# Caged Sister

## Art and Resistance in American Women's Prison Zines 1933-2019

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the previously unacknowledged literary tradition of women's prison zines in the United States. Prison zines are short collections of art and literature that circulate in the prison where they are produced, in other penal facilities in America, and even among the general public. This thesis is grounded in an analysis of over fifty different publications and nearly 1000 individual issues that I have gathered over the course of my PhD through original archival research across the United States. I plot the entire women's prison zine literary tradition from the earliest publication in 1933 through to the present day in an effort to identify shifts in content, readership and production. Using genre to define my approach, I examine how prison zines offer new insights into literary traditions that have otherwise excluded them, arguing that the prison is a unique environment for creative production that leads to a distinctive and compelling sub-genre of American literature. I examine how prison zines dismantle and adapt traditional women's magazines, contribute to the American protest literature tradition, generate collective autobiography, and reconfigure feminist print culture in order to more accurately voice the experiences and identities of women behind bars. I identify three defining features of prison zines—community, confinement aesthetic and resistance—arguing that they are products of the unique carceral environment in which zines are produced: an environment rooted in punishment and isolation. This form of analysis demonstrates how incarcerated women use print to establish networks and sustain communities; voice marginalised experiences and opinions; educate each other and the general public; and communicate, create, and resist. In doing so, this thesis reflects the interdisciplinarity and growing diversification of the field of American Studies and the influence on it of gender, race, and print culture studies. It considers the historical contexts that create the genre, the literary and cultural techniques that define it, and articulates the marginalized voices that are continuously omitted from the canon.

*For my Dad*

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# Abbreviations

*Archives:*

BCRW: Barnard Center for Research on Women

BHL: Bentley Historical Library

CSA: California State Archives

DPUA: DePaul University Archives

MHSL: Minnesota Historical Society Library, Gale Family Library

MPLSC: Milwaukee Public Library Special Collections

RRBML: David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

SLHU: Schlesinger Library, Harvard University

UCSD: University California San Diego Special Collections

UFA: The University of Florida Archives

UMSCL: University of Michigan Special Collections Library

UMSCRC: University of Michigan Special Collections Research Center

WHSA: Wisconsin Historical Society Archives

WRHS: Western Reserve Historical Society

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*Introduction*

# A Zine of Her Own: Mapping the Women's Prison Zine Literary Tradition

Now we're starting a newspaper
"The Reflector" is its name.
We're printing it just for us girls
But striving too for fame.

…

Good luck to the "Reflector"
We hope it ceases never,
But will until the end of time
Go on and on forever.

- Marie Carey, "Our Paper" [1]

In November 1935, teacher Mary Anne Toner began a journalism class at The State Reformatory for Women at Shakopee.[2] With the blessing of the Superintendent at the time, Estelle Jamieson, Toner purchased a new mimeograph machine and with it founded the longest-running women's prison zine in the United States. Established as a monthly publication, *The Reflector* documented the institutional goings-on at Shakopee alongside the art, writing and opinions of hundreds of women who have passed through its doors ever since.[3] Born out of the reformatory model's emphasis on rehabilitation over punishment, *The Reflector* was one of the first stand-alone women's prison zines to be published in the United States. Over the next eighty-four years, while other women's prison zines came and went, *The*

[1] Marie Carey, "Our Paper," *The Reflector*, November 1935, 5.
[2] Thomas M. Daly, *For the Good of the Women: A Short History of the Minnesota Correctional Facility Shakopee* (Bloomington: Daly Publishing, 2004), 26.
[3] On average, *The Reflector* was released 10 times a year before cutting back to quarterly.

*Reflector* remained a constant. It evolved into a quarterly, developed a subscription system, adapted to technological changes—shifting from mimeograph to computer—and created an email list to distribute issues digitally. Although unique in its longevity, *The Reflector* is part of a well-established carceral publishing tradition in the United States. In the twentieth anniversary edition, the editor at the time, Fern G., comments on the role of the penal press:

> Prisons and Institutions of Correction throughout the country with few exceptions are putting out inmate publications. Whether it is a weekly, monthly or seasonal, the purpose and importance of this publication is basically the same. Those who are on the editorial staffs realize what prison journalism can do for the men and women behind walls, but just how many inmates know how important it is for us to have an outlet through which we can express our feelings? Actually the publications are the only thing we can say is ours. There are inmates whose talent for writing would lie dormant were it not for their prison papers. There are those who have never felt the satisfaction of seeing their words in print. In some cases men and women have received recognition in the field of journalism for books, articles written while in prison.[4]

At the time of its conception, *The Reflector* was one of 104 publications coming out of prisons, reformatories and reformatory schools in America, not counting the various discontinued publications that came before.[5] Since then, the penal press has continued to publish zines, new and established, adapting to fit with the changing status of the criminal justice system and

[4] Fern G., "Editorial," *The Reflector,* July 1954, 6.
[5] Isabella Kellock Coulter, "A Study of Publications in National and State Penal and Correctional Institutions in the United States," *Social Forces* 15, no. 2 (December 1936): 255-261. In this extensive study, Coulter sent questionnaires to 266 penal institutions in the US for details of their previous or existing publications. From that group, 258 replied: 154 had no publication or had discontinued it, and 104 had an existing publication at that time.

American society more broadly. According to Robert Gaucher, Canadian prison zine *Collins Bay Diamond* published a study in 1959 claiming that at that point there were over 250 publications coming out of prisons in the United States and Canada.[6] Yet despite the clear breadth, endurance and growth of the penal press over the last century, scholars have largely ignored collective women's prison writing. While the male strand of the penal press has received significant attention over the past fifty years, the voices and writings of incarcerated women remain overlooked. This thesis is the first research project to examine women's prison zines in the United States and to map the entire literary tradition. By gathering and analysing over fifty publications, I will argue that women's prison zines have been valuable tools for education, communication and change, not just for incarcerated women, but for society more broadly.

Women's prison zines are short collections of art and literature that circulate in the prison where they are produced, in other penal facilities in America, and even among the general public. They represent an extensive yet often ignored literary tradition and are products of the carceral state's punitive and rehabilitative structures. By treating these zines as products of confinement, I argue that the prison is a unique environment whose creative legacy is a distinctive and compelling subgenre of American literature that adapts, shapes and borrows from other literary genres. Women's prison zines adapt the traditional form, style and content of women's magazines; expand the Women in Print Movement and feminist debates at the time; redefine collective autobiography; and contribute to the American protest literature tradition. By viewing women's prison zines in relation to these genres, it expands current definitions and broadens our understanding of collective writing during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in order to offer new ways to interpret the female incarceration

[6] Robert Gaucher, "The Canadian Penal Press: A Documentation and Analysis," *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 1-12.

experience. But women's prison zines are also a distinctive subgenre of American literature in their own right. This carceral literary tradition is informed and shaped by the prison environment which renders women both physically and psychologically confined. In the literal sense they are denied spatial freedoms and restrained behind bars and in cages. But these women are also stripped of their identity and confined by degrading stereotypes such as "fallen women" and bad mothers. They are denied political influence and silenced or ignored by larger society. Yet despite their invisibility, and in some ways as a direct response to it, incarcerated women have for nearly a century produced prison zines that shine a light on a largely obscured and forgotten world. In this identity vacuum women can define themselves through zines by writing about issues that concern them and in doing so give themselves a voice. As a result, zines connect, educate, resist, and develop a complex protest aesthetic that calls for wider social change beyond penal reform.

There are three distinct ways in which the unique environment of the prison proves fertile ground for creative production. Primarily, the forced imprisonment of women creates an involuntary community and wider network. Unlike other "zinesters," the creators of women's prison zines are brought together through circumstance and location rather than shared interests or ideas. Yet despite potentially lacking this initial familiarity or common interest, prison zines are able to transform a forced community into a legitimate, textual community within individual facilities, nationwide and even internationally. Their imprisonment unites them, but the zines connect them. As such, rather than these groups and individuals coming together to form a zine (as is more traditional in zinester communities), prison zines are products of forced proximity. The creators of zines use articles, poetry, letters and artwork to communicate with each other and offer advice, reassurance and companionship. Zines connect women across physical, geographical and social barriers, creating a large network that includes political prisoners overseas, women out on parole, and transgender individuals held at male facilities.

In doing so, zines construct a community, both literal and textual, that provides support for women. This support manifests in a variety of ways, from emotional support and advice, to financial donations and even physical protest by the public on behalf of the women inside. Although it is women's confinement that provides the initial circumstances for the zines' creation, it is their shared experiences as women—whether that be cis, transgender or gender non-conforming women—that unites and motivates them. What becomes apparent when reading women's prison zines is that personal gains are not the only motivating force for contributors. Rather, they seek to forge a collective voice and sisterhood behind bars that educates readers and demonstrates the complexities and diversity of womanhood.

Secondly, the environment of the carceral state also influences the production, style and form of the zines, creating an aesthetic shaped and defined by confinement. This, in part, is what facilitates the community outlined above; women's prison zines are intended as modes of communication to connect people across bars, walls and geographical distances. As such, they are built around interaction. From reader's letters and contributions, to advice from fellow editors in their "exchanges" columns, zines emphasise the plurality of print, encouraging polyvocality and multi-authorship. Contributors can vary from issue to issue and the content reflects this diversity, sometimes offering different or even conflicting views. The collective-inspired form also influences the style of the zines. They are visual publications, and a lot of the imagery consists of imprisonment iconography: bars, chains, cages and handcuffs. But they can also represent resistance. Much of the imagery found in prison zines show women breaking chains, holding up their fists, and includes images of famous women who defied captivity such as Assata Shakur, Joanne Little and Sojourner Truth. Taken together, this style and form represents a creativity informed by women's confinement but inspired by their resistance that encompasses a range of experiences and opinions.

This confinement aesthetic connects to the final defining feature, in that the physical and psychological confinements of prison can lead to resistance. In her book *Resistance Behind Bars,* Victoria Law writes about her time in Baltimore City Jail in 1985 and defines the type of resistance that evolved:

> Resistance. Not necessarily the militant kind that you might think of when you hear the word. Not so much the fist-in-the-air riots and strikes, but the simple, robust fabric of survival so often woven by women prisoners. In that fabric can be found rich, textured lessons about solidarity, social change, political evolution – about how human beings and society as a whole can transform.[7]

One manifestation of this resistance behind bars can be found in zines. Where prisons construct spaces of isolation, punishment and control, zines provide a textual space for communication and education. Zines can be used for printing manifestos or rallying support but are also used as platforms for self-expression. Articles about motherhood, fashion or same-sex relationships are all acts of resistance in that they construct the individual identities of incarcerated women against the stereotypes and dehumanizing systems of the carceral state.

These three factors—community, confinement aesthetics, and resistance—define the collective women's prison writing tradition. This thesis demonstrates that, when taken together, these features shape a tradition that alters our understanding of various genres—women's magazines, feminist and lesbian print culture, collective autobiography and protest literature—to broaden the canon of American literature and vocalise the experiences of a marginalised community. In doing so, I seek to get beyond the statistics and stereotypes, and beyond the

[7] Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009), iii.

popular autobiographies and TV shows, to access the self-defined identities and realities of incarcerated women.

## Defining a Tradition

The United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. In fact, there are currently over 2 million people held in prison or jail in America, and this does not include youth incarceration, people held in detention centres, or the 3.7 million people on probation. Between 1980 and 2017, the number of women incarcerated increased by more than 750%, catapulting female incarceration to a level of national crisis.[8] According to the American Civil Liberties Union, "just four percent of the world's female population lives in this country, yet nearly one-third of all the female prisoners in the entire world are held here."[9] Despite these high numbers, incarcerated women remain one of the most invisible communities in the United States. Research that examines women in prison has only really emerged in earnest in the past fifty years with scholars such as Victoria Law, Estelle B. Freedman, Silja Talvi, Nicola Hahn Rafter, Joy James and Beth Richie working to overturn scholarly neglect and expose the peculiarities and nuances of the female prison experience. Their studies paint a detailed picture of the evolution of gendered facilities, examining prison policy, judiciary discrimination and incarcerated women's resistance. This wealth of rich and comprehensive analysis in recent years is in part why I am not examining the development and history of female incarceration and the prison industrial complex through zines. Although this type of scholarship provides useful context for discussion, this thesis is primarily a literary and cultural analysis and other

[8] "Fact Sheet: Incarcerated Women and Girls," *The Sentencing Project* (June 2019), https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Incarcerated-Women-and-Girls.pdf

[9] "How Incarcerating Women Fuels Our Mass Incarceration Crisis: An Animated Series," *American Civil Liberties Union website*, accessed August 6, 2019, https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights/women-and-criminal-justice/how-incarcerating-women-fuels-our-mass-incarceration.

studies would therefore provide a more thorough discussion of the contexts, policies and histories of incarceration in the United States.[10]

The prison literature tradition in the United States has received a similar level of scholarly attention, with researchers such as Bell Gale Chevigny, Cynthia Owen Philip, Dan Berger and H. Bruce Franklin all acknowledging the existence of a "coherent body of literature with a unique historical significance and cultural influence."[11] Both Cynthia Owen Philip and H. Bruce Franklin attempt to create fairly representative anthologies of the history of American prison writing. In her 1973 study, *Imprisoned in America,* Philip starts in 1776 with The Society for the Relief of Distressed Prisoners and goes on to include over ninety extracts from people held in facilities across the United States up until the Attica rebellion in 1971.[12] Franklin, on the other hand, grounds the origins of prison writing in America in nineteenth-century slave narratives and, in doing so, seeks to emphasise that the prison system "is central to the oppression of Black people since the 1860s."[13] Although Franklin acknowledges that his 1978 study (and its most recent edition in 1989) are part "of an ongoing movement to redefine the canon of American literature" and that within four years of printing the first edition the annotated bibliography doubled in size, neither Franklin nor Philip give the writings of

[10] Key studies include Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Silja Talvi, *Women Behind Bars: The Crisis of Women in the U.S. Prison System* (Emeryville: Seal Press, 2007); Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009); Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1981); and Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women, Prisons and Social Control* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

[11] H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Writing in 20th Century America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 1.

[12] After years of rising tensions between incarcerated men and prison officials, on September 9th, 1971, Attica Correctional Facility in New York witnessed one of the most infamous riots in the United States. Men incarcerated at the facility forcefully seized control of the prison for five days, holding forty-two officers and civilians as hostages. "The Attica Brothers," as they became known, made several demands for better conditions in the prison, including religious and political freedom, the introduction of rehabilitation programmes and an end to violence. The riot ended on September 13th when the National Guard stormed the prison, killing ten hostages and twenty-nine incarcerated men and wounding over eighty others in less than five minutes. See Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2016).

[13] Franklin, *Prison Writing in 20th Century America*, xv.

incarcerated women the attention that they deserve, nor make any reference to women's prison zines at all. Both Dan Berger and Bell Gale Chevigny focus on the more recent history of prison writing, defining the 1970s as the "renaissance" of prison literature.[14] Chevigny anthologises the winners of the PEN writing competition from the last quarter of the twentieth century when the awards were created and includes a number of incarcerated female writers in her collection.[15] Berger, like Franklin, concentrates on the experiences of Black prisoners and their outputs in the period, arguing that "black prison narratives helped popularize an idea that prison was both a metaphor for and the epitome of the hidden constraints in American society."[16] He even emphasises the role of print culture within prisons in this period, describing these publications as the "backbone of prison organising."[17] However, like Franklin and Philip, despite including several female writers in their work, neither scholar acknowledges the full richness of the female prison writing tradition, nor mentions women's prison zines.

In the 1980s, Judith A. Scheffler called for critics to acknowledge the extensive and distinct tradition of women's prison writing and to remedy its absence in their scholarship. Creating an annotated bibliography of writing by women in prison, Scheffler argued for an "appreciation of these works" in order to "identify them as a body of literature with distinct characteristics, purposes, and problems."[18] Yet despite this enthusiasm, her conclusions are somewhat limited. Although she makes a compelling argument for the role of prison writing as a form of communication, suggesting that "for most writers … the fundamental purpose is to communicate with others … maintain[ing] essential links with family and friends" and

[14] Chevigny quotes prison poet William Aberg as describing the 1970s as "a prison renaissance." Bell Gale Chevigny*, Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999), xv.
[15] PEN stands for Poets, Playwrights, Essayists, Editors and Novelists. In 1973 the American arm of the international organisation established an annual literary competition for individuals incarcerated in federal institutions across the United States.
[16] Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 164.
[17] Ibid., 226.
[18] Judith A. Scheffler, "An Annotated Bibliography of Writing by Women Prisoners," *Prison Journal* 64, no. 1 (April 1984), 68.

"communicat[ing] their experiences directly to a wider audience," she also limits the genre to non-creative works whose function is practical or documentative.[19] "The reader must not approach these works with the expectation of reading manifestos or inspirational poems," she argues, because "the works are not, generally, theoretical or cerebral; they are practical, empirical records of events, attitudes, persons, and physical surroundings."[20] Such claims reduce women's prison writing to its most basic, superficial level and ignore the complexity and diversity that defines the genre. In this thesis, I argue that women's prison zines are both theoretical and cerebral. They include art, literature and life-writing that evoke historic and contemporary art and literature, and through their own creative radicalism, zines have the capacity to protest, oppose, and resist. By going beyond mere physical descriptions and events, incarcerated women create their own literary and artistic aesthetic to verbalise and visualise the effects of the endemic imprisonment of women in modern America.

