A Coincidence of Interests:  
Prison Higher Education in Massachusetts

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INTRODUCTION
Post-secondary education is flourishing in the prisons of Massachusetts. As late as 1967 not a single college course was available to prisoners for credit. Only twenty years later, seven institutions of higher learning offer programs of study in as many different facilities within the state. Two-year programs, some leading to the associate’s degree, are offered by Middlesex, Mount Wachusetts, and Quinsigamoond Community Colleges and by the University of Massachusetts at Boston. Programs leading to the bachelor’s degree are offered by Curry College, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Boston University, which has also implemented one of the first in-prison master’s degree programs in the United States. Cumulative annual enrollments now approach one thousand students (approximately ten percent of the state’s prison population). In 1988 undergraduate and graduate degrees were earned by thirty-eight prisoners. It is clear that higher education has been received in the prisons of Massachusetts within the last two decades.

The timing of the proliferation of advanced education in the state’s prisons poses important questions about the actual purposes of these programs. Notably, a look at the history of penological practices suggests that higher learning was embraced by the prison systems at precisely the same time that the reformation of offenders ceased to be a popular aim of incarceration. Moreover, the literature on prison education emphasizes the priority of value and moral education, decidedly reformative aims. How can we explain this apparent contradiction? Is it in fact the case that despite what educators have to say about their aims,1 reformation is not what prison authorities have in mind when they allow these programs to flourish? To what extent does the proliferation of post-secondary prison education represent a transfer within the system of the reformatory function of punishment?

I am not suggesting that the growth of prison education in this state was the result of collusion between higher learning and the professional degraders (i.e., prison authorities). On the contrary, the relationship between higher learning and corrections in Massachusetts has been characterized by tension. The literature implies that this tension is a consequence of a fundamental conflict of values (Corcoran, 1975);

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however, the real cause may be far more pedestrian. Historical ac-
counts of the prison reveal a continuous and enormous gulf between humanitar-
ian language and barbarous reality. Throughout, the de-
graders have never opposed the ideal (or language) of education, only its actuality. Since higher learning in Massachusetts has actually dared to educate rather than simply mouth the myths of education to which the degraders were inured, one could expect that during the period when rehabilitation was under attack the prison education programs would have been the first to go; yet, as we have seen, the opposite is the case.

I suggest that prison higher education in the case of Massachusetts is more the product of an often contradictory and haphazard evolution-
ary process than a carefully implemented plan for meeting educational needs. My intention is to illuminate this process and its implications through an analysis of the role of education in the penal context; the circumstances which allowed higher learning to enter the prisons of Massachusetts; the expression of reformative theory in the articulation of program goals, objectives and curriculum; and finally, the interplay of theory, educational practice, and penal bureaucracy. The analysis presented is based on secondary sources drawn primarily from the literature of penology and primary sources consisting of interviews conducted with the founders and/or directors of three of the post-
secondary prison education programs currently operating within the Massachusetts' prison system.

THE PENAL CONTEXT

The Modern Prison and Soul Reformation

The American prison and the modern concept of incarceration was introduced by Quakers with the opening of Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail in 1790. Reformers such as Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, inspired in part by the ideas of the eighteenth-century reforming jurists, sought an alternative to executions and other corporal punishments that they regarded as cruel and inhumane. That alternative would conform to what Menninger describes as the

...Quaker belief that a man who had done wrong, and had been convicted of it, must be brought to realize that he had done wrong, and desire to do better; he must become penitent before he could be helped (Menninger, 1969: 222).

Penitence would emerge from hard labor, education, and religious training interspersed with periods of contemplative isolation in a confinement that allowed intense surveillance and discipline.

The invention of the penitentiary marked not only the culmination of a shift in the nature of punishment, but also in its object and purpose.
The object of punishment shifted from the body to the soul of the offender (Foucault, 1977). The criminal, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, would not be viewed as intractably evil. The nature of man was essentially good and the offending agent could be located in a corrupt or deficient soul. The purpose of punishment had moved from a public demonstration of monarchical power inflicted against an evil body to deployment of a new technology the prison — in which the coercive power of the new state would be utilized to effect a reformation of the soul that would simultaneously affirm the moral superiority of the avenging community and the intrinsic worth of all men.

The desire to effect transformation was among the original aims of incarceration and from the outset learning was presumed to have a role in the accomplishment of that aim (Angle, 1982; Reagan and Stoughton, 1976; Roberts, 1971). The logic of education's inclusion in the penal regime was relatively simple. In an homogeneous America law was not yet estranged from Protestant morality. The individual who violated the laws of civil community ipso facto revealed himself as a sinner against the laws of God. Education was comprised of Bible-based religious training and basic skills were taught to promote a literacy sufficient to enable Biblical study and contemplation in the isolation of the asylum.

While in the vision of the reformers education would teach men the Christian way of life, soul transformation remained subservient to the purely incapacitative and deterrent aims of punishment and the role of education was severely limited. Through the mid-nineteenth century few formal programs existed. The nation's first prison school, for example, opened at Walnut Street Jail in 1798, but operated only during prisoners' scant leisure hours and its 'curriculum' was devoted to basic skills and religious training. The same was true of the Boston Prison Discipline Society which, beginning in 1825, developed and promoted the concept of Sabbath Schools for religious training. Later it offered basic skills to combat the rampant illiteracy which hindered knowledge of the Bible (Angle, 1982; Roberts, 1971). Reagan and Stoughton observe:

Admittedly, these early attempts at reform to be obtained solely through the haphazard visitations by chaplains were doomed to failure; yet they did represent the first attempt at education in the form of isolated incidents which gradually began to establish a pattern. The assumption on the part of the prison chaplains that the Bible was the keynote of reform led to basic attempts at reading and writing in order that biblical truths could be effectively mastered and absorbed (Reagan and Stoughton, 1976: 36).

The pattern Reagan and Stoughton note may not have been the most important. The early reforms and their associated efforts evidenced a great gulf between theory and practice, between claims about the
existence of education programs and the reality of what was actually offered. It is this pattern that would characterize the history of correctional education.

'Scientific Penology' and Rehabilitation

The late nineteenth century witnessed a second great shift in penological thought. Beginning with the introduction of the 'New' or 'Scientific' penology of the 1870s and culminating in the 'rehabilitative ideal' of the 1960s, the human sciences and the emerging professions (i.e., social work, hygiene, psychology), with their theories of criminal causation, attempted to achieve the reformation of a deviance which proved to be unresponsive to religiosity. Reformation would remain an aim of incarceration, but those who sought to achieve it would no longer seek to act upon the soul.

The new penology's initial exemplar was at the Elmira Reformatory in Elmira, New York (1876-1900). The Elmira Reformatory is reputed to have offered a penal regime consistent with the philosophy espoused by the National Congress on Penitentiary and Reformatory Discipline in 1870. It advised:

- humanitarian, individualized treatment.
- Indeterminate sentencing, a carefully planned mark system, progressive classification, meaningful academic and industrial education, intense religious instruction, and positive reinforcement and mild discipline, as opposed to traditional 'brute force', were proposed as a means of increasing prisoners' opportunities, enhancing self-esteem and ultimately, fostering rehabilitation (Pisciotta, 1983).

Reagan and Stoughton describe the penal regime at Elmira as "an all encompassing manipulation of consciousness, from dawn to dusk" designed to "transform the mental, physical and moral habits" of Brockway's 'patients.' This new approach seems to have represented a direct response to the rampant abuses of the old model of the penitentiary, but there is reason to suspect that a new philosophy would have emerged regardless, since the reformation of the soul could not be sustained as a social aim of incarceration in an increasingly heterogeneous and secular society in which legal and moral order were already quite distinct.

Brockway is reputed to have given education an important place in the regime at Elmira (Roberts, 1971). Indeed, the reformatory was referred to as 'the college on the hill.'

Individual study was stressed and the 'inmate scholars' were required to work on the lessons by gaslight each night. The two-year program, based upon a ten-month academic year, was designed to provide the 'inmates' with rudimentary reading, spelling, and arithme-
tic during the first year, and progress to history, geography, civil government and moral philosophy in the second (Pisciotta, 1983: 617).

Faculty and students from nearby Elmira Women’s College instructed upper-level courses from the outset and a professor from that college, Dr. D.R. Ford, was placed in charge of the reformatory’s educational efforts (Roberts, 1971).

Sources are available which provide overviews of specific educational programs ‘developed’ in American prisons (Angle, 1982; Reagan and Stoughton, 1976; Roberts, 1971) but, for our purposes, only the essence of that history is needed. Education at Elmira was secondary to discipline. As Pisciotta so accurately states: “The rhetoric of ‘scientific reform’ and humanitarian treatment changed the form but not the substance of control” (Pisciotta, 1983: 620). We must remember that Elmira was a ‘model’ of the humanitarian environment: an ideal to which other prisons across the nation would aspire but never reach. At Elmira, education was given a place in penological theory, but penological practice made that place as insignificant as possible. In prisons receiving less public attention, the gulf between theory and practice was likely to have been far wider.

The Emergence of Higher Learning

The Elmira experience represented the first instance of higher learning’s involvement in American prisons. Yet its involvement did not give prisoners the opportunity to take accredited courses that might lead to a degree. Higher learning at Elmira took the form of weekly lectures on topics such as ‘Honesty is the Best Policy’ (Pisciotta, 1983). The lecturers may have been college professors, but the prisoners who attended were not regarded as college students. More than a half-century would pass before higher learning would make accredited courses and degree programs available to prisoners.

Higher learning, nationally and in Massachusetts, actually made sporadic attempts to implement structured programs in the prisons during the rehabilitative era. Among the early prison education programs cited by Roberts (1971) are ones offered by the University of Maryland at Maryland Penitentiary, 1953; the University of Kansas and St. Mary’s College at Leavenworth, 1957; the University of Southern Illinois at the state prison in Menard in 1957; and correspondence courses at several federal penitentiaries. Most of these programs consisted of very sparse offerings and did not hold out the possibility of earning a degree. In 1967, at the height of the rehabilitative era, only about 3,000 prisoners, less than one percent of the total population, participated in some form of post-secondary education and most of these were involved in correspondence courses (Adams, 1968).
This dismal picture is not surprising. From the advent of scientific penology through the rehabilitative era, prisons have been characterized by an internal conflict between reformative and punitive aims (Rothman, 1980: 10). Treatment staff educated in deterministic theories of behavior saw the roots of criminality in antecedent causes for which the individual may not have been responsible, while security personnel viewed the offender as responsible for his deviance and deserving of punishment. Treatment and reformation were not only made subservient to security and punishment, they were co-opted by security and punishment. The educators, psychologists, and social workers accountable only to prison administrations sustained the mythology of treatment. The reformatory aim was spoken about, but only the punitive aim was acted upon. In such an atmosphere, outsiders with sincere reformative intentions were seldom welcome.

Higher Education Enters the Prisons of Massachusetts

It was not until 1968 that higher learning entered the Massachusetts prison system. The Student-Tutor Evaluation Project (STEP) founded by Babbette Spiegel, began in Walpole State Prison and eventually expanded to Norfolk State Prison (Bryant, 1984). That program consisted of humanities courses certified by Northeastern University and taught by tutors. Its aim was limited to preparing men to pursue higher education once paroled or released. Babette Spiegel, who believed in the inherent good of education, was the first of many 'dedicated volunteers' who would shape higher learning in Massachusetts' prisons.

The rehabilitative era was very much alive at that time, but under attack from both ends of the political spectrum. The prison system, like other social institutions of that era, had come into the view of outside ideologues who attacked rehabilitative theory, and when some of these outsiders actually entered the prisons, they were confronted with the reality that many so-called rehabilitative programs were either ineffective or existed only in the 'mythology of corrections' (Germanotta, 1988; Bryant, 1988). The Massachusetts Department of Corrections, even in crisis, embraced higher learning reluctantly. It allowed Spiegel's program into the prison because she had political influence (Bryant, 1984), but it demonstrated its discomfort from the outset by restricting participation to fifteen carefully selected prisoners per session (Reagan and Stoughton, 1976).

