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Public Scholars

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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Title: *Runaways, Delinquents and Unruly Girls: The Long History of Gender and Incarceration*

Grant period: From 2024-01-01 to 2024-12-30
Project field(s): Women's History; Gender Studies; American Studies

Description of project: Unruly Girls is the untold story of the imprisonment of girls in Washington and nationally using documents from the Washington State archives that no one has requested in at least twenty years. Through the stories of three girls at different time periods, the book tells a broader story about how the state has punished girls who lived outside the bounds of what society deemed appropriate gender and sexual behavior.

REFERENCE LETTERS

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Runaways, Delinquents and Unruly Girls: The Long History of Gender and Incarceration

Fifteen-year old Mae Wright arrived at the Washington State Training School for Girls near the remote town of Fort Mound in February 1915 shivering and "practically ragged." Mae lived with fifty-two other girls in a refurbished shed without heat because the state had neglected to include oil in the budget. Girls ages twelve to eighteen huddled by the lone fireplace, ate pigeons and hogs but were forbidden by the staff from milking the cows because as city girls, they might harm the animals. Mae farmed, dug ditches and hauled wood to construct a platform to the railroad station. A local newspaper article referred to Fort Mound as a "bowery of beauty," but it was a prison for girls in Washington. Washington State passed the Juvenile Court Law the previous year. Vagrancy, prostitution, spending time in a pool hall, incorrigibility, truancy, the use of "vile, vulgar and profane conduct," lingering around railroad tracks, rebellious behavior, and "wandering in the night without being on lawful business" were all criminal acts that signified delinquency.

Mae was one of many girls captured by the state and confined at Fort Mound. Her official crime was truancy and incorrigibility, but a brief sentence in her court record mentions consorting with boys. *Unruly Girls* is the untold story of the imprisonment of girls in Washington and nationally using documents from the Washington State archives that no one has requested in at least twenty years. Innovative scholarship is excavating the histories of the incarceration of adult women, but we know little about the experiences of girls. Most states built training schools, and they resisted describing them as prisons. Three intertwined narratives structure my book: Mae in 1915 when the prison opened, Linda in the 1950s as Fort Mound became a cottage system preceded over by social workers and renamed the Maple Lane School, and Gail in the 1990s and present who was incarcerated at age fifteen during an era of tough on crime laws and released twenty years later. Prison matrons, a social worker who writes a *Reader's Digest* story about the girls, local farmers, the first female governor of Washington, families and educators all enter the narrative.

Mae, Linda and Gail represent a broader story about how the state has punished girls who lived outside the bounds of what society deemed appropriate gender and sexual behavior. Over and over, they are punished for sex out of wedlock, having boyfriends and girlfriends, being in public space, and flouting norms about how to dress and look. The book explores how the state invented different meanings of delinquency to control the girls filling its courtrooms and punish gender rebellion and same-sex and interracial relationships, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Caseworkers' files from the 1950s and 1960s frequently cite overfamiliarity with a person of a different race and sex outside of marriage as evidence of criminality and psychiatric damage.

Girls endured brutal punishments and forced labor in the 1920s and 30s. By the 1950s, as Fort Mound grew overcrowded, the warden renamed it the Maple Lane School. She announced they would no longer use straightjackets, inject girls with nausea-inducing drugs and shave their heads. According to the state, the girls were no longer sinners in need of brutality and labor, but psychiatric cases in need of treatment by social workers. Linda, age sixteen, arrived at Maple Lane in the early 1960s after giving birth to her son. Her diagnosis: inadequate personality. The case notes describe her as a wild animal. Yet, in letters to her mom, she is a distraught teenager, who pleads to see her son and for her freedom. To leave Maple Lane, her cottage parents expected her to demonstrate politeness, compliance and hostess skills. A judge sentenced Gail to sixty years when she was fifteen. Gail spent part of her teenage years in Echo Glen, the latest incarnation of Fort Mound/Maple Lane. Solitary confinement was her frequent punishment for disobedience to staff or intimacy with her girlfriend. She regained her freedom after twenty years, and as an adult, she reads the archival material as part of our collaborative digital community archive project.

I place the stories of the girls at the center of the book precisely because the archive reflects the control the state held over them. The book seeks to document not only repression and hardship but the friendships, first loves, escape plots, and moments of joy and rebellion. Twenty girls ran away together on Christmas 1955. They wrote love poems to each other and coded messages about boys. Some demanded education beyond stenography and home economics. In a primer on how to con the staff, a fourteen year

writes, “Use flattery. Show respect. So what if Mrs Smith is a dog? Pat her on the head.” The stories of Mae, Linda and Gail restore humanity to girls who were classified by the prison as ladies, delinquents, thieves, prostitutes, “schizoids” and criminals.

It is critical that we understand the history of imprisoning girls. As a society, we are still grappling with the incarceration of young girls. In 2022, the Vera Institute for Justice released a report calling for an end to the incarceration of young people. Over ninety percent of girls, GLBTQ and non-binary and transgender youth who enter the prison system have experienced sexual violence. Even today, girls who defy expectations of gender and sexuality are incarcerated, even as more people demand the abolition of youth prisons.

Sources and organization: With funding from a Mellon Foundation Northwest 5 Engaged Humanities grant, I have made numerous trips to the Washington state archives, and digitized hundreds of files from the Department of Institutions that are the basis for this research. There are documents from 1913 to 1981 including newspaper articles, land and building design, population reports, escape attempts, letters from girls at the school, detailed case workers notes about girls in the 1960s, and oral histories with people who worked at the school. I will return to the archives several times in Spring 2023. I have a longstanding relationship with the head of Juvenile Rehabilitation at the Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families, who will make their historical files available for the book. The Russell Sage Foundation also has material from a 500-page report in the 1920s on training schools for girls in nine different states that will allow a broader national comparison. I have also secured permission from the Department of Corrections to visit the Fort Mound/Maple Lane building which was closed in the 1990s. Many of the secondary sources are familiar to me as I regularly teach courses on the history of gender and prisons. The work of archival scholars Michelle Caswell, Jarred Drake and Saidiya Hartman have been invaluable for conceptualizing how archival material is a manifestation of state decision-making and power. My previous books have utilized interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, which will enable me to undertake oral histories. Through my other work on higher education in prison, I have a strong connection to a network of women and girls in Washington who were and are incarcerated, and they have been working on the digital archive project with me.

Chapter Outline:

The book interweaves the stories of Mae and Linda with Gail’s experiences in prison as a teenager, and her perspective on the archive to illuminate how the past haunts the present.

Introduction: ***Seeing the Future*** The Washington Department of Corrections attempted to reopen Maple Lane/Fort Mound as a prison for women and girls in 2018. A coalition of activists working with the local community protested, and eventually they were able to keep it closed. Gail describes the archive files as a time warp; as she reads the past, she knows what the future holds.