Since Scheffler's encouragements in 1984, there have been several publications that seek to acknowledge the literary outputs of women in American prisons. Unlike some of the texts mentioned so far, these studies seek to decentralize the popular or famous writings of incarcerated people (and men in particular), and instead offer the experiences of ordinary women. An edited collection of writing titled *Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars, and Writers Speak Out* and Lori B. Girshick's *No Safe Haven: Stories of Women in Prison* both prioritize the voices of incarcerated women through the inclusion of interviews, essays and creative writing from individuals both inside and outside of prison. In the introduction to *Women, Writing, and Prison*, Ann Folwell Stanford writes that "words can knit together broken narratives, break through silences and create new worlds, new visions. Within the dehumanising social practices within the jail, writing becomes an act of resistance, sometimes

[19] Judith A. Scheffler, "Women's Prison Writing: An Unexplored Tradition in Literature," *Prison Journal* 64, no. 1 (April 1984), 59-60.
[20] Ibid., 65.

obvious, sometimes masked."[21] Here Stanford reflects a popular stance held by recent scholars of women's prison writing by emphasising the genre's focus on the personal, as the women use writing as a form of resistance to articulate their individual experiences of confinement and deconstruct the stereotypes that continue to define them. *Inside this Place, Not of it: Narratives from Women's Prisons* is a similar collection of writings from women in prison that also emphasises the personal struggles of the women: "these are women who have been silent for most of their lives, whose desire and needs were ignored by often abusive families and spouses, and, later, by prison authorities. They tell us their stories here because it is, for many of them, the first chance they've had to be heard."[22]

This emphasis on the accounts of ordinary women and their personal experiences has led some scholars to include women's prison zines in their discussions of incarceration and incarceration literature. However, more often than not, they are referred to solely on an individual basis and normally within wider discussions of women's prison resistance or examinations of the value of educational and literacy programmes. Karlene Faith has written extensively on her involvement with the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project (SCWPP) and the California Institute for Women. Her accounts give details of the various programmes provided by the SCWPP and the publications that emerged from the workshops as a result. Similarly, members of the organisation the California Coalition for Women Prisoners have published an article giving the history of their zine *The Fire Inside,* offering the group's perspective on the role of the publication. Other studies of specific institutions bring to light the role of the publications at the facilities. Thomas M. Daly references *The Reflector* in his study of the Minnesota Correctional Facility at Shakopee, and Kathleen A. Cairns's history of

[21] Ann Folwell Stanford, "Not Much Silence Here," introduction to *Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars, and Writers Speak Out,* ed. Tobi Jacobi and Ann Folwell Stanford (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 8.
[22] Robin Levi and Ayelet Waldman, "A Battalion of Survivors," introduction to *Inside this Place, Not of it: Narratives from Women's Prisons* (McSweeney's Books, 2011), 5.

the California Institute for Women discusses the creation of the zine *Clarion.* Studies such as these are all useful for discovering more about individual publications and how they functioned within their respective prisons. None of these scholars, however, attempt to place the zines within a wider prison print culture tradition.

Donna L. Rowe's PhD thesis, *From the Inside Out: Women Writers Behind Prison Walls*, is one of the few studies to acknowledge a tradition of collective women's prison writing in America. She attempts to fill an intellectual gap by discussing how the experiences of women prior to, during, and after prison are reflected in their writing and what one can learn from reading them. Rowe critiques James McGrath Morris's conclusions that, aside from a few publications to come out of segregated facilities in the first half of the twentieth century, there is a distinct "lack of women prison journalists" in the United States.[23] Instead Rowe argues that there were "several women's prison newsletters that flourished during the 1970s and 1980s" which form the basis of her second chapter.[24] Focusing on one Seattle-based "newsletter", *Through the Looking Glass,* Rowe does not provide "a literary analysis of the material published in the newsletter" but instead draws conclusions about the female incarceration experience from the text and "listen[s] to the voices of women writing from prison."[25] Her analysis is thorough and reflective. However, in terms of establishing a tradition, she only alludes to one other zine, writing that her research "has not brought to light any other women's prison newsletters published in the 1960s or 1970s."[26] As the women's prison zine tradition spans nearly a century, her conclusions demonstrate the continued lack of knowledge not just about this period, but about the flourishing women's prison zine tradition more broadly and the need for a more comprehensive study.

[23] Donna L. Rowe, "From the Inside Out: Women Writers Behind Prison Walls" (PhD thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2004), 15.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 65.
[26] Ibid., 68.

There have been several attempts to acknowledge and categorise a standalone, American penal press over the past fifty years, but these studies focus primarily on the collective writing from male facilities. In 1989 Robert Gaucher documented the Canadian penal press tradition, citing 1950 as the year that the first publication, *Telescope*, was released. Gaucher found that against the sensationalist or insincere work of prison scholars, the penal press "constituted an exceedingly rich ethnographic source of prisoner experience and prison life in Canada during the post-war period of prison reform and change."[27] In the US context, the two most extensive attempts at mapping and defining a collective prison writing tradition are Russel N. Baird's *The Penal Press* and James McGrath Morris's *Jailhouse Journalism: The Forth Estate Behind Bars.* Both books offer fascinating and detailed studies of the history of prison publications in the United States, providing thorough accounts of some of the more popular publications since 1800 in an attempt to identify defining features and processes of the tradition. These studies both contain lengthy appendixes, listing over two hundred and over one hundred prison publications respectively, including several created by incarcerated women. Yet despite including more women's prison zines than Gaucher, both Franklin and Morris give little attention to these publications in the body of their research, focusing instead on the works from male facilities.

By failing to discuss women's writing in any great depth, these scholars overlook the particular experiences and concerns that are unique to incarcerated women and which can offer insight into prison reform, diversity and womanhood. What is more, their focus on using the texts as either primary sources to better understand penal policy, or as journalistic endeavours, limits the discussions of the publications to factual or rehabilitative platforms, much as Scheffler does. Baird acknowledges that "there is potential for the penal press to make contributions in a number of ways: as an internal communications medium transmitting useful

[27] Gaucher, "The Canadian Penal Press," 1.

information to the inmate population and to official personnel; as an external medium making the public aware of problems faced both by convicts and prison administrators; as an educational experience for staff members and a morale booster for inmates; and as an outlet for creative self-expression and aid towards rehabilitation." [28] But the personal and collective significance of zines is undervalued. In this thesis I demonstrate both the personal, collective and societal advantages of prison zines, and take Baird's conclusions further to deepen our understanding of their role as educators and communicators and as platforms for creativity and self-expression.

## Project Scope and Archival Research

This thesis plots the entirety of the previously overlooked tradition of women's prison zines in the United States. It will track the development of zines throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from the early independent women's prisons of the 1930s to the twenty-first century era of mass incarceration. It will explore the ways in which zines reflect social and political changes over the years, and how women engage with topical issues such as sexuality, racism, discrimination, drug addiction and poverty. Moreover, it will also consider the ways in which the production of prison zines has changed over the century; how censorship and outside involvement has influenced the style, production, readership and content of the zines; and how serialization, reader involvement and diverse authorship have shaped the genre. The result is a tradition that spans nearly a century and consists of over one hundred publications that adapt and transform conventional genres in order to better represent a silenced and invisible community. Although broadly shaped by chronology to track the development of the tradition, I use genre to structure this thesis in order to examine how women's prison zines offer new insights into literary traditions that have otherwise excluded them. The four genres I consider

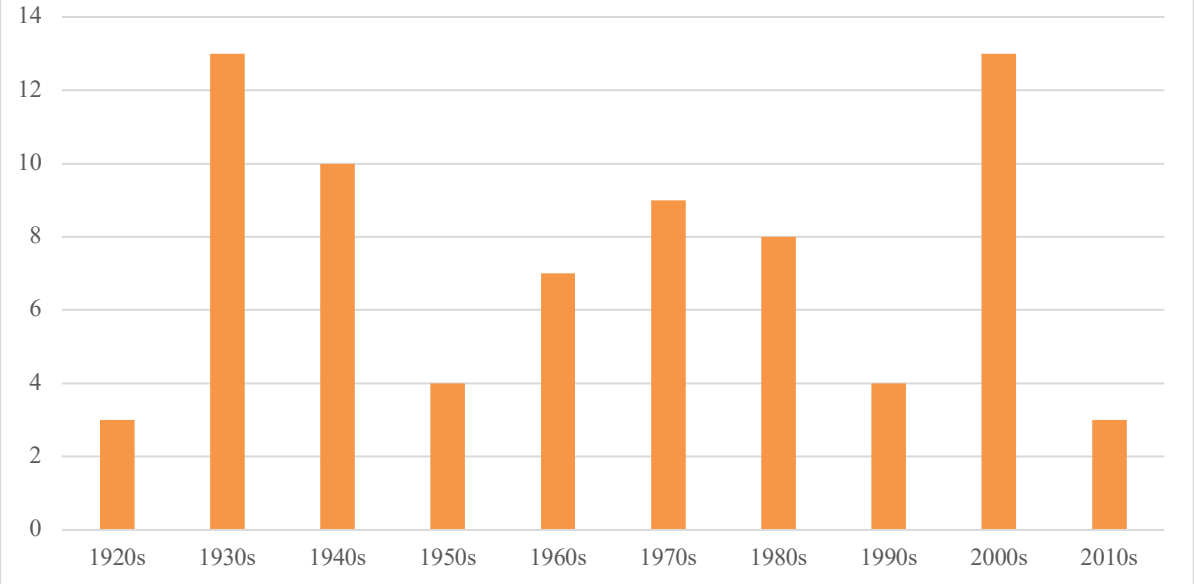
[28] Russel N. Baird, *The Penal Press* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 16.

are women's magazines, feminist print culture, collective autobiography and protest literature. Structuring my thesis in this way demonstrates the importance of women's prison zines to these genres, and American literature more widely, and evidences the shifts within zines' content and form. Certain topics become more prevalent, reflecting changes to the criminal justice system and wider societal and political contexts. Zines such as *Break de Chains of Legalised U.$ Slavery*, for instance, are saturated with political references and Black militaristic terminology; they present a complex, comprehensive but neglected commentary on the perpetual confinement experienced by women, and women of colour in particular, in the United States in the 1970s. By contrasting these zines against older zines such as *The Reflector* from the 1930s, we can see how issues of gender, race, sexuality, addiction and poverty emerge and develop over the century.

This thesis is grounded in extensive, original archival research from across the United States. Yet as my appendix demonstrates, this research involved a number of archival challenges. Where I have been able to find copies of certain zines, accessing them has proved challenging, and there are many publications that I know of but have been unable to find. I am grateful to the many archivists, librarians and research assistants that aided me along the way, scanning items to post or email, providing me with relevant materials, or pointing me in the direction of other possible holdings. In total, I have identified over one hundred zines from women's and girls' facilities between 1901 and 2019. From these one-hundred-plus zines, I have copies of fifty-two publications, totaling nearly 1,000 individual issues and have located a further nine zines, but do not own copies. The remaining publications I have found referenced in other zines, studies or questionnaires, but have been unable to find in archives. Through this extensive research, I have been able to create an overview of the collective women's prison writing tradition in the United States. Over the past century, the prevalence of women's and girls' zines in the United States has varied. As Figure 0.1 evidences, from the seventy-four

publications for which I know or can estimate the start date, the majority began either in the 1930s or 2000s. There are various reasons why these decades might have more publications than others. Primarily, the wealth of publications in the 2000s could simply be a result of recent archival efforts. My time spent researching at DePaul University unearthed a number of prison workshop projects such as the Women, Writing and Incarceration Poetry Workshop that produced several one-off or short-term zines which were subsequently archived at the university. Women's prison zines from earlier decades, however, proved much harder to find. For some I could only find one issue; others I could not find at all and therefore could not feature on the graph. It is also possible that the high numbers of women incarcerated in the United States since the 1980s has encouraged various facilities to introduce more workshops and classes. This, when combined with the comparable ease of production for modern zines with computers and printers becoming more readily available, could also be a reason for an increase in the number of publications introduced in more recent years.

Fig. 0.1: Start Dates of Women's Prison Zines in the United States




The other period of growth was the 1930s and 1940s. In his own reflections on the history and prevalence of the penal press, Baird posits that "the depression years brought on a significant increase in the establishment of penal publications … perhaps because the public

had other worries than the 'coddling of prisoners.'"[29] This is not an unrealistic interpretation, but it is also possible that as this period was shortly after the reformatory boom (sixteen reformatories were built between 1901 and 1933 across the United States) there was an increased emphasis on rehabilitation over punishment, which included introducing activities that would encourage self-reflection and improvement. Isabella Kellock Coulter's 1935 study of prison publications found that, out of the 103 facilities that published a zine, "50 were of the opinion that it had much [rehabilitative] value; 30, that it had little value; and the remaining 23 either ignored the question or evaded it by phrasing the answer so that it was impossible to classify it accurately."[30] Coulter's findings would suggest that, although not all prison officials agreed, there was seen to be a particular rehabilitative benefit to supporting a prison publication, and that this was tied to the reformatory ideals of the period.

I separate the women's prison zine tradition into two strands: those produced "in-house" and those "externally edited" as each publication method offers new interpretations of the genre. Earlier in-house zines are reminiscent of the more traditional forms of the penal press. They are created on-site at a specific facility, and are produced with the permission, and often influence, of the prison staff. These in-house zines began emerging from independent women's facilities in 1933 with *The Eagle* at The Women's Reformatory at Alderson, but the in-house tradition can be dated back much further.[31] Before 1933, women could occasionally contribute to the co-ed newspapers at facilities that housed both men and women such as *De-*

[29] Baird, *The Penal Press,* 42.
[30] Isabella Kellock Coulter, "Prison Journals in National and State Penal and Correctional Institutions in the United States" (master's thesis, Boston University, 1935), 127.
[31] Nicole Hahn Rafter separates the history of women in prison into three parts. The first period from 1790 to 1870 involved housing women in separate penal units attached to male prisons (known as the "custodial model") and were similar to men's penitentiaries. The second stage from 1870 to 1935 saw the growth of the "reformatory model" which Rafter describes as having "many 'feminine' aspects, designed as it was around beliefs about fundamental differences between the sexes." These were normally separate facilities that housed women and were not attached to male prisons. In the third and final stage from 1935 to present day, these two models merged. Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Prisons for Women, 1790-1980," *Crime and Justice* 5 (1983), 132.

*Ho-Co News* from Plymouth House of Corrections and *Agenda* from Washington State Penitentiary. Before that, zines were also published from independent male facilities, with both Morris and Baird tracing the earliest prison zine back to *Forlorn Hope* in 1800 at a debtor's prison in New York.[32] As evidenced earlier, there has been a wealth of material written on these earlier prison publications and collective male prison writing more broadly by Morris, Franklin and Baird amongst others, which will not feature in this thesis. Similarly, for coherency and brevity, I am only choosing to discuss the zines that came from independent, adult women's facilities, and not those attached to men's facilities. The only exception to these spatial limitations is LGBT+ and specifically transgender prison zines that are made by and include work from transgender women housed in male correctional facilities.[33] In this instance, I am still choosing to prioritize the work of incarcerated adult women, regardless of where they may be detained. This focus also excludes a number of adolescent girls' zines that appeared in reformatory schools from the late nineteenth century up until the 1960s. Although fruitful and rich materials that offer a different perspective on confinement, gender expectations and girlhood, there was not the space in this project to consider and discuss them thoroughly.

The 1970s then saw the growth of the second strand of zine: those that are externally edited. Unlike in-house zines, externally edited zines were edited and printed outside of a single facility and included the work of incarcerated women across and beyond the United States. This type of women's prison zine was formed in response to the frequent neglect of the female prison experience in favour of the male, and the censorship and restrictive influence of prison

[32] Baird, *The Penal Press*, 19-22. According to Baird, "America's first penal newspaper was founded by an inmate of the New York Prison. His goal was to work for the enactment of a bankruptcy law. Imprisoned along with hundreds of others because he could not satisfy his creditors, William Keteltas established the *Forlorn Hope* on Monday, March 24, 1800, in an effort to bring an end to imprisonment for debt in the United States." The publication only lasted 6 months and it would be another 80 years before another prison publication was established.

[33] I use the term LGBT+ here to encompass lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, and all other minority gender identities and sexual orientations that are not explicitly identified in the LGBT acronym.

staff on in-house zines. Unlike the specific locale of in-house zines, which were tied to an individual facility, externally edited zines were edited, printed and distributed outside of prison. This process was generally orchestrated by individuals or organisations such as "Women Free Women in Prison" and the "California Coalition for Women Prisoners" who were interested in, and worked with, women in prison. Each group had their own individual methods of sourcing content, editing material and establishing subscriptions and many lasted less than a decade. Yet despite the rise of externally edited zines towards the end of the twentieth century, both forms of zine have persisted and are present across the United States today.

From the large collection of primary materials that I have gathered, I focus on a select number of zines in each chapter. As much as I would have liked to include every publication I have found—as all would add further richness to my discussion and demonstrate the medley of diverse voices in these publications—in order to offer breadth *and* depth, I decided to select fifteen zines to form the basis of my analysis. In general, I own the most editions of these zines and can therefore offer an analysis based on more than one issue. Nevertheless, there is much more work to be done on this tradition and I hope that my appendix will provide future scholars with a basis for additional research. It lists all of the archival details of the primary sources used in this thesis, along with all of the other publications that I have gathered, some with the dates, names of facilities and current locations where available, others known of but not found, or missing publication details. As well as the accessibility and archival problems that I have outlined previously, the gaps in the appendix also hint at the silencing of incarcerated women in the archive. At the time of writing, only one of the pre-1990 listed zines had been digitized by the online platform "The Freedom Archives." Digitization is a challenging and complex issue, yet it would significantly increase the accessibility of zines, many of which are housed at universities and governmental buildings that are intimidating or inaccessible to many people. Melissa Munn from Okanagan College in Canada has established a version of this type of

online platform for primarily Canadian-based prison publications. The introduction on the website outlines the project's aims, explaining that it "is dedicated to providing an open-access archive of these important materials" as a means of providing a "history from within."[34] It would be beneficial for both incarcerated communities and wider society to digitize these resources in order to make them more accessible. As zines are created by marginalised and repressed groups, it is problematic to restrict or conceal them. They are powerful tools for education and change and should be utilized as such.

## Terminology and Testimony

When embarking on this project I made the decision not to include oral testimonies. Although I am dedicated to profiling and amplifying marginalised voices, I chose to do so directly from the zines themselves, rather than conduct my own interviews because it would have proved almost impossible to locate the contributors to prison zines over the past century. Much of the content is anonymous, and where names do appear it is frequently just the first name or a nickname. Any attempt to locate the individual upon release would be impossible. But, more importantly, I made the decision not to include oral histories because of the nature of the zines. They are shared endeavours that do not emphasise the individual. To select one or even several voices to offer their experiences of creating zines would be detrimental to the overall diversity of the collective. Moreover, the way the women choose to present themselves in the zine is how I receive them. I do not research any of the women's backgrounds, or alleged crimes or histories. Instead, I interpret their contributions as I find them. To do otherwise would be to undermine the role of the zine and the purpose of it as a publication in its own right. As such, the only additional reflections I include are from secondary sources whose creators choose to

[34] "About the Penal Press," *The Penal Press – A History of Prison From Within*, accessed August 12, 2019, https://penalpress.com/.

include this type of information themselves. For instance, members of the Manson family contributed to the California-based zine *Clarion,* and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn regularly wrote for *The Eagle* and offered reflections on the zine in her memoirs. Moreover, from spending a considerable amount of time reading zines and the literature around incarceration, I also made the conscious effort to avoid using generic terms such as "inmate," "prisoner" or "convict" when referring to incarcerated women. In a survey conducted by The Marshall Project, they found that from over 200 people surveyed, the majority preferred the term "incarcerated person" to "prisoner" or "inmate", with one participant commenting that "It would be ridiculous to label each of us based on the worst moments of our lives. It's equally ridiculous, and cruel, to make people forever bear labels that define them first and foremost as their crime."[35] Terms such as these add to the invisibility and dehumanisation of people in prison and, although occasionally used by the women themselves, are unnecessary tools of oppression that ignore the complexities of individual identity.