The New Arrangement

The rehabilitative era came to an end in the early 1970s, collapsing under attacks from both liberals and conservatives. The latter viewed the emphasis on treatment programs, however mythological, as symp-
tomatic of society's leniency toward criminal offenders. Liberals, increasingly cognizant of the gulf between the expressed aims of rehabilitation and the reality of imprisonment, rejected the notion of treatment as 'theoretically faulty,' 'systematically discriminatory,' and 'inconsistent with justice' (American Friends Service Committee, 1971). What emerged in the United States were a variety of so-called 'justice models.' Whether developed by liberals or conservatives, each of the justice models shared some common characteristics. The most important of these was that the reformatory aim would no longer dominate the language and theory of corrections. Treatment staff would still employ the familiar language of rehabilitation, but the real business of corrections would be the protection of public safety through the provision of care and custody. Bifurcation best describes a system of confinement in which 'voluntary programs' were made available to those prisoners who desired them, while the rest were simply incapacitated or 'warehoused.'

In Massachusetts, the transition in penal philosophy coincided with sustained violent uprisings within its prisons. The Omnibus Prison Reform Act (Chapter 777 of the Massachusetts General Laws) was enacted. Because it legislated such reforms as furloughs, education and work release, and the establishment of lesser-security facilities, many have regarded this legislation as a statement of rehabilitative intent. But, if its reforms responded to prisoners' violent expressions of despair and loss of hope, it also provided the logic for distinct facilities and varying levels of classification which became the hallmark of the new philosophy of incarceration. It offered more humane confinement in lower security facilities, while at the same time furnishing the logic of maximum-security wastelands barren of programs.

**Accidental Praxis**

In these circumstances, with coercive reformation abandoned and rehabilitation no longer the responsibility of corrections, higher learning was able to enter the prisons as a separate force, able to shape a mission without wholly conforming to correctional hostility to rehabilitative programming. The educators who guided higher learning into the prisons were not at the time necessarily aware of or concerned with the fact that they acted at a pivotal moment in the history of the prison, nor did they typically concern themselves with stating broader purposes. Bryant notes:

It [higher education] hasn't been based upon a deliberate philosophy. From the very beginning ... it all started with these so-called dedicated volunteers, people who for one reason or another decided to come in and bring educational services to prisoners ... (Bryant, 1988).
They themselves attribute the birth of the program they developed to a series of 'fascinating coincidences' (Bryant, 1984; 1988; Barker, 1988; Germanotta, 1988); indeed, the University of Massachusetts at Boston initiated the Higher Education in Prison Project (HEPP) at Norfolk due to a bizarre series of events. Spiegel's STEP program was administered by Brandeis University and staffed by Northeastern University. Two early STEP students released from prison and two female Brandeis students killed a Boston police officer during a robbery attempt. After the two universities abandoned the program as their response to adverse publicity, Spiegel was able to secure support from the University of Massachusetts, which acknowledged the need for such programs created by the educational provisions of Chapter 777. Given the educational backgrounds of most prisoners, preparatory work within the prisons would be required before students could take advantage of external opportunities while on education release. There was, however, another and less idealistic reason for the university's interest:

It hit that era when L.E.A.A. [Law Enforcement Assistance Administration] was involved; there was money available. When there's money available people go after it and develop programs to fit that need. The request at that time was for a liberalizing effect on prisons; there was a lot of money in L.E.A.A. for programs for juveniles, for education, for creative programming. U/Mass. Boston being a young, new school, went after it (Bryant, 1988).

One result of the bid to secure L.E.A.A. funding was that the program's goals and objectives had to be specific. In seeking to continue Spiegel's earlier efforts and deliver a preparatory program consisting of basic skills and humanities education, the U. Mass. Program stressed "the reformatory or rehabilitative effects of education" (Bryant, 1988).

Elizabeth Barker, who founded Boston University's Prison Education Program, had no such intention when she first entered Norfolk Prison in 1972. She came as a result of a competition between the Boston University's Quiz Team and another comprised of prisoners. Although she was somewhat sensitive to prisoners' plight, she recalls sharing many of the common assumptions about prisoners and her astonishment at discovering "bright, intelligent men, eager for the opportunity to learn" (Barker, 1988). She notes:

Astonished by this revelation of the intellectual abilities and ambitions of prisoners, we offered to recruit volunteer professors to teach at Norfolk if the University would grant credits and tuition-remission scholarships. The B.U. Administration of that time was considering the proposal until the adverse publicity resulting from the STEP participants' robbery in 1970 caused a decision against it (Barker, 1990).

It was only after John R. Silber became President of Boston University that the program was initiated. Barker described how she obtained
Silber's authorization during a meeting of the faculty executive group in which she, as head of the Student Life Committee, debated with him about his negative attitude toward student anti-war demonstrators. As he left the meeting in a state of anger, she followed him down the administration building stairs to ask him, as she had the previous administration, to authorize her recruiting professors to teach credit courses with tuition scholarships. Silber responded enthusiastically. In doing so, the volunteer professors were in the next five years able to prepare seven prison students to receive Metropolitan College's Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree, with an Interdisciplinary Studies major.

In 1977, Silber agreed that a degree program should not depend on volunteers and ever since has supported the payment of prison teachers whom he considers as semi-volunteers, since they work for very modest stipends. In 1986, while at a reception in Norfolk, he responded favorably to the request of about twenty B.U. prison graduates for a master's degree program. He asked Barker to initiate it at once, increasing the prison education budget to make it possible. In 1988, he conferred Master of Liberal Arts diplomas on the first three to earn them and continues his support of the expanded programs, which now (1991) operate at both M.C.I. Norfolk and the Bay State Correctional Center.

Dante Germanotta, founder of Curry College's Justice Education Project, became involved in a similar fashion. Germanotta, as an educator deeply concerned with issues of social justice, became actively involved in the prisons and prison education after a former prisoner visited and spoke at one of his on-campus classes in 1981. He began to include sessions with prisoners at Massachusetts Lancaster prison in the schedule of Curry's criminal justice classes. Like Barker, he discovered intelligent men who were willing to share their prison experience, but most importantly, who demonstrated an eagerness to learn. Several years later, in response to requests from prisoners, he managed to convince Curry College to enroll prisoners in accredited courses taught by volunteers from Curry's faculty (Germanotta, 1988).

Each program, founded in altruism, delivered the learning function of higher education to prisoners, and each of the founders employed language that express the hope for, if not the manifest objective of reformation. Yet the 'fascinating coincidences' that led to the development of these programs sometimes obscures the need for careful consideration of the impact they have had on the total environment of the prison.

**STABILIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR THEORY**

As these programs matured, Barker and Germanotta have done much to shape the structure of higher learning in Massachusetts' prisons. At
Norfolk prison, the University of Massachusetts, Boston offers college preparatory work and courses through the sophomore year, while Boston University offers junior and senior level courses. That model is duplicated in the relationship between the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Mount Wachusett Community College at their sites in Gardner and Lancaster prisons. Curry College delivers a degree-granting program at MCI-Walpole. Germanotta went on to found the Massachusetts Council on Prison Education, a support organization which seeks to express the common interest and concerns of the various colleges and universities involved in the prisons and, to some extent, coordinate their activities.

Yet the most striking similarity among the higher learning programs in Massachusetts' prisons is their emphasis on the liberal arts and the humanities. It is in this common curriculum and in efforts to express its rationale that the reformative impulse of the Massachusetts' educators finds its clearest expression. For example, Boston University's program at Norfolk serves as a model of the various liberal arts curricula, which began as a reflection of Barker's academic interests, but:

'evolved,' without prior theory, to create a program which is both particular to the prison in its cognitive-moral emphasis and standard to the university in its academic requirements and criteria (Barker, 1984). The Boston University program offers a familiar product through its adherence to the university's 'academic requirements and criteria,' but in refiguring that product's content and style to achieve a 'cognitive-moral emphasis' for prisoner/students, it reveals its essentially reformative aims.

Barker readily acknowledges the influence upon her expressions of curriculum rationale of Steven Duguid, a Canadian educator who has attempted to advance theory supporting higher learning's reformative aims (Duguid, 1979; 1980; 1981a; 1981b; 1987). Like Duguid (1981c), Barker begins with the refutation of the medical model which dominated correctional programming up to the end of the rehabilitative era in the early 1970s. That model assumed criminal behavior to be the product of a perspective which regarded the offender as a diseased person who needed to be 'cured' and, as such, became an object, a thing to be examined, studied, and acted upon (Barker, 1985). In contrast, educational models emphasizing cognitive-moral developments assume that prisoners are responsible individuals who exercise free will, albeit poorly. Barker notes that the educational model proceeds from the assumption that criminal offenders, whatever their special problems and circumstances, do not differ from mankind in general respect to their possession of reason, imagination, appreciation of beauty, respect for honor and integrity, and the ability to make morally self-
determining choices on the basis of their perceptions of reality (1986: 9).

If, as Duguid posits, "most prisoners are simply deficient in certain analytic problem-solving skills, interpersonal and social skills and in ethical/moral development" (Duguid, 1981c:143), the task confronting prison education is to provide the offender with opportunities for cognitive and moral development. Cognitive development will guide the offender to a new thought structure which alters his perceptions of other individuals and the social world, while moral development will alter the way in which he interprets his perceptions and, ultimately, how he behaves (Barker, 1986 and 1988; Duguid, 1981b).4 “The very process of achieving this,” Barker notes, “constitutes an education befitting free men” (1986).

Both Barker and Duguid aver that reformation can be accomplished through a liberal arts curriculum that fosters skills enabling the offender to identify and solve the many types of problems encountered in the course of life in a manner which reflects both a knowledge of alternative approaches to issues and an awareness of the consequences of considered resolutions.

A liberal arts education ... fulfils such a role because it prefigures that day with challenges and options which prison life generally life does not provide (Barker, 1986:12).

If the goal is to improve moral reasoning, the liberal arts makes that goal reachable. It presents compelling circumstances which transcend the spatial and temporal boundaries of personal existence and focus instead upon the resolution of complex issues and problems. Further, it furnishes opportunities to develop critical thinking skills in place of rigid, personal dogma. Cognitive moral development is accomplished by enabling the student to perceive in ways that credit multiple perspectives, moral development is accomplished by enabling the student to interpret alternatives in ways that reflect mature consideration of competing consequences, and reformation is achieved when higher cognitive and moral functioning lead to the acquisition of new values that will guide the actual behavior of the offender (Barker, 1984; Duguid, 1981a and 1987).

There is little coincidence in the ‘fit’ between Duguid’s theory and higher learning’s practice in Massachusetts’ prisons. Barker, Duguid, Germanotta, and others involved in Massachusetts prison education are friends and colleagues. They are frequently in contact and have collaborated in the preparation of lectures and presentations for a variety of regional, national, and international conferences concerning the status and future of prison education.
INTER-SYSTEM RELATIONS

The realization of higher learning's reformative aims is dependent upon the interplay of the stated intentions and systematic qualities of corrections. Although the relationship between higher learning and corrections at the policy level has lately been characterized by cooperation, this has not always been the case nor does it extend through all levels of the correctional apparatus. The 'atmosphere' in which the programs operate and in which prisoners/students study and learn is the product of variable realities within the correctional hierarchy. Three of these, the policy level, the classification and treatment level, and line officers will be considered here.

The Policy Level

Friction between higher learning and correction is often attributed to conflicting aims. "While corrections," one source notes, "is designed for custody and control, the purpose of education is freedom, growth, and self-actualization" (Corcoran, 1985:53). Higher learning and corrections are most compatible, however, at the policy level where aims are formulated. Senior correctional administrators speaking the language of 'justice models' emphasize the functions of custody and control, but must also allow 'rehabilitative' opportunities for those prisoners who truly desire them. Indeed, the existence of competing aims is essential to justice models of correction. Germanotta notes:

[A] justice model is a model which theoretically makes no assumption that anyone ought to be addressed at all, but lets them self-select and finally some end up doing what they want to do. But you warehouse the rest (Germanotta, 1988).

This model, in short, cannot be legitimated without the opportunity to make choices, an opportunity provided by such outsiders as Boston University and Curry College's liberal arts programs. In fact, this curriculum is ideal, since it is grounded in the principle of freedom to choose, the individual's moral duty to make responsible, acceptable choices.

