and Public Policy Recommendations". The second article by John F. Frana, Michael Lenza and Ryan D. Schroeder, "Convict Criminologists in the Classroom", is a survey of student views regarding the prospects of having an ex-convict teaching their criminal justice courses. James Burnett and D J Williams report how they used CC to develop a rehabilitative initiative in "Convict Criminology and Community Collaboration: Developing a Unique Program to Empower Vulnerable Youth in Idaho". In "Fundamental Problems in Criminal Justice Knowledge Production" Michael Lenza challenges the way research is constructed and

conducted in mainstream criminology and criminal justice. The section concludes with a piece by Robert S. Grigsby exploring how CC might chart a path forward in "Convict Criminology and Social Justice Advocacy: Toward Radical Change".

Part II: Prisoners in the Community begins with an essay by Daniel S. Murphy, Stephen C. Richards and Brian Fuleihan entitled "Policy Options to Mitigate the Criminal Record Barrier to Employment". It is followed by Richard Hendricksen and Alan Mobley's "A Tale of Two Convicts: A Reentry Story About the Impacts of Ethnicity and Social Class". This autoethnographic piece brings to life how structural inequality and the destructive systematic indifference of how our criminal justice system affects the ability of individuals to reintegrate into society. In "A Convict Criminology Perspective on Sex Offender Laws: America's "War against Sex Offenders" by Brian Oliver and "Interrelated Problems of Silencing Voices and Sexual Crime: Convict Criminology Insights for Reducing Victimization" by D J Williams and James Burnett some of the unique challenges faced by those convicted of sexual offences are discussed. The last piece is an autobiographical account by Jesse De La Cruz entitled "Detoured: My Journey from Darkness to Light" that reflects upon his personal journey from being a convict in San Quentin to becoming an exconvict graduate student in California.

Part III: Convict Criminology Beyond Borders reports our recent efforts to educate ourselves about prison conditions in other countries, and establish collaborations with ex-convicts in Great Britain and Finland. Andreas Aresti reports on "Developing a Convict Criminology Group in the UK". Matti "Kid" Hytönen recounts how ex-convicts established a group in Finland to help prisoners and former prisoners reenter society in partnership with government in "An Ugly Fairy Tale with an Ending of Hope: The Founding of KRIS in Finland". Its continued success is in part due to their recognition of the promise of prisoners returning to society to use their knowledge and experiences to help others and their communities. The last article, "Finnish Criminal Policy: From Hard Time to Gentle Justice", by Ikponwosa O. Ekunwe and Richard S. Jones provides the historical background for one of the most progressive criminal justice systems in the Western world. The issue concludes with three short Response pieces by Katherine Irwin, Robert Johnson, and Mike Larsen and Justin Piché that reflect on the past and future of CC.

THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

The CC Group continues to grow. Every year we add ex-con and non-con academics to our ranks. We know that we depend on the support of hundreds of non-con professors and administrators working at universities in the United States and many other countries that help ex-convict students and faculty, sometimes at the risk of their own careers. Despite our success, we know of ex-convicts being denied admission to undergraduate programs or admitted and denied dormitory rooms. We know of college graduates denied admission to graduate programs or having their graduate student stipends suspended after the states passed new laws (e.g. Missouri and Kentucky). We also know Ph.D. students who have been denied an opportunity to defend their dissertations (e.g. Texas) and ex-convict professors denied tenure or promotion in numerous states. Unfortunately, some private and public universities are uncomfortable with both exconvict students and faculty.

The fact is that ex-convict professors are still just a few dozen, including those in the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, France and Finland. Regardless of the state or the country for that matter, we have learned over the past fifteen years that, while it may be safer to play it low profile, it compromises our ability to support all the prisoners coming out of prison that manage to gain admittance to a university. At many universities the ex-con professors work to advise and mentor the many ex-con students that ask for help. Most of us spend a lot of time attending to the academic dreams of felons and ex-convicts that find us because our work is public. Our hope is that every large university in the country comes to realize that they need to hire ex-con professors or at the very least academic advisers to serve felons, as much as they hire people to advise women, minorities and non-traditional students.

Nevertheless, while we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of CC with this issue, the future of our movement is not assured. While our contributions to the critical literature on criminology and prisons continue, and we have a few more ex-convict tenured professors, we still have no academic home. Ideally, we need at least one Endowed Chair in Convict Criminology to guarantee the future of our group, along with the over seven million men and women presently under correctional supervision who need to know their voices and experiences matter.

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ABOUT THE SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS

Stephen C. Richards, PhD, is an ex-convict now Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. His work has appeared in numerous academic journals. The author of five books, his most recent books include Behind Bars: Surviving Prison (2002), Convict Criminology (2003) and Beyond Bars (with Jeffrey Ian Ross) (2009). Richards is a Soros Senior Justice Fellow and member of the American Society of Criminology National Policy Committee. He is lead organizer of the Convict Criminology Group.

Michael Lenza, PhD, is an ex-convict who is now an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He has published on the death penalty, research ethics, medical marijuana, a historical political view of the development of mass incarceration in the USA, as well as theory and research methods. He is currently working on the institutional foundations of violence in the American context, and utilizing postmodern autoethnograpic theory and methods to provide voice to prisoners.