Terminology proved particularly challenging when defining the genre and publications for the first time. Scholars of collective prison writing use a variety of terms without much uniformity. Newspapers, magazines, newsletters, periodicals, books and pamphlets are all used and, in many cases, emphasise the informative aspects of the publications. However, Russel M. Baird comments that "the content of many [of the publications] is contrary to the norm. Newspapers may be loaded with literary material, and magazines may be full of news. Mechanical facilities, rather than content, often seem to determine the form."[36] Indeed, these publications surpass the normal criteria for "magazines" or "newspapers" with content that is both informative and creative, and also inherently personal. Rather than reproducing generic, detached news content, women's prison zines are rooted in personal experience and opinion.

[35] Blair Hickman, "Inmate. Prisoner. Other. Discussed.," *The Marshall Project* website, April 3, 2015, https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/04/03/inmate-prisoner-other-discussed.
[36] Baird, *The Penal Press,* 110.

Zines, which Stephen Duncombe describes as sitting somewhere between "a personal letter and a magazine," capture both the authority of a published product and the personality behind it.[37] He defines zines as "noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves."[38] They are "independent and localized, coming out of cities, suburbs and small towns across the US, assembled on kitchen tables. They celebrate the everyperson in a world of celebrity. Losers in a society that rewards the best and the brightest. Rejecting the corporate dream of an atomized population broken down into discrete and instrumental target markets, zine writers form networks and forge communities around diverse identities and interests."[39] As Duncombe suggests, the genre promotes accessibility and convenience, and pushes back against the authority and hierarchy of mainstream publishing.

For communities in prison who might potentially lack access to equipment, knowledge and information, using the term "zine" for their publications encompasses the efforts that individuals make to produce each issue, often without funding or resources. In addition, Jenna Freedman, curator of the zine library at Barnard College, acknowledges that "libraries do not typically house works unmediated by publishers and editors or those by authors uncredentialed by educational degrees or professional accomplishments," but that zines offer "young women's voices … a home on library shelves."[40] Scholars like Freedman, Janice Radway and Alison Piepmeier emphasise the genre's capacity to offer women a platform that is not regulated or influenced by the male-dominated publishing world, and stress the role of women in building and defining the genre. Although by no means exclusively gendered, zines have an extensive tradition of young, female creators exposing the realities of womanhood in their own words. It

[37] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm Publishing, 2008), 14.
[38] Ibid., 10-11.
[39] Ibid., 7.
[40] Jenna Freedman, "Grrrl Zines in the Library," *Signs* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 2009), 52.

is this context that also influences my choice of term, as women publishing behind bars are contributing to this outspoken, DIY, feminist tradition. The form is also conducive to the duality of incarcerated women's identities. As Piepmeier notes, "the materiality of zines also facilitates theoretical engagement: being able to work with visual, textual, and sculptural media allows zine creators a variety of ways to address the issue of complex, politicized identity."[41] The creators of women's prison zines use the publications to explore their lives and identities both inside and outside of prison, and the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class that define their experiences.

Using the term "zine" for prison publications is not a new concept. The Anthony Rayson Zine Collection at DePaul University houses an array of anarchist, feminist, and LGBT+ zines, including the publications that Rayson helped incarcerated people to publish. Red Chidgely has also written about the twenty-first century prison zine *Tenacious,* arguing that by including prison publications in the tradition, they can "challenge conventional understandings of zine production as leisure-based or politically sublimated activities typically carried out by white, middle-class youth."[42] By ascribing the term "zine" to this longer tradition of collective women's prison writing, I hope to further diversify the genre to include women of colour, queer and working-class women, but also to expand the tradition temporally to include publications from the twentieth century as well.

## Chapter Structure

This thesis is separated into four chapters that each discuss a genre and several zines. Chapter One examines the influence of women's magazines on prison zines and how incarcerated

[41] Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 128.
[42] Red Chidgely, "Re-Imagining Zine Movements: *Tenacious*, a Prisoner-Made Zine, and the People of Color Zine Project," *Media Fields Journal* 7 (2013), 2.

women adapted the genre behind bars. The zines discussed, *The Eagle, Harmony News, Insight, Inmate Output* and *Mother's Club News,* introduce the first incarnation of the prison zine: those produced in-house. Through an analysis of their form, style and content, this chapter argues that in-house zines in the twentieth century adapted the women's magazine genre in order to better represent the thoughts, experiences and opinions of women in prison. By re-appropriating certain themes such as fashion, domesticity and health, the creators of these in-house zines appealed to an incarcerated audience and offered women a sense of identity that rejected stereotypes and a sense of erasure and anonymity generated by the prison system. By including articles on adapting prison uniforms to demonstrate individual style and femininity, or exercise suggestions within the confines of a prison cell, the editors of women's prison zines offered specific ways in which their incarcerated readers could reclaim a sense of identity and independence in spite of their confinement, and in a way that mainstream women's magazines would not. The use of certain stylistic tropes such as sisterly editorial voice also helped to establish a sense of community and group identity, based on shared experiences, advice and emotional support. As with popular women's magazines, the contributors used this tone to connect with their readership, offering a sense of familiarity and companionship to the women at their facility and even incarcerated women and men across the country. The result is a type of prison zine that utilizes and adapts the popular themes, forms and styles of mainstream women's magazines to work within the confines of the prison and empower the incarcerated population therein.

Chapter Two examines the evolution of women's prison zines in the latter half of the twentieth century. With contributors growing more resistant to institutional censorship and external feminist and lesbian organisations becoming increasingly concerned with the carceral state, the editing, printing and distribution of zines began to take place outside of prisons. As such, externally edited zines such as *No More Cages*, *no title at all is better than a title like*

*that!* and *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We Are Sisters* were created with the help of external organisations and rarely had ties to any one facility. Chapter Two argues that analysing women's prison zines in this period expands The Women in Print Movement to include the publications and efforts of incarcerated women and contributes to existing scholarship which highlights the work of lesbian and minority women.[43] Prison zines in this period echo many of the central features and motivations of The Women in Print Movement. They centralize the efforts and ideas of women in an industry that otherwise remains male-dominated and exclusive, thus providing women with a platform for creativity, freedom of speech, and social and economic advancement. By inserting women's prison zines into this tradition, I argue that the zines offer a distinct branch of feminist discourse, influenced by the women's experiences in prison, that expands discussions of certain topics such as motherhood, mental health and sexuality. In doing so, it further complicates the often one-dimensional historical interpretations of the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s and highlights the women-centred networks that grew in and around prisons.

In Chapter Three, I identify women's prison zines as a form of collective autobiography, offering a new definition of the genre that has its roots in confinement. Through analysis of the zines *Clarion*, *Through the Looking Glass*, *Determined Action for Women Now* and *Black and Pink*, I argue that the specific spatial and temporal qualities that exist within each facility affect the form, style and content of the zines, and as such, they reject traditional autobiographical structures. The emphasis on confinement and isolation within the physical and psychological spaces of the prison, and the subsequent, relative freedom that the textual prison zine creates, engender various literal and imagined communities and (dis)harmonious

[43] The Women in Print Movement began in the late 1960s as women sought autonomy and control of all aspects of print production, separate to the male dominated, discriminatory environment of mainstream publishing. In this period, over 560 new publications were established as women took control of the editing, printing and distribution of women's writing. I discuss this history more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

content. The indistinct, anomalous nature of prison time, meanwhile, complicates traditional, linear timeframes and autobiographical forms. Collective autobiographies, I argue, reject a single, monolithic author in favour of a multi-authorship that frequently changes and has varied, sometimes contrasting, opinions. They are published serially and elude a linear timeframe with content switching between pasts, presents and futures, thereby rejecting any sense of conclusion or closure. Finally, through shared histories and reader involvement, the creators of prison zines also seek to forge a collective identity that more accurately represents the diversity within the female incarceration experience and that pushes back against popular stereotypes and prejudices. By defining collective autobiography this way, these features can be seen to be shaped by the prison environment and offer new, collective ways to interpret the female incarceration experience beyond those depicted in single-authored autobiographies.

The final chapter examines three zines, *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery*, *The Fire Inside* and *Tenacious,* in order to demonstrate how women's prison zines contribute to the American protest literature tradition. I argue that zines are used as a tool to record, enact and physicalize acts of protest both within and outside of prison walls. The editors of these prison zines include details of activism within prisons, letter campaigns and manifestos, and act as a vehicle to promote action from outside supporters, documenting their activities in the zines' pages. In doing so, women's prison zines form a textual network of incarcerated activists and allies, using the publications to connect with one another and offer solidarity and support. Zines also evidence the diverse style and form of protest literature as they use various texts and imagery by incarcerated women. Zines include articles, poetry, drawings, photographs, cartoons and essays by a variety of women which, in turn, makes prison zines less specific. I argue that women's prison zines are an assemblage of many different movements owing to the multiple narratives, authors and therefore multiple identities that are depicted in their pages. The enclosed environment of the prison and forced proximity of the contributors invites

intersection between different discussions including race, poverty, gender, sexuality and addiction, to name but a few, in ways that are both continuous and original. I therefore define these publications as "intersectional protest literature." Zines bring together various movements and individuals to produce holistic and inclusive pieces of collective protest literature.

## Conclusion

Women's prison zines offer readers a unique insight into the imprisonment of women in the United States. Unlike historical accounts, official institutional or legal records, or even autobiographies, prison zines offer us a multidimensional, polyvocal perspective on the realities of the prison environment and incarceration, and the beliefs, hopes and fears of incarcerated women. They offer insights not merely on their time spent behind bars, but also transgress temporal and spatial locations to reflect on American society and womanhood more broadly. Yet despite seeking to offer a broad and extensive analysis of the history of women's prison zines in America and, in doing so, reflect the diverse opinions and experiences of women in prison, it is important to acknowledge that even within collective publications like zines, not all experiences are represented. Not all incarcerated women choose to contribute to zines and many are simply unable to do so owing to literacy levels, discrimination or prison procedure. It is therefore important to remember that despite emphasising the collective experience of women in prison, there will be groups not represented in this thesis. Nevertheless, within the specific context of prison zines I will examine the literary and artistic creations of incarcerated women in order to offer a particular yet diverse perspective on women's confinement. In doing so, I hope to further the reach of these undervalued and unacknowledged publications, in order to encourage more research, more interest and more understanding.

*Chapter One*

# "We can dream, can't we?": Adapting Women's Magazines Behind Bars

I'm a woman who will be defiant enough

to remain a woman

I'm a woman who will survive.

- Sue Grochowski, "I'm a Woman" [1]

In 1942, Mary Belle Harris advised the women incarcerated at the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia, that they should "Build within them a wall of self respect."[2] Harris, warden at Alderson for the institution's first sixteen years, was candid in her views on the treatment and education of the women. She designed a "community of women working together under the guidance of other women" in order to "free them from being dependent on a man or a burden on the community."[3] Harris's revolutionary prison model led many industry professionals at the time, and historians since, to view Alderson as a model institution, resembling "a fashionable girls boarding school" rather than a prison.[4] Comparing Alderson to a "ladies' seminary," Claudine SchWeber highlighted the "beautiful surroundings, the many activities, [and] the comparative freedom and responsibility."[5] The institution encouraged "varied educational and vocational offerings" and hobbies rather than punishment, isolation and silence. The offerings included "music and other arts, movies, a library, typing, and religious services…special celebrations, contests, ceremonies, dances, or any other type of

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[1] Sue Grochowski, "I'm a Woman," *Inmate Output,* January 1984, 10.
[2] "Mary Belle Harris" in *Notable American Women: The Modern Period: A Biographical Dictionary,* ed. Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 316.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Claudine SchWeber, "Pioneers in Prison: Inmates and Administrators at Alderson, the Federal Reformatory for Women: 1935-1930, The Founding Years," *Federal Probation* 44, no. 3 (1980), 30.
[5] Ibid.

activity she [Harris] thought would occupy and motivate human beings."[6] In addition to these extra-curricular activities, in November 1933, five years after Alderson opened, Harris introduced the institution's first publication, *The Eagle.* Comprised of articles, news and illustrations, *The Eagle* was created in order to "give the inmates an opportunity for self-expression, to provide them with a medium for discussion of problems of general interest, to acquaint the public with the true status of the inmate, and to develop a better understanding between the prisoner and society."[7] Printed on-site with a contents page and cover art, and filled with prison updates, activity pages and opinion articles, the content and form of *The Eagle,* like many other in-house women's prison zines of the period, closely resembled popular commercial women's magazines. Yet despite their obvious similarities, women's prison zines such as *The Eagle* also deconstructed and expanded the genre of women's magazines from behind prison walls throughout the twentieth century.

Women's magazines have been a cornerstone of North American culture for over two centuries. Commanding readerships of several million women at any one time, iconic women's magazines such as the *Ladies' Home Journal, Godey's Lady's Book, Vogue* and *Good Housekeeping* have influenced and reflected cultural trends and offered snapshots into the expectations and realities of life for the modern American woman.[8] These magazines are one of the most significant influences on women's prison zines, particularly on in-house zines that began in the early half of the twentieth century and which emulated the appearance, format, content and tone of popular women's magazines. By bringing the genre behind bars, the creators of women's prison zines expand and adapt the style and content in order to include the thoughts and experiences of an incarcerated female population. As this chapter will

[6] Joseph W. Rogers, "Mary Belle Harris," *Women & Criminal Justice* 11, no. 4 (August 2000), 19.
[7] Front Matter, *The Eagle,* Summer 1954, 1.
[8] See Amy Aronson, *Taking Liberties: Early American Women's Magazines and Their Readers* (Westport: Praeger, 2002) and Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

demonstrate, since the 1930s in-house prison zines have expanded depictions of womanhood to better represent women behind bars. They challenge rigid depictions of motherhood, working women and those seen as "deviant." They have also reclaimed typically feminine subjects such as fashion and domesticity to offer incarcerated women a sense of identity and individuality that the repressive and dehumanizing prison environment removes. Finally, by using stylistic tropes such as sisterly editorial voice and polyvocality taken from women's magazines, prison zines work to establish and sustain a community and network of incarcerated women that is built upon collaboration and support. Together, these factors have offered incarcerated women a sense of empowerment by providing a platform for self-expression, and ultimately the development and expansion of a coherent collective women's prison writing tradition over several decades.

## Women's Magazines in the United States and In-House Prison Zines

Women's magazines were present in the United States from early in the new nation's formation. Publications targeted specifically at women readers began appearing in the 1790s and laid out a rough framework of gender-specific content that magazines have applied and adapted over time. During the past two centuries this has included fiction; household and cooking advice; international news; art, film and book reviews; fashion and beauty articles; letters, and advice columns. Much of the diversification of content came about as a result of a broadening readership. John William Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman noted how women's magazines "encouraged women to read more—not a difficult task since it was one of the relatively few occupations sanctioned by the patriarchal society—and … offered an outlet for the growing number of women writers who were beginning to dominate the expanding market

of women's fiction."[9] By the late nineteenth century women's magazines provided a platform for women to write and communicate exclusively in the realm of a (narrowly defined) female space, particularly as by 1860 women's literacy rates had reached over ninety percent.[10] Since then, as women's magazines have continued to expand and fracture into subject-specific publications, they have walked a fine line of criticism. Split between what Amy Aronson describes as "an oasis of progressive thinking" and tools intended to "brainwash" or "entrap," women's magazines have divided scholars over the last fifty years.[11] Critics such as Betty Friedan have disparaged magazines for their limited and negative portrayals of women. In her seminal text *The Feminine Mystique,* Friedan damned the "young and frivolous" image of a woman that emerges: "almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home."[12] For Anna Gough-Yates, this type of scholarship has dominated debates around women's magazines, labeling the magazine industry "a monolithic meaning-producer, circulating magazines that contain 'messages' and 'signs' about the nature of femininity that serve to promote and legitimate dominant interests." Yet these views, she argues, "offer, at best, only a partial account of the industry."[13] Recent critics such as Aronson have begun to view women's magazines as more positive tools for female self-expression and community-building. For Aronson, this positive history marks the genre as exemplary in so much as it was one of the few female co-defined and co-led spaces in the nineteenth century. Magazines and periodicals were methods by which women could access print culture as writers, readers and even editors, and were subsequently a textual entry into society offering, as Aronson argues, "the opportunity to break through a gender-imposed

[9] John William Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 27.
[10] Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), 110.
[11] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 7.
[12] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Classics, 1963), 23.
[13] Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships in Late-Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7.

silence in the public sphere."[14] In this chapter I am contributing to scholarship that has viewed the monolithic reading of women's magazines as restrictive, one-dimensional, misogynistic and consumerist. I further diversify readings of the genre and demonstrate how the form was used and moulded by women behind bars for their own benefit.

Joanne Meyerowitz has demonstrated the dangers of viewing women's magazines as a single entity in her discussions of mass culture, which, she argues, "is neither wholly monolithic nor unrelentingly repressive. In this view, mass culture is rife with contradictions, ambivalence, and competing voices. We no longer assume that any text has a single, fixed meaning for all readers, and we sometimes find within the mass media subversive, as well as repressive potential."[15] This chapter by no means idolizes women's magazines, which are far from perfect. There is an inherent focus on consumerism and status, emphasised by the prolific number of advertisements that appear in their pages, and they rarely encompass the full range of human experiences. Yet despite this, neither are they all the same nor should they be critiqued as such. Even across a single magazine, Nancy A. Walker argues, the content and messages in individual issues can vary greatly, and thus they can be "revealing as cultural artifacts."[16] Women's magazines can offer readers, both then and now, reflections on contemporary culture and society, oftentimes containing contradictory content from editors, contributors and even readers. Therefore, rather than repeat this long-standing debate over the perceived evils and benefits of popular women's magazines during the twentieth century, in this chapter I intend to demonstrate how the application and adaptation of the genre behind bars offers the creators and readers of women's prison zines an avenue for self-expression and

[14] Aronson, *Taking Liberties,* 12.
[15] Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 231.
[16] Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, x.

communication different from that of women's magazines, but cultivated from similar ideologies and structures.

