Reflections by Women on their Criminalization and Incarceration:  
A Journal of Prisoners on Prisons Thematic Syllabus  
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In 1988, the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons began publishing articles written by criminalized people who were or had previously been incarcerated. This thematic syllabus focuses on articles written by women pertaining to their experiences prior to, during, and after their criminalization and imprisonment. Women are the fastest-growing prison population across the world (Nellis & Rovner, 2020). This is a particularly prevalent issue in Canada, where Indigenous women continue to be imprisoned at a rate that is much higher than non-Indigenous women (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2016; Monture, 2006). The growing incarceration of women has been attributed to colonial, racist, classist, ableist, cis-heteronormative and patriarchal legacies of imprisonment (Davis & Shaylor, 2001). Their imprisonment creates or further exacerbates existing mental health issues, too often leading to self-harm and deaths by suicide. This syllabus addresses these and other themes including, but not limited to education and programming for women prisoners, women as political prisoners, and the effects of imprisonment on family.

Prisons were not built for women. These sites of confinement were built for men and co-opted to become schools of femininity, orderliness, and conformity that punished the assumed-to-be-inherent immorality of women (Armstrong & Chartrand, 2007; McCorkel, 2003). As the prison industrial complex began to grow in the wake of capitalist expansion and increasingly austere penal policies and practices, the prison itself did not adapt to diminish the pains of imprisonment and address even the most basic needs of one of its fastest-growing populations - incarcerated women (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2016; Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Irwin & Austin, 1997). Like the closed institutions they replaced such as the Kingston Prison for Women (P4W), contemporary sites of human caging perpetrate and exacerbate abuse against women through ill-suited programming, inadequate health and mental health care, and degrading living conditions (Pate, 1999). The prison does not function strictly as a mechanism of social control, but is also a punitive and disciplinary enterprise that continues to harm women and renders them more manageable through the use of psychotropic drugs as a means to quell resistance to unjust living conditions (Kilty, 2012). Female docility, then, has and continues to be one of the major objectives of patriarchal society (Davis, 2003).

Mainstream media and academic circles often omit the experiences of criminalized women—both inside and outside of prisons. Indeed, much of the existing literature overlooks structural factors and personal narratives in favour of discourses that individualize and pathologize the behaviour of female prisoners (Crépault & Kilty, 2017). This phenomenon is situated more broadly within the
political tradition of individualizing criminalized acts and disorder (Gilmore, 1999). A focus on women-centered and women-written articles is thus necessary to explore and shed light on the intersectional locale of prisoners who, by virtue of their gender, sexuality, race, class, age, ability and/or other markers of difference face challenges that are different from those commonly examined in male-dominated discourses about carceral control (McCorkel, 2003; Rafter, 1995).

In examining the gendered legacies of imprisonment, the readings listed below explore how the patriarchal nature of the prison system makes women’s experiences different from those of men. We learn of the inadequate care that women receive, whether it be for regular health check-ups, mental health, dental care, or even access to sanitary pads. The journal contributors also enlighten us on the challenges women face while pregnant in prison or being a mother to children who are outside of the prison. Furthermore, they explore the topic of the abuse, violence and trauma many women have gone through prior to, during, and after their incarceration, as well as how this can lead to self-harm and deaths by suicide. After taking stock of the insights of criminalized and incarcerated women, readers are likely to arrive at the conclusion that their incarceration must be abolished and that community supports must be expanded as part of broader efforts to end violence against women and promote gender equality, equity, and inclusion.

**Indigenous Struggles**

*Sisterhood*, by Cedar Woman  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*Entrenched Social Catastrophe*, by Ms. Cree  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*Indian Prayer*, by Unknown  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*Brothers and Sisters*, by Sandy Sayer  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*Sisterhood Speaks Out*, by Sandy Sayer  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*My Healing Journey*, by Sharon Acoose  
*Volume 20(1) 2011*

*This is Who I Am: Aboriginal Women’s Healing from Criminalization and Problematic Drug Use*,  
by Colleen Anne Dell, Valerie Desjarlais and Jennifer M. Kilty  
*Volume 20(1) 2011*

*Grand Valley Institution for Women*, by Josephine Pelletier  
*Volume 26(1&2) 2017*

*Fraser Valley Institution for Women*, by Anonymous Prisoners  
*Volume 26(1&2) 2017*