1. Mae ***Fort Mound 1915*** In the first decades of the prison Mae and others labored, sewed, and endured. Few had completed education beyond eighth grade, and when Lt Governor Coyles visited in 1923 he was aghast that they were not allowed to write more than one letter to their families. Some of these letters survive along with reports of women’s societies, wardens and oral histories of staff.

2. Mae, Linda, Gail: ***Training Girls*** Using the Russell Sage foundation report on training schools throughout the United States in the 1920s and 30s, I focus outward to the invention of the delinquent girl, and the developing network of juvenile court that ensnared girls in the prison system.

3. Linda: ***From Straightjackets to Social workers 1951-1961*** The superintendent, Helen Shank, renamed the prison as a specialized treatment center for imprisoned girls. With state funds in the 1960s, she oversaw the construction of nine cottages each housing an invented category of girl: the oedipal girl, the omnipotent delinquent, and “the conformist” where Linda is placed. With cottage parents, the state anoints itself as the replacement family as case workers increasingly blame “shiftless fathers” and mothers with “no sense of maternal duty.” An employee publishes “Common Sense Magic” using confidential information about the girls’ histories and their families. For the first time in forty years, Linda and others receive a high school education.

4. Gail: ***Present and Past*** "Ungovernable at home, perpetually truant at school and sexually promiscuous." Gail reads about the girls in the 1920s and 1950s. She discusses her own crime and early years in the same juvenile prison before being transferred to adult prison at age seventeen.
5. Mae: ***"Jubilant Delinquents?"*** Only white girls were initially imprisoned at Fort Mound, but by the forties and fifties there are African- American and Native American girls in prison population records. This chapter looks at what life was like in the Martha Washington School for girls where African-American girls were initially jailed. There are disturbing references in the same documents to girls whose mothers were also incarcerated at Fort Mound in previous decades or sent to the state psychiatric hospital.
6. Linda: ***"From swaggering delinquents to poised young ladies"*** The initial rationale for Fort Mound was to remove girls from a prison with boys. However, by 1968, boys from the nearby juvenile prison are bused in for classes and participate in dances, swimming, and sports. A superintendent writes "normal contacts between boys and girls reduce tension which arise when they are kept apart and minimize the extent of homosexual activity." The cottage parents teach submission and domestic skills through classes and religious instruction.
7. Gail: ***Present and Past*** Gail is transferred to Arizona in her late twenties, surviving over seven years in solitary confinement. The superintendent of the prison in Washington, who Gail describes as a surrogate mother, intercedes so she can return. Gail reflects on what family means in prison.
8. Mae and Linda: ***Runaways*****:** From the 1920s onward, girls attempted to escape with such regularity that the prison had a policy of not informing police until twenty-four hours had passed. From the studies of sociologists and oral histories, we learn what happened when girls left Fort Mound/Maple Lane.
9. ***Abolitionist Archives****:* Fort Mound/Maple Lane became a mental health institution in the 1980s and then closed. Boxes of files were shipped to the state archives, and the girls were transferred to a newly built prison, the Echo Glen Juvenile detention center. Gail receives a college degree in prison and upon release works to end youth incarceration as she complete law school.

Competencies, skills, and access

I am the author of three previous monographs and a co-edited collection. I have also published about gender and prisons in popular outlets such as *the Boston Globe*, *The Nation* and *the Chronicle of Higher Education*. I received an NEH fellowship in 2011 to complete my third book, *God in Captivity: The Rise of Faith-Based Ministries in an Age of Mass Incarceration.* The book was reviewed widely including on CSPAN Book TV. I was interviewed on NPR's Fresh Air, MSNBC, and have participated in two documentary films about my book *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement*. I am also the founder, first Executive Director, and now Faculty Director of the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS). I co-founded this organization with incarcerated women at the Washington Correction Center for Women (WCCW) in 2011, and we now have a nationally recognized higher education in prison program.

Final product and dissemination

I believe there is a broad readership for stories of girlhood and prisons. It is relevant especially at this post-pandemic moment where states have experienced unprecedented declines in the number of people in adult prisons, and activists are demanding that we close prisons for young people. This book can inform these struggles. I would engage organizations I am connected to such as the Vera Institute, which has a policy area on young people in prison, the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, a national organization for hundreds of college in prison programs nationally which also organizes a national conference. The Alliance often choses a book to distribute to prison programs and universities nationally. I have published two books with Beacon Press/Random House, and my editor there has expressed interest in this book. I am also in talks with Brian Distelberg at Basic Books with whom I previously worked. I am currently designing a website on Omeka where all the primary documents from the research will be available publicly, which will expand readership of the book. I would launch the digital portion of the project in collaboration with the WA State History Museum and ideally time it to coincide with the publication of the book.

Work plan

I have spent months immersing myself in the archival material, and I will have completed most research in the archives by the end of 2023. I am requesting 12 months of full-time support to complete a draft of the book and to devote to writing. I plan to conduct any follow-up research and writing in Washington State. I will submit my book proposal to my editor at Basic Books in March 2024 and have a complete manuscript by December 2024. My goal is to publish the book in early 2025, almost one-hundred years from when the first girl arrived at the Washington Training School for Girls.

In Spring 2023, I will teach a class on the Archives at the University and at the prison where I run a college program so I will have further opportunity to engage with the material and to hear how incarcerated and non-incarcerated college students understand it. In June 2023, we will hold a one-day workshop/conference tentatively titled, "Archives of Gender and Incarceration in Washington," so that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, community organizations, faculty and students can collectively respond to and discuss the histories of Fort Mound/Maple Lane. This will inform the narrative of the book in the present. I will also complete most oral history interviews in 2023.

2024 Timeline

January- March: Drafting Chapters 1 and 2 on the early history of Fort Mound and the development of training schools for girls nationally. Visit to the site of Fort Mound to meet with the building caretaker and Department of Corrections Coordinator.

April-June: Complete drafts of Chapters 3, 5 and 6, which focus on the Maple Lane cottage system and the short-lived Martha Washington school based on archival materials from the 1950s and 1960s.

June to July: Conduct remaining oral histories with survivors of Fort Mound/Maple Lane in the 1960s and 70s. Complete Chapter 8, *Runaways*, on what happened to many of the girls who were imprisoned in the 1960s and 70s.

August to September: Complete the chapters on Gail's experience as a juvenile in prison based on her recollections and oral histories. Write chapters 4 and 7. Meet with the records division of the Department of Youth Children and Families to assess their historical records of Echo Glen Detention Center.

October to December: Finish the Introduction and Chapter 9. Submit full draft to Basic Books by December 2024.

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Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: Random House, 2019).

Michelle Daniel Jones and Elizabeth Nelson, *Who Would Believe a Prisoner? Indiana Women's Carceral Institutions, 1848-1920* (New York: New Press, 2023).

Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Richard Lawrence and Craig Hemmens, "History and Development of the Juvenile Court and Justice Process." In *Juvenile Justice: A Text Reader*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008) pp 19–38.

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Tappan, Paul W Tappan. *Juvenile Delinquency* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949).

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EDUCATION

New York University

Ph.D., 2002, Department of Social and Cultural Analysis; M Phil., 1998, American Studies

Brown University

A.B., *summa cum laude*, May 1995
Major: American Civilization and Latin American Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2015-present Chair, Crime, Law and Justice Studies and Associate Professor Department of Religious Studies, University of Puget Sound

2008- 2013 Associate Professor, Department of Comparative Studies and Criminal Justice Research Center, Ohio State University

2004-2008 Assistant Professor, Department of Comparative Studies and Criminal Justice Research Center, Ohio State University

2002-04 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Religion Department, Barnard College

NON-ACADEMIC

2017-present Faculty Director, Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS)

2012-2017 Executive Director, Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS)

ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- 2022-2023 American Council of Learned Societies, Sustaining Public Humanities Grant, to support a reading collective of formerly incarcerated students and faculty to think about freedom after long sentences
- 2021-2023Mellon Northwest Five Engaged Communities Grant to support digital archive work
- 2019-2024 Andrew Mellon Foundation for FEPPS BA Program in the Prison
- 2015 Hedgebrook Writer-in-Residence
- 2013-14 Soros Justice Media Fellowship, Open Society Foundation

- 2011-12 National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship to support writing *God in Captivity*

- 2010-11 Institute for Advanced Study Fellowship, School of Social Sciences

- 2002-2004 Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities, Barnard College

- 2001-2002 American Association of University Women American Fellowship

- 2000-2001Social Science Research Council Sexuality Research Fellowship

AWARDS

2020: Martin Luther King Living the Dream award by the University of Puget Sound to a member or members of our community who exemplify the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. and his passion

PUBLICATIONS: BOOKS

The Pains of Freedom: Race, Gender and the Afterlife of Long Prison Sentences, (b) (4)

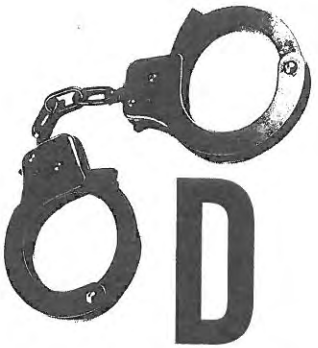
God in Captivity: The Rise of Faith-Based Prisons in an Age of Mass Incarceration (Beacon Press/Random House, March 2017)

Fanpire: The Religion of Twilight (Beacon Press, 2012)

Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement (University of California Press, 2006)
Winner of the Ruth Benedict Book Award from the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists and the Gustave O Arlt Award from the *Council of Graduate Schools*

Zero Tolerance: Quality of Life and the New Police Brutality in New York City (New York: New York University Press, 2002)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS in: *Inside HigherEd, Chronicle of Higher Education, American Quarterly, Journal of Higher Education in Prison, Boston Globe, The Nation, PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association, Guernica, The Revealer*



GOD IN CAPTIVITY

THE RISE OF FAITH-BASED PRISON MINISTRIES *IN THE AGE OF* MASS INCARCERATION

TANYA ERZEN

Beacon Press
Boston

CHAPTER 2

THE PENITENTIARY AND THE FARM

A History of Redemption and Control

AS A PREACHER READ the Bible before a mass of prisoners in a Philadelphia jail, a deputy stood guard beside him with a lighted torch and loaded cannon. Should anyone move, the head jailer had ordered the deputy to fire upon the audience of prisoners.[1] Almost 250 years later, a retired Southwestern Baptist seminary professor and minister stood at a lectern using the Bible to explain how to win others to Christ. "Assume good motives of those around you," he explained to a room of thirty men at a maximum-security prison in Texas. As he spoke, a cockroach scuttled by his foot. No one seemed to care or notice. Quickly, numerous students raised their hand. One man, Keith, with a round face and small eyes, says, "I'm listening to these questions and I'm thinking of it in a prison context. You said the words, 'assume good motives.' Well, that just set off an entire alarm system. Here you always assume evil motives. You always approach the actions or the words or the input of others from a very critical standpoint." Citing 1 Corinthians 13, Dr. Bob Overton responds that it means they have to approach people discerningly. A person's bad motive could be an index or way to reach them or convert them. Leroy Youngblood, at sixty-seven the oldest man in the class, mutters, "This isn't as boring as I thought." He wears a self-constructed name tag with the words "Washed in the Blood" hand-lettered on it.

The contemporary Christian class was in Darrington Unit, a maximum-security prison in Texas. As part of a prison program, the men can receive a bachelor's degree in Christian ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Houston. Ben Phillips, a professor at Southwestern and director of the Darrington program, which graduated its first class in 2015, escorted me. The program occupies an entire wing of the prison, with two classrooms, a library, a computer lab, conference rooms, and offices. (Its supporters are raising $2 million to convert a prison gym into a chapel and more classrooms for the seminary.) It is one of many faith-based college programs throughout the South, such as the Louisiana women's program I discussed in the previous chapter, in which women and men receive a degree in Christian ministry and then are sent to proselytize to other prisoners.

Whether preached under the threat of cannon fire or with the enticement of a college degree, the promise of redemption for prisoners is a spectral presence underpinning the rise of modern punishment, from the penitentiary to the reformatory to mass incarceration as we know it today. Redemption and punishment have maintained a tense symbiosis throughout the history of US prisons. The first models of punishment were based on warring theological ideas that the prisoner was permanently stained by sin, and that conversion and reformation of the individual was possible. Initially, the reformers of the first US prisons, the penitentiaries in New York and Pennsylvania, promised a novel form of captivity in which redemption of the individual might occur under the right moral conditions. If a person was penitent, he could be reformed. Quaker, Calvinist, and Methodist reformers constructed the first penitentiaries in the early 1800s based on the belief that confinement within walls would reawaken the divine in each criminal. Christian theologies of innate wickedness, of the possibility of grace and transformation, and of the concept of an eye for an eye shaped ideas of punishment. Reformers forged the first penitentiaries and their modes of punishment around questions of whether crime was the manifestation of an inherently corrupt nature or an act of free will. These first Northern penitentiaries had penance and penitence as their founding principles. Religious redemption was the antidote to physical punishment.

Yet, control has always been the perennial and underlying logic that persisted through various manifestations of incarceration in the United States that involve the body and soul of the prisoner. The prison requires discipline and surveillance in order to function, and religious models justified physical punishment, routinized prayer, individual isolation, and silent, congregate labor. In the first Quaker penitentiaries, prisoners were expected to labor and study in complete silence and isolation. The theological ideas of religious reformers were also directed toward molding the will of the prisoner. According to Andrew Skotnicki, a professor of religious studies, "It was believed that a methodical regimen regulating every aspect of the inmate's life could produce the conditions where revival preaching might find an open heart."[2]

Control of prisoners' bodies and souls found a more overt and harrowing form in the Southern convict lease system in the late 1800s. Men, women, and children—many former slaves—died harvesting sugarcane or rice on the sites of former slave plantations. Their labor generated profit and was the gruesome genesis of companies like Domino Sugar. Many of the convict lease farms on which prisoners toiled eventually became giant state prisons like the Mississippi State Penitentiary or Louisiana State Penitentiary. Control took the form of total subjugation without any pretense of redemption.

Vestiges of the penitentiary's emphasis on the prisoner's redemption, and of the plantation-era idea of the prisoner as dispensable laborer, remain in faith-based prisons today. In the history of religion in the American prison, a strain of logic views punishment as just, as long as it is imbued with religious principles, a logic that persists in faith-based ministries. Skotnicki, writing of the role of religion in American prisons, argues, "The history of the penitentiaries reveals, however, that it is possible to invest structures of control with meaning, as long as there is a stated moral organizational principle that is the channel through which an institution can be ordered and its inhabitants socialized. This task has been and always will be fundamentally religious in nature."[3]

Darrington Unit, the maximum-security prison in Texas, is a former plantation and farm. It is at the end of a long country road that passes through fields of milo, a type of cattle feed with the appearance of tasseled

corn. And it is also a key site for the reemergence of the logic that punishment is redemptive, that a carceral church produces people with changed hearts, and that faith-based ministries and seminaries are necessary to supervise the reformation of the body and soul.

Our current model of prisons is a fairly modern invention without any analogies in world history. In the colonial era, most crimes were seen as sins, and imprisonment as we know it today was almost nonexistent.[4] Early colonial towns in New England had populations of sometimes fewer than one thousand inhabitants.[5] Institutionalized punishment was too expensive, so when punishment occurred, it was swift and immediate. Transgressors were usually known members of the community, and almost everyone belonged to the church. Given this proximity to others, the punishment most befitting the crime was humiliation through time in stockades or banishment from the community. Being tarred and feathered was also a colonial punishment, and the women and men accused in the Salem witch trials of 1692 were hanged. Colonial models of law and justice were steeped in Calvinist doctrine. John Calvin, the sixteenth-century theologian, argued in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that all humans were inherently wicked and sinful. Since humans were condemned from birth, the only function of punishment was deterrence. The pious might rejoice only in the more pronounced suffering of the wicked, as all were destined to suffer, and punishment by Calvin's vengeful and fierce God was inevitable.[6] Colonial laws also followed English criminal codes, which listed as many as 160 crimes as capital offenses.[7] Only after the Revolutionary War did laws begin to shift away from the British model, as the states asserted independence. By the late 1700s, new criminal codes in the early republic abolished capital punishment, except for treason and premeditated murder.[8]

In the American South, hangings, whippings, and burnings, often at the hands of lynch mobs, were commonplace brutalities for slaves and even those who might oppose slavery. Bodily torture and humiliation served in the absence of a formal code of law and justice. The newly constructed prisons of the early 1800s, with solitary cells and hard labor, were designed to replace brutal physical punishments, and they wed Calvinist ideas with

concepts of individual liberty and optimism spurred by the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival movement.[9] Quaker faith in the inherent divinity and, thus, goodness in each person was a drastic contrast to Calvinism's pessimistic view of human nature. Prominent Quakers like Thomas Eddy and members of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons conveyed their belief in the inner divine light carried by all human beings to the prisoner. Early religious reformers affirmed prisoners' reformative potential and argued for a connection between democracy and humane punishment.[10] Prisons might become prayer houses. Criminals were not born, Eddy and others argued; they are molded by social circumstances and could be reformed. The dimmed light might be reignited in the gloom of the modern penitentiary.

Quaker reformers believed that silence, prayer, discipline, and orderliness were methods for fostering a redeemed life in prison.[11] Their theology of redemptive suffering emphasized an unbending faith that God approved of prison and worked through it to reach prisoners, an assumption that continues to resonate with faith-based ministries today. The logic of control emerged in the idea that prisoners' progress in mercy and grace could be measured in their submission to the prison order. In obeying rules of silence and bodily order, prisoners showed their respect for civil authority and, further, their respect for God. Writing of the creation of prisons in France during the same period, philosopher Michel Foucault describes how prisons produced new forms of subjection and power because they governed the body and the soul: docility and obedience were the result of the highly regulated prison system. "Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies," he writes. "Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)."[12] To prison reformers in the early republic, criminals no longer stood for humanity's collected depravity, as Calvin had preached, but represented a Christian's opportunity to convert all sinful people and bolster the discipline of the prison.

In the early 1800s, solitary confinement emerged as a key strategy of control and redemption in Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia and Auburn State Prison in upstate New York. The principles of this new system were isolation and work. The rationale for isolation was to prevent

collaboration and recidivism, to promote reformatory practice, and "to create a situation in which the words and power of the imprisoning and reforming power will take on even greater authority due to the relative silence of all others."[13] Eastern State was based on the Quaker model of silence. Designed by architect John Haviland, with walls extending outward, prisoners could not see each other in their cells. They worked and exercised alone in the yards that extended from their cells. Quaker groups, religious men and women, and chaplains who visited would stand and talk to each man individually. They rationalized solitary confinement as a more humane and reformative approach to punishment. Its proponents believed that, in isolation, "the truth lodged deep in the soul could present itself, aided by the encouragement of the bible and the words of the minister."[14]

One journalist opined of the Quaker system, "It showed a touching faith in human nature, although precious little knowledge of it."[15] Isolation in Eastern State Penitentiary drove many to suicide and despair, rather than penitence and reform. Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, who had been sent by the government of France in 1831 to survey American penitentiaries, and whose observations still prove eerily prescient today, wrote, "We have often trod during the night those monotonous and dumb galleries, where a lamp is always burning: we felt as if we traversed catacombs; there were a thousand living beings, and yet it was a desert solitude." And, "This absolute solitude, if nothing interrupt it, is beyond the strength of man; it destroys the criminal without intermission and without pity; it does not reform, it kills."[16]

From the time of the first prisons, the aim of redemption always dueled with the rationale of efficiency, control, and profitability. Tocqueville and Beaumont wrote, "The prisoner in the United States breathes in the penitentiary a religious atmosphere that surrounds him on all sides."[17] However, punishment could induce profits and efficiency from prisoner workers, while the missionary might simultaneously evangelize a captive population. If solitary was one method for remaking the prisoner, labor was another, and the contract system in which outside businesses paid a fixed rate for prisoner labor was introduced as early as 1817 in Auburn.[18] Silence was a way to keep prisoners from contaminating each other with

their sins, but it also enabled the keepers of the prison to squeeze productivity from an unruly and unmotivated workforce through increasingly extreme corporeal punishments.[19] The prisoner's labor and wages became an incentive for reform of the Quaker model and increased the power of the prison over the prisoner. At Auburn State Prison, politicians and prison administrators, eager to make the prison profitable, supplemented silence at night with communal labor by day.