Nonetheless, the advantages of liberal arts education as rehabilitation has its limitations. Correctional personnel at the policy-making level, sensitive to public criticism that offenders might 'benefit from their crimes,' have refrained from offering avocation, educational, or vocational programs which have currency beyond the prison. While correctional administrators have expressed support for higher learning in the prison, they have generally opposed the granting of credits for courses, and the current commissioner of corrections and the state's governor (in 1991) have expressed opposition to degree programs within the prisons. Only after a successful prisoner-initiated court
challenge, for example, was Curry College able to offer its degree program in Walpole.

The Classification and Treatment Level

Almost all non-security activities within the prison fall within the bounds of the classification and treatment level. Treatment personnel responsible for the provision of rehabilitative opportunities are generally receptive to higher learning for the obvious reason that the emphasis corrections places on security is reflected in resource allocation, leaving treatment personnel without the funding required to develop and implement meaningful programs. Higher learning programs resolve their fiscal problems. In many instances the university programs are among the largest and most expensive 'treatment' efforts within the prison, yet some expenses are covered by grants and the university without costs to corrections.

Classification is another matter. There is a nexus between treatment and classification which threatens the integrity of the learning process. Classification personnel take pains to inform prisoners that participation in programs such as education will have a favorable impact on classification status and, ultimately the likelihood of parole. Belief in the validity of this claim is encouraged by higher learning. For example:

In view of the good records of the no-longer-incarcerated participants in the B.U. program, its professors and coordinator feel no hesitation in recommending that the educational commitment and work of their prison students be given consideration in connection with applications for release (Boston University, 1988).

Classification 'contracts' binding the prisoner's classification status to participation in certain programs often specify educational criteria and further reinforce the 'compulsory' nature of participation. The threats this creates for the integrity of the learning process are numerous. Education is transformed into coercive action in which the exercise of voluntary participation may become impossible. The emphasis of students is shifted from the experience of learning to the pursuit of good grades, credits, and degrees into fulfilling requirements that will satisfy the classification process. The desire for learning or personal growth becomes subservient to a powerful unethical reward system. Many seats at all levels in prison education programs are occupied by men and women who neither desire nor intend to learn. They want to satisfy the expectations of classification officers and this is exacerbated by state laws providing for reductions-in-sentence via 'good time' earned for participation in the programs.

Student motivations are not the only potential casualty of this
‘hidden curriculum.’ Most faculty members are aware that academic performance may influence a prisoner’s future and some demonstrate a reluctance to grade based on performance. This may explain the actions of one professor who announced, early in the semester, that all students would receive an ‘A’ regardless of their performance. Some of his students were elated at the promise of an unearned grade, but others felt ‘cheated’ and expressed disillusionment. Success has little value when failure is impossible.

**Line Officers**

The prison is a technology which seeks to actualize the social perception that the offender is “lesser in the scheme of social types” (Garfinkel, 1956). It accomplishes this by stripping the individual of all socially approved statuses. The prisoner is mortified, de-socialized, and subjected to interpersonal terrorism and personal contamination in a moral atmosphere which is authoritarian and dehumanizing. The prison teaches the offender that he or she is incompetent, irresponsible, and without worth (Goffman, 1961). These systematic features of incarceration are maintained through the routine behavior of lower-level line officers who have historically opposed higher learning’s presence in the prison. The good prisoner, in the ideology of the line staff officer, ‘knows his place.’ He does not seek meaningful change in his life. He works at a menial job, passes his time watching television, and ‘talks sports.’ The ‘good prisoner’ has accepted his fundamental lack of worth and is resigned to a life without social or economic status, during and after incarceration.

Prisoners who strive to better themselves through higher learning are viewed as ‘problematic’ and ‘arrogant’ and are accused of ‘conning the system’ by pretending to be something they are not. They are subjected to increased personal harassment and other forms of interpersonal terrorism. Instructors and program co-ordinators of the advanced educational programs do not escape harassment. The programs are accused of politicizing inmates. Faculty may have been subjected to humiliating strip searches and forced to endure long and needless delays in entering the prison. Class materials are arbitrarily declared ‘contraband.’ Anyone associated with higher learning in the prisons whether as a prisoner/student or faculty member has experienced the hostility and resentment of lower-level personnel. Familiarity with higher learning programs by line staff eases but does not eradicate opposition at this level. Even at Norfolk prison, where higher learning has been active for two decades, line staff officers continue to express opposition to the alien presence.
CONCLUSIONS

The 'dedicated volunteers' who introduced college-level instruction into the Massachusetts' prison system hoped it would have a 'liberalizing effect' on prisoners and the prison environment. They genuinely sought to enrich the lives of a small number of prisoners who exhibited a thirst for learning. The colleges and universities which subsequently entered the prison system in force may have possessed a variety of motivations, but they were clearly guided by an unabashed faith in the power of education to achieve the goal of reformation that had eluded corrections for almost two centuries.

Higher learning's ability to develop and implement education programs in Massachusetts' prisons has exceeded the expectations of early program founders. The growth and stability which it now enjoys appears largely attributable to the penal philosophy which emerged subsequent to the collapse of the rehabilitative ideal. Higher learning's reformative aspirations strongly suggest a deliberate or quasi-deliberate transfer of the reformative aim of incarceration, but convincing evidence that higher education can intersect criminal behavior remains elusive.

The current emphasis upon liberal arts and the humanities has its origins in the personal preferences of program founders. The universality of liberal arts curricula among the various higher learning programs is justified by its ability to promote cognitive and moral development, but no empirical evidence convincingly supports this claim and there is no substantial link between cognitive ability and criminality. Further, evidence of a reformative effect upon offenders is scant and unconvincing. In light of these facts, higher learning's reluctance to deliver more technical or skill-based curricula may be merely a matter of habit and politics.

The principal dilemmas higher learning must confront is its unintended collusion with the penal apparatus, which arises from the coincidence of interests it shares with the Massachusetts' Department of Corrections. Entry into the prison milieu transforms the fundamental character of education. Its basic premises and values are undermined by the coercive environment in which it operates. Whether intended or not, its presence within the prison immerses it in the scheme of bifurcation that lies at the heart of justice models of incarceration. As prison higher education programs become increasingly integrated with corrections, there is a danger that they are becoming complicit in a process that has historically done little but degrade and defile.

Many prisoners, myself included, owe much to those who made it their business to bring higher education into our lives. To suggest, however, that they have yet to grapple with the many significant
implications of their practice within the prisons is not to express a lack of gratitude. If prison higher education hopes to endure as a meaningful force in reshaping the lives of men and women who live in confinement, it must begin to examine both the historic and contemporary coincidence of interests that not only facilitated its beginnings but will also shape its future.

ENDNOTES

1. The literature calls attention to a multiplicity of objectives among them increased educational levels (Seashore, et al., 1976) and meeting such psycho-social needs as self-esteem (Pendleton, 1981; Gehring, 1988). But these may be considered of secondary importance because they are presumed to be instrumental to achieving the rehabilitation of the offender. As one writer notes: “The theoretical assumption behind all the education programs developed, however, is that if becoming a criminal is a learning process, the remaking of useful citizens is more the task of education than it is the outcome of custody or punishment” (Corcoran, 1981:49). The literature is replete with such statements, suggesting that the reform or rehabilitation of the offender has priority among the objectives of higher learning in the prisons.

Further evidence regarding objectives is expressed in that portion of the literature relating to the nature of program assessments and evaluations. Some assessments and evaluations have concluded that no correlation exists between participation in higher learning programs and the rate at which offenders subsequently returned to prison (Blumstein and Cohen, 1974; Seashore, et al., 1976); others have determined that a significant correlation in fact exists (Chase and Dickover, 1983; Thorpe, MacDonald, and Bala, 1984; Duguid, 1981; Blackburn, 1981). Though the findings are inconsistent, in every case program efficacy is measured in relation to recidivism.

2. Those interviewed include: Elizabeth Barker, Professor Emeritus at Boston University, founder and director of that institution’s Prison Education Program; Kit Bryant, Director of the University of Massachusetts, Boston’s Higher Education in Prison Program; and Dante Germanotta, founder and director of Curry College’s Justice Education Program.

3. Factors beyond the prison also contributed to the timing of higher learning’s entry. As one program director noted: “Among the most important appears to be: (1) the overall growth of the educational system, more schools, more community colleges, more universities with an expanded commitment to community interests and public service; (2) the number of technical jobs had increased, calling for a more technical workforce; and (3) government, including public universities, perceived its role as an involved actor in the solution of social problems” (Bryant, 1984).

4. Since we are discussing the nexus between theory and praxis in the ‘real’ contexts which were exclusively male, ‘he/him’ is appropriate and non-sexist.
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The task of educational programming as rehabilitation demands a preparation of the prisoner for eventual participation outside following his/her release. With few exceptions prison education is described as personal development: the acquisition of skills/knowledge which will be useful in getting a job, developing a new world view, and above all else staying out of trouble. The question which I should like to pose is this: Should this form of educational programming be seen as a form of personal development or as a form of social control?

The question is not a simple one and the answer may be even more complex. In order to answer it, I will briefly examine the history of educational programming in the Canadian prison system. Then by focusing on one post-secondary educational program in that system, I will discuss the theoretical perspective of criminal behavior on which this programming is based, its accomplishments, and its implications as a form of social control.

When Kingston penitentiary first opened its doors in 1835, the penal philosophy of the time included a strict regime of sanitation, inspection, separate confinement, sobriety, coarse diet, hard labor, and a rough and uniform apparel. The emphasis was on retribution not rehabilitation, and a silent system was strictly enforced. Prisoners spent from twelve to sixteen hours a day in their cells, and no leisure activities of any sort were allowed. Although prisoners were compelled to attend church on Sundays, they were not allowed to have any contact with other prisoners. During the nineteenth century, a teacher was employed to provide individual instruction in cells during evening hours. The emphasis was on basic literacy for a few prisoners; not a functional literacy for all (MacGuigan, 1977).

The period of 1900 to 1960 saw a change in penal philosophy from a retributive to a rehabilitative model, and a number of changes in penal practice concomitant with this philosophical shift occurred (Ekstadt and Griffiths, 1988). Lighting was placed in cells to enable prisoners to read and study during daylight hours — at first as a reward for good conduct prisoners and later universally. Gradually the hours of lighting were extended into the evening, which provided a longer period for reading. Evening school was organized in groups in the dome area of the prison instead of the former individual instruction in cells. A number of other rehabilitative developments took place. Correspondence and visits with family and friends were introduced and later
expanded along with leisure time activities. The silent system was finally abolished. University correspondence courses were introduced towards the end of this period and several prisoners obtained degrees (MacGuigan, 1977). An emphasis on occupational development was secured through the introduction of workshops and trade training. In short, the importance of social activities was recognized by administrators as crucial to the rehabilitative process (ibid.; also see Cosman, 1981).

From 1960 onwards there was an unparalleled growth in the Canadian Prison System. For example, in the seventy-five year period of 1880 to 1955 the number of prisons in Canada doubled from five to ten; however, in the next twenty year period (1955-1974) this figure rose to fifty-three federal prisons (MacLean, 1986a). Today we have over sixty (Lowman and MacLean, 1991; Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1990.). One of the most important events of this expansionary period was the introduction and refinement of the Therapeutic Community and the expansion of an entire workforce of penal experts in rehabilitation, including prison educators (Lowman and MacLean, 1991; Ekstadt and Griffiths, 1988).

During this period we also see changes in criminological theory, changes which in time gave rise to what is often dubbed 'correctionalism' (MacLean, 1986b). Fundamental to correctionalism is the logic of the 'medical model': the proposition that people who break the law are somehow deficient and require 'correctional' treatment to make them 'normal'. These ideas were certainly not innovative. The Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, developed a theory of crime which suggested that criminals were evolutionary throwbacks who were incapable of functioning in an advanced society because they were biologically inferior. These people could be identified by physical stigmata, usually simian in nature, which was posited as indicative of their inferiority (Vold and Bernard, 1986). The medical model, as it was employed in this theory, suggested the use of physical treatments aimed at making these 'degenerates' normal. Lombrosian theory fell from favour after about forty years and was replaced by a similar one which identified criminal behavior with psychological impairment. People committed crime because their brain did not function properly, and to correct this treatments such as electroconvulsive therapy, prefrontal lobotomies and drug therapy were introduced. These methods and the theoretical perspective which justifies them are still with us today, but they have been supplemented with a theory that locates the source of psychopathology in the social development of the individual (MacLean and Milovanovic, 1991). That is, criminals are seen as people who are deficient in social, moral and cognitive development; thus, in this approach 'treatment' is aimed at correcting these deficiencies. One way by which such rehabilitation might be accomplished is through the
learning process. This leads to the introduction of educational programs which seek to promote cognitive and moral development so prisoners will leave prison well-equipped to function normally in broader society (Vold and Bernard, 1986).