In-house women's prison zines were introduced to women's facilities in the United States for a number of reasons. As noted in the introduction, these artistic and literary creations were often initiated by prison wardens or staff as an exercise in self-expression, creativity and even rehabilitation. From her extensive research and questionnaire, Isabella Kellock Coulter found that "some progressive prison officials were genuinely interested in the need for a prison journal or newspaper--- even as early as 1870" and that by 1934, "50 institutions were of the opinion that their prison journal had <u>much</u> rehabilitative value; 30 that is had <u>little</u> value; and the remaining 23 either ignored the question or evaded it" (emphasis in original). Coulter goes on to break this rehabilitative value down into "entertainment," "recreational value," "a socializing force," "an outlet for self-expression," "educational value" and "vocational value."[17] In addition, as well as acting as products for personal development, in-house zines were also established as an attempt to educate the wider public on the current state of penal facilities in the United States. Prison officials and lawmakers, as well as the general public, could subscribe to the zine and receive regular updates and information on the goings on of a facility. For Alderson's *The Eagle,* which in 1935 had an outside readership of thirty-five, this included regular updates from the on-site "cottages," detailing the work that they were doing, the comings and goings of the women housed there, and any news (or even gossip) that they had. An example from the Vol. 29 No. 3 issue reads "Cottage 16: Hello again, from cottage 16, from Margie and Jean, from Bennie and Grace, from Dorothy and Francis, and Peggy and Pearly… Well!! Just hello from all of the girls… This old cottage is about the same. A few new faces and the same old frames."[18] *The Eagle* also contained news items related to an area of

[17] Isabella Kellock Coulter, "Prison Journals in National and State Penal and Correctional Institutions in the United States" (master's thesis, Boston University, 1935), 128-129.
[18] "Cottage Chatter," *The Eagle*, Fall 1962, 53.

the facility; the dairy, the kitchen, the sewing room or the farm. Much like with the cottages, in these articles a representative gives updates on their assigned workplace, and sometimes describes their activities or environment, offering a picture of what life is like at Alderson. The Vol. 25 No. 5 update on the dairy opens "GOOD MORNING! That's the way we greet each other every morning at 4:30 always with a smile (you can believe that if you want to). Then off to our wonderful dairy. By now it's 5 o'clock and we are all awake (for real). Now we prepare for the big event of the morning – Milking. Charlotte L. lovingly escorts one of our soft-eyed beauties to the wash rack where Yours Truly assists her with her morning bath."[19] These informative articles were intended to educate the general public as well as update other women at the facility with their news. For the readers of women's prison zines both then and now, articles such as these act in a similar way to women's magazines as "cultural artifacts," documenting the lives and experiences of a smaller community of women incarcerated at Alderson.

This descriptive, educational element also featured in the zine's illustrations and imagery. The back page of the Summer 1958 edition includes a hand-drawn image depicting "Summer 1958 at Alderson" (Fig. 1.1). The image, as with the majority of this type of content in *The Eagle,* is overwhelmingly positive. The women emphasise the quality of the facilities and care that they receive at Alderson, offering a wholly upbeat and uncritical perspective of the prison and the carceral state more generally. Yet the extent to which this positivity can be accepted on face value is questionable. As gatekeepers of the publications produced in prisons, prison wardens and officials played a large role in establishing and maintaining the zines. All content had to be approved by prison staff before publication (although the full extent of censorship within each zine is unclear). In the biography of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn—a famous American communist and member of the Industrial Workers of the World organisation—Helen

[19] LuVerne H., "Our Dairy," *The Eagle*, Spring 1958, 13.

C. Camp references Flynn's time at Alderson and her interaction with *The Eagle.* She recounts one of the more "bizarre" experiences whereby prison officials requested Flynn write a "patriotic article" on the Declaration of Independence and comments: "the irony of her comments on the Bill of Rights— 'they are not just historical documents but lasting guarantees,' that 'it is our duty to safeguard and protect… and to practice their principles, in all our domestic and foreign policies' —was apparently lost on her publishers."[20] Although this is a single account of a famous woman incarcerated at Alderson, it is an example of how the staff interacted with *The Eagle*—in this case coercing a woman into writing something patriotic for it—and suggests that the freedom of the incarcerated editors and writers was significantly restricted.

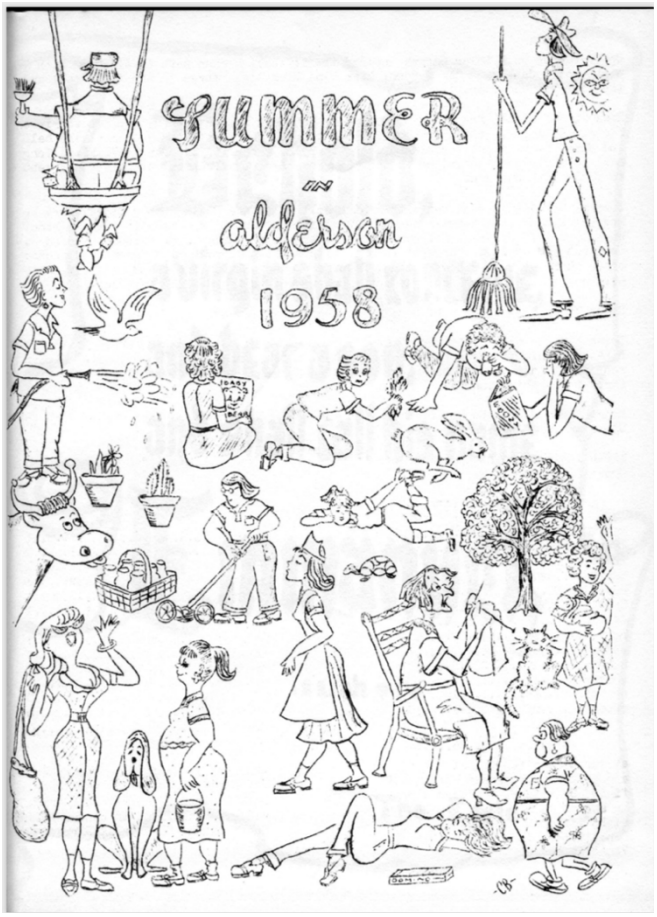



**Figure 1.1: "Summer in Alderson 1958," *The Eagle*, Summer 1958, 37.**

[20] Helen C. Camp, *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 259.

Yet despite the substantial involvement and influence of prison staff, which shaped the form, content and tone of the zine, these in-house publications produced throughout the twentieth century were not soulless endorsements of the penal system. Amongst the descriptions of prison activities and services, the women write articles about their interests and experiences, express themselves artistically and poetically, and communicate with each other and other prison zines across the country. The women embraced these spaces as communal, female, textual sites for self-expression. As explained in the introduction, before women's prison zines such as *The Reflector* were established at independent women's facilities, incarcerated women were sometimes able to contribute to the co-ed publications that ran out of facilities that housed both men and women. These publications acted much like the independent women's prison zines in that they included poems, news and updates on the facility. For Michigan-based zine *The De-Ho-Co News,* this included a separate section towards the end of the publication for the "Women's Division." Here, the women of the Detroit House of Correction were able to report on each "cottage," giving updates such as "I might tell you about the lovely dinner that was served Sunday afternoon March 15, 1936", "Spring is here again and we are happy to see the sunshine on both sides of the street" and "Mrs. Leonard our Matron on her days off visited the flower show in Detroit and said it was beautiful."[21] This type of content was not dissimilar to the content of independent women's prison zines which also focused on providing updates from the facility. However, there were some important differences. The women's prison zines that emerged out of independent women's facilities had a specific style and tone that merged the format and content of the penal press with that of women's magazines. These distinct publications textually and artistically bridged the gap between prison life and the womanhood depicted in women's magazines in order to demonstrate their lived experience as incarcerated women.

[21] "Cottage 'A'," *The De-Ho-Co News,* May 1936, 17.

## Reclaiming Femininity

The carceral state is well theorized as an oppressive and restrictive environment that strips its occupants of any sense of identity and individuality.[22] Through various means, the prison system strategically erodes an incarcerated individual's sense of self. The physical separation from society and loved ones, the removal of personal items and clothing, and the constant surveillance and absence of privacy all amount to a loss of identity and self-expression. Silja Talvi writes of the pervasive use of identification numbers rather than names in US prisons, arguing that "the totality of her personhood, life experience and unfulfilled hopes and desires is far, far more complex than the seven-digit number that will identify, regulate, and control her existence for years to come."[23] Yet in spite of these restrictive measures, incarcerated women seek out ways in which to affirm their identity, both individually and collectively. There are numerous, varied ways in which women's prison zines become a tool to help incarcerated women achieve this self-expression, but one way in which in-house prison zines attempted to do so was through the reclamation of typically "feminine" content in women's magazines. In doing so, women's prison zines like *The Eagle* adapt and deconstruct the women's magazine genre and demonstrate its malleability; by altering the content of women's magazines and what they mean, prison zines do more than merely confirm prescribed gender roles. By including and adapting some of more predictable content of women's magazines in the twentieth century, such as columns on domesticity and fashion advice, women's prison zines offer their contributors and readers a space to express their identity, femininity and individuality against the repressive environment of prison.

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[22] In their article on women's prison poetry, Alison Brooks and Robert Johnson write that "Prisoners may feel that they have been stripped of their identities and reduced to a shell of a person, void of individuality and uniqueness." Alison Brooks and Robert Johnson, "Exposed Yet Unrevealed: Reflections on the Poetry of Women Prisoners," *Gender Issues* 27, no. 3-4 (December 2010), 157. See also Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009).

[23] Silja Talvi, *Women Behind Bars: The Crisis of Women in the U.S. Prison System* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007), xx.




**Figure 1.2: Covers of *The Eagle* (left to right): Spring 1957; Summer 1958; Fall 1959; Spring 1958; Winter 1962. The illustrated cover designs changed with each edition, sometimes reflecting the season with Christmas images or spring birds, or upcoming events such as the fourth of July, or even passages from the bible. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn described how "The covers for the quarterly *The Eagle* were done by a woman in the [craft] shop, a painstaking process when several colors were involved." Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner: The Alderson Story* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 127.**

On first inspection, prison zines like *The Eagle* aesthetically resemble popular magazines in a number of ways. The bright, beautiful cover pages, regular editorial pieces and contents pages reveal few clues to the publication's origin (Fig. 1.2). It is not until Vol. 24 No. 2 that *The Eagle's* mission statement is included and outlines the purpose of the publication: "The Eagle is published by and for the inmates of the Federal Reformatory for Women, Alderson, West Virginia, under the direction of the Warden, the supervision of the Educational Department, and with the Sanction of the Bureau of Prisons."[24] Women's prison zines include theatre, film and book reviews; jokes; cartoons; crosswords and puzzles; horoscopes; poetry and recipes. Many of these features are exclusively for the pleasure and entertainment of the women and do not allude to the women's confinement. Nevertheless, these seemingly mundane features can be seen to take on new meaning when adapted behind bars. Despite obvious restrictions on fashion and beauty products within prison, many in-house prison zines have regular features on "fashion forecasts" or "Glamorous Guides to Grooming." The Spring 1957 edition of *The Eagle,* for instance, contains a three-page spread on "Fashions 1957" with accompanying images, announcing: "If you will bear with your reporter we plan, at least we are going to try, to give you the latest of what appears in magazines, also newspapers, to be

[24] "Contents Page," *The Eagle,* Summer 1956.

destined for the very 'well dressed' woman of 1957" (Fig. 1.3).[25] The article details shoes, bags, gloves, coats and hair styles that have been inspired by women's magazines with hand-drawn images to accompany it. Although not every issue has a fashion feature in it, many included some form of update on current fashions for the women incarcerated at Alderson. In doing so, the women writing these features are attempting to bring outside fashions inside of prison. This is not necessarily in the literal sense; there was not much opportunity for shopping or design even in a more open prison like Alderson, but by emulating the tone and advice of popular fashion magazines, they not only offer incarcerated women an outlet to consider style and clothing whilst behind bars, but also recreate part of the textual community that surrounds fashion and women's magazines.[26]




**Figure 1.3: "Fashions 1957" three-page spread from the Spring 1957 edition of *The Eagle*, 11-13.**

The articles in *The Eagle* that discuss fashion and beauty are not overtly political. Indeed, it is this type of content that often leads critics such as Friedan to denounce women's

[25] "Fashions 1957," *The Eagle,* Spring 1957, 12.
[26] As Alderson followed the reformatory model it did not have some of the restrictions of other facilities such as bars, cells or chains. Nevertheless, women were not freely able to leave the site or go shopping and their time was heavily structured by prison staff. Any activities that occurred off-site had to be approved by the Warden and even chaperoned.

magazines as shallow and insignificant. However, this focus on the superficial and the material takes on a new significance behind bars. Primarily, as DIY, in-house texts, prison zines like *The Eagle* do not feature advertisements or promotional material and so remove the commercial aspect. Zines still retain the magazines' emphasis on style and fashion, but rather than focusing on buying clothes and the inherent consumerist sentiments this invokes, the emphasis on women's beauty and fashion is a method by which the women are able to express their femininity. For some, the writing, reading and discussion of fashion and beauty allows them to reclaim their identity by expressing a femininity that is otherwise not permitted. For instance, in an article in *The Eagle* that asked several women what they would do if they were "Warden for a Day," one woman wrote: "I would let the women order clothing—shoes and underwear especially—from the outside, to feel more feminine."[27] In their study of women's liberation in fashion magazines, Shelley Budgeon and Dawn H. Currie complicate the one-dimensional view of women's fashion publications, writing that:

> They [researchers] are beginning to reject both a simplistic identification of fashion and beauty texts as unequivocally "bad" for women and the view that women are somehow "duped" by patriarchal "propaganda." Usually characterized as "postmodern", some recent writers emphasize ways in which fashion texts and associated activities are important avenues for pleasure for women …. According to these writers, a problem with many feminist readings of women's magazines is that they anticipate, and thus construct through the practice of their reading, oppressive interpretations. These readings fail to see that fashion and beautification represent one of the few arenas in

[27] "If I Were Warden for a Day," *The Eagle,* Winter 1961, 18.

> which female desire can be legitimately expressed and also overlook the ways in which women actively transform or resist meanings from commercial texts.[28]

The way that women's prison zines utilize fashion is also far more complicated than simply an inherited, textual, patriarchal oppression that benefits a consumerist, capitalist market. Discussing fashion trends and beauty tips was not about promoting brands or shops to their readers as prisons restricted the ability of incarcerated women to engage with fashion as consumers. As such, viewing fashion content through this lens is limiting within this context as, for some of the women incarcerated at Alderson, fashion was also about identity. The outcome of including fashion and beauty content in prison zines was not for their readers to rush out and buy the items listed. Rather, it enabled incarcerated women to textually engage with current styles through prison zines, allowing them to connect to mainstream culture and actively participate in one aspect of society.

In her article on imprisoned suffragists and prison clothing, Katherine Feo Kelly argues that for "the jailed suffragists, the forced adoption of prison dress corrupted the integrity of their bodies by enveloping them in poor hygiene, rotting food, and loose morality of the Occoquan Workhouse" and that their "insistence on keeping civilian dress outwardly signified their wider resistance to prison's effect on the physical body through hunger and work strikes."[29] For these suffragists, prison clothes signaled oppression and dehumanization, something which they later reclaimed when they wore the same prison clothing on a subsequent speaking tour. However, these women also saw themselves as political prisoners and "elite," and thereby undeserving of prison clothes, unlike the regular, working-class prisoners at

[28] Shelley Budgeon and Dawn H. Currie, "From Feminism to Postfeminism: Women's Liberation in Fashion Magazines," *Women's Studies International Forum* 18, no. 2 (1995), 174.
[29] Katherine Feo Kelly, "Performing Prison: Dress, Modernity, and the Radical Suffrage Body," *Fashion Theory* 15, no. 3 (2011), 302.

Occoquan, especially women of colour. Although this is a slightly different example of self-expression, it reiterates the significance of clothing in prison; of free-will, fashion and identity. For the suffragists at Occoquan, prison clothes were dehumanizing, and taking them outside of prison for their speaking tour turned them into tools of resistance. Conversely, for the women at Alderson, it was the bringing of outside fashions behind bars, both physically and textually in the zines, that created a sense of resistance. In contrast to the suffragists' somewhat discriminatory rhetoric, therefore, the women could elevate themselves materially through the discussion and wearing of certain clothes. In doing so, the women could choose that you are (or are not) what you wear.