Punishment and control existed in multiple forms: the lash, labor, or isolation for the sake of religious transformation. In the same prisons where ministers stood extolling the virtues of repentance in the dark prison corridor, with a lantern hanging from the cell bars, prisoners would be whipped and forced to work all day. Prison authority and God's grace in Auburn and Eastern were inseparable; submitting to God meant submitting to prison authorities. Neither system—of silent, congregate labor or separate, solitary cells—allowed any form of communication between the imprisoned, because it was thought community would lead to corruption and depravity, and hinder moral reform.[20] For prisoners who resisted religious instruction, the reformers believed that the hours of isolation might eventually drive them to biblical devotion and reflection, particularly because the Bible was the only book available to them.[21]

Although Eddy, the Quaker, still saw prisoners as human beings, Calvin's notion of an inherently flawed and sinful human nature reigned at Auburn State Prison. Elam Lynd, the warden of Auburn, himself religious, proved to be despotic and vicious.[22] Lynd rejected the idea of religious reformation. "We must understand each other," he told Tocqueville and Beaumont. "I do not believe in a complete reform, except with young delinquents. Nothing, in my opinion, is rarer than to see a convict of mature age become a religious and virtuous man. I do not put great faith in the sanctity of those who leave the prison. I do not believe that the counsels of the chaplain or the meditations of the prisoner, make a good Christian of him."[23]

Since the prison was meant to be financially viable, any method of brutality was justified. Lynd introduced the lash as punishment for broken rules. At the sound of a keeper's whistle, men in his prison moved in lockstep, with their arms held tightly to their chests or with one hand

down and the other resting on the arm or shoulder of the prisoner ahead of him.[24] Prisoners could reclaim their humanity by surrendering their will to God and, more importantly, to the authority of Lynd. In 1825, in his zeal for productivity, Lynd had prisoners floated on barges from Auburn down the Hudson River to Ossining, New York. There, in silence and backbreaking labor, they built Sing Sing Prison. Many of them would go on to live there.

Tocqueville and Beaumont characterized the American system this way: "The Philadelphia system produces more honest men, and that of New York more obedient citizens."[25]

Externally, Auburn's system worked on the body, at the level of movements, gestures, and attitudes: an infinitesimal power over the active body. The constant coercion and supervision of the body's activity was the object, rather than internal or spiritual reform. "The whole duty of a convict in this prison is to obey orders, labor diligently in silence, and whenever it is necessary for him to speak to a keeper, to do it with a humble sense of his degraded situation," Lynd wrote.[26] Life was routinized. Bells rang to determine mealtimes. Keepers kept vigilant watch over the prisoners. The prisoners woke and worked in silence. In her book on the history of religion in prison, Jennifer Graber writes that Auburn's prisoners had become the walking dead—bodies in disciplined motion, without the will to resist.[27] It was no longer the cannon directed at the unruly inmates but a system of discipline, labor, and religious coercion.

After the Civil War, the Quaker model of solitude and individual labor proved more costly and less efficient than Auburn's communal model. As the United States became more religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse, prisons gradually became more punitive.[28] Prisoners who emerged from the hellholes of Auburn and Sing Sing told stories of physical terror that exposed the lie that suffering might be redemptive. Their stories emphasized the concept that prison hardened rather than reformed; it turned men into beasts.[29] And yet a public outcry about the barbarity of the lash at Auburn only engendered more intricate and pernicious forms of brutality: the shower in which a man was tied to a chair and continually doused with cold water; the gag, a metal plate inserted in the mouth and

attached to cuffs by a chain; screws and pulleys by which to hang a man by his thumbs. The success and profitability of Auburn and Sing Sing encouraged Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Vermont, and Virginia to develop similar models.[30]

Around the same time Auburn became a paragon of prison management to extract maximum labor, the model of the prisoner as disposable laborer found its apotheosis in the transition from slavery to convict lease farms in the South. Their models of prisoner control were fueled by Southern ideas of racial subjugation and white supremacy. Southern prisons and work farms were often former plantations, where brutality and horror far eclipsed any idea of redemption. Robert Perkinson, in his book on the history of prisons in Texas, compares the Northern and Southern prisons: "One reformatory; one retributive; one integrationist, one exclusionary; one conceived in northern churches and the other on southern work farms."[31] With the highest rates of incarceration and reputations as the most violent places to do time in the United States, these same Southern prisons are today the sites of religious evangelization and faith-based ministries.

The Reconstruction era after the Civil War marked a moment of hope and possibility for freed African Americans. During this brief period, African American men and women owned land and businesses, and ran for political office; it seemed that democracy might take root in the rubble of the defeated states of the Confederacy.[32] However, Southern white elites struck back, and soon legislatures began criminalizing actions like loitering and vagrancy, behaviors that had never been subject to criminal sanction in the past. Politicians, desperate to maintain white supremacy, and terrified of the newly enfranchised African Americans, sought ways to enslave on work farms those who had once been enslaved on plantations. The black codes or "pig laws" became justification for sending children from the age of eight and adults to the newly built convict lease farms. The pig laws resulted in the record imprisonment of black men during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era and, along with the convict lease system, restored white-dominated political and social order.[33] W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the foremost African American intellectuals of this period, wrote of Reconstruction, "The slave went free, stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."[34]

In his book *Worse Than Slavery*, David Oshinsky describes the horror of the convict lease farms. Men convicted of the increasingly labyrinthine number of crimes targeting African Americans were leased out to work for the benefit of landowners, where overseers whipped and worked convicts to death. The system was maintained by a trustee system in which prisoners called "Big Stripes," armed with guns, guarded other prisoners. However, since prisoners were no longer property, they could be worked to death, discarded, and replaced by new prisoners. The number of African Americans in the convict lease system grew exponentially, while white imprisonment declined during this period. Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the National Association of Colored Women, argued, "In . . . the convict lease camps of the South to-day are thousands of colored people men, women, and children, who are enduring a bondage, in some respects more cruel and crushing than that from which their parents were emancipated forty years ago."[35] Whites received longer sentences because they were usually punished only for the most heinous crimes, and while whites did work on the convict lease farms, they were often kept in the prisons rather than leased out to corporations and landowners. As accounts by white prisoners of their treatment "as slaves" leaked out, the public unleashed its outrage at the specter of white men and women subjected to slavelike conditions.

The only goal in this model of imprisonment was profit, gained through the brutal control of bodies. The South needed to industrialize, and freed slaves became the engine of labor in coal mines, lumber mills, railroad camps, and sugarcane plantations in Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the same states with the highest presence of faith-based ministries today. The expansion of the Texas prisoner population coincided with the railroad boom of the 1870s. Convicts laid most of the 3,500 miles of track in North Carolina. Modern corporations like US Steel and Imperial Sugar, the railroads, and even the construction of the capital city of Texas were made possible through this system. The South's economic development depended on the sweat and blood of prisoners: between 1866 and 1915, the death toll of men in the convict lease system exceeded thirty thousand.[36]

The system of convict leasing lasted until after 1915, but its legacy has stretched far beyond.[37] Prisons like Parchman Farm became the Mississippi

State Penitentiary, which now has a Baptist seminary. Angola, a slave plantation and convict lease farm, is now the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Still referred to as "the farm," it is the site of the original prisoner missionary program. Darrington Unit in Texas, also originally a plantation and then a convict lease farm, is the latest permutation of the faith-based prison experiment. The application for the Darrington seminary program describes its seminarians as farmhands going out into the fields to harvest, a metaphor supposed to invoke the idea of a missionary field but one that is especially haunting, given the prison's history.

Over time, the penitentiary model declined in favor of labor and profit rather than individual reformation. The term "penitentiary" was rarely used after the Civil War.[38] It was replaced by the word "reformatory." Eastern State Penitentiary, the last of the prisons based on Quaker models of solitary confinement, turned to congregate labor in 1913. The formation of the Prison Association of New York in 1844 and the first national prison conference in Cincinnati in 1870 signaled the institutionalization and professionalization of punishment during the Progressive Era.[39]

The word "reformatory" reflected the shift in thinking to prisons that emphasized education, labor, and training. Increasingly, the public expected bureaucrats and officials to administer the prison, rather than religious reformers. This era ushered in a rehabilitative ethos based on theories of medical, behavioral, and biological science that viewed people in prison as sick and in need of cure rather than religious redemption. Psychotherapeutic treatments became prevalent in prisons, and by 1926, sixty-seven prisons employed psychiatrists and psychologists.[40] Religion was rarely a feature of these new programs, and many prisons were renamed "correctional institutions" in the 1950s as part of the wider hospital metaphor of treatment.[41] In the Northern states, gradually, the idea of "corrections" that we now associate with prisons took precedence.

The idea that prisons would provide job training, basic education and access to recreation infused the carceral system around the middle of the twentieth century.[42] Several trends followed this period of rehabilitation. First, rehabilitative programs began to disappear in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, the combination of tougher sentencing laws and the War on Drugs flooded the prison system with predominantly poor and African

American and Latino men and women. As the racially disproportionate behemoth of mass incarceration in the United States that we have today emerged in the 1980s, the state withdrew support for programs in favor of warehousing vast numbers of people. Highly organized and influential prison ministries began to reenter the prison in a more organized manner during this punitive period of massive prison growth and unprecedented numbers of men and women in prisons.

Prison Fellowship (PF) became one of the most prominent, evangelical prison ministry organizations in the United States. Its founder, Chuck Colson, died in 2012, but, as I discuss in chapter 7, his belief in evangelicals as a social force to transform mass incarceration shaped the current conservative coalition around criminal justice reform. Colson was a former Nixon aide, known for his ruthless political tactics, and he served seven months in federal prison for obstruction of justice as part of his Watergate crimes.[43] Upon his release in the late 1970s, he wrote the book *Born Again* and refashioned himself as an advocate for the redemptive power of evangelical Christianity on criminals.[44] He attributed his zeal for prison ministry to the men he met in prison, who, he felt, were often victims of injustice, and to the prison itself, as marked by despair. Colson left prison convinced that secular rehabilitative programs would never succeed. Formally incorporated in August 1976 as Prison Fellowship, Colson's ministry offered prison authorities an alternative to secular rehabilitative programs that were widely judged to have failed, especially in the aftermath of the Attica Prison uprising. His model was based on fellowship groups of prisoners supported by community volunteers, and it coincided with renewed interest by evangelicals in the prison as a mission field.

Colson's faith-based experiment in the United States drew inspiration from a Christian prison in Brazil called Humaita, near Sao Paulo, which was built by the Association for the Protection and Assistance for the Convicted (APAC) in the 1970s.[45] Mario Ottoboni, the founder, attended, with fifteen other couples, a Cursillo, a short course on Christianity consisting of fifteen talks and five meditations spread over three days. At the end of a Cursillo, a person embarks on the "fourth day," considered to be the rest of his life. As part of his fourth day, Ottoboni went to work with prisoners in Brazil. Like the early prison reformers of the 1790s, he had

toured a jail in Brazil and was appalled by the conditions there. There were more than 150 men in a space meant for 40, without water, sunlight, or cleaning materials.[46] "It is imperative to restore in the prisoner the sense of human dignity and divine affiliation, so that he can turn himself to goodness," Ottoboni wrote. "It should never be forgotten that the whole of the APAC approach finds its inspiration in the sacrifice on the cross, and in the merciful look of Christ when he turned to the repentant thief and announced his salvation."[47] A judge granted Ottoboni and others unlimited access to the Brazilian prison, with authority over how it would be run, allowing Ottoboni to act as a subsidiary of the justice system.[48] He and others authored a book called *Christ Wept in Jail*, which prompted the Brazilian government in 1976 to reform its penal code and treat prisoners in a more humane manner. After various setbacks, Ottoboni took over Humaita as a private entity in 1984.

Humaita is a "community in perfection," said to be indistinguishable from any other kind of faith-based community. It wants to transform not only the prisoners but the prison environment.[49] Humaita teaches responsibility to a community rather than individual tasks or programs. According to the professor of biblical law Jonathan Burnside, "The State can build prisons, nominate agents, assign resources—but cannot give love. It is only we, physical persons . . . that can face the challenge of seeding love in the prisons."[50] Participants at the Humaita program receive judicial, medical and psychological assistance, good food, and a prison free from the corrupting influence of the police. They have their own canteen, a barbershop, and a place for families to visit. They also receive sentence reductions for participation; for each day in the program, one day is subtracted from their sentence. Men participate in daily prayers, literacy and professional-skills courses, and the Cursillo course to win unbelievers called Journey with Christ. They also have godmothers and godfathers, community members who agree to sponsor them and visit them throughout their time in prison. In addition to moving through five phases of progressive freedom, the prison has a prisoners' council of one hundred men, including a Council on Sincerity and Security, which enforces the rules and behavior of the community. Those who violate a rule go before the fifteen members of the Council on Sincerity and Security to explain their behavior.[51]

Colson visited Humaita and used it as a model for Prison Fellowship. The first Prison Fellowship faith-based dorm in prisons opened in the United States in 1997, and APAC officially became a part of Prison Fellowship International in 1989. The central part of the fellowship is the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, a twenty-four-hour-a-day Christian immersion program that it later started in prisons around the United States. The fellowship has contracted with state corrections departments to minister to entire wings of men's medium security prisons in Texas, Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa, and Kansas.

The program begins eighteen to twenty-four months before a prisoner is released. To be eligible to join, prisoners must be within two years of parole and must proclaim their status as born-again Christians. Men and women work at a job during the day and attend classes to develop their life skills and spiritual maturity. The classes focus on time management, anger control, family relations, and job preparedness. There are also classes dedicated to biblical doctrine and scripture memorization. Evenings are filled with more Christian teaching and discipleship seminars that run until 10 p.m. During the second phase of the program, prisoners must perform community service, and they are encouraged to apologize and make restitution to their victims in the form of letters or meetings. Six months into the program, each person is matched with a Christian church volunteer who mentors him or her during the remaining time in prison. After release, that person continues to mentor him or her for six to twelve months, during which the former prisoner must hold a job and be an active church member.[52]

During the 1970s, another prison-ministry movement, called Kairos, also inspired by Humaita, spread throughout the United States. The goal of Kairos was not only to help Christ in saving souls, but to transform prison environments; it was based on the idea that religious volunteers and people inside prison could bond despite the disparities in their situations. Kairos began during a weekend at Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, in 1976. Its stated goal was "to bring Christ's love and forgiveness to all incarcerated individuals, their families, and those who work with them, and to assist in the transition of becoming a productive citizen."[53]

Kairos doesn't create faith-based dorms or prisons, as some ministries do, but it is one of the oldest and most active ministries. Kairos ministries currently operate in over thirty-three states and close to three hundred prisons in the United States and in prisons in Australia, Canada, England, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, Honduras, and South Africa. Kairos holds approximately 650 weekend gatherings each year and has one of the highest numbers of prison volunteers in the United States, and it organizes 7,000 short courses in Christianity, based on the Cursillo method, during Kairos weekends involving 170,000 people in US prisons.[54]

In order to run a Kairos weekend in a prison, volunteers must commit to forty hours of preparatory community building over a two-week period.[55] Kairos believes the best volunteers have suffered from abuse, addiction to drugs and alcohol, isolation, and abandonment, just like the men and women inside the prison. Often, volunteers are required to make themselves vulnerable by sharing their own struggles in order to build trust and sustain connections. While the volunteers might imagine a compassionate connection with the prisoners, if they have not properly overcome their own problems, they risk reinforcing what has happened to prisoners, rather than being models of transformation. The founder of Kairos argues, "The volunteers are not worth anything to the prisoners unless they are vulnerable and of course that same vulnerability makes them a security risk."[56]

For volunteers, being in the prison must be a willing sacrifice rather than a professional obligation. They are to be authentic and vulnerable, to share the agape love of God, no matter what it costs the volunteer emotionally. The founder of Kairos writes that "when we begin doing it for any other reason, whether it is being paid or moving into that ministry because it feels good to us . . . then we begin to lose track of what we are up to and the authenticity disappears.[57] Kairos welcomes prisoners of any religion, despite its explicit Christianity, and bills itself as broadly ecumenical. The ministry eschews altar calls, overt proselytizing, and speaking in tongues for the sake of this identification. During a Kairos weekend, women and men in prison are led through a structured "encounter" program in which they are introduced to Kairos's philosophy and the volunteers on Thursday night. The next day, they "encounter the self" and scrutinize their own

decisions and their relationship with God. On Saturday, they encounter Christ and are required to analyze how Christ resonates as a model for forgiveness in their relationships. Finally, on Sunday, they expand beyond the focus on the self and encounter others, which should launch them into the process of aligning themselves with a fellowship of Kairos graduates as part of a broader religious community within the prison. After the completion of the weekend course, they will participate in another reunion, join a weekly prayer and fellowship group, and finish with a final two-day retreat. The "prayer and share" group produces continuity for prisoners who have completed Kairos trainings.

Kairos chooses prisoners for its three-day weekend courses who are leaders; they do not need to be Christian but must have significant influence over the prison population. Kairos strives to recruit people like gang leaders who might not come to the chapel but who can aid it in transforming the prison.[58] By converting the most powerful and influential prison leaders, Kairos persuades others to become Christians; the prison authorities benefit as well when prisoner leaders are under the sway of a ministry group. Kairos volunteers are forthcoming about their own sins during the weekend courses as a way to encourage prisoners to show vulnerability. The volunteers work on listening skills, disclosing formative life experiences to all who attend. In a meditation called "the Wall," prisoners are supposed to testify about how their behavior has led them to isolate themselves from others. After the weekend, Kairos urges the men and women in the groups to continue meeting together once a week and organizes weekly reunions with outside volunteers. Kairos weekends become the basis for ongoing Bible study.

Thomas Eddy, the Quaker reformer, preached, "Work on the prisoner's soul must be carried out as often as possible. The prison, though an administrative apparatus, will at the same time be a machine for altering minds."[59] Over a hundred years after the first penitentiaries, APAC, Prison Fellowship, and Kairos reintroduced to the prison individual conversion and heart change as the central facet of transformation. The growth of faith-based ministries nationally and the evangelical impulse to remake people into Christians has taken root in prisons where historically reform was never a consideration—prisons like Darrington.

Texas has over one hundred state and private prisons; it is one of the largest prison networks in the United States, and many men and women are serving life terms or the equivalent. During the class I described at the beginning of this chapter, prisoners discussed how to ascertain someone's motives and deal with recalcitrant potential converts. A constant din distinguishes Darrington from other prisons, and the unceasing clamor only abates when the door to the seminary wing closes. Other prisons I've visited did not seem as unremittingly loud. Darrington has one long main corridor, with staircases and rows of barred cells down the central artery. The day rooms, mostly lined with white painted benches and a few tables, are the domain of the prison gangs, according to men in the seminary. The students treat their status as potential missionaries with gravity, and their white jumpsuits and the stark white walls of the windowless classroom gave the classroom an almost monastic appearance. The men I speak with tell me that, once the seminary program was underway, the gang leadership agreed to reserve a special table just for seminary students. The story of Christians being protected and sanctioned by the gangs has become the stuff of legend here, although I am never able to verify if it is true.

Echoing Eddy's sentiments from the early 1800s, Ben Phillips, the seminary director, tells the men at Darrington, "You know when you got into this program that it is largely not to minister to the free world; your assignment—and you're already doing it, I understand, in your cell blocks—you're going to change the culture of this system. It's already happening in Darrington." At Darrington and elsewhere, the purpose of redemption is to manage and contain the sprawling carceral system that exists throughout the United States. Unlike prisoners in the Quaker penitentiary, the students in the prison seminary are to govern themselves and each other. As I discuss in the next chapter, the seminary students forge community and belonging, but they watch each other carefully for lapses in behavior or even belief. Rather than outsiders, seminary students become the religious leaders in the prison, a rare chance for them to have responsibility or to participate in their own governance. Just as the reformers at Eastern State Penitentiary and Auburn State Prison did, Phillips believes he is bringing God's word to the prison, and that it will spread through the influence of the students. The debate about good motives the men

engaged in is key, because they must figure out how to shape and influence others within the prison. Keith, who is thirty-five years old and has a life sentence, told me that when they are sent to other Texas prisons as missionaries, their strategy should be to win over the other religious guys first, before they can even start to think about new converts.

The seminary grants the power to minister to others, to monitor each other, and to patrol prisoners' own inner worlds for signs of sin or false motives. They spend their days in a quiet section of the prison, sealed off from the chaos of prison life. A particular officer is assigned to the seminary wing. Often, the students' idea of who has authority over them can conflict with the administration and those paid to guard them. Patricia, from the women's seminary in Louisiana, believes punishment is just, as long as it comes from God, who is an alternate authority to the prison. Many of the men in Darrington echoed that idea. God would enter their hearts and change them, and only God can determine their punishment and redemption, not the guards or the prison or the courts. Patricia and many of the men in the seminar were disdainful of the officers and even the mode of punishment the prison mandated. "Your job is not to punish me," Patricia said. "I was punished when I went to court. I'm punished every day when I can't go home. I'm punished when I talk to my daughter on the phone or my kids, when they have babies and I can't be there. But it's not your job to punish me." For them, punishment is coupled with redemption of the individual by God. The two are inextricable.

Phillips greets everyone with the bantering Southern politeness that later compels him to invite me to dinner. Although he is an avid sports fan and wears a Baltimore Orioles jacket, having grown up in Maryland, he was descended from a long line of Baptist missionaries. "I like to say I was a Baptist before birth," he tells me. Before he started working at Darrington, the only time he'd been to a prison was with the University of Maryland band. They played "Tis the Gift to Be Simple," with the words "Tis the gift to be free," at the opening of a jail in Prince George's County. Phillips's grandparents were Baptist music missionaries who specialized in the trumpet and trombone and traveled all over the world. Despite his specialization in ancient religion, his passion is military history, and

he reads Greek. His dream to attend the Naval Academy was scuttled by asthma and poor eyesight, so he immersed himself in the seminary. Prison work was never on his radar until one Saturday, while he was practicing for a piano concert at church, he received a call from the president of the seminary. The president asked Phillips to direct the program and expected an answer right away. As Phillips put it, "Sometimes you know God's will, and sometimes others tell you it."

Inside the prison, Phillips clearly enjoys his authority and showing me around, but he doesn't hover. Darrington is one of the few men's prisons where I could talk to prisoners in a room without anyone else around. However, there are no female faculty members because of the seminary's belief in gender role differentiation. Women, they think, should not have teaching authority over the students. The female correctional officers at Darrington wear a heavy apron-like garment over their uniforms that looks like the X-ray cover at a dentist's office. Sean, the program administrator, says, "I would not recommend that women work in this environment on a regular basis. The things that they have to deal with to me are just really hard. Even if theologically we were cool with women being spiritual authorities, advisors, and whatnot, I still would not practically recommend that it be the case." He emphasizes that the main reason women can't teach is because the men would be uncomfortable.

The program has computers and a library, but the men are limited to the courses the seminary offers and the books available. They are being inducted into a specific worldview, that of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Later that day at Darrington Unit, Phillips teaches a class for freshman on virtues. Although he occasionally glances at his tablet, he speaks with the fluency and dynamism of someone accustomed to the pulpit. The men have been reading Aristotle and Aquinas, on reciprocal and individual justice, but today the lesson is on redistributive justice. As I sit at a table with seven men, Phillips hands each a strip of paper with five boxes on it. The boxes represent their happiness index. Then he hands each man a bag of candy. Some have Orange Slices, others Skittles, M&Ms, or Junior Mints. One of the wardens enters the room and watches carefully.

First, Phillips asks them to record their level of happiness, on a scale of one to five, in the first box of the strip. Five is the highest and one is the lowest. Next, the men exchange their bags of candy with someone at their table and then record their happiness level in the second box. After a boisterous five minutes of laughter and talking, Phillips tells them to trade with a person who has the same letter on their strip of paper. Again, they record their happiness index. Finally, Phillips tells them they can trade with anyone in the room. At the end, they subtract the first number from the last to see if their happiness stayed the same, went up, or went down. After all the trading, almost everyone's number increased. Phillips uses this exercise to discuss redistribution and his own particular political views as part of a religious worldview: "The more people you have to trade with, the better chance you have at happiness, to get what you want. When trade is forced, someone outside decides, it decreases happiness." To illustrate, he asks Warden Tucker what he likes, and the men are forced to hand over their Orange Slices. "This is what communism does," Phillips explains to them. The free-market lecture continues as he discusses greed and covetousness, blending the biblical with the economic. The lesson makes his particular views seem biblically supported and mandated, and without access to other classes or information, why would the students think differently? One man asks, "What if we don't start out the same? Some have more and others less." Phillips tells the class it doesn't matter, because we all start out in the image of God. God will provide.

In 1833, George W. Smith, an early commentator on prison life, expressed that the will might be tamed through religious instruction: "Each individual will necessarily be made the instrument of his own punishment—his conscience will be the avenger of society."[60] The men in the class were not being preached to under the threat of a cannon or toiling in the fields of the plantation, but they were still under coercion: the alternative was endless warehousing in the Texas prison system.

In the library where Phillips's virtues class met, men were hanging a large wooden plaque that seminary students at Angola prison had elaborately carved for them. The verse on the plaque was from Matthew 7:7–8: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who

seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." The worldviews presented to them were partial and biased, as was the information they could access. The verse implied that a person might discover something about himself, the divine light of the optimistic Quakers, but his choices were already circumscribed: become a missionary or remain a number in the vast prison system. Today's faith-based ministries are a carceral church, much like the penitentiary. They accept punishment and imprisonment as necessary precursors in order for a person in prison to be redeemed. The Quakers may have initially hoped that through their experiments in redemption and confinement, the prison system might fade away. Instead, they laid the groundwork for mass incarceration. The question then becomes whether a system is justified as long as the people captive within it will find God. The seminary strives to make prisoners into emissaries of Baptist belief, fed back in the vast Texas prison archipelago without questioning why so many people are in prison in the first place.

January 22, 2023

Re: NEH Public Scholars Program

Dear Review Committee:

(b) (6)

[redacted]

(b) (6) [redacted]

[redacted]

Sincerely,

Mary Gould

Mary R. Gould, PhD
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January 23, 2023

National Endowment for the Humanities
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RE: Public Scholars Program Letter of Recommendation for **Dr. Tanya Erzen**

(b) (6)

[redacted]

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

(b) (6)

[redacted]

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

(b) (6)

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Sincerely,

Mary Thomas
Associate Professor
Director, The Ohio Prison Education Exchange Project