The idea of post-secondary education in the prison then is not a new one, and during the 1960s and 1970s programs were introduced in a number of prisons in a variety of countries. In Canada, educators at the University of Victoria (UVic) developed a post-secondary educational program for the federal prisons in British Columbia which began operating in 1972. In discussing the aims of this program Douglas Ayers and Stephen Duguid suggest that:

From its inception in 1972, the University of Victoria Program has maintained a commitment to four primary goals:

1. Develop more awareness of the problem and issues in society generally and, hopefully, incorporate more mature values using particularly English and history courses as vehicles for such development.

2. Bring about certain attitude and personality changes that will prepare students to cope successfully with society and its institutions. In particular, develop skill to take alternative views in discussion of issues, to suspend judgement, to understand society's institutions and their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

3. Make students more self-confident and better able to express themselves.

4. Provide students with the basis for further education — vocational, technological, academic or cultural. This basis for continuing education includes the development of the necessary work and study habits and confidence to pursue further education. A subsidiary outcome is to make them more employable and better able to hold a job (1980:4).

In order to achieve these goals Ayers and Duguid employed a cognitive development approach based on a developmental model of human growth and maturation attributed to Lawrence Kohlberg, whose work is grounded in the philosophy of John Dewey and the psychology of Jean Piaget. It is assumed that adult prisoners have poorly developed moral reasoning abilities caused by limited opportunities for cognitive development during their socialization. These deficits in reasoning are seen as the criminogenic factors. Prisoners can advance to a higher stage of development through a process of cognitive and moral education. When this is achieved the likelihood that the individual will re-offend is supposedly reduced. Ayers and Duguid developed a complex program which operated on three different yet related levels:

1. The first level of operation was to provide post-secondary education, which was both accredited and transferable to any university in
Canada. By providing a general education to the level of a Bachelor of Arts degree, it was felt students would be afforded the opportunity for career change.

2. At the second level and because the program is centered on the theory of human development, the program was aimed at providing the cognitive development necessary for social and moral development. Thus a moral/ethical dimension was built into all of the courses, allowing debate and discussion of history for example, from a moral perspective.

3. At the third level the program aimed at creating a sense of an alternate community. This was accomplished by segregating those prisoners in the program from other prisoners in the prison, and by providing an educational staff which were not part of the prison staff (ibid.:5-6).

Despite the questionable theoretical basis for a program which posits that criminal activity results from insufficient cognitive and moral development, the UVic. program (now at Simon Fraser University) can be seen to have noble aims. Clearly a great deal of thought and planning went into the implementation of this pedagogical practice. The question which must be addressed is: How successful was the program?

In order to answer this question, three evaluative tools must be employed. The first identifies what proportion of the prisoner population participated in the program and how many of them completed it. The second assesses observable change in prisoner moral reasoning as suggested by the theory of cognitive and moral development. The third looks for a notable impact on the ex-prisoners' decision to engage in criminal activity.

Concerning the proportion of participation, between 1972 and 1980 hundreds of students participated in the UVic. program. Although only a few of these actually graduated with a degree, the number of prisoners exposed to the program is really quite impressive.

For purposes of evaluating the degree of cognitive and moral development and the impact, if any, this had on criminal activity, Ayers and Duguid conducted an eight-year follow-up study which concluded in 1980. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the methodology employed; suffice it to say that an experimental group of seventy-three prisoners who had taken at least two terms of classes and who had been released for at least six months was selected and matched with a control group on a number of variables (e.g., age, nature of offence, sentence). The intent was to produce a control group which was similar to the experimental group in all respects but one — participation in the post-secondary educational program. The findings for changes in moral and cognitive development are described by Ayers and Duguid:
Taken as a whole, the attitude change evidenced in the study indicated a movement away from the moral alienation of the criminal from society and its institution toward an understanding of that society, and the position of the individual (ibid.).

I would like to illustrate these conclusions by showing you two tables of data produced in this stage of the study.

**Table 1: Number and Percent of Respondents' Political Views by Credits Earned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits Earned</th>
<th>Increased Understanding</th>
<th>Moral Alienation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-12.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5-19.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0-28.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Adapted from Ayers et al., 1980, Table 10, p. 26.

Although the number of participants (N) is quite small — sixteen in all — the results suggest that with an increase in credits earned the political views of participants were more likely to reflect an increased understanding of society and less moral cynicism. For example, three students with 30 or more credits indicated increased understanding while only one with as many credits was identified as cynical.

Even if we accept the idea that the post-secondary educational program at UVic. had a significant impact on the attitudes of those prisoners exposed to the program — that is, if we accept that there has been an observable development on both cognitive and moral grounds — we cannot simply go on to assume that these changes will automatically be translated into behavioral changes (i.e., less criminal activity). The question then is: to what extent do the cognitive and moral developmental changes contribute to a reduction in criminal behaviour? One way of answering this question is to compare the incidence of observed recidivism in the experimental group with that of the control group. All of the methodological difficulties with both defining and measuring recidivism aside, Ayers and Duguid make just such a comparison:
Table 2: Number and Percentage of Program Participants and Matched Control Group by Type of Contact with the Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Contact</th>
<th>Program Participants</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to prison for violation of parole</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to prison for violation of parole and new offence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to prison for new offence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awaiting trial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fines or minor violations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not re-incarcerated</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Group</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Adapted from Ayers et al., 1980, Table 26, p. 51.

Once again, the numbers are small, but the trend is notably in favor of Ayers' and Duguid's approach. Of the sixty-five program participants, 86% were not re-incarcerated. By comparison, 48% of the control group were not re-incarcerated. It is interesting to note, however, that for both groups very few (3 and 5 percent respectively) were returned to prison for new offenses alone. Parole violation seems to be the significant difference.

At this point, it should be asked that with all this emphasis on the efficacy of the UVic. program to improve the level of moral development and thereby reduce the rate of recidivism, is anyone concerned with the value of education itself? Instead of evaluating what students learned (e.g., their grasp of new concepts and their ability to apply and criticize them) assessment is concerned with measuring course work as a curative for pathological conditions. Accepting at face value a theory that criminal activity is linked to the stage of moral development is in itself problematic, at the very least. While we are speaking of morals, one might question how ethical it is to evaluate the worth of teaching history, anthropology, or Canadian literature by their capacity to change a person's perspective towards criminal activity. Who amongst us would like to have our academic achievement assessed on our demonstrated ability to avoid contact with the police? Can such a skill be seen as a valid indicator for educational success either as teacher or student?

Another more subtle problem emerges from the conception of education as a weapon in the arsenal of war against crime. Study after
study of the prison system in Canada has demonstrated that there is a crisis of control. The parliamentary Sub-Committee, appointed in 1976 to investigate the Canadian Prison system because of the wave of riots, hostage-takings, and other violent disturbances occurring in the 70s concluded that:

Society has spent millions of dollars over the years to create and maintain the proven failure of prisons. Incarceration has failed in its two essential purposes — correcting the offender and providing permanent protection to society. The recidivist rate of up to 80% is evidence of both (MacGuigan, 1977).

Many researchers agree that the result has been that the primary objective of the prison administrator is control of the prisoner population (e.g. see Gosselin, 1982). I would like to suggest that the post-secondary educational programs should be seen in the same light: as a strategy of control by prison administrators under the guise of liberal, rehabilitative ideology. Wotherspoon has argued that education in the prison provides an opportunity to increase the surveillance of prisoners:

Education in prison compounds the authority which any educator or educating agency commands over the content and mode of the transmission process. No educational process is neutral, even when couched in the sterile rhetoric of ... liberalism. In prison, the prisoner student is saddled with a potential double handicap of being 'decriminalised' and 'educated' on someone else's terms. The educational enterprise also generates information about the student [prisoner] in the form of grades, progress reports, written documents, and whatever else the [prisoner] reveals through ... educational activities. While educational priorities shift, as they have tended, from an emphasis on content and doing to cognitive and moral development and being-becoming, more aspects of the [prisoner] are opened to scrutiny. The [prisoner's] whole being is increasingly vulnerable to exposure and evaluation. The terms of education become more internal than external; the content becomes less important than self-knowledge and the process of education .... [The theory here is that] such a process allows the student working in conjunction with the teacher/therapist to outgrow certain [sociological pathologies]. Education becomes control ... [And as Gosselin suggests], "the prisoners internalize the desired norms, through a variety of techniques so that they effectively become their own jailers" (1986: 171 emphasis in original).

In short, prisoner education posited as moral education is first and foremost an effective form of social control masked as a form of rehabilitation and evaluated not on its pedagogical merit, but on its efficacy of reducing recidivism. That such manipulation of purposes takes place in the prison comes as no surprise to most prisoners. That it should be defended/promoted in the name of moral development is perhaps more disturbing, more draconian than it might otherwise be.
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A Non-Traditional Approach to a Curriculum for Prisoners In New York State

Juan Rivera

THE DIRECT RELATIONSHIP

The need for a non-traditional approach to education in the New York State prison system derives from what a group of innovative prisoners calls the 'direct relationship' between the sixty-two prisons in New York and the specific communities where prisoners come from. A curriculum reflecting the reforms requested by New York's Commissioner of Education are needed, but for prisoners the curriculum must include an additional dimension. It must include a non-traditional, community-specific approach that takes the community into account and links the needs of the community with those of the offender. After all, those needs brought most of the offenders to prison in the first place.

Why a non-traditional approach, and what does it mean? To answer this we must first define a traditional approach. From our perspective this is a curriculum which is Eurocentric, white, and middle-class. It is taught to a variety of ethnic groups on the false assumption that anyone is able to fit into this society. In contrast, a non-traditional curriculum recognizes Latino and Afrocentric perspectives. It acknowledges the poor and the reality that we are not allowed to fit into Eurocentric society. Fundamental differences between cultures must be considered and understood in all curriculum initiatives, since they concern every aspect of our lives.

Why should prisoners in New York demand such a non-traditional curriculum? They want it because it reveals the direct relationship — that is, although Blacks and Latinos together represent less than twenty-five percent of the total general population in New York, they comprise 82.3 percent of the State's total prison population,¹ with the Latino population the fastest growing segment in the State's prison system. Furthermore, the direct relationship reveals that seventy percent or more of the prisoners come from New York City (Correctional Association, New York and New York State Coalition for Criminal Justice, 1990: 7). Perhaps more important it recognizes that eighteen specific assembly districts in New York City contribute seventy percent of the prisoners, which leads to our next question: What is occurring in those eighteen assembly districts that is not occurring in the other 132 districts in New York State?

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There are 'crime generative factors,' commonly known as family breakdown, poor health care, substandard housing, under-education, high unemployment, drugs, discrimination, prison, etc., that are prevalent in those assembly districts and are the root cause of our problems. Without question these 'crime generative factors' are the reasons why such a disproportionate number of Latinos and Blacks are in prison. Consequently, these root causes must be understood from a Latino and Afrocentric perspective.

Our analysis is not a unique one with respect to socio-economic conditions, but it is one that seeks a solution from the perspective of those most affected by the ever-increasing incarceration rate and a recidivism rate which, according to the Department of Correctional Services, was at 39.5 percent in 1988 (1988: 8-9). Since approximately ninety-five percent of the prison population when released return to the communities from which they come, and since four out of ten of these people will return to prison, this suggests that released offenders returning to their communities are contributing to the higher percentage of the overall crime rate in these districts.

**TRADITIONAL VERSUS NON-TRADITIONAL**

There is a popular assumption that while people are in prison something is being done to address the problems that caused them to come to prison. However, the traditional methods that are used do not work for the majority of prisoners, who today are either Latino or Black, because the traditional methods do not take into account the institutional failures and 'crime generative factors' that exist in our communities. The traditional methods imply that the fault rests solely with the offenders: that they commit their crimes because there is something wrong with them (i.e., that they are inherently evil). Conversely, the non-traditional approach claims that there are socio-economic conditions, in addition to the individual's behavior, that cause a person to commit a crime. We say that these factors cannot be overlooked and in fact should be addressed by providing a non-traditional course in basic civic and community politics. Instead of rehabilitation, we like to call this an empowerment process which allows individuals to transform themselves from what they were to what they can become. In place of the helplessness poor people often feel, a sense of control over their future is instilled in them and this empowerment works to transform a criminal mentality into a progressive and law-abiding one by permitting the ex-offender insight into failing institutions in their own communities.

In addition, African and Latin American history classes should be established and attached to all educational institutions, including the General Education Diploma (G.E.D) educational program. At the
Green Haven Correctional Facility we have observed that prisoners who attended both the Black and Latin American history classes acquired a G.E.D. diploma and went on to enroll in the Dutchess or Marist College with greater success than those who did not attend either class. Although we have not conducted an empirical analysis of the success rate of students who take these classes, we believe the classes capture the interest of students and stimulate their learning ability. Moreover, these classes serve to instill a natural sense of self-worth which cannot be inculcated through a Eurocentric approach. For the Italian, Irish, and other Europeans, the Anglo-Saxon model might be a normal and suitable standard of achievement; however, the African descendant needs an African frame of reference and the same is true for the Hispanic.

**MODEL CLASSES**

In order to release from prison people who have been educated with a new vision of themselves, and of the purpose and direction their lives should take from that point onwards, we have created two classes which we think can serve as models for other prison education programs and which address the responsibilities we have to ourselves and our communities.

Addressing these responsibilities is essential if we are to survive as individual ethnic groups and simultaneously thrive as American citizens. These classes take into consideration three principal characteristics of the prisoner which the state's traditional approach does not address: (1) the crime generative attitudes of the prisoner and their origins, (2) the ethnic status and identity of the prisoner, and (3) a sense of community. Let us examine these from the perspective of those who have lived in prison.

The first characteristic, the crime generative attitudes of the prisoner, are created by the socio-economic conditions which exist in the community. These are the attitudes which lead one to believe that, "You must make it in this society by being tough and mean, or by any way you can." Thus, a disrespect for the laws of American society arises. This happens when a distinct people experiences segregation, injustice, inferior education, and the force of police as the slave patrols (Williams and Murphy, 1990: 3-5). This happens when people are deprived of community control, political control, and economic independence (i.e. they lack repatriation) (Blauner, 1990: 111).

The longing to fit the traditional European model often leads to self-hatred because we fail to 'fit in' and this places our community members on a collision course with the 'white man's law.' We seek compensation for our failures by acquiring symbols of success, money, and
material possessions, which for most of us can only be gained illegally and often in the form of ethnic crime. Hence, we develop the attitude that illegal activity is all right.

Ethnicity then is central to the problem of crime, and understanding ethnicity in this way must become part of a prison curriculum. The study of ethnic status and identity helps prisoners to deal with the reality of their ethnic status in American society, which is that of second-class citizens. More positively, it identifies the role of ethnic groups in American history. This develops the positive self-esteem needed to advance past the stereotypes and stigmas created for us by others. An understanding of ethnic status also challenges the feeling of powerlessness which keeps us from doing something about our present conditions.

The final characteristic, the sense of community, must also have a place in prison education programs. Having a sense of community empowers prisoners because it links them with groups in the community and teaches them how their community operates. We learn from an historical perspective about the development of community concepts, including community concepts of social control which take into consideration the impact of crime generative factors on community empowerment movements. All of these factors afford the prisoner insight into how s/he fits in the community, thereby instilling in ourselves concern for the community and the people in it. The prisoner learns to see how people are struggling as a community to survive.

The classes are designed to develop a well rounded person with some basic knowledge, ranging from the meaning of ethnocentrism to what is liberation theology. We recommend these classes be scheduled for a period of six months. Throughout the course outside speakers should participate and provide insight to related issues. We also encourage grass-roots groups from the community to assist us in improving what we have developed so far, for we sternly believe that there are no prison problems, only community problems which we bring with us to prison. And since it is the community’s survival that is at stake, their input is most essential.

PURGING STAGES

Equally important is the need to help prisoners deal with negative influences which have been embedded in their personalities. Hence, we advocate self-development purging stages which help to create a new Hispanic or Black person through (1) emotional purging; (2) educational purging; and (3) social purging.

The first purging stage addresses emotions such as racism, sexism, hate, vanity, and desires. We also examine the negative and positive
practices of machismo. Educational purging attempts to eliminate the effects of mis-education, the result of skewed demographics, all-white American history, and traditional (i.e Eurocentric) learning. Emphasis is placed on re-education by acknowledging our own history and non-traditional knowledge. We find that the social purging stage is the most important part of the process by which we come to understand why we are who we are and how we got that way. It addresses both those aspects of our social perspective that need revamping and changing in our minds and the way we conceptualize our own reality. This is where we begin to breach the stereotypes and stigmas that society creates for us, which are the major restrictive constructs, the subliminal underpinnings of our psycho-social problems.

A theory which supports the purging stage is the labeling perspective. We must be in a position to choose between positive and negative role models, but this cannot be done until we are in a position to identify and understand these role models. For example, C.H. Cooley’s (1983) theory the ‘looking glass self’ suggests just how important it is to understand the labeling process and its detrimental effects on the individual’s self-image and the image of the entire community. The labeling process is executed through the traditional educational system. Both the labels and the labeling process are made to appear real/natural by the media. We must understand this process and its dangerous effects so we can begin to redefine our own reality and make concerted efforts towards changing conditions in our communities. In this way, we can become a life-giving component instead of an element which destroys those very communities in which we live and die.

CONCLUSION

We as prisoners are making an honest effort at reconciling ourselves with those communities we helped to destroy. We realize that we harmed not only ourselves but the community as well. With these classes we hope to open prisoners’ eyes, to give new meaning to our lives, and to allow us to see ourselves as part of the community.

We do not have all the answers, nor do we pretend to have them. Nevertheless, we have begun something meaningful which can become a turning point in this destructive process taking place today. Also, we realize that much of the community hesitates to accept us, and we understand these feelings. Thus, we have formulated a five-step reconciliation process entailing recognition, responsibility, reconstruction, reconciliation, and redemption. It attempts to bring together the community and prisoners for the purpose of creating non-traditional approaches to the problems of crime and criminal justice. Prisoners must recognize that they have committed wrongs against their communities so that reconciliation with communities can begin and meaning-
ful working relationships can be developed amongst themselves as participants in the workshops.

Here at the Fishkill Correctional Facility, we are attempting to formulate another class similar to the ones we created at the Green Haven Correctional Facility. We call these model classes the "Conciencia and Resurrection" study groups. Conciencia, in Spanish translates "to be in a state of consciousness." The class attempts to address our problems from a Latinocentric perspective. Likewise, the Resurrection study group instructs from an Afrocentric perspective.

We encourage anyone who is interested and able to assist us in enhancing these classes and our curriculum, and/or anyone who wants more information concerning the classes to contact us in writing. CONCIENCIA!

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On Prison Education and Women in Prison

An Interview with Therasa Ann Glaremin

INTRODUCTION

Theresa Ann Glaremin was recently released from Kingston Prison for Women after six years inside that institution and eleven months inside a provincial institution. She is now on day parole and she did a radio interview with me, Gay Bell, on the phone from the halfway house in Kingston where she was living.

I have submitted this interview to the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons for a number of reasons: for the information it contains on educational opportunities for federal women prisoners; for readers to have the opportunity to get to know Newfoundlander Theresa Ann Glaremin, a writer of Micmac and Irish descent; and to encourage readers to try to get interviews with prisoners or ex-prisoners they might know onto their local media.

CKLN-FM is a community radio station operating out of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. 'Word of Mouth,' on which this interview was aired, is a program of national news commentary. CKLN-FM does much programming about prisoners and was very open to doing this interview.

National Student Week (October 14-18, 1991) was designed to raise awareness of the under-funding of education, the fact that classes are too large, and that marginalized courses like women's studies and African studies are insufficiently funded. I thought it was important to include a woman prisoner's view on the education that was actually available to her while she was inside a federal institution.

THE INTERVIEW

Gay Bell: Would you like to tell us about your educational history?

Theresa Ann Glaremin:

When I went into the system I had only a Grade Six education, and while I was at the Provincial, it was pretty hard to really get anything because they have no programs at the Provincial. They have some limited programs through the Ministry of Education, but as far as the school and that goes, there's not really anything. You're dependent on the postal service for your books and your courses.

When I was transferred from the Provincial in 1986 to the Federal system at the Prison for Women (P4W), I found that the educational

Gay Bell and Theresa Ann Glaremin wish to thank Zoltan Lugosi for his help in preparing this interview for publication.
program was enlarged. That is, they had a school there for prisoners, so I wanted to upgrade myself from my Grade Six level to the ABE level.

Gay: That’s Adult Basic Education?

Therasa Ann:

Yes, that’s right. That’s to Grade Nine level. But when I got there, it was a different thing. The Work Board¹ at that time, even though they were pushing to get you to your ABE, they needed people to work in the institution in laborious positions — like in dining, kitchen, cleaners, laundry; they needed people to perform laborious functions to keep the institution tidy and that. They put me in the kitchen apart from the fact that I wanted to go to school. They said that I wasn’t going to need my education when I got out, that I would probably get a job in a restaurant or as a cleaner, if I wasn’t a housewife.

So what I did was work in their kitchen serving food to the prisoners and cooking and cleaning and washing pots; but on my downtime, the time that was my own, I got my Ministry of Education courses, and I moved forward. I set a goal for myself and I wanted to achieve it. I wanted something more than being dependent on a man for something because I didn’t have the education to move forward. So, when I got to my ABE level, I was really happy and really satisfied. When I got my certificate I was really proud, and then I decided that I wanted to move on, forward.

I wanted my high school diploma; so I set my sights for my high school diploma. But the institution had other jobs for me to do. They sent me to microfilming. For about two years I was going outside the institution during the day as a technician doing microfilming. It was a monotonous job. Everything was mundane.

Gay: Is prisoners’ labour contracted out?

Therasa Ann:

Yes, prison labour is contracted out. Women working there receive the wage of the pen and not the wage of the street. It [microfilming] was run by an independent business which ran sweat shops with no advancement for those in its employment. The microfilming program has since been closed-off to women and has found a place within the walls of Kingston Prison (for men). It is a form of slave labour and offers no opportunities on the street as jobs of this nature aren’t available.

So, as I was saying, when I came back to my cage I continued with my studies. There was a period when I couldn’t get certain courses through the Ministry of Education. I had to go and see the Warden and threaten to expose what was really going on with these programs that we were supposed to be getting. The Administration was making a big deal about education: ‘Oh, the education is great inside!’ But we
weren't getting any benefits from that. They just wanted us to clean, and if you were a good stool pigeon you might get into the education program.

Gay: What does that mean?

Therasa Ann:

That means that you inform on other prisoners about their activities in order to get favors from the Administration.

Gay: If you inform you might get something?

Therasa Ann:

Yes, but I got nothing because I didn't care to talk about other prisoners' business. So I had to fight and put in grievances in order to get some time at the school to take required courses for my diploma, which I couldn't get through the Ministry.

I won my grievance, and the Warden went to bat for me and put me in school for about eight months. I got my high school diploma in June of 1988.

I was the Valedictorian and I gave a very emotional speech about the value of education. I spoke about how we are all at this stage in time and none would move forward if we didn't use this time that we were given as a punishment for being women — that's how I looked at it because I'm not guilty of what they say I've done, so I look at things in a different way.

There was a high percentage of women in prison at that time in 1988 who did not have an education and as a result of the consciousness-raising efforts of myself, Gail Horri, Jo-Ann Mayhew and Fran Sugar, we got things moving towards getting more educational programs for the women. Men have those shops (vocational education courses) where they can get trades at the federal institutions. We didn't have that. We still don't, by the way. Not if the Parole Boards can help it.

Gay: What do you mean?

Therasa Ann:

In the federal pens one has the option of learning a trade. The P4W has no programs whereby a woman can leave with a license.

Men can leave prison with their papers to do woodworking, barbering, electronics, mechanics, etc. Women have John's B.P., which is as bad as microfilming. Men can get limited parole to work outside of prison. Women are barred due to their lack of training. The Parole Board makes the decision as to whether a woman can go into the community or not.

Education is the only certification a woman can bring with her and
she has to be allowed, by decision of the Board and the Warden, to attend a men's prison to get that education because these university programs are offered on a larger scale to men. They are only offered to a limited number of federal women prisoners.

Gay: So, there's education for trades in the men's prison, but there's nothing for women.

Therasa Ann:

Non-existent; and that's why Gail Horri, Jo-Ann Mayhew, Fran Sugar and I were speaking on behalf of the federally sentenced women by sitting on panels and task forces to decide what was the best thing we could do for the women. We believed that what the women wanted, their consensus, was to have trades. They wanted to leave with certificates, something they could have that would enable them to get jobs when they got out so they wouldn't have to be lower-class citizens. They had three strikes against them: they are women, they are in the prison system, and they are uneducated as well. When they came in, most of them were below the ABE level like myself — maybe Grade Eight or Nine. About seven or eight percent of the women had high school, university degrees, things like that. In the crowd that I hung around with, 75 percent of the women had less than a Grade Nine education.

What was being taught inside and outside were just two totally different concepts. So the chance of a woman coming out with her hairdressing diploma and using it to get a job on the streets was very marginal, unless she fell down on her hands and knees and begged the employer to please let her have a job, or did something drastic. She would never get it on the merits of that hairdressing diploma because it was so poor in quality. And women never had the chance to leave prison with a mechanics certificate, or a certificate from a shop, or barbering, or anything.

Anyway, through the efforts of me and my fellow sisters, we endeavored to start programming at the Prison for Women; and indeed programming did start — tons of programming through the ABE. But once again only those chosen few could go into the ABE. Then toward the end of 1988, coming into 1989, they sort of changed it all around. They started rounding-up people in droves and forcing them to go to school against their wills. Something had to have come down from the upper echelon of power that corrections works through because they took people out of their jobs and put them in school. They were saying that anyone who worked in these jobs had to have their Grade Nine education. The jobs had been done by women who didn't have their Grade Nine education and were doing quite well. That didn't matter. Now, they wanted them all to go to school in order to qualify for the same job.
Gay: How did the women feel about that?
Theresa Ann:
It really confused the women. They were pissed off. Some of them didn’t go to work, some of them withdrew, some of them turned to substance abuse. That didn’t matter.
Gay: Tell me about the Queen’s University Correctional Project.
Theresa Ann:
It is a program headed by Queen’s University and Correctional Services Canada.

The high school diploma was the highest you could earn in the prison system. A fine lady named Darryl Dolen foresaw this about twelve or thirteen years ago. She had a high school diploma herself. She fought really hard to continue her education and challenged the process that eliminated women. As a result she was allowed to take the program, thereby opening the doors for women to be allowed into the university program. She was the forerunner, the one who got Queen’s Correctional Law Project going, and now women inside have the option to continue with their education through to completing their BA while in prison.
Gay: So, that’s how you started at Queen’s, is it?
Theresa Ann:
That’s how I started doing it. This system was put in place by Darryl Dolen and it seemed that all we had to do was take the bull by the horns — if you’ll excuse the rude expression, I don’t want to grab any bulls by their horns — and move forward with it. But it wasn’t as easy as all that. When I and the women involved in the program wanted to move forward with it, we found that we couldn’t.

As it stands now, there are no functional programs at the P4W that enable women to become better equipped for the workforce when they are released. The education program is the most beneficial program to the women but courses are limited in number and women are chosen not because of their desire to attend program, but by the Work Board and Warden who decide which women should go.3

Whatever programs are offered at the federal level to women, they cannot even compare to what men in the system receive. Women are still not seen as the ‘breadwinners’ in our present class structure, and, therefore, programs offered to them, when they come into conflict with the law, reflect and reinforce the patriarchal system by offering programming of a personal, psychological nature, rather than affirmative action programs which would enable entry into the workforce.
Gay: *So what do you see a woman prisoner’s rights to education as being?*

Theresa Ann:

For those locked away, entry into a university program or an educational program, as opposed to correspondence courses, should be a right and not a privilege at the Warden’s choice. Parents are liable to go to jail for not providing education to their children. Likewise, Corrections have become ‘bad parents’ when it comes to the education of women prisoners in its care.

Gay: *How can women prisoners protest when their rights are not respected?*

Theresa Ann:

One of my sisters, Murdock, just came off a death fast because the Warden offered her a job in the gym if she would end the fast. She had been locked on the range for over one year with no job placement and no stimulation of any kind or any chance of personal growth, let alone the chance to be able to work or contribute something to her prison community. This is a prime example of a woman being treated like an animal in the privacy of the system that professes to help her.

Gay: *Then let’s dedicate this radio show to Murdock and her courage in standing up for her rights. Thank you, Theresa Ann, for sharing your experiences and knowledge with our listeners.*

ENDNOTES

1. The Work Board is a panel of department heads (e.g., the head of school, head of laundry, head of social development) which places prisoners in the federal system into work placements during their stay. A prisoner must work in the Board’s placement in order to be paid a wage. There are five levels of pay, and one must stay in a job placement for fourteen weeks before receiving a wage increase or obtaining a job transfer. These placements are satisfactory only to the Work Board: they are never the choice of the prisoner.

2. Parole Boards began asking prisoners why they did not get an education while inside and turned them down until they at least finished ABE.

3. Zoltan Lugosi adds that women are chosen for courses if they seem to be able to carry the extra workload because it keeps the scholastic achievement statistics on the rise, thus making the program coordinators look good to senior management.
Virginia’s prison system is not any different from other states as far as having only one facility for women and several for men. The one thing that does stand out here at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women (VCCW) is the educational programs, the institution’s greatest asset. The Literacy Incentive Program gives a woman a chance to learn to read and write so she can go on to get her high school diploma in the form of a General Education Development (GED) certificate. From there she can go on to enroll at either J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College or the Mary Baldwin College Adult Degree Program.

So often women come to prison with the handicap of no education or else with just enough to get by. Many people do not realize that without an education they are bound for whatever unskilled job is available at the time, if any at all. In today’s society working women are making moves up the ladder. It has taken them many years to get to this point. Men have had vocational schools open to them for many years, due mainly to their role as breadwinner of the family. But what about the woman who does not want a family or to be married; what options are open to her? She must provide for herself and with little or no education this task can be very difficult.

Many women are single parents today and they need the skills that will enable them to provide for their children and themselves. To this end, vocational training is useful. Here at VCCW some vocational training programs are offered to women. One example is drafting, both manual and the Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD) system. The first drafting class gives a woman a chance to learn drafting basics. Then, she can go on to the CAD system where she learns the computer system most companies are using today. Another example is an apprenticeship program run by the buildings and grounds department which offers training in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and general maintenance. This program provides the opportunity for women to learn not only how to fix things in their own homes but skills to get a non-traditional job as well. I feel that this is an area where all women could use some experience given that repair costs are so high. We should all know how to replace something as simple as a washer on a leaky faucet instead of calling a repair person and paying the high cost for such minor work. This program should be expanded so that more women can acquire these skills.

Cheryl Bonfanti is a prisoner at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women, Goochland, Virginia.
The community college program at VCCW offers training in the business field. This certificate program is one that will get a woman in the door of most business offices since she will know how to operate their equipment.

The Mary Baldwin Adult Degree Program offers the opportunity to earn a B.S. degree in four years. In this program, classes make the same demands as those given on the Staunton campus where Mary Baldwin College is located. Prisoners are not given any sympathy for being in prison, and that is the way the students want it. Some of the instructors teach at the college and drive here for classes. Each student receives a Pell Grant and a $2,000 scholarship from the college. The grant and scholarship are renewed annually. Each year we must pay our own admittance fee of $25, a small amount to pay when one considers the benefits that a student will reap.

This is one of the best things that has happened to VCCW because it gives so many women hope. A woman can come to this institution with little or no formal education, and depending on how hard she works and the amount of time she has, she can leave with a degree. This is not an impossible dream; it is one that can become a reality.

I must say that I am biased in my views of the programs because I completed the CAD course and am presently working on my degree from Mary Baldwin College. I believe these programs offer excellent benefits which a women can use once she is back outside.

During the time I have been at VCCW, I have heard several women say "What is the use of a GED? I'm not going to work on the outside. I didn't before and I'm not when I go back out there." These women are only fooling themselves because once they get 'back out there' and see that times have changed, they will wish they had taken advantage of the educational programs that were offered to them. It is difficult for me to understand how anybody can hold themselves back from something that only costs time, when that is one thing that we have plenty of right now. Just as they found time to meet the drug dealer on the street for drugs, they need to find time for an education. In the past there were more important things to do than sit in a classroom somewhere. I know I would have much rather gone shopping than study for a test. Many women were busy working two jobs just to make ends meet on a monthly basis. Women who go to prison are not those with the elite backgrounds and the best education money can buy. They are instead those from lower class America, struggling to make ends meet. For them, education was not a top priority within their families. What was important was having a roof over their heads and food on the table. Crime, well, that was a quick fix for a long term problem. In many families drugs and the shortage of money took precedence over anything else.
I can understand this, but as a prisoner I cannot stress enough how important education is. A prisoner has so much time and the best way to spend it is by preparing herself for a better future for herself and her children. An education is something not every parent can afford, but while that parent is in prison she can make changes which will benefit her and her family when she is released. The knowledge and skills she obtains while in this situation may prove to be the stepping stones that will help her to prevent her children from going down the road of hard knocks in a prison environment. An education is the one thing that we could all benefit from in or out of prison because being in prison does not make us stop living and does not keep the world at a standstill until we return to society.

Today in Virginia’s prison system there is not one educational program in any facility without a waiting list, be it for three months or a year. Prisoners are seeing the difference that education can make and are starting to make the changes in their adult lives that were denied them as children and teens due to the economic status of their families. Women are making more and more positive gains in the workforce today because they realized that an education will pay off. This is the same thing that women in prison are realizing. They see the need for change and are taking the steps to meet that need.
INTRODUCTION

There are those inside and outside prison who still question in their minds and hearts the proposition that most prisoners can learn, and they believe that the cultural deficits of most prisoners are too deeply embedded to be overcome. A negative image of prisoners is most often promoted and conveyed to the public. The perceived failure of the rehabilitative process is used to justify building more prisons and being 'Tough on Crime.' Elliott Currie notes:

To the criminological Right, it [failure] offered further testimony that the only feasible response to criminal offenders was increased efforts at deterrence and incapacitation, and it served in a deeper sense to confirm the view that crime reflected fundamental flaws in human nature over the constitutional rights of the offender. In spite of our best efforts, the research seemed to say, you can't do anything with these people after all, so you shouldn't try. For the left, on the other hand, the apparent failure of rehabilitation frequently supported a very different argument that given the deep social and economic sources of crime in the United States little could be gained ... by tinkering with offenders in the name of individual treatment (1985:237-38).

It is unlikely that much will be said about the many prisoners who, while in prison or after leaving, go on to succeed in higher education. Their achievements often go unheralded, unable to fit into the language of failure. In my view, I think that all incarcerated women and men need to hear something other than the constant negativism that is directed their way. Perhaps we will be able to gain strength and inspiration from each other, and to secure advice and help from those we can trust.

I am an African American, and presently incarcerated. However, I choose not to spend time lamenting the inadequacies of prisons and the lack of meaningful education programs. I would rather focus upon getting the good news out that most prisoners can attain high school diplomas, that some can earn Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, Doctorate, and Law degrees, moving onwards towards creative, productive, and positive lives. I want to help provide ways in which prisoners can make a difference in their education and their lives. I want to assist in the building of bridges, not public relations propaganda for the building of more prisons. The history of self-help among African Americans offers models that can be useful for prisoners in the search for innovative approaches to resolving the current crisis in the criminal justice system.
When I look at what is currently happening to the majority of African Americans, Latinos, Native American Indians, and poor white people, and the business of building more prisons, I become angry. But I refuse to yield to feelings of helplessness. I choose instead to transform anger and frustration into bold and direct action. This essay is intended as an initial exploration into a process which may help prisoners to learn to question and transform themselves and, in the long term, the criminal justice system. I willingly share my 'educational experience' as a possible starting point for other prisoners to consider as they move towards attaining dignity, self-esteem, self-direction, self-empowerment, and academic freedom.

CLIMBING UP THE PRISONER EDUCATION LADDER

It is important not only to understand why the vast majority of incarcerated women and men lack basic academic skills, but also to consider seriously ways to correct the problem. It is time to look into the nitty-gritty of prisoner needs and hang-ups. From there we can go on to consider whether it might even be possible for prisoners to accomplish self-determination and self-empowerment.

Most prisoners are politically disenfranchised. Prisoners have no voice in decisions that affect their lives while incarcerated. The prisoner is told what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and where to do it. Add in the schedules for eating, personal hygiene, court time, visits, recreation activities, sleeping and almost every hour of the day has been planned by the prison staff. Overall, no real responsibility is given to the prisoner.

The major program in prison is to program the prisoner. The key focus is to contain and maintain prisoners, not to educate us. In short, this sort of policy actually translates into the continual development of the underdevelopment of prisoners.

Too often mainstream inquiries into prison are framed by politicians/legislators so it appears that these power brokers are aiming to solve the problem of crime. But they will not solve anything because they will not confront the real cause of crime; that is, the conditions of the poor and many African Americans in particular, conditions which are the direct result of our exploitation by capitalism and the political agenda of the 'power elite' in the United States and elsewhere. Today, for example, more African American men are in prison than are in college. In fact, the number of African Americans attending college stands at twenty-six percent, down from thirty-three percent in 1976. College educated black men have an unemployment rate four times greater than their white peers. African Americans and other people of colour are most often victims of crime before they are perpetrators.
It is therefore impossible for us to look upon the crisis of crime in the United States as it affects people of colour and society at large without asking ‘Who are the real criminals?’ In the face of tremendous odds, physical and mental pain and slavery, despite government and corporate policies aimed at perpetuating our impoverishment, African Americans have survived, remained self-reliant, and proved to be socially adaptable. Prisoners can do the very same thing. Since we as prisoners are often the most directly affected, it is necessary that we develop a keen awareness of the inter-relationship of race, class, and gender oppression, including the institutional white-male-over-black-male oppression which in this patriarchal society underpins everything else.

These issues, which are of deep concern to African Americans, are too extensive and too complex for an adequate treatment in this paper and by any one writer, but we must be reminded of the fact that it is impossible to address the question of prisons and prison education without this context and without hearing the voices of men and women from across the spectrum of the African American community, those both inside and outside of prison. And we must realize that it is up to us, prisoners and ex-prisoners, to forge ties of mutual support and exchange information and skills or we, African-American, Native American Indian, and Latinos, could perish. We need to face the fact of our incarceration. We have to stop kidding ourselves and playing games. We must organize, beginning with organizing ourselves.

In pragmatic terms, we must analyze existing ‘prison programs,’ meagre though they may be, to assess precisely how they work or do not work, while forming ourselves into political organizations to structure our recommendations. We need to gather and duplicate whatever is valuable and bring in persons to impart and interpret information and share experiences. If our efforts are to succeed, we must be adamant in showing to people in society the importance of mandating prisons to provide all prisoners with a decent education, tangible job opportunities, and hope for the future. The nation’s prisons warehouse countless numbers of poor people, among them many of the brightest and brashest African-Americans, Native Americans and Latinos who refuse to settle for passivity. That is one reason why it is absolutely imperative that people in and out of prison move into a renewed stage of communal activism to assert leadership in effecting change.

If I may speak of my own experience, I decided to participate in my education. In that process I discovered a community of friends and supporters. I turned my cell into a field of action, a base of power. I found out that I could study eagerly and learn prodigiously for the best of possible reasons, my own reasons. For me, the key to opening the windows, unlocking the doors of education and opportunity was when
I decided to take control of my life. During this journey, I have also experienced a profound spiritual awakening that enabled me to cease all previous nefarious activities and habits. Now I strive to pass on information, free of charge, and, I hope, ‘inspire’ ways in which other prisoners may be able to attain and/or surpass their goals.

It may be possible that a large segment of prisoners, by educating themselves, can bring about constructive change in the penal system. Although prisons in each state and country may have a different set of rules and programs, each prisoner must deal with stress, pressure, hopes, fears, desires, and dreams. We entombed souls may be hindered in our natural movement, and the outwardly oral expression of our esoteric thoughts; however, we possess the power to think. Prisoners intellectual ability is best evidenced by that special ability to navigate around most of the rules set by the prison. Indeed, there exists already a group of talented prisoners who can play a vital role in contributing to the fermentation, formulation, and facilitation of wiser and much better prison policy and education for prisoners.

You can see that I choose to accentuate the positive and promote the success of some prisoners. The so-called stigmas placed upon prisoners, like poor motivation, low self-esteem, discipline problems, and even perceived learning disabilities, can be overcome for the vast number of prisoners. By unmasking and acknowledging the ‘continued development of the underdevelopment of prisoners,’ we can get down to the business of education reform fully.

Regardless of the prison you may be in, you can ‘reach out’ (via writing letters to colleges, newspapers, etc.), request and often receive a positive response. This is a good way to build a network of supporters and at the same time receive a lot of mail.

Whether you are interested in music, art, history, psychology, or political sciences, you can locate an accredited college that offers AA, BA and MA programs. More than seventy colleges and universities in the United States offer fully-accredited correspondence courses. Almost all will enroll students (in or out of prison) living anywhere in the world. Thousands of courses are offered for credit in virtually every academic and technical area. Most schools offer courses in popular topics (e.g., business, education, psychology), some specialized courses (e.g., management, cinematography, modern Arabic) are only available at one or two schools. The great majority of courses are at the undergraduate levels, but students in Masters and Doctoral programs may be able to use them to meet degree requirements or to increase personal knowledge.

It is possible to earn an accredited Bachelor degree at either the University of the State of New York or Thomas Edison State College.
entirely from a prison cell, through correspondence courses. In most states and prisons, Pell Grants are given to prisoners who attend college. In short, the prisoner must be willing to make the effort to capitalize on the opportunity. Once that decision is made and acted upon, often truly amazing things begin to happen.

For example, one of the most advantageous disciplines for prisoners to learn is law. This subject allows prisoners to infiltrate and perhaps overcome the very system which originally overwhelmed them. Although this might begin as a necessity of sanity geared toward proving innocence or a reduction of sentence, many times it ends with a heightened awareness and increased knowledge of the law. At the root of this is the inherent need for human beings to maintain morale. Learning the law and filing legal papers on one's own behalf gives a prisoner a feeling of control over his/her destiny. Success creates not only feelings of self-respect, but often leads to the lessening of self-destructive strategies.

Some prisoners who read this may have questions and/or doubts regarding 'prisoner education success stories' — whether or not these stories could be meaningful to their lives. Maybe questions about money to pay tuition, academic requirements, the need for books and supplies, and so forth pop up in one's mind. If such thoughts are beginning to form in your mind, it is good because this is the first step in climbing up the education ladder.

It is equally important to know about the accomplishments of others. The following are brief accounts of the many prisoner success stories.

William Brown, at the age of eight, found himself in prison, withdrawing cold turkey from a heroin habit. In prison, he taught himself how to read and write. He went on to receive his GED, and an AA degree, and pushed to earn a BA, MA and PhD. Now Dr Brown teaches criminal procedure at West Texas University. He was appointed to a two-year term to represent the Association on the Board of the National College of Criminal Defense.

Allan Haber had lived in twelve different foster homes by the time he was thirteen years old. By the time he was twenty-one, he had been in five additional juvenile and adolescent institutions. He had an extensive criminal record (i.e., approximately fifteen misdemeanours and three felony convictions). He was a heroin addict for over eighteen years. Now, AI Haber works as Assistant Chief Law Clerk for the New York Supreme Court. He received his High School Diploma and Associate in Arts Degree while he was incarcerated. Released from prison in 1971, he continued his educational advancements, first earn-
ing a BA from Columbia University in 1980. Then on a Root-Tillmen Scholarship at NYU School of Law, he became an excellent law student. He later became the President of the Fortune Society, a member of the Board of Directors of Project Green Hope, a member of the Board of Advisors of the Bayview Correctional facility and a frequent guest lecturer at Columbia, NYU, and other universities.

John Irwin is recognized as one of the top prison experts in the US today. He served time at Soledad prison in the late 1950s. Working towards his PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1968, Irwin published his dissertation, *The Felon*, that sold well over 100,000 copies. In 1971 he co-authored, *Struggle for Justice: A Report on Crime and Punishment in America*. In 1978, *SCENES* and in 1980, *Prisons in Turmoil* were published. He became a tenured Professor of Sociology at San Francisco State College.

Ron LeFloore in 1973 was serving a term of five to fifteen years at the state prison in Jackson, Michigan. Years later he was a star left fielder for the Montreal Expos baseball team. He was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the National Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Benjamin Rayburn was a World War II Veteran. After his release from the service, finding no work available for a person who had not completed high school, he turned to crime. He became the leader to the Benny Denny gang which terrorized the eastern United States. Benny was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to life and thirty years on Federal charges of bank robbery. He did time in Kentucky, Alcatraz, and Atlanta, Georgia. While in prison, he studied law. He became so respected for his legal skills that he was called from his Atlanta prison cell one day to serve as an expert witness. Later his life sentence was terminated because he was 'denied due process hearing.' Later, he filed a *Habeas Corpus* concerning his 30-year federal sentence. The US Supreme Court granted his *Habeas Corpus* and, in 1969, he was released on bail pending review of a post conviction petition.

Bill Witherspoon was arrested in Chicago in 1959 for killing a policeman. In 1960 he was sentenced to die in the electric chair in the Cook County Jail. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear his case in 1967 after nine years on death row. The Supreme Court set aside his death penalty sentence and reduced the sentence to 50-100 years in prison. He was transferred to Joliet Prison. The Illinois Department of Corrections approved work release for Bill, working with a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. He was sent to Sheridan prison, filed suit for being transferred without due process and was ordered by the court to be placed back on work release. This time he was placed in the Carbondale Illinois Work Release Centre. When his parole hearing came up he was once again taken off work release and placed back into Sheridan. He
filed another law suit. This time the court found the Director and Warden in contempt of court and ordered Bill back into work release. He went to work for the Prison Legal Aid at Southern Illinois University. He helped senior law students prepare, research, file, and argue briefs before different federal and state courts. Bill filed a federal civil rights action against the Illinois parole system and after nine years on death row and twenty years in prison, he was released on parole in 1979. He began working as a counselor for START and was responsible for finding jobs and housing for ex-offenders leaving the Michigan prison system.

Robert Young was jailed three times in federal and state prisons in California in the mid-1960s. After his final release, he earned a BA at California State University at San Diego, and then decided to go to law school. He was turned down by eleven law schools, but was finally accepted at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento. After graduation, Young spent three years in private practice, and three more as an assistant district attorney. In 1977 he was elected to the Justice Court of Auburn, California. Judge Young summarizes his philosophy this way: 'I don't take no for an answer.'

Tiyo Attallah Salah-EL. Before being sent to prison, I had graduated from high school, then enlisted in the Army, served in Korea, was wounded and honourably discharged in 1953 with the rank of Sergeant. In 1954 I married, and began a thirty-year experience as a jazz musician and also engaged in many negative activities (e.g., drug sales, abusing women, lying, stealing, assault and battery, and shootings). In 1975 I was sentenced to 'life.'

When I arrived in prison I was filled with anger, frustration, and confusion. It took approximately two to three years for me to 'cool down' and realize the seriousness of my situation. My interests (sports and music) were instrumental in pointing me towards attending a few college courses that were offered here at SCI — Dallas, PA. I also wrote Monty Neill, who at the time was the Director of Prisoner Education Program at Franconia College and requested his help. Monty became, and remains, my friend, brother, and mentor. He guided me towards political awareness, inner peace, a BA in African American history, an MA in Political Science, and appointments as a Program Advisor for Beacon College and Director of the Prisoner Education Program.

During the past fifteen years, I composed and recorded music, became a member of ASCAP, coached and played football, wrote articles for Radical Teacher and the ECN Prisoner Project, and became a member of the National Lawyers Guild. Two years ago I applied to and was accepted at a law school. Professor Denise-Cardy Bennta, Associate Dean of City University of the New York Law School, reviewed my first year work of law school. Upon her recommendations I was
awarded funding for law school from the Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund. I recently submitted an application to the Temple University requesting admission to the PhD program offered by the Department of African American Studies. I have established and maintained solid academic and social relationships with respected scholars (e.g., Howard Zinn) and other women and men who are involved in helping to bring about positive social change.

My achievements pale compared to the accomplishments of the other people mentioned in this article. There are many others, incarcerated women and men, striving to attain goals. As strange as it may sound, ‘life’ in prison may in a peculiar way become a positive ‘good life’ inside a prisoner’s mind, heart, and soul. Yes, some prisoners can grasp that inner magic and/or power within themselves that will inspire them towards attaining self-determination and self-empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In my view, power properly understood is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic changes. In this sense, power, like prisoner education, is not only desirable but necessary in order to implement the healing and helping process for prisoners. In whatever form power comes to the people, it is most often achieved by organized efforts, essentially through ideological, political, and economic means. Cooperation then, rather than competition, is the essential principle, not just for prisoners, but for all poor folk on this planet. The task is to begin to make ourselves and others aware that ‘prisoners have power’ and worth. As prisoners, we occupy a position of uncommon and exciting advantage if we will only elevate our gaze high enough to recognize it.

One way to do this is through correspondence courses which are available to prisoners. A complete listing of correspondence courses can be found in a book that costs only $8.95, is revised annually, and can be bought at most bookstores: The Independent Study Catalog: The NUCEA Guide to Independent Study Through Correspondence Instruction. You can order this book from Peterson’s Guides, Princeton, NJ, (add $1.75 for postage and handling).

REFERENCES

I am especially pleased to take this opportunity to respond to an issue of the *Journal* focusing on prison education. While serving a term which otherwise nearly robbed me of the 1980s I became directly involved with prison university programs in several penitentiaries in the Prairies' Region. I began studying by correspondence through Athabasca University (Alberta, Canada), in 1983, and completed my Bachelor of Arts in history from that facility in 1988. I am currently on parole pursuing graduate studies in anthropology at the University of Alberta. Unfortunately, despite achieving, at least, a modest academic success, my overall experience with prison university programs, or what passes for them in the Prairies' Region, prompts me to conclude that my accomplishments were realized in spite of, rather than because of, the various 'curricula.'

For example, I was refused admission to the university program in Edmonton Institution because I could not 'demonstrate an adequate academic background.' Accordingly, I was forced to manufacture one by borrowing the money to purchase a course from Athabasca University which I completed on my own time during the evenings and on the weekends. When I was finally allowed to pursue studies on a recognized basis, my cell became my designated work area, and my grade of employment remained at the lowest possible level for over two years. Moreover, my experience with the university programs at Drumheller and Stony Mountain was, if not literally similar, then at least similarly frustrating. Each of these facilities approached the problems associated with providing post-secondary education to the prisoners in a uniquely different manner; yet, in each case, the problems precluded establishment of more than a rudimentary program.

But these problems, as Ray Jones explains in 'A Coincidence of Interests: Prisoner Higher Education in Massachusetts,' can be overcome to the extent necessary to permit prisoners to benefit from them. However, while acknowledging that university programs 'are flourishing in the prisons of Massachusetts,' Jones perceptively observes that prison authorities may well have conceded to such a situation for reasons decidedly opposed to the reformative aims of the educators. Indeed, in a short review of prison history, he points out that the relationship between educators and correctional authorities has always been contentious. Hence, he is noticeably (and rightfully) alarmed to discover 'that higher learning was embraced by the prison system at precisely the same time that the reformation of prisoners ceased to be
a popular aim of incarceration.‘ Of course, such intelligence indicates that prison authorities may simply view the prison university program in the traditional context of punishment and security, for example, as a form of behavioral modification or as a mechanism of control.

In ‘Post-Secondary Education for the Prisoner’s Cognitive and Moral Education or Social Control,’ Brian Maclean discusses not only the manner in which prison administrators view the university programs, but some problems associated with evaluating the nature and effects of higher learning in prison. He presents compelling evidence that a properly constructed program can result in both sufficient and observable cognitive and moral development, although MacLean is quick to concede that such changes do not necessarily translate into behavioral changes. Nevertheless, his description of the prison university program in the British Columbia Region leads to the conclusion that exposure to a Liberal Arts education did significantly affect the attitudes of numerous prisoners and did significantly reduce recidivism.

On several occasions MacLean raises the issue of ‘cultural bias,’ noting that ‘in the prison, the student has little authority to dictate the content of his/her education.’ Juan Rivera, in ‘The Direct Relationship: A Non-Traditional Approach to a Curriculum for Prisoners in New York,’ elaborates on this theme, explaining that because Blacks and Latinos comprise 82 percent of New York State’s prison population, ‘a properly structured’ prison university program must account for Afrocentric and Latino perspectives. Rivera emphasizes that the ‘differences between cultures must be considered and understood in all curriculum initiatives.’ Furthermore, he points out that since the traditional Eurocentric approach towards education so often results in arousing feelings of alienation among minority groups, prison educators must adopt a non-traditional approach that would recognize the specific ethnicity and attitudes of prisoners, while instilling in them a sense of social responsibility and community. This type of approach requires that prison educational programs reflect the particular needs of various ethnic groups; thus, the curricula would fluctuate geographically according to the ethnic composition of the population.

In ‘On Prison Education and Women in Prison,’ Therasa Ann Glaremin responds to questions concerning the particular educational needs of Canadian female prisoners, most of whom are Indian or Métis. Her interview with Gay Bell depicts the somewhat amazing lack of insight characterizing those responsible for orchestrating academic matters in Kingston, Canada’s only federal prison for women. Echoing Rivera, Glaremin points out the futility of making the traditional types of educational programming available to female prisoners and, in many cases, forcing prisoners to participate. Moreover, like Jones and MacLean, Glaremin shows that the more advanced programs, such as
prison higher education, have been discouraged by prison authorities and were initiated only after the prison administration recognized their usefulness in terms of security. In any case, the prison university program, undoubtedly, becomes even more complicated within a penitentiary for women.

In 'A Chance to Learn,' Cheryl Bonfanti illustrates that, given the proper organization and administration, a beneficial outcome can result. The state of Virginia's prison system, like the Canadian, is distinguished by a single facility for women and many for men. In opposition to Kingston, however, the Virginia Correctional Center for Women offers prisoners a variety of vocational and academic programs which were designed (and continue to be administered) according to the particular educational needs of the women. If the prison is realizing an advantage in terms of security by allowing this type of a program to function behind its walls, then Bonfanti's evidence clearly indicates that it is possible to maintain academic programs that can successfully accommodate the concerns of the prison administrators and the needs of prisoners. And she feels that Virginia's prison college program for women is especially successful 'because it gives so many women hope.'

Education can do that, as Tiyo Attallah Salah-EL illustrates so well with his accounts of the influence prison education has had on his and other's lives in 'Attaining Education in Prison Equals Prisoner Power.' And in the context of the prison experience, perhaps 'hope' provides a true measure of evaluation. In any case, as this issue of the Journal suggests, prisoners finally seem to be gaining a small measure of input into the academic programs at their disposal, perhaps enabling them to open doors previously closed.
A Reply to Brian MacLean’s “Master Status, Stigma, Termination and Beyond”

John Morris III

I read your article entitled “Master Status, Stigma, Termination and Beyond” in the Autumn 1990/Spring 1991 Journal of Prisoners in Prisons and wanted to write and put my two cents worth in. I greatly respect and admire what you have done with your life, and I got angry and upset at what those idiots did to you. I had to write, even if just to let off my own steam.

This is nothing new to me. I have been doing time for over twenty years and have nearly fourteen in right now, straight. I am almost thirty-seven and I expect to be inside for quite a few more years.

What I do is the exact antithesis of what you do. I wear my ex-con/con ‘stigma/master status’ as a badge of honor. Whether this is just protection on my part or ... , I wear it proudly. If someone will not or cannot accept me as me, separate from my past/present, then I simply do not have that person in my life.

I am an anarchist and a rebel, but I have found through long trial and error that a lot of very uptight people will accept me by the simple fact that I appear not to care about their acceptance. The key word is appear. I do care, sometimes too much, but appearing not to works, at least for me, or at least I think it does. I have never given it much deep thought, maybe out of desire not to know.

Anyhow, I thought I would write and express my views, for what they may be worth. I do not think my attitude would work for everyone but it has for me. I get to play the ‘heavy’ on a permanent basis. Sometimes it is fun and empowering to put it all right back into their faces.
In spite of the official announcements of the Canadian State promising means and methods of protection against AIDS within prisons, and in spite of the fact that Canadian correctional policies contain provisions for prisoners suffering from the HIV/AIDS virus, abuse, torture, isolation, arbitrary dissociation, cruelty, and antagonism towards the carriers are common inside the walls of Canadian prisons. PWAs (Prisoners With AIDS) must know that there is help and support for them. At this stage, education (peer education, support, and counseling) is the primary focus. For more information, contact:

Ron Shore/KAP (Kingston Aids Project)
Box 120
Kingston, Ontario.
K7L 4V6
(613) 545-3698

Act Up
762 Rue Gilford
Montreal, Quebec
H2J 1N7

Julia Barnett/PASAN
Box 87
689 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M6J 1E6

Zoltan Lugosi/PASAN
Box 57172 Jackson Station
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 4X1

PWAs-RAG (Rights Advocacy)
Syndicat des Eleves
2035 Blvd. St. Laurent
Montreal, Quebec
H2K 2T3
PENNYSYLVANIA LIFERS

Pennsylvania is one of only four states where the sole mechanism for release (in the case of lifers) is through commutation of one’s sentence by the governor. During the Thornburgh and Casey administrations, more lifers died in prison (81) than have been commuted (25), showing how political the commutation has become. A Bill (HB 1382) is being prepared for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives that would provide the possibility of parole for persons given life sentences, after serving 15 years and according to an exemplary prison record. The need for support and personal involvement is great. For information, contact:

Pennsylvania Prison Society
3 North Second Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
19106
(215-351-2300)

The Veterans Law Clinic, an affiliate of Vietnam Veterans of America, is seeking information and references on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Agent Orange (AO). They are also seeking the contribution of expert witnesses and legal counselors to the case work of Veterans incarcerated in Pennsylvania. All the information and help is fully appreciated. Contact:

Charles Turiano
Veterans Law Clinic
Sci — Graterford
PO Box 244
Graterford, Pennsylvania
19426
**PRISON DISCIPLINE STUDY**

The PDS was developed in 1988 to investigate the extent of severe discipline in prisons by allowing prisoners to speak for themselves. The findings were tallied and analyzed by Dr. Mark Hamm, Department of Criminology, Indiana State University, in cooperation with the PDS Data Committee: Therese Coupez, Francis Friedman, and Corey Weinstein. For more information, contact:

Prison Discipline Study  
1909-6th Street  
Sacramento, California  
95814

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**CANADIAN PRISONERS RIGHTS**

A Newsletter of the Canadian Prisoners Rights Network, which evolved out of a national meeting of lawyers, academics, and frontline workers, in June 1989 in Kingston, Ontario, and where the aim is to strengthen communication within the ranks, responds to the need of a national organization and promotes Canadian Prisoners' Rights Advocacy. CPRN is a non-governmental and non-profit network of persons and organizations with a common interest in prisoners' rights. Those who want to participate and support CPRN are most welcome!

CPRN  
18 Roslin Avenue North  
Waterloo, Ontario  
N2L 2G3
ABOUT THE COVER

Tony Bashforth was born in Sheffield, England in 1956. He first realized his artistic talent at the age of 19 when, serving a Borstal sentence, he won an Arthur Koestler Award for Prison Art. Later, while serving an eight-year sentence, he won three successive Koestler Awards (1982-1984).

He has exhibited at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield and the Hayward Gallery, London. His work is also represented in the prestigious Outsiders Collection in London. His pictures have sold in Britain and Germany.

Tony has recently completed an autobiography covering the period from his childhood to his release from prison in 1986. He is now working on a series of pictures focusing on different aspects of criminal and prison life. He describes his art as a safety valve and means of survival, reflecting his physical and psychological experience.

Cover Illustration: Tony Bashforth, 1992.

Cover Design: Collective Press, Vancouver.

ISSN 0838-164X