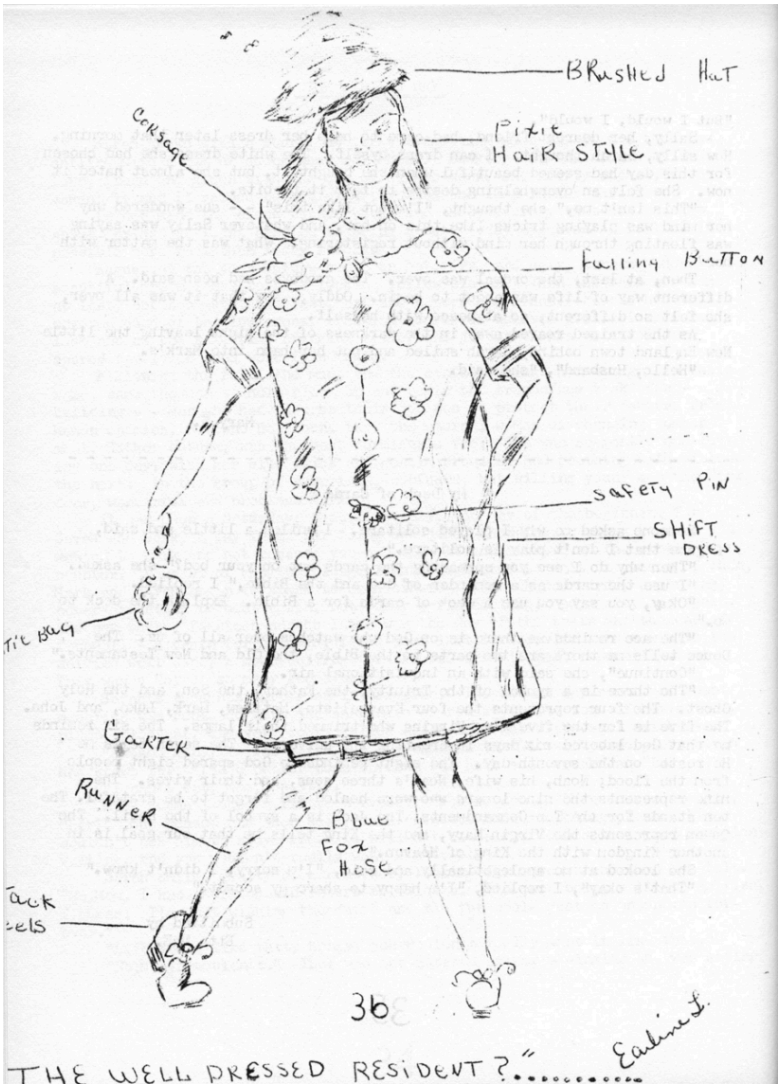



**Figure 1.4: "The Well Dressed Resident?," *The Eagle*, Fall 1963, 36.**

The actual uniform regulations within the prison are not made explicit in *The Eagle,* but a 1971 article in *The New York Times* claims that the women at Alderson were able to "wear their own clothes."[30] Rose Giallombaro's study of Alderson in 1966 details the breakdown of clothes that women receive upon arrival. These included "3 dresses or 2 dresses and 1 pair slacks … 3 slips … 3 brassieres … 3 pairs of panties."[31] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn recounts her experience of arriving at Alderson and receiving the assigned clothing in her book *My Life as a Political Prisoner: The Alderson Story.* She writes, "Most of our time in orientation was spent repairing, fitting, and sewing the clothing allotted to us" which she claims was "army surpluses … Blue slacks and jackets from the WAAC's, seersucker dresses from the Waves, and long sleeved, well tailored dresses of a deep blue, with large pockets, came from the Coast Guard." Clothes changed over the years, and "in 1955 there were two styles of dresses in many colors; red, green, blue, yellow, brown, and plaids. When I left there was only one style, a coat dress buttoned down the front. The tendency was to uniformity and not to the variety of earlier days. The discarded style had a square neck and short sleeves and was cooler in summer. They were condemned because the officers said the women turned them down 'too low.' The women said 'As soon as we like anything in here it is taken away from us!'"[32] The zine makes several references to the "dresses" that women receive, including a sketch in the Fall 1963 edition depicting "The Well Dressed Resident?" complete with safety pins and "falling buttons" (Fig. 1.4). There is also evidence of a certain amount of freedom in their clothing. In Vol. 24 No. 2, Anne Dew describes her work in "The Clothing Room," which is "a repository for all strange and odd objects found around the reservation."[33] According to Dew, women came to The

[30] "A Women's Prison That Resembles a Campus," *The New York Times* (October 30, 1971), https://www.nytimes.com/1971/10/30/archives/a-womens-prison-that-resembles-a-campus.html.
[31] Rose Giallombardo, *Society of Women: A Study of a Women's Prison* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1966), 221.
[32] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner: The Alderson Story* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 34-35.
[33] Anne Dew, "The Clothing Room," *The Eagle,* Summer 1956, 24.

Clothing Room to find new items to exchange for their current clothes and describes the best and worst case scenarios: "When we are most discouraged is when we have a girl that is REALLY in a bad way for clothing and we can't fit her in anything. This is the girl who goes out of the door with only one pair of socks and two dresses, but has a big smile as she says: 'Thanks a lot! I really appreciate you trying so hard to fit me.' Our spirits soar, our courage is revived and we try twice as hard to please the next girl."[34] It seems, therefore, that women were not allowed to order clothing to the prison and could not readily engage with current trends and fashions, but were still able to express themselves, albeit in limited ways, through the available clothing at Alderson.

It is perhaps because of this relative freedom at Alderson that content relating to fashion appears so regularly in *The Eagle,* particularly in comparison to other, later, in-house zines. In the Spring 1959 edition of *The Eagle,* a new column on "Alderson's Fashions" is introduced with the following explanation: "we are always thinking of fashions outside, so why not here? Since we must be here, we might as well take advantage of the situation. Most of us like to look nice all the time, so here are a few helpful suggestions to make our dresses a little nicer."[35] The article goes on to detail the ways in which women can decorate their allocated clothing in order to add style and individuality and then gives an account of a "fashion parade" held by one of the cottages: "Bessie W. modeled a dream of a black and gold stole made by Alice T., with black accessories and heels loaned by our officer, Mrs Cook. She looked quite like the actress on the way to her own premiere. She carried all of us outside (in our imagination), for a little while."[36] Here the women are evidently taking the content one step further by not only reading and discussing fashions, but by practically taking this advice and applying it to their current situation in prison. The transforming of their clothing and the fashion parade give the

[34] Ibid., 25.
[35] "Alderson's Fashions," *The Eagle,* Spring 1959, 36.
[36] Ibid., 37.

women a sense of freedom as it evokes the feeling of being "outside." The sense of escapism described in the zine is echoed several times when talking about fashion at Alderson. Vol. 25 No. 5, includes an article detailing new fashion trends such as "navy blue takes its usual first place in Spring attire" and "flowers, the symbol of femininity, are always prevalent on hats, especially during the Easter season." The piece closes reflectively, with the author writing "we can dream, can't we?"[37] In this sense, the presence of content relating to fashion offers women the sense of escapism by staying connected to the outside world through fashion trends and imagining the possibilities for themselves. In doing so, the women are actively reclaiming a sense of autonomy and individuality through the fashion columns and thereby adapting a seemingly mundane aspect of women's magazines in order to better suit their incarcerated readership.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that this type of femininity, or embracing women's magazines, was empowering for all women. Indeed, despite disproportionate incarceration rates for African American and Latina women in the United States throughout the twentieth century, in-house zines such as *The Eagle* show no explicit reference to these women in their pages. There are no articles pertaining to race or racism (either within prison or outside), and the fashion and beauty articles are exclusively informed by white standards. Although the accompanying drawings are simple, it is quite clear that they exclusively depict white women and by only supplying the contributors' names, there is no way of knowing the ethnicity, age, sexuality or class of the women contributing to the zines. Because of the nature of these sources and the enclosed prison system, trying to account for these silences is particularly challenging. It is problematic to assume that these zines were an exclusively white, female textual experience, owing to the high numbers of minority women incarcerated in the United States who potentially came into contact with the zines (including 611 African American inmates at

[37] Patricia S., "The New," *The Eagle,* Spring 1958, 28-29.

Alderson between 1927-37, and several African American members of staff). Yet by analyzing the fashion content and the zine's imagery, it becomes clear that the experiences and representations of women of colour were not included in the earlier, in-house zines, whether because of censorship, limited exposure, or segregation.[38] According to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Alderson was segregated until the Supreme Court ruling in 1955, yet "even after the cottages were desegregated by law, discrimination and prejudice did not come to an end. The Negro women were assigned, as before, to all the menial tasks; on the farm, in the cannery, in the laundry, on maintenance, and at the piggery until it was abolished."[39] What this revelation might suggest is that the racialized hierarchy of roles at the prison meant that women of colour were assigned the more menial and physical jobs and thus prevented from working in an editorial role at *The Eagle*. Flynn also comments that although the women were allowed to subscribe to one newspaper and one magazine, "White women were not allowed to subscribe to Negro periodicals."[40] It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the majority of the staff working on *The Eagle* were white, and were informed primarily by white, mainstream women's magazines which have continuously projected a limited depiction of beauty informed by racist standards and cultures. The lack of content relating to racism is undoubtedly a product of prison censorship, which affected all aspects of prison life including personal letters.

But it is not just fashion that offers incarcerated women a sense of identity and escapism. Women's prison zines also included articles on typically domestic tasks such as cooking, including recipes, tips, and updates on the kitchen at their facility. Some women were commissioned to work in their institution's kitchen, but on the whole, any culinary freedom or creativity would be restricted because they cooked for hundreds of women with specific

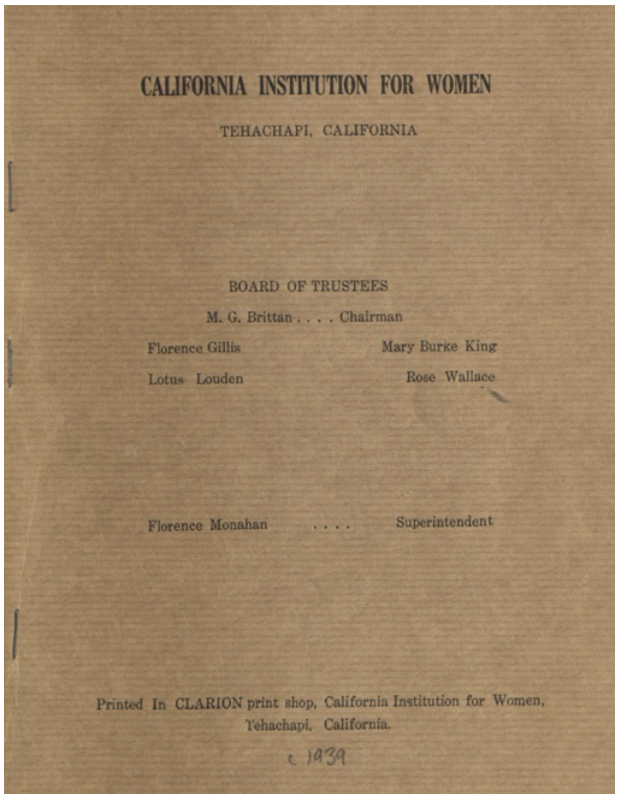
[38] Mary Ruth Andrews, "The Educational Program in a Federal Institution for Delinquent Women" (master's thesis, Duke University, 1940), 39. Giallombardo, *Society of Women*, 33. Giallombardo lists seven Black female correctional officers working at the prison in 1966.
[39] Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner*, 176.
[40] Ibid., 134.

ingredients. Yet, irrespective of this, the zines show an emphasis on food, cooking and domesticity. In her 2014 study, Amy Smoyer discusses the role of foodways in crafting positive identities for incarcerated women. She argues that, when incarcerated, women acquire the opportunity to create a "fundamental shift in identity" whereby they can "rebuild their lives because of the relative safety and stability that these spaces provide compared with the chaos, violence, and poverty that often characterize women's lives in the community."[41] In doing so, they can distance themselves from their previous sense of self, one which is associated with criminality, and instead establish a "food voice" that communicates individual and group values through the preparation and consumption of food.[42] Smoyer argues that this is done through creating new identities associated with being "healthy and good," by sharing their commissary and cafeteria food with more needy women, even occasionally breaking prison rules in order to do so, and making healthy choices with their food and exercise.

What Smoyer does not consider, however, is the role of zines' food content and how this also plays a role in foodways and identity formation and reclamation. The 1946 Winter Edition of *The Reflector* includes a two-page spread listing "Shortcuts in the Kitchen" and offers the following advice: "Put a touch of thyme in tomatoes, stewed, baked, or what have you. Lemon and a pinch of ground ginger in apple sauce will make the family ask for more. The next time you roast pork sprinkle a few caraway seeds on it."[43] The *Clarion* print office at Tehachapi Women's Prison in California even went as far as producing their own cookbook in 1939 filled with recipes for meat dishes, vegetables, salads, cakes and desserts (Fig. 1.5). The presence of food-related content is, in part, a reflection of the popularity of those topics in commercial American magazines. According to Jessamyn Neuhaus, "by the 1940s, few

[41] Amy B. Smoyer, "Good and Healthy: Foodways and Construction of Identity in a Women's Prison," *The Howard Journal* 53, no. 5 (December 2014), 526-527.
[42] Ibid., 527.
[43] Alma P., "Shortcuts in the Kitchen," *The Reflector,* Winter 1946-47, 12-13.

periodicals, newspapers and food-processing corporations lacked a resident recipe purveyor. Almost every women's magazine featured monthly recipes and cooking tips, and, often, cookbook reviews and biographies."[44] This inclusion of food-related content in women's magazines is in many ways a reflection of the period which emphasised the role of the housewife, femininity and family life, not merely in women's magazines, for as Nancy A. Walker argues, "concern with home, family, and all that is commonly associated with the domestic was by no means the sole province of women, but instead permeated American culture."[45] Yet despite this prevalence in culture and society more broadly, it seems curious for cooking and domesticity to be such prevalent topics in women's prison zines when the majority of women reading and writing them would be unable to follow the tips and recipes whilst incarcerated.


CALIFORNIA INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN

TEHACHAPI, CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

M. G. Brittan . . . . Chairman

Florence Gillis — Mary Burke King

Lotus Louden — Rose Wallace

Florence Monahan . . . . Superintendent

Printed In CLARION print shop, California Institution for Women, Tehachapi, California.

c 1939

**Figure 1.5: Cover of the cookbook made by the women incarcerated at the California Institute for Women, Tehachapi, 1939, printed in the same office as their zine *Clarion*.**

[44] Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2003), 102.
[45] Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World*, xi.

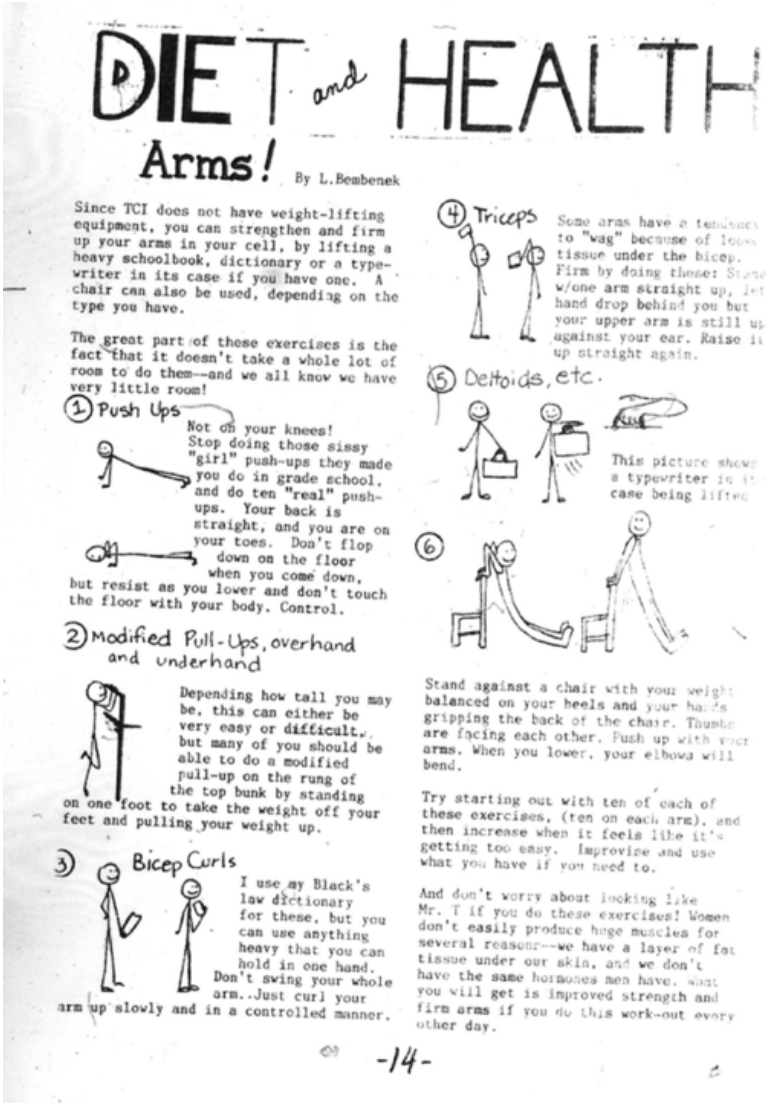
It is possible that this inclusion of domestic content (defined by Walker as matters pertaining to the home, as well as "family and social relationships, child-rearing practices, personal well-being, purchasing habits, recreation, schools and neighbourhoods, gardening and civic involvement, food preferences, health and personal appearance"), represented something different for women in prison than those outside.[46] As Smoyer suggests, it could be an attempt to craft a new identity for themselves, built on culinary skill and separate to their status as incarcerated women. However, it could also be an attempt by the women to domesticate the prison environment, bringing part of the American cultural and societal landscape into prisons where all traces of their outside lives are eroded. By including recipes and kitchen tips, the women are able to recreate feelings of a home environment textually, despite limited access to ingredients and equipment. In doing so, they are similarly trying to establish new identities and reclaim old ones. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn found that many women at the facility sought ways in which to approve their appearance such as giving each other haircuts and adjusting their clothing. She also describes "another manifestation of femininity" as women attempted "to decorate their rooms with pictures, plants, a few books, even if they never read them."[47] In Flynn's view, the decoration of the women's cells acted as a further reclamation of femininity and an attempt to domesticate their corner of the prison.

This emulation of women's magazines was not just a product of the 1940s and 1950s. *Inmate Output* began at the Taycheedah Correctional Institution in Wisconsin in November 1983 and its mission statement states how "as newspaper staff members, we want to deal with issues, accurately, impartially and unbiased [sic] that are pertinent to women and prison, provide helpful information for entertainment and enjoyment, for population to promote positive thinking and encourage inmate unity and involvement."[48] As such, the content

[46] Ibid., viii.
[47] Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner,* 87-88.
[48] "Inmate Output Goal Statement," *Inmate Output,* January 1984, 3.

fluctuates from page to page, from jokes and cosmetic product advice to articles on the death penalty and child support legislation. *Inmate Output* also contained many of the features of early zines like *The Eagle.* Issue 10 includes a feature "Summer Beauty Tips," which consists of actual cuttings from articles in women's magazines. Each edition also contains a "Horoscopes" section on the back page; letters; reviews of films, books and music; and a "Diet and Health" section. Health and fitness are themes that have frequently appeared in women's magazines but have grown in popularity in the last twenty years off the back of the rise of prominent women in sport.[49] Exercise, diet and weight-loss are all themes that permeate women's health magazines and also feature in the "Diet and Health" column in *Inmate Output* but, as with the fashion articles in *The Eagle*, are adapted to suit incarcerated women. Don Sabo argues that for some incarcerated men, "sports and fitness activities are a crucial survival strategy, a life practice intended to create and maintain physical and mental health in a hostile unhealthy, place" or used as a way to "displace anger and frustration."[50] The presence of content related to exercise and fitness would suggest that it holds similar benefits for women in prison. One article suggests that "Since TCI does not have weight-lifting equipment, you can strengthen and firm up your arms in your cell, by lifting a heavy school book, dictionary or typewriter in this case if you have one… The great part of these exercises is the fact that it doesn't take a whole lot of room to do them – and we all know we have very little room!" (Fig. 1.6).[51] As with the fashion articles in *The Eagle*, common features of women's magazines are altered to better serve incarcerated women, turning what would be basic exercises into something more practical and useful.