*Fraser Valley Institution for Women*, by Stephanie Deschene  
*Volume 26(1&2) 2017*

**Experiencing Racism**

*Non-Violent Resistance*, by Heathers Evans  
*Volume 5(2) 1994*

*A Woman’s Journey in the BPP and BLA: Safiya Bukhari, 1950–2003* by Safiya Bukhari  
*Volume 15(2)/ 16(1) 2007*

*Absent Voices: Experiencing Prison Life from Both Sides of the Fence - A Turkish Female’s Perspective*, by Safak Bozkurt and Andreas Aresti  
*Volume 27(2) 2018*

**Political Imprisonment and Women**

*Female Political Prisoners and Anti-imperialist Struggle*, by Susan Rosenberg  
*Volume 2(2) 1990*

*Mother’s Day*, by Brenda Murphy  
*Volume 15(1) 2006*

*With My Child in Jail*, by Saeideh  
*Volume 19(2) 2010*
Reflections of an Iranian Political Prisoner, by Minoo Homily
Volume 19(2) 2010

Justice Beyond My Ordeal, by Anahita Rahmanizadeh
Volume 19(2) 2010

Political Imprisonment in Tehran, by Marina Nemat
Volume 20(1) 2011

Political Protest, Mass Arrest and Mass Detention,
by Debra Parkes and Meaghan Daniel
Volume 20(2) 2011

Cycles of Abuse: Trauma Endured Prior to, During and After Prison
My Blood, by Norma Stafford
Volume 5(2) 1994

From Isolation to Community...
Seeking Minimum Security Facilities 3 Women,
by Jo-Ann Mayhew
Volume 5(2) 1994

Entrenched Social Catastrophe, by Ms. Cree
Volume 5(2) 1994

Prison for Women’s Invisible Minority, by Melissa Stewart
Volume 8(1&2)

Strip Searching: Stop the State’s Sexual Assault of Women in Prison, by Debbie Kilroy
Volume 12(1) 2003

People I Met, Thoughts I Had — Women and Children, by Viviane Saleh-Hanna
Volume 14(1) 2005

A Woman’s Journey in the BPP and BLA: Safiya Bukhari, 1950–2003, by Safiya Bukhari
Volume 15(2) / 16(1) 2007

Reflections of an Iranian Political Prisoner, by Minoo Homily
Volume 19(2) 2010

Stopping the Real ‘Cycle of Violence’: A Feminist Critique of Patriarchal Battering
and the Criminalization of Women by American Police, by Cathy Martson
Volume 20(1) 2011

My Healing Journey, by Sharon Acoose
Volume 20(1) 2011

A New Direction for Federally Sentenced Women, Foiled Once Again, by T.A. Glaremin
Volume 20(1) 2011

The Gender of Crime and Normalization of Male Violence
by the North American Justice Systems, by Cathy Martson
Volume 24(2) 2015
Justice in Gender-Responsiveness? Psychological Dominations and Internalized Oppressions at a Women’s Prison in the U.S., by Tara Perry and Colleen Hackett  
Volume 25(1) 2016

After the Prison Closes: Seeking Healing, Memory, and Awareness at P4W, by Linda Mussell  
Volume 28(1) 2019

Discrimination and Differential Treatment: Women in a Gendered Society  
Corrections is a Male Enterprise, by Jo-Anne Mayhew  
Volume 1(1) 1988

D I S A R M The Infamous Thing, by Gayle Horii  
Volume 5(2) 1994

Pressgang Printers, by Norma Stafford  
Volume 5(2) 1994

Checking Out But Never Leaving: Women, Prison and ‘Community’ in Colonial Australia, by Kat Armstrong and Vicki Chartrand  
Volume 16(2) 2007

Reflections on the Prison as Community, by Judith Clark  
Volume 19(1) 2010

A New Direction for Federally Sentenced Women, Foiled Once Again, by T.A. Glaremin  
Volume 20(1) 2011

Women are the Fastest Growing Prison Population: Why You Should Care, by Debbie Kilroy and Kim Pate  
Volume 20(1) 2011

Justice in Gender-Responsiveness? Psychological Dominations and Internalized Oppressions at a Women’s Prison in the U.S., by Tara Perry and Colleen Hackett  
Volume 25(1) 2016

Inadequate Health Care  
Report on the Central California Women’s Facility, by Karonji Spears  
Volume 5(2) 1994

HIV+ Women Prisoners, by Solidarity Statement from Chowchilla  
Volume 5(2) 1994
Dropping Like Flies: Another Death at Chowchilla California Women’s Facility,
by Joann Walker

Brazil, by the Female Prisoners of the State of Sao Paulo

I’m Dying with AIDS, by Patrice O’Donnell

Quinte Detention Centre, by S.B.

Supporting Women, by Gayle Horii

People I Met, Thoughts I Had — Women and Children,
by Viviane Saleh-Hanna

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoners

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Stephanie Deschenes

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoner 2

Mental Health, Segregation and Self-harm

Notes: Suicides at P4W, by Gayle Horii

D I S A R M The Infamous Thing, by Gayle Horii

CSC and the 2 Percent Solution: the P4W Inquiry, by Kim Pate

Suicide: the Challenges Faced by Female Federal Prisoners,
by Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford

The Bear and Me, by Jo-Ann Mayhew

On Segregation, by Renée Acoby
Pregnancy, Motherhood and Family Behind Bars

A Fighting Battle, by A Prisoner’s Wife
Volume 7(1) 1996/1997

Not Without My Sons, by Yraida Guanipa
Volume 12(1) 2003

Mother’s Day, by Brenda Murphy
Volume 15(1) 2006

With My Child in Jail, by Saeideh
Volume 19(2) 2010

On Mothering in Prison,
by Jennifer McMillan and Allison Granger-Brown
Volume 20(1) 2011

Absent Voices: Experiencing Prison Life from Both Sides of the Fence – A Turkish Female’s Perspective, by Safak Bozkurt and Andreas Aresti
Volume 27(2) 2018

Prison Education

On Prison Education and Women in Prison:
An Interview with Therasa Anna Glaremin,
by Gay Bell
Volume 4(1) 1992

No English, Gracias, by Marilyn Buck
Volume 19(1) 2010

A Dark Cloud, by Lynne Elliott
Volume 20(1) 2011

Social Justice Praxis within Walls to Bridges Program, by Rachel Fayter
Volume 25(2) 2016

Attempting to Secure a University Education while in Prison, by Petey
Volume 25(2) 2016

Incarcerated Scholars, Qualitative Inquiry, and Subjugated Knowledge,
by Michelle Jones
Volume 25(2) 2016

Inadequate Resources for and Access to Penitentiary Libraries Diminish Access to Justice and Transformation, by Nellie Parr
Volume 27(1) 2018

Surviving Imprisonment

Editor’s Introduction, by Liz Elliott and Gayle Horii
Volume 5(2) 1994

The Art In/Of Survival, by Gayle Horii
Anxious Women Await Prison Clothing, by Melissa Stewart and Julie MacKay
Abattoir, by Gayle Horii
DISARM The Infamous Thing, by Gayle Horii
Remembering Women in the Struggle, by Mary McArdle
Excuses, Excuses, by Rosena Brown
Acceptable Casualties, by Bernadette F. Olson and Julie C. Kunselman
Contraband, by Patricia Prewitt
Commentary on Imprisonment, by Yraida Guanipa
A Dark Cloud, by Lynne Elliott
Looking from the Inside Out, by Janus V.
Ya Gotta Keep Your Head Up, by Emily O’Brien
Stigma and Societal Rejection
Stay Strong They Say, by Patrice O’Donnell
The Coalition of Women Prisoners, by Tamar Kraft-Stolar
Becoming Criminal, by Anonymous
The Zombification of Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People, by Grace Gámez
The Need for Change Behind and Beyond Prison Walls
CSC and the 2 Percent Solution: the P4W Inquiry, by Kim Pate
The Impact of the Conservative Punishment Agenda on Federally Sentenced Women and Priorities for Social Change, by Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne

Établissement Joliette pour Femmes, by Comité des détenues

Grand Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoner 1

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoner 2

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoner 3

Fraser Valley Institution for Women, by Anonymous Prisoner 4

Voicelessness: A Call to Action, by Paula Harriott and Andreas Aresti

Jessica Kakeeway, "Flower Skull"
Works Cited
Kilty, J. M. (2012). ‘It’s like they don’t want you to get better’: Psy control of women in the carceral context. Feminism & Psychology, 22(2), 162–182.