



WOMEN OF FAITH IN JAIL

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28 APRIL 2023

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

WOMEN AND RELIGION



MALE & FEMALE PRISONERS: EXPERIENCE DIFFERS

THE LIVES OF AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEN PRISONERS ARE SIMILARLY MARGINALIZED; HOWEVER, THE SYSTEMIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES OF WOMEN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY ARE REFLECTED IN THE LIVES OF FEMALE INMATES

- WOMEN ARE USUALLY PRIMARY FAMILY CARETAKERS. JAIL AND PRISON SEPARATE THEM FROM THEIR CHILDREN, AND THEY OFTEN LOSE CUSTODY WHILE INCARCERATED
- WOMEN ENTER THE CARCERAL SYSTEM WITH MORE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES, AND WOMEN UNDERGO MORE TRAUMA IN JAIL AND PRISON
- FOR CHAPLAINS AND OFFICERS, WORKING WITH WOMEN PRISONERS CAN BE MORE COMPLEX AND INTENSE THAN WITH MEN
- PRAYER AND FAITH MAY BE SOME OF THE FEW COMFORTS AVAILABLE IN THE STRESSFUL CARCERAL SETTING

JAIL AND PRISON ARE DIFFERENT

FROM "RANGE OF CHAPLAIN ENGAGEMENT WITH PRISONERS" GTU - MA THESIS, BY KATY DICKINSON, 2021

Jail	Prison
Whether or not they are guilty, about 80% of people held in American jails are not convicted of any crime. Many un-convicted people remain in jail because they are too poor to make bail.	Prison inmates have been convicted.
Inmates are usually in a jail near their home community, or in the community where they were arrested.	Prison inmates may be sent anywhere in their state (and sometimes out of state).
People can be jailed from a few days to a dozen years or more. Most do not know their schedule for judgement.	Prison inmates generally know their incarceration schedule.
Jail sees a large-scale, constant churn in and out.	Prison populations are comparatively stable.
Jails are managed by county or municipal authorities.	Prisons are managed by the state governments and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons. There are also incarceration facilities operated by the armed forces and other federal agencies.

PRISON AND JAIL ARE UNBALANCED SOCIETIES

- AMERICA HOLDS ALMOST 2 MILLION PRISONERS
 - **93%** ARE IDENTIFIED AS MALE
 - PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED IN PRISONERS (STRONG REGIONAL DIFFERENCES)
- IN ADDITION TO CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR, INCARCERATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH MANY PERSONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, ACTING ALONE OR TOGETHER:
 - ABOUT HALF OF INMATES IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY HAVE MENTAL ILLNESS
 - ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF JAIL INMATES REPORT DRUG DEPENDENCE OR ABUSE
 - SINCE EARLY TEENS, MANY ARE IN & OUT OF FOSTER CARE, INCARCERATION, MENTAL ILLNESS, AND ADDICTION
- FEW ARE INNOCENT, BUT MOST SEEM OVER-PUNISHED BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO POOR TO PAY BAIL OR HIRE A CAPABLE LAWYER
- GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ: “THE QUESTION FOR JOB IS NOT WHETHER OR NOT HE IS A SINNER; HE KNOWS WELL THAT AS A HUMAN BEING HE IS INDEED A SINNER. THE QUESTION RATHER IS WHETHER HE DESERVES THE TORMENTS HE IS SUFFERING.”

3 JAIL OFFICERS: VIEWS ON HOW PRISONERS DIFFER

UNPUBLISHED INTERVIEWS WITH 3 DEPUTIES (EACH WITH 15 OR MORE YEARS ON JOB)

- WHAT ONE TEACHES TRAINEE OFFICERS ON COMMON PRISONER CHARACTERISTICS:

1. LACK OF LIFE STRUCTURE (OFTEN WITH A HISTORY OF AN ABSENT OR ABUSIVE FATHER)
2. UNDEVELOPED SENSE OF MATURITY, NOT TAKING INCARCERATION & CONSEQUENCES SERIOUSLY
 - MEN ARE MORE MANIPULATIVE, MAY TREAT INCARCERATION LIKE A GAME OR SUMMER CAMP
 - WOMEN MAY TREAT IT AS SPENDING TIME WITH A GROUP OF GIRLS
3. INABILITY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN ACTIONS – BLAME PROJECTED OUTWARD
4. HISTORY OF TRAUMA (ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN), OFTEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TO ESCAPE TRAUMA

- OBSERVED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN JAIL PRISONERS:

- WOMEN ENGAGE MORE EMOTIONALLY / VERBALLY, MEN MORE PHYSICALLY
- MEN GET MORE PROGRAMS, JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, THAN WOMEN
- WOMEN ARE NEEDIER, QUESTION ORDERS MORE THAN MEN – MORE DRAINING FOR OFFICERS
- WOMEN ARE GIVEN MORE SLACK BY OFFICERS WHEN THEY ARE MOTHERS OR PREGNANT

WOMEN'S MASS INCARCERATION

THE **PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE** (PPI) ISSUE AN ANNUAL “MASS INCARCERATION: THE WHOLE PIE” REPORT. A FOLLOWUP WAS JUST ISSUED CALLED “WOMEN'S MASS INCARCERATION: THE WHOLE PIE 2023” THAT FOCUSES ON WOMEN PRISONERS:

- “80% OF WOMEN IN JAILS ARE MOTHERS, AND MOST OF THEM ARE PRIMARY CARETAKERS OF THEIR CHILDREN.”
- WOMEN EXPERIENCE 53% JOBLESSNESS BEFORE ARREST, GREATER RATES OF HOMELESSNESS, DISABILITY, HEALTH CHALLENGES, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE THAN MALE PRISONERS
- “WOMEN ARE 3 TIMES AS LIKELY AS MEN TO BE SEXUALLY VICTIMIZED BY PRISON OR JAIL STAFF.”
- ABOUT 4% OF WOMEN ARE PREGNANT WHEN THEY GO TO PRISON
- WOMEN ARE HELD FOR LESS TIME THAN MEN IN COUNTY JAIL; HOWEVER, WOMEN'S RATE OF INCARCERATION IS GROWING TWICE AS FAST AS MEN'S
- WOMEN DIE IN JAIL AT A HIGHER RATE THAN MEN
- WHEN A MOTHER OF YOUNGER CHILDREN IS INCARCERATED, HER WHOLE FAMILY SHARES IN HER PUNISHMENT.
- PPI ESTIMATED ALMOST 150,000 MOTHERS WERE INCARCERATED APART FROM THEIR CHILDREN ON MOTHER'S DAY

JAIL CHAPLAINS AND INMATES

INTERACTION POINTS BETWEEN PRISONERS AND CHAPLAINS ARE DETAILED IN THE COUNTY SHERIFF'S "INMATE RULEBOOK." INCLUDING

- NON-MEDICAL SPECIAL DIETS: KOSHER, HALAL, OR VEGETARIAN
- RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL OR SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS, INCLUDING:
 - WORSHIP SERVICES, MEDITATION, CENTERING PRAYER, AND RELIGIOUS LIFE-SKILLS CLASSES
- INDIVIDUAL PASTORAL CARE (PRAYER, WELLNESS CHECKS FOR FAMILY, DEATH NOTICES)
- ACCESS TO RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ITEMS, INCLUDING:
 - SCRIPTURES AND RELIGIOUS PRAYER OR STUDY MATERIALS
 - HIJAB, KIPPAH, OR KUFY HEAD COVERINGS, PRAYER RUGS, ROSARIES, BOOKS, AND ART SUPPLIES

PRISONERS HAVE TIME ON THEIR HANDS AND OFTEN USE IT TO EXPLORE AND DEEPEN THEIR SPIRITUAL OR RELIGIOUS FAITH. SINCE 2019, WHEN INMATES GAINED ACCESS TO A WIDE VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SCRIPTURES AND TEXTS THROUGH THEIR NEW ELECTRONIC TABLETS, REQUESTS FOR RELIGIOUS INFORMATION, DIETS AND ITEMS, AND INQUIRIES ABOUT CONVERSION, SEEM TO HAVE INCREASED.



AN EXAMPLE: WOMEN AND RELIGION IN JAIL

OCCASIONALLY, JAIL CHAPLAINS ARE PRESENTED WITH CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SEEM TO BE UNIQUELY FEMALE AND RELIGIOUS.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE IN TRAINING, I SHADOWED A SENIOR WOMAN CHAPLAIN IN THE MAXIMUM SECURITY DORM ON THE WOMEN'S SIDE. WE SPOKE AT LENGTH WITH AN INMATE WHO WAS DISTRAUGHT BECAUSE HER RELIGIOUS GARMENT HAD BEEN REMOVED BY MEN DURING THE ARREST PROCESS.

THE GARMENT HAD BEEN RESTORED BY THE TIME OF OUR VISIT BUT FOR HER, THAT VIOLATION OF MODESTY SEEMED MORE TRAUMATIC THAN IMPRISONMENT. AFTER WE SPOKE FOR AN HOUR, MY COLLEAGUE WAS ABLE TO ARRANGE FOR MORE MENTAL HEALTHCARE AND LEGAL SUPPORT FOR THIS INMATE.

CHOOSING TO INCARCERATE YOURSELF: CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING IN JAIL

BEING A JAIL CHAPLAIN REQUIRES A SPECIAL DEDICATION, BUT WE ALWAYS NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS. A RECENT MEDITATION AT ONE OF OUR TRAINING SESSIONS WAS CALLED “CHOOSING TO INCARCERATE YOURSELF.” CHAPLAIN ANGEL HERNANDEZ SAID,

“WE HAVE THESE MINISTRY TRAININGS SO THAT AS CHAPLAINS, YOU NEED TO CHOOSE INCARCERATION AS WELL. NOT LIKE THOSE THAT ARE INCARCERATED, AND NOT LIKE THOSE WHO HAVE FAMILIES INSIDE. YOU CHOOSE THE SURROUNDINGS OF INCARCERATION IN ORDER TO BE WITH THOSE INSIDE.... WE ARE A MINISTRY THAT SEEKS OUT PEOPLE THAT CHOOSE INCARCERATION. THAT KNOW THAT THEIR RIGHTS ARE LEFT, LIKE THEIR PHONES, LIKE THEIR SMART WATCHES, THEIR RIGHTS ARE LEFT IN THE CAR. WE LOOK FOR PEOPLE THAT ALLOW THE DIRECTION OF THE LAW INSIDE TO HAVE THE AUTHORITY, REGARDLESS OF THE TITLE YOU HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO ATTAIN ON THE OUTSIDE. WE LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES.... WE ASK THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU CHOOSE INCARCERATION TO THEN BE AN INSPIRATION TO THOSE INSIDE.

HEBREWS 13:3: “REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON AS IF YOU WERE THERE YOURSELF. REMEMBER ALSO THOSE BEING MISTREATED, AS IF YOU FELT THEIR PAIN IN YOUR OWN BODIES.”



Elmwood Jail 2016



Elmwood Jail 2017



County Award 2015

QUESTIONS?

MY BLOG: [HTTPS://KATYSBLOG.WORDPRESS.COM](https://katysblog.wordpress.com)

COMMUNITY: [HTTPS://HELPINGOUT.NET](https://helpingout.net)

CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS CHAPLAINCY:
[HTTPS://WWW.CICMINISTRIES.ORG](https://www.cicministries.org)

Elmwood Jail 2023