[49] Marie Hardin, Susan Lynn and Kristie Walsdorf, "Challenge and Conformity on 'Contested Terrain': Images of Women in Four Women's Sport/Fitness Magazines," *Sex Roles* 53, no. 1-2 (July 2005), 105.
[50] Don Sabo, "Doing Time, Doing Masculinity: Sports in Prison," in *Prison Masculinities,* ed. Don Sabo, Terry A. Kupers and Willie London (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 61.
[51] "Diet and Health: Arms!," *Inmate Output,* June 1987, 14.



DIET and HEALTH

Arms! By L.Bembenek

Since TCI does not have weight-lifting equipment, you can strengthen and firm up your arms in your cell, by lifting a heavy schoolbook, dictionary or a typewriter in its case if you have one. A chair can also be used, depending on the type you have.

The great part of these exercises is the fact that it doesn't take a whole lot of room to do them--and we all know we have very little room!

1 Push Ups

Not on your knees! Stop doing those sissy "girl" push-ups they made you do in grade school, and do ten "real" push-ups. Your back is straight, and you are on your toes. Don't flop down on the floor when you come down, but resist as you lower and don't touch the floor with your body. Control.

2 Modified Pull-Ups, overhand and underhand

Depending how tall you may be, this can either be very easy or difficult, but many of you should be able to do a modified pull-up on the rung of the top bunk by standing on one foot to take the weight off your feet and pulling your weight up.

3 Bicep Curls

I use my Black's law dictionary for these, but you can use anything heavy that you can hold in one hand. Don't swing your whole arm..Just curl your arm up slowly and in a controlled manner.

4 Triceps

Some arms have a tendency to "wag" because of loose tissue under the bicep. Firm by doing these: Stand w/one arm straight up, let hand drop behind you but your upper arm is still up against your ear. Raise it up straight again.

5 Deltoids, etc.

This picture shows a typewriter in its case being lifted

6

Stand against a chair with your weight balanced on your heels and your hands gripping the back of the chair. Thumbs are facing each other. Push up with your arms. When you lower, your elbows will bend.

Try starting out with ten of each of these exercises, (ten on each arm), and then increase when it feels like it's getting too easy. Improvise and use what you have if you need to.

And don't worry about looking like Mr. T if you do these exercises! Women don't easily produce huge muscles for several reasons--we have a layer of fat tissue under our skin, and we don't have the same hormones men have. What you will get is improved strength and firm arms if you do this work-out every other day.

-14-

**Figure 1.6: "Diet and Health" section in *Inmate Output*, June 1987, 14.**

What becomes apparent when reading this type of content in women's prison zines, is not only the clear influences of women's magazines, but also the obvious efforts women made to make them relevant to their confinement. Discussing fashion and health were, in themselves, not sufficient. The creators and contributors consciously sought to acknowledge their situation as incarcerated women, not to expose their limitations so much as to demonstrate their duality: it was possible for them to be incarcerated and remain an individual. It is important to consider whether the impetus behind the emphasis on women's fashion and domesticity is indeed a method of reclamation by women or instead part of the reformatory ideal of creating a genteel, pious woman who conforms to societal notions of femininity. As it is difficult to know the

level of censorship within the zines, the inclusion of fashion, domestic and health articles may in fact be encouraged by staff who work with the zines. Giallombardo emphasises the influence of the Reformatory model on Alderson, suggesting that "'treatment' for women meant instilling in them certain standards of sexual morality and sobriety and preparing them for their duties as mother and homemakers." She goes on to argue that "if the task of the formal organization is to train women to occupy roles in society as mothers and homemakers, this can best be accomplished under conditions which approach home life."[52] Giallombardo relates this incentive to the formal set-up of the prison, with the layout, staff and activities all products of this reformatory ideal. It could therefore be possible that the fashion and domesticity content in *The Eagle* was a similar by-product of this initiative, with the staff encouraging discussion of this type of content within the zine. Yet the tone and content of the articles pertaining to these themes would suggest that, even if they are somewhat encouraged, they are not forced upon the women. The escapism and creativity that emerges through discussions of the fashion forecasts, and the adapting of fitness and sports features to suit the confined cells and prison spaces would suggest that these topics are part of life behind bars and are tools through which women can self-define and establish a sense of independence.

## Expanding Womanhood

In-house women's prison zines offer many different representations of women, beyond the reimagining of the femininity depicted in women's magazines. As well as fashion and domesticity, prison zines included topics that challenged or expanded popular depictions of womanhood. They challenged narrow conceptions of motherhood, particularly the critical judgements and stereotypes of women in prison who were seen as "bad" or "unfit." Through descriptive and educational elements, they also sought to disrupt ideas of "deviant" women,

[52] Giallombardo, *Society of Women,* 7.

offering insights into their lives in prison and demonstrating their humanity. But the content was also intended to be directly relevant to incarcerated women, as well as challenging popular beliefs. In addition to altering existing content of women's magazines, women's prison zines also introduced new material that was more specific and useful for their imprisoned readers. Zines included topics on incarceration, laws and legislation and the impacts of prison on its inhabitants and their families. In doing so, the zines offered women practical ways in which they could navigate their lives within and outside of prison and suggested how they might position themselves as citizens after release.

Much of the more general content in in-house zines like *The Eagle* sought to offer some sense of what life was like behind bars in order to educate others on the true status of the "female felon." As mentioned earlier, much of this content was shaped by the knowledge of an external readership, inclusive of lawmakers and prison officials, which encouraged the inclusion of more informative content, supposedly documenting the "true" experiences of the women at Alderson. To what extent this depiction is true or not remains uncertain, yet the profile of incarcerated women that emerges is interesting in of itself. *The Eagle* included many reflective pieces by the women, contemplating their separation from family, their responsibilities within prison and outside, and potential avenues for self-improvement or recovery. Vol. 24 No. 1, for example, includes a piece suggesting that they establish an Alcoholics Anonymous group at Alderson, arguing that "an A.A. group at Alderson would be the answer to the statement: 'It was drink that put me in here. Suppose it all happens again when I get out?' Not only would you have the benefit of talking to your 'kind' but you would have the resources (the library, space and TIME) to help you on your way to a non-alcoholic new life" (emphasis in original).[53] Similarly, a piece in the same issue titled "So you don't like Home Ec.?" makes the case for attending the home economics classes, arguing that "Home

[53] Anonymous, "Alcoholics Anonymous," *The Eagle,* December 1955, 45.

Economics isn't a job! It's fun to learn to be, not just a woman, but a useful and genteel one. So come on, give us a chance to meet and like you, and you'll make a profit out of your 'lazy time'!"[54] Both of these articles emphasise self-improvement and recovery, presenting prison as an opportunity for rehabilitation. This is not an uncommon theme within women's magazines. Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad have argued that this idea of resilience or being able to "bounce-back" is a popular narrative within women's magazines. From careers and financial recessions to mental health and post-pregnancy bodies, women's magazines, Gill and Orgad argue, promote the image of an independent woman; adaptable and positive and able to "bounce back" from any negativity.[55] In-house women's prison zines have a similar emphasis on individual effort and resilience, with a focus on self-improvement and self-determination. However unlike women's magazines, prison zines tend to centre around the women's incarceration specifically, suggesting ways to avoid repeat-offences and make the most of their time behind bars.

However, not all of the articles in *The Eagle* viewed Alderson and women's experiences of prison in such a positive, reformative light. In that same edition, Yvonne W. questions the rehabilitative qualities of prison, arguing that, having seen several women return to Alderson after breaking their parole, they are not "being 'rehabilitated' to live in a world with normal people or near normal people, but instead we are rehabilitated to live in a human zoo with all of those who are frustrated as much or much more so than we ourselves. So I think that if it is so important to have help in adjusting to life 'inside', then it is doubly important to have help in adjusting to life 'outside'."[56] Many of the experiences written about in prison zines relate in some way to women's incarceration, either their trouble with alcoholism, domestic abuse, or

[54] Barbara N., "So you don't like Home Ec.?," *The Eagle,* December 1955, 39.
[55] Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad, "The Amazing BounceBackable Woman: Resilience and the Psychological Turn in Neoliberalism," *Sociological Research Online* 23, no. 2 (2018): 477–495.
[56] Yvonne W., "Plea from all going out in 1956," *The Eagle,* December 1955, 43.

drug addiction, or accounts of the judiciary system or parole. Whether these views are positive or not, they attempt to demonstrate the variety of women's experiences and offer targeted advice beyond the realms of regular women's magazines.

This advice also included finding employment, something not exclusive to women in prison, but with its own particular challenges. In fact, content pertaining to employment and careers was (and still is) a popular topic in women's magazines, appearing with more frequency in the 1930s and 1940s with the growth of the "New Woman" and different narratives of womanhood. As Friedan notes, in this period "They were new women, creating with a gay determined spirit a new identity for women – a life of their own."[57] Women's magazines evolved to incorporate this change in readership, encouraging women to pursue jobs of their own and be more independent, yet, as Tebbel and Zuckerman note, "for none of them is marriage and the family ruled out as a possibility."[58] For women in prison, however, and their depiction in zines, the acquisition of a job was seen as critical for their reentry to society and was emphasised throughout the twentieth century. For instance, the editorial in Vol. 24 No. 3 of *The Eagle* lists the academic and vocational courses available at Alderson, commenting: "Think this over, get that much needed education, have a better brighter outlook on the constructive side of life. Be able to sell yourself to your employer and then do a job well."[59] Similarly, Vol. 28 No. 1 includes an article titled "Job Success Can Be Yours" and suggests "All this ties in with getting and keeping a job. No matter how capable you may be, your employer will not want someone around who drives business to another firm… These are just some of the opportunities offered in Vocational Classes, designed to help you make yourself over into someone new and successful when you 'graduate' from Alderson."[60] These examples

[57] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique,* 25.
[58] Tebbel and Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America,* 107.
[59] "Editorial," *The Eagle,* Winter 1956, 3.
[60] "Job Success Can Be Yours," *The Eagle,* Spring/Summer 1961, 31.

have much in common with the career guidance columns in women's magazines, emphasizing self-improvement and hard work. However, as incarcerated women, the advice places extra emphasis on redemption, becoming someone "new," and the issue of finding employment after prison is presented as a problem for the unwilling or lazy, not as a problem exclusively related to their incarceration. An account of a job fair in an edition of *Insight* (based at the Florence Crane Women's Facility in Coldwater, Michigan) reads just like any other advice column, foregoing the reference to "ex-convicts": "One important thing I learnt at the job fair was the fact that people are willing to help ex-convict [sic] as long as you are trying to help yourself. Be honest and go into the interview with a good attitude and I'm sure someone will be willing to listen and give you a chance. Don't knock yourself before you even get started."[61] The career tips for readers of women's prison zines are far more specialized than in women's magazines which would not ordinarily specifically address the issues of women who have spent time in prison. The advice given in zines like *Insight* is reminiscent of the style of women's magazines but takes the content beyond the generic advice given to women in magazines more generally in order to be of tangible use to women inside.

As well as offering advice, zines were also used as a space in which women could discuss issues such as employment and share their views. Vol. 29 No. 2 of *The Eagle* includes a "cottage poll" feature, asking the women what their "perfect career" would be. The responses vary, but include answers such as "the restaurant business … because I have worked around food and people so long that I can just about tell what they like and don't like", "I think beauticians and clothes designers have the best careers", "Bookkeeper or accountant would be ideal to me" and "My choice is to become a teacher as I believe there is a shortage of <u>good</u> teachers" (emphasis in original).[62] Although content like this does not offer specific, tangible

[61] "Job Fair: What Are Your Plans When You Leave Here?," *Insight,* August 1998, 20.
[62] "Cottage Poll: My Perfect Career," *The Eagle,* Summer 1962, 24-25.

advice, it offers the women the space to contemplate future careers and hear ideas from other women, thus presenting employment as an achievable and appealing possibility for readers. In a similar way, the fiction pieces in *The Eagle* depict alternative prospects for women beyond homemaking. Vol. 29 No. 2 includes a story about a woman heading west in search of adventure and spending time as a sheepherder on a ranch. The protagonist and narrator of the short story describes herself as "one of those people who has to be constantly going, with a wanderlust so intense it was difficult for me to sit still for any period of time, anywhere."[63] Similarly, Vol. 29, No. 2 includes a story about a female astronaut who "was to be the first person to land on the moon."[64] Both of these examples reflect the writer's sense of escapism and adventure in contrast to the confines of prison, with one leading a quest into space and the other assuming the pioneer role in heading west in search of new experiences. Although somewhat unrealistic, both stories also depict strong, independent female protagonists who have careers or interests outside of the home. Kate Peirce in her 1997 study found that, before 1970, fiction pieces in women's magazines were almost entirely focused on marriage and relationships, with little contemplation of careers or jobs.[65] Helen Franzwa's 1979 study of *Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's* and *Good Housekeeping* found that in their fiction pieces, there was not "a single married woman who worked in 1955, 1960, 1965 or 1970."[66] By offering alternatives to the gendered roles often depicted in the fiction of women's magazines at the time, women's prison zines gave incarcerated women a sense of opportunity by providing them with alternative images of womanhood. As well as the ambitious images of astronauts and pioneers in the fictious pieces, zines also included first-hand accounts from incarcerated women who, more often than not, were from low-income households and therefore had no

[63] Elizabeth S., "Irrezina," *The Eagle,* Summer 1962, 12.
[64] Bethene McC., "Night Dreams in the Air," *The Eagle,* Fall 1962, 4.
[65] Kate Peirce, "Women's Magazine Fiction: A Content Analysis of the Roles, Attributes, and Occupations of Main Characters," *Sex Roles* 37, no. 7/8 (1997), 584.
[66] Helen Franzwa, "Working Women in Fact and Fiction," *Journal of Communication* 24, no. 2 (1974): 104-109.

choice but to work. Susan C. Craig has argued that in the early reformatories, an emphasis on training women in domesticity "reflected both a preoccupation with middle-class values as well as a lack of understanding of the economic and social realities of inmates, who would return not to a life of middle-class homemaking but to one of economic hardship."[67] For the zines, therefore, the content relating to employability and careers was a practical alternative to the white, middle-class narrative of domesticity that was not necessarily achievable. Again, in this case the intention was not so much to emulate the content of women's magazines exactly, but rather to use the form to expand upon ideas of womanhood in order to make it more relevant to the women inside.

This revision of the content of women's magazines also included their constructions of motherhood. It was, and still largely is, commonplace for discussions of parenting to be seen as an exclusively female role, with "motherhood" being synonymous with "parenthood." One magazine article from 1886 suggested that "motherhood is the crown and glory of a woman's life…The blessing of motherhood, which is like nothing else on earth, is placed in compensation over against all the pain and care which so often seem to be women's particular burden."[68] Seen as an essential part of womanhood, childbearing featured heavily in women's magazines, through articles, columns and even whole publications dedicated to bringing them

[67] Susan C. Craig, "A Historical Review of Mother and Child Programs for Incarcerated Women," *The Prison Journal* 89, no. 1 (March 2009), 41. Harris came into some conflict over this issue during her time as warden of Alderson. Paul W. Keve notes how Sanford Bates, Superintendent of Prisons, was "frustrated to see that women often were pulled away from their production work for such activities as 'supervised reading, candy making, table service and painting.' When Harris protested that she must train her charges to be homemakers, Bates replied, as reassuringly as possible, that he sympathised with her goals and was proud of her institution, but, 'men and women outside have to spend an average of eight hours in labor, which interferes with their cultural development.'" Paul W. Keve, *Prisons and the American Conscience: A History of U.S. Federal Corrections* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 106.

[68] L. W. Palmer, "The Coming Guest," *Babyhood* 2 (1886), 313, referenced in Rima D. Apple, "Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *The Society for the Social History of Medicine* 8, no. 2 (1995): 161-178.

up "right."[69] Much as with their depictions of fashion and beauty, this emphasis on children, family and motherhood, and the strict rules and advice given on the subject, meant that the mother (and subsequently woman) constructed by women's magazines was a fixed, defined, monolithic being, who all women should aspire to emulate, and regularly molded this ideal around the white, middle-class experience. For women in prison, however, their reality was far removed from the superficial ideal of mothers often depicted in women's magazines. As a result of being incarcerated, women in prison are frequently labeled by society as "bad mothers," as they are seen to further defy conventions of femininity and womanhood. Karlene Faith has argued that "in sociological jargon, the 'master status' of a mother in prison is not her mother identity but her criminal identity. Women's parental credentials are called into question on the grounds that no woman who has used drugs, worked as a sex worker or otherwise shown 'deviant' or criminal tendencies can be a 'good' mother."[70] According to studies from *The Prison Journal*, this leads to feelings of guilt and depression, as the women feel vulnerable and helpless when they cannot provide or care for their children.

Between 1930 and 1960, Alderson officials permitted children to stay with their mothers at the facility, housed in the "food cottages." However the length of time given for mothers and children to stay together fell from three years in 1940, to just a few months in the 1950s, with the whole programme scrapped by the 1960s.[71] Yet the topic of motherhood and children appeared in *The Eagle* and other in-house women's prison zines throughout the twentieth century, offering a different interpretation of motherhood that was complicated by the women's imprisonment. These subjects were of particular interest to the women and staff

[69] Some examples of articles are "Are You Too Educated to Be a Mother?," in *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1946 and "Are American Moms a Menace?," in *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1945. Both examples are from Nancy A. Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford St Martin's, 1998).
[70] Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance* (Press Gang Publishers, 1993), 204.
[71] Craig, "A Historical Review of Mother-Child Programs for Incarcerated Women," 45.

at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Framingham. Seen as a model example for mother and child support, Framingham became an exemplary institution under the guidance of warden Miriam Van Walters who wanted Framingham to be "child-centered."[72] Unlike some other reformatories that encouraged chastity and purity, Walters encouraged integration of unmarried mothers rather than exclusion.[73] As part of this effort, she established a weekly Mothers' Club, whereby "each mother was made free to talk," and with it, a publication *Mothers Club News* (one of three publications from Framingham in that period: *Harmony News, Mothers Club News* and a poetry anthology *The Seed*) (Fig. 1.7).[74] *Mothers Club News* included updates on the women and their children such as how much weight the babies have gained, the goings-on in the cottages and nurseries including a "Baby Booster" gossip-style column, letters from readers both within the institution and outside, opinion pieces based on certain topics such as "How I want my child to grow up", and advice on how children should be raised, sharing experiences with each other: "Ann would always eat her dinner if it was put in a bowl of milk. Comment -- A bad habit and she should learn to eat her solid food without being washed down."[75] The publication was a project solely about the mothers incarcerated at the facility, introduced in part to bolster their club, but also to improve the experience of, and attitude towards, incarcerated mothers. Although there is no information on readership, in Vol.

[72] Walters introduced a nursery, adequate healthcare and parental education, and built cottages exclusively for mothers and children funded by Eleanor Roosevelt. For more information on her work as warden of Framingham see chapter "Building the Framingham Symphony" in Estelle B. Freedman, *Maternal Justice: Miriam Van Waters and the Female Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[73] In various instances, mothers and children were able to stay together for some period of time in prison. According to Susan C. Craig, "a report on the prison population in Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania between 1900 and 1840 suggested children were among those present." Craig goes on to reference other facilities that encouraged maintaining maternal connections. Bedford Hills in New York allowed new-borns to stay with their mothers for their first year, and in 1935 the State Reformatory for Women at Sherborn, Massachusetts introduced two new cottages, "one for mothers and babies and the other for junior girls aged 17 to 21." On the whole, policy varied with each facility and state. Craig, "A Historical Review of Mother-Child Programs for Incarcerated Women," 42.

[74] Freedman, *Maternal Justice*, 200.

[75] *Mothers' Club News*, February 4, 1937, 5.

1 No. 6 the editor makes reference to a subscription service that Van Walters had engaged in, paying fifty cents for a ten-week subscription. By offering this service, it would suggest that the creators of *Mother Club News* intended to have a readership outside of prison and thus may have altered their content accordingly.




**Figure 1.7: Covers for *Mother's Club News*, March 5, 1937 and April 3, 1937.**

This could be a reflection of the period. Jennifer Burek Pierce has argued that "early twentieth-century women's magazines sought to transform motherhood into a subject of public significance rather than private sentiment."[76] For the creators of *Mothers' Club News,* there are no attempts to deny their position as incarcerated mothers, but much of the content is focused on the women's ability to mother and their commitment to their children. The feature "How I want my child to grow up" includes much of the expected reflections of new mothers: concerns over their child's health, their education, and hopes that they will be "honest" and "fair." One

[76] Jennifer Burek Pierce, "Science, Advocacy, and 'The Sacred and Intimate Things of Life': Representing Motherhood as a Progressive Era Cause in Women's Magazines," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History and Criticism* 18, no. 1 (2008), 71.

woman comments that "if he sees no cheating in his own home and has good honest friends, he will have honest ways."[77] In this, the impetus is specifically tied to the "home" and thus the mother: it is her responsibility to encourage morality and honesty in her child. These examples reflect the wider pressures and criticisms of mothers at the time who, as a reader of *Ladies' Home Journal* articulated, "would train each new generation – mold the youth of our land into useful, worthy citizens."[78] However, they also demonstrate an internalised pressure, as incarcerated women, to reform and thereby provide for their children.

This discussion of motherhood within prison zines even expanded to include unplanned pregnancy and children born out of wedlock. The Winter 1956 edition of *The Eagle* includes a poem titled "To the Prison Madonnas." The poem's narrator describes the pregnant women in the craft shop, contemplating the fears and concerns they might have awaiting the birth:

> Was it a fleeting passion or a deep abiding love?
> What matter now to these tragic, waiting women,
> Who sit around a work table in the Craft Shop,
> Misshapen, big with child, awaiting their hour of deliverance.
> Some sad-eyed, some smiling, talking softly of their hopes and fears.
> Sewing on baby garments, making tiny shoes, passing the days,
> 'Till "unto her a child is born", within these prison walls,
> Does she fear for the little one, sleeping beneath her heart?
> Be not ashamed, mother dear, that a child is born in prison!
> A Babe was laid in a manger Who became the Light of the world.

[77] Annette Domingue, "How I want my child to grow up," *Mothers' Club News,* February 4, 1937, 3-4.
[78] E. Look, "Our Readers Write Us," *Ladies' Home Journal,* 10, in Sarah Burke Odland, "Unassailable Motherhood, Ambivalent Domesticity: The Construction of Maternal Identity in Ladies' Home Journal in 1946," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (2010), 68.

> A Babe was born in a log cabin who freed the people from slavery.
>
> Hold good thoughts for your baby to be brave and kind and true.
>
> Who knows to what heights of human service this baby may aspire,
>
> Who is now solace for your heartbreak, fulfillment of your dreams?[79]

The narrator acknowledges that the pregnancy may have been unplanned, conceived from a "fleeting passion", yet is uncritical. In fact, she instead encourages the mother to "be not ashamed," comparing the fetus to Jesus who "was laid in a manger" and "became the Light of the world." This is quite a progressive view of unplanned pregnancy for the 1950s and was rarely encouraged to the same extent in other, mainstream women's magazines. Indeed, Sarah Burke Odland argues that in 1946, *Ladies' Home Journal*, despite occasionally showing "resistance to dominant ideologies of domesticity, … portrayed motherhood as an unassailable ideological position, the feminine ideal."[80] This ideal, Odland argues, presents motherhood as an all-consuming inevitability for white, middle class women who should leave behind any career aspirations upon having a child and dedicate herself fully to its wellbeing. The possibility of unplanned pregnancy or single motherhood, therefore, was not even acknowledged in its pages. Motherhood (for white, middle class women at least) was something planned for and aspired to and was inherently tied to domesticity. As the husband worked to support his family, the woman was expected to stay at home and raise the child. In her study of popular magazines and content relating to single mothers, Margaret L. Usdansky found that "magazine discourse hovered at consistently low levels over the first six decades of the century, never exceeding 16 articles per 100 magazines." It was not until 1970 when the first rise in magazine discourse occurred, lasting until "1987 when there were 62 articles per

[79] Elizabeth F. "To the Prison Madonnas," *The Eagle,* Winter 1956, 11.
[80] Odland, "Unassailable Motherhood," 73-78.

100 magazines. Magazine discourse then declined somewhat before reaching a second peak of 68 articles per 100 magazines in 1996, the year that welfare reform passed."[81] Therefore, by acknowledging and even celebrating a child born out of wedlock, as in this poem, this contributor is challenging the rigid definitions of motherhood and domesticity promulgated by magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* in this period.[82] Although not outwardly encouraged, single parenthood was presented positively in some women's prison zines, rather than shamed or dismissed.

Although published forty years later, discussions of motherhood and children also became regular features in both *Insight* and *Inmate Output* with their respective columns "Mothers in Chains" and "Mother's Page." As neither facility had a comparable mother and baby facility like Framingham, the content varies slightly. Both "Mother in Chains" and "Mothers Page" contain features such as messages from parents to their children, tips on parenting such as "101 Ways to Praise a Child", submissions of writing and artwork from both the women incarcerated at the facility and their children, and articles related to parenting and motherhood. These can be as standard as advice on divorce or children struggling in school, to more specific issues related to prison and incarcerated mothers. For instance, Issue 15 of *Inmate Output* has an article on "Planning a Visit With Your Child" which gives advice on solving potential problems that might arise during a child's visit to the mother's prison such as how they might fund it, who would accompany the child/children, and what activities are available once they get there.[83] As well as practical information, a lot of the artistic content in women's prison zines is dedicated to themes of motherhood and separation. One poem titled "My Sons" evidences a mother's guilt at being apart from her children. She writes:

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[81] Margaret L. Usdansky, "The Emergence of a Social Problem: Single-Parent Families in U.S. Popular Magazines and Social Science Journals, 1900–1998*," Sociological Inquiry* 78, no. 1 (February 2008), 84.

[82] "Elizabeth F." was actually Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and this poem was one of several that she wrote and published in *The Eagle* during her time at Alderson.

[83] M. Stanek, "Mother's Page: Planning a Visit with your Child," *Inmate Output,* January 1985, 10.

Joy, laughter, happiness

Sadness, fear, disappointment..

What I wouldn't give to start over again.

Missing them sometimes, desperately

Reaching but never touching

Talking and never hearing

Loving but never feeling.[84]

Here the writer is expressing the complex emotions of detachment but also alienation experienced by an incarcerated mother, who is not just physically separated by prison walls, but is also so far removed from their lives that she metaphorically, as well as physically, cannot "touch", "hear" or "feel" them. The feelings of joy and happiness so often associated with children, are replaced by "sadness, fear and disappointment." Ann Folwell Stanford in the introduction to *Women, Writing and Prison* argues that "those who have spent even a minimal amount of time writing with incarcerated women will attest to the dominance of the thinking and writing about children and the profound desire to reconnect, be forgiven, and start over."[85] For the author of "My Sons", she wonders whether they will ever forgive her, and if "they will ever really know and understand [her] as [their] mother."[86] A poem titled "I am Still a Mother" in the May/June 1996 edition of *Insight* offers a similar sentiment. The author writes "Mom may get caught up in the prison system, but she still is a Mother. A Mother will spend the last penny she has, so that her children will have decent outfits, that's being a mother. Moms make mistakes, just like the rest of the human race. Mom will learn from her mistakes, then she'll

[84] "My Sons," *Inmate Output,* October 1984, 15.
[85] Ann Folwell Stanford, "Not Much Silence Here," introduction to *Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars and Writers Speak Out,* ed. Tobi Jacobi (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 8.
[86] "My Sons," *Inmate Output,* 15.

teach you so, hopefully, you won't make the same mistakes too."[87] As with the other examples, this author is attempting to evidence her abilities as a mother, which are independent of her incarceration, and complicate the reductive ideas of motherhood that punish women who have "made mistakes."

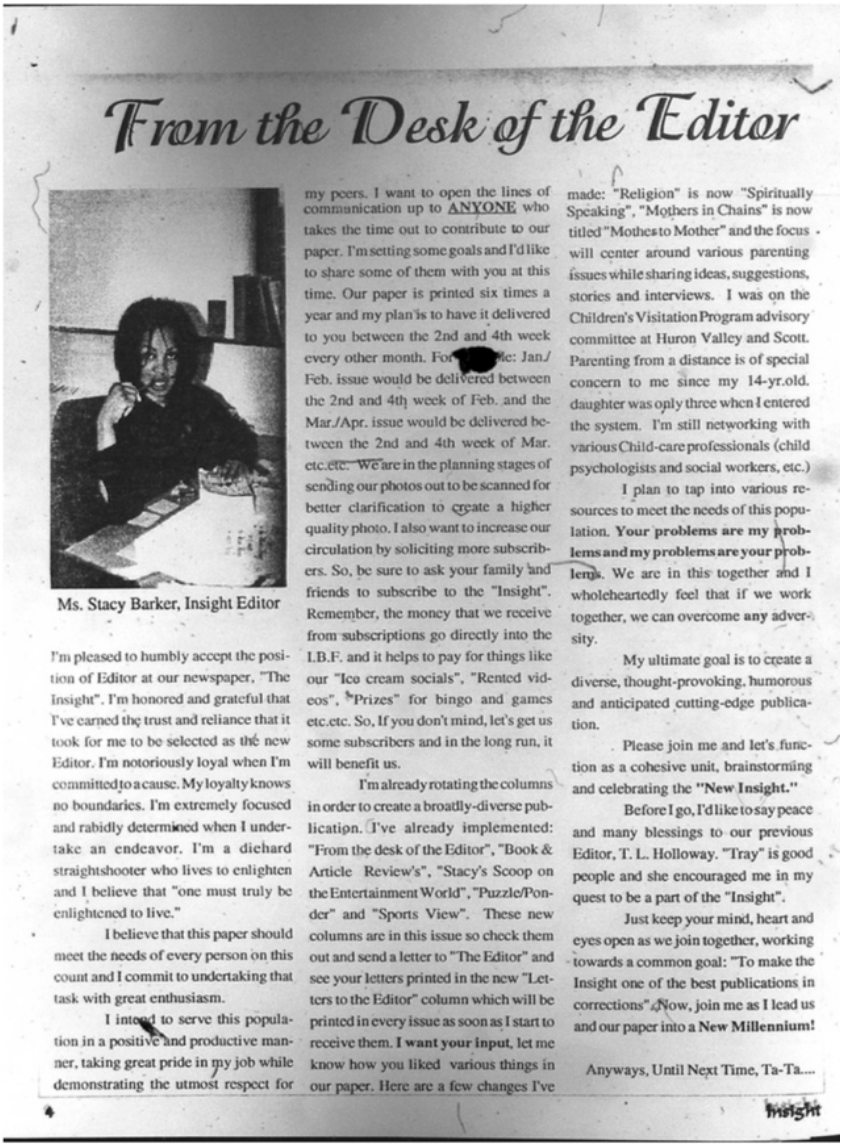
This content relating to motherhood is consciously challenging the idealized depictions of incarcerated mothers as well as their demonization. Where women's magazines offer basic tips and experiences of mothers, women's prison zines take this one step further. The advice they offer is often specialized to their experiences as incarcerated mothers and regularly offers comforting or supportive words for other mothers in their situation. Yet unlike women's parenting magazines that exclusively target other mothers, the women writing from prison also regularly use the medium to communicate with their children, writing poems or letters for them to read. For instance, the Christmas 1998 edition of *Insight* invited mothers to write about their favourite or most memorable Christmases and many took the opportunity to write to their children: "My son is the most precious person in the world to me. I remember how excited I was when I found out I was having a boy. Reflecting back to the first Christmas that we had together. He was only seven months old, but he brought so much joy to my Christmas… It was the best Christmas of my life knowing that I had him for the rest of my life! MERRY CHRISTMAS MY DEAR SON! Your Mom."[88] Incarcerated women use the space created by the zine to demonstrate to their children, the readers, and themselves, the level of their devotion and commitment to their children and emphasise their capability as mothers.

[87] Bonnie Jones, "I Am Still A Mother," *Insight,* May/June 1996, 19.
[88] "Mother to Mother," *Insight,* December 1998, 4.

## Establishing a Network

It was not just through the zines' content that women in prison emulated women's magazines. Much of the tone and style of in-house zines like *The Eagle* were reminiscent of the sisterly, advisory rhetoric that came to define popular women's magazines in the twentieth century. Much of this had to do with the role of the editor who was often a fellow incarcerated woman, giving the appearance (even if it was not always the case in practice) of a publication controlled exclusively by women in prison. Female editors were present in America before the Revolution, and began editing women's magazines in the 1820s.[89] As female editors addressed female audiences, they developed a rhetoric described by Patricia Okker as "the sisterly editorial voice … characterized by a relative informality and an assumed equal and personal relationship between reader and editor."[90] This editorial voice was also present in women's prison zines. Despite some influence from the prison staff, incarcerated editors oversaw the zine's content and frequently wrote editorial pieces for each edition. For instance, *Insight* consistently employed a woman incarcerated at the facility as editor and included a letter from her at the start of each edition. In the May/June 1998 edition, Stacy Barker takes over as editor and writes in her opening editorial: "Your problems are my problems and my problems are your problems. We are in this together and I wholeheartedly feel that if we work together, we can overcome any adversity."[91] This introductory editorial outlines Barker's role as an editor who is approachable; it uses the second person pronoun "you" to directly address the reader and takes on the "sisterly editorial voice" found in women's magazines in order to help build and sustain the community around the zine (Fig. 1.8).

[89] Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors,* 7-8.
[90] Ibid., 23.
[91] Stacy Barker, "From the Desk of the Editor," *Insight,* June 1998, 4.



# From the Desk of the Editor



Ms. Stacy Barker, Insight Editor

I'm pleased to humbly accept the position of Editor at our newspaper, "The Insight". I'm honored and grateful that I've earned the trust and reliance that it took for me to be selected as the new Editor. I'm notoriously loyal when I'm committed to a cause. My loyalty knows no boundaries. I'm extremely focused and rabidly determined when I undertake an endeavor. I'm a diehard straightshooter who lives to enlighten and I believe that "one must truly be enlightened to live."

I believe that this paper should meet the needs of every person on this count and I commit to undertaking that task with great enthusiasm.

I intend to serve this population in a positive and productive manner, taking great pride in my job while demonstrating the utmost respect for my peers. I want to open the lines of communication up to ANYONE who takes the time out to contribute to our paper. I'm setting some goals and I'd like to share some of them with you at this time. Our paper is printed six times a year and my plan is to have it delivered to you between the 2nd and 4th week every other month. For [redacted]e: Jan./Feb. issue would be delivered between the 2nd and 4th week of Feb. and the Mar./Apr. issue would be delivered between the 2nd and 4th week of Mar. etc.etc. We are in the planning stages of sending our photos out to be scanned for better clarification to create a higher quality photo. I also want to increase our circulation by soliciting more subscribers. So, be sure to ask your family and friends to subscribe to the "Insight". Remember, the money that we receive from subscriptions go directly into the I.B.F. and it helps to pay for things like our "Ice cream socials", "Rented videos", "Prizes" for bingo and games etc.etc. So, If you don't mind, let's get us some subscribers and in the long run, it will benefit us.

I'm already rotating the columns in order to create a broadly-diverse publication. I've already implemented: "From the desk of the Editor", "Book & Article Review's", "Stacy's Scoop on the Entertainment World", "Puzzle/Ponder" and "Sports View". These new columns are in this issue so check them out and send a letter to "The Editor" and see your letters printed in the new "Letters to the Editor" column which will be printed in every issue as soon as I start to receive them. **I want your input**, let me know how you liked various things in our paper. Here are a few changes I've made: "Religion" is now "Spiritually Speaking", "Mothers in Chains" is now titled "Mother to Mother" and the focus will center around various parenting issues while sharing ideas, suggestions, stories and interviews. I was on the Children's Visitation Program advisory committee at Huron Valley and Scott. Parenting from a distance is of special concern to me since my 14-yr.old. daughter was only three when I entered the system. I'm still networking with various Child-care professionals (child psychologists and social workers, etc.)

I plan to tap into various resources to meet the needs of this population. **Your problems are my problems and my problems are your problems.** We are in this together and I wholeheartedly feel that if we work together, we can overcome **any** adversity.

My ultimate goal is to create a diverse, thought-provoking, humorous and anticipated cutting-edge publication.

Please join me and let's function as a cohesive unit, brainstorming and celebrating the **"New Insight."**

Before I go, I'd like to say peace and many blessings to our previous Editor, T. L. Holloway. "Tray" is good people and she encouraged me in my quest to be a part of the "Insight".

Just keep your mind, heart and eyes open as we join together, working towards a common goal: "To make the Insight one of the best publications in corrections". Now, join me as I lead us and our paper into a **New Millennium!**

Anyways, Until Next Time, Ta-Ta....

4 Insight

**Figure 1.8: "From the Desk of the Editor," *Insight*, July/August 1998.**

A similar relatedness was echoed in the editorials of *The Eagle.* In Vol. 26 No. 2, the editor at the time, Carol M., explains how it is "no easy job – this publishing of a prison magazine, but we certainly hope our efforts to please you are not in vain. Let's face it – the editor has no experience in this field and is fumbling her way through this mag by the blind trial and error Braille system."[92] Here the editor is relatable; a fellow, inexperienced woman at Alderson who directly addresses the readers in her hopes to appeal to them. This familiarity is even reiterated in Vol. 25 No. 6 in the form of small cartoons to accompany the signatures and

[92] Carol M., "Across the Editors Desk," *The Eagle,* Fall 1959, 6.

names of each member of editorial staff. The images are hand drawn depictions of certain features: a pair of glasses, some smiling lips, a single hairy leg (Fig. 1.9). Although fairly obtuse in their depictions of each individual, the images attempt to humanize the members of staff and give their readers a glimpse into the editorial process.

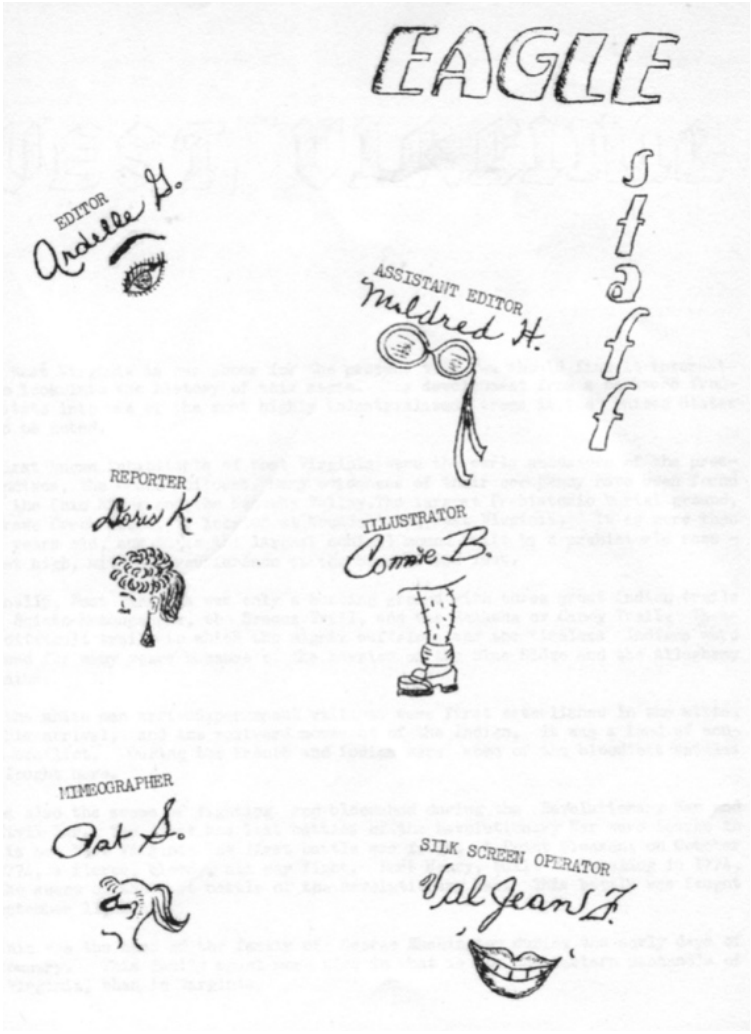



**Figure 1.9: "Eagle Staff" feature, *The Eagle*, Winter 1958, 6.**

Margaret Beetham describes this shift in the tone, form and content of magazines at the turn of the century as the "feminisation of the press." An expanding female readership encouraged an informal tone with increased focus on "the tit-bitty article [and] the gossip column."[93] Although the term is somewhat problematic because it suggests certain qualities

[93] Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine, 1800-1940* (London: Routledge, 1996), 126.

are inherently gendered, she argues that the term "feminization" is still useful "insofar as it stresse[s] feeling rather than reason, the personal rather than the authoritative tone, the private or 'human' interest of its stories as against their public aspect."[94] Part of this informal tone of the editor is what Marjorie Ferguson describes as the "surrogate sister" role of women's magazines: "in offering support, encouragement and help with readers' problems, they project empathy with, and sharing of, those same problems."[95] As well as the editor, this role of confidant and friend is demonstrated most clearly in women's prison zines through the experience or opinion-style article. These features give first-hand descriptions of experiences or events that the writer has gone through in order to advise and comfort those in similar positions. "My Life on Alcohol" in *Harmony News* captures both the sense of revealing personal information and the conversational tone. "Believe me girls," the author writes, "I had my share of everything, and to come right down to it drinking was the cause of it all. All I can say now girls is I want the help and really am going to try hard, and if I try hard enough, I know that I will make the Program once again. … Believe me girls it's not worth it, I know, don't throw your whole life away that way."[96] The use of first person here emphasises the sense of knowledge through experience by claiming "I know," giving the piece authority and expertise, and adding to the source's sense of creditability and trustworthiness. The title chosen to address the readership is also significant. The term "girls" was commonly used by prison staff throughout the twentieth century to refer to all incarcerated women. According to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, at Alderson, "all inmates, from 16 to white-haired grandmothers, are called 'girls.'"[97] By using this form of address in the zines, the contributors could be utilizing, or perhaps even reclaiming, a patronizing title inherited from prison discourse. Yet the term also

[94] Ibid., 126.
[95] Stacy Barker, "From the Desk of the Editor," *Insight,* July-August 1998, 9.
[96] "My Life on Alcohol," *Harmony News,* 1961, 30.
[97] Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner,* 39.

evidences the sisterly manner that was common in women's magazines when offering advice, working to establish the readership and with it a community. "Girls" specifies women, and its informality (i.e. not "ladies") suggests a targeted, known audience. Although all of the zines mentioned so far had a readership outside prison, the personal, advice columns emphasise a sense of community by specifically targeting an incarcerated female audience.

*The Eagle* features many advice pieces written by the women at Alderson that have a similar tone to *Harmony News*. Vol. 25 No. 4 includes an opinion piece on homesickness. The author, Bonnie D., writes "your soul cries out like the bleating of a lost lamb. Your tears are mountain streams during the spring. You, my friend, are homesick." After discussing the pains of feeling homesick whilst incarcerated, Bonnie D. closes by saying "For myself, I am thankful that someone or some place or something means so much to me that neither time nor distance can obliterate its remembrance. I grieve for those who have never suffered 'homesickness', as I recall to my mind a poetical phrase that I once read:- 'Love is lovelier when embalmed in tears.'"[98] Similarly, an article titled "Mastering Our Emotions" in Vol. 25, No. 1, reads like a self-help book, with the author writing "Everyone we meet is a potential source from which we can derive some measure of good. We also have something which should prove of benefit to them, and which we alone are capable of giving them. Therefore we must keep our minds in a state of ready acceptance and be prepared to enter into this state of interchange of ideas."[99] This self-help attitude, meant to inspire readers into better behavior and attitude is often tinged with religion and piety. In the same edition of *The Eagle,* one contributor writes that "among other prayers, which we should pray, is 'Lord, open my eyes that I may see myself as I really am.' … We cannot seek God in prayer with a heart full of hatred, malice, vulgar words and violence against each other."[100] This religious element was not unusual in mainstream media

[98] Bonnie D., "Homesickness," *The Eagle,* Christmas 1957, 10.
[99] Frances S., "Mastering Our Emotions," *The Eagle,* Spring 1957, 17.
[100] Mercedes B., "What are you asking for?," *The Eagle,* Spring 1957, 14.

at the time, and *The Eagle* is full of references to Christianity including cover imagery, written features by representatives of the Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches, and editions themed around the Christian holidays, mainly Christmas and Easter. It is therefore not surprising that much of the content is imbued with religious connotations, even if this alienates a non-Christian readership.

A branch of this advice-based content is the "Agony Aunt" column, which has appeared in women's magazines since the eighteenth century enacting "a feminine dynamic of mutual support and creat[ing]… a community of likeminded readers."[101] Various in-house zines have adapted the Agony Aunt feature for their incarcerated readers. *The Eagle* briefly included a humorous feature "Dear Miss Prunella" which posed non-serious questions to the fictional figure "Miss Prunella", who responded with lighthearted advice. For example, one letter signed "Itchy" asked "Dear Miss Prunella: The love bug bit me. What shall I do?" "Try Noxema", replied Miss Prunella. Another asked "Dear Miss Prunella: In my travels around the world I've been wooed many times. Part of my heart is left in many sections of the globe. I will be going home from Alderson soon. But my heart won't tell me which way to go. Please advise me. Signed, HEART TROUBLE." Miss Prunella responded, "Your heart is just like the United Nations. All there, but can't quite get together."[102] Miss Prunella was most likely a comedy feature created entirely by an individual rather than an actual advice column, but it demonstrates how women's prison zines appropriated certain themes for their audience. This is particularly true for *Inmate Output's* column "Ask the Warden." This Agony Aunt-style feature appears in each edition and offers readers the chance to question the warden of the facility on any topic. This included "Has there been any word about abolishing the State Parole Board?" and "Why do we have a 12:30 curfew during the week?"[103] By utilizing a classic

[101] Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?,* 166.
[102] "Dear Miss Prunella," *The Eagle,* Summer 1962, 50.
[103] "Ask the Warden," *Inmate Output,* March 1985, 4.

feature of women's magazines, prison zines become more pertinent to incarcerated women, offering them a tangible way to engage with the facility and seek information or even change.

Features like "Ask the Warden" were also a way in which the editorial team sought to involve more women in the zine and feature their voices. In July/August 1996 when Suzanne DeWitt took over the role as editor of *Insight*, she wrote: "It is my feeling that the 'Insight' is the voice of the women that reside in Florence Crane Women's Facility. I do not profess to know what everyone is thinking. And therefore I am not a mouthpiece for everyone. I encourage and ask any readers of the 'Insight', that has [sic] an idea or thought that they would like to express, to write a story, article, poem etc., and submit it."[104] As DeWitt's opening editorial evidences, for many women's prison zines, the role of the editor as visionary and creator was not exclusively confined to one person, nor one team of people. It is a horizontal form of communal editing that democratizes the process and emphasises the importance of polyvocality to the genre's form. Aronson argues that "if the novel … promotes equality through its interpolation of diverse genres and discourses, then the magazine does so by design: the form operates visually as well as verbally and embraces both polygeneric contents and multiple authorship."[105] She views the diversity of content as symptomatic of the diversity of readership and contributors that offers varied and competing narratives within the pages. It is in this polyvocality, she argues, that the strength of women's magazines lies. Such polyvocality is a key feature of women's prison zines, which consistently demonstrate multiple authorship and operate as a type of collective autobiography (a term I define and discuss in greater depth in Chapter Three). The contributions from various authors and the wide range of content demonstrate the publications' ability to provide a space within which women can articulate

[104] Suzanne DeWitt, "From the Desk of the Editor," *Insight*, July/August 1996, 2.
[105] Aronson, *Taking Liberties*, 11.

their diverse thoughts and concerns, offering women the same "invitation to participation and self-expression" that Aronson finds in early women's magazines.[106]

Providing a platform is especially important for women in prison who are unable to articulate their opinions and emotions freely outside of zines; even more than the average nineteenth-century female writer who was, according to Aronson, "widely proscribed and policed," women in prison are monitored and silenced.[107] The inclusion of personal accounts, poems and opinion articles from a variety of women from different backgrounds extends what Aronson terms the "democracy" of women's magazines. She argues that the American women's magazine promoted strong democratic ideals through its polyvocality, but that this "'democracy'… has been circumscribed by cultural restraints such as racial prejudice, economic means, and social status – and by the levels of literacy and cultural clout that tend to reinforce those inequalities."[108] Although this is certainly the case historically for women's magazines, I would argue that the translation of the genre behind bars and in the independent print culture of women in prison has democratized women's magazines beyond the realms of commercial, mainstream magazines, by reaching an audience so far removed from society. Women's magazines are evidently valuable to incarcerated women, as they appear in institutions across the country and influence the form, content and meaning of women's prison zines. But the fact that women reimagine the genre to make it relevant for their situation suggests a further democratization and adaptation of the genre. Where commercial women's magazines have expanded since their origins in an effort to appeal to wider racial and class audiences beyond middle-class white women, women's prison zines do so by default: they are publications that are made by and for an underrepresented group. In so doing, they not only

[106] Ibid., 12.
[107] Ibid., 46.
[108] Ibid., 14.

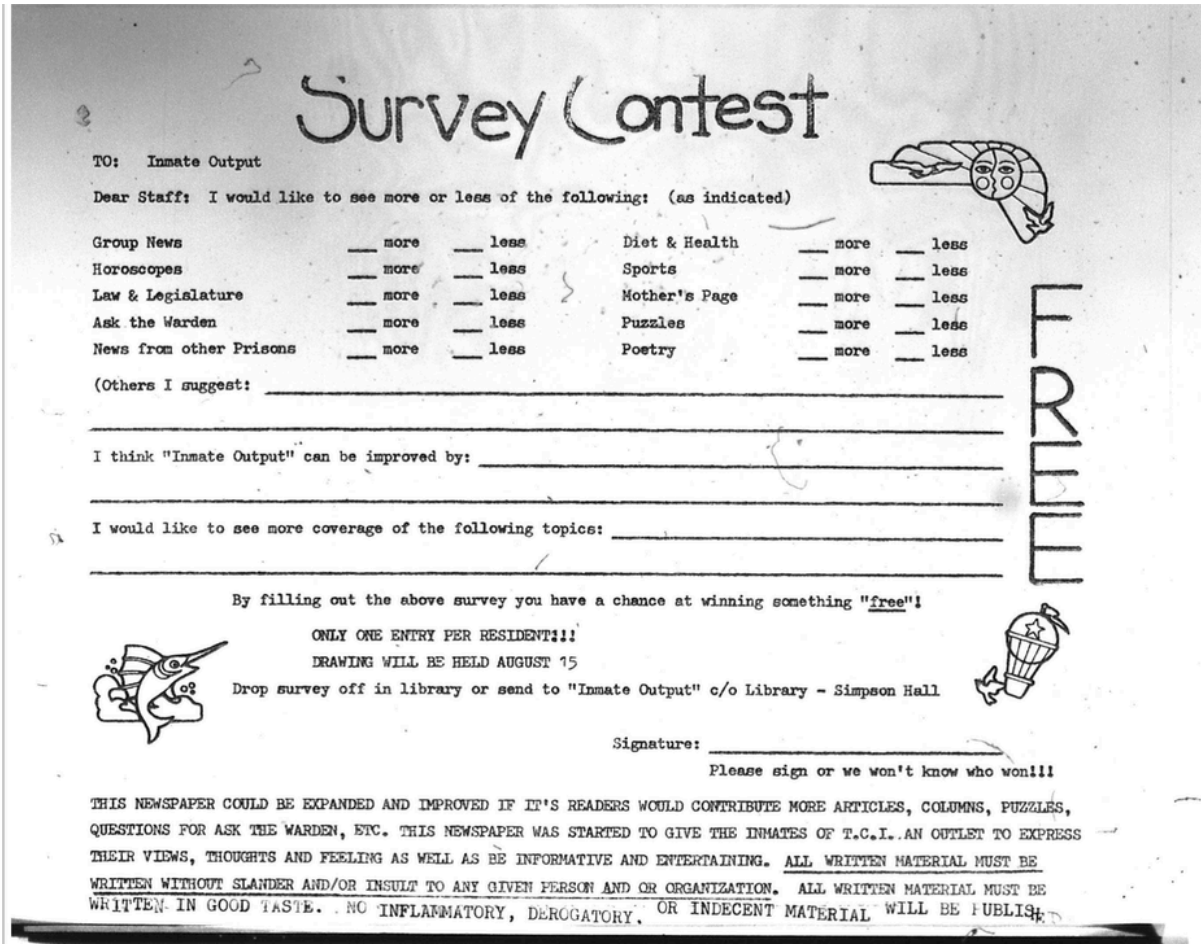
democratize the genre further, but also increase the opportunity for the genre to offer empowerment.




**Figure 1.10: "Gotcha" centre fold pages of *Insight*, July/Aug 1998.**

One way in which this democratization is portrayed in in-house women's prison zines is through the use of photography. Photographs began appearing in women's prison zines later in the twentieth century and generally depicted the people and events at the facility. Each issue of *Insight* included pictures of the women incarcerated at Florence Crane Correctional Facility in the centre two pages titled "Cheese Spread" or "Gotcha." Sometimes the images were from special events or parties or the women's graduation, and sometimes they were just of everyday life at the facility. The inclusion of photography (and imagery more generally) copies the pictorial style of women's magazines. However, women's prison zines also simultaneously subvert the genre by including images of everyday, normal women at the facility instead of celebrities or models. It puts faces to the readership and sometimes even the editorial team, expanding this idea of a textual democracy. The photographs also offer alternative

representations of incarcerated women, beyond the orange jumpsuits, chains and bars that populate the mainstream press. The roughly cut out and collaged images show the women in everyday clothing, smiling, with informal captions such as "I need a break/Ms. Powe" and "Food-Tech Keepin' Us Happy" dispelling popular negative perceptions of women behind bars (Fig. 1.10).



Survey Contest

TO: Inmate Output

Dear Staff: I would like to see more or less of the following: (as indicated)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group News | ___ more | ___ less | Diet & Health | ___ more | ___ less |
| Horoscopes | ___ more | ___ less | Sports | ___ more | ___ less |
| Law & Legislature | ___ more | ___ less | Mother's Page | ___ more | ___ less |
| Ask the Warden | ___ more | ___ less | Puzzles | ___ more | ___ less |
| News from other Prisons | ___ more | ___ less | Poetry | ___ more | ___ less |

(Others I suggest: _____

_____

I think "Inmate Output" can be improved by: _____

_____

I would like to see more coverage of the following topics: _____

_____

By filling out the above survey you have a chance at winning something "free"!

ONLY ONE ENTRY PER RESIDENT!!!

DRAWING WILL BE HELD AUGUST 15

Drop survey off in library or send to "Inmate Output" c/o Library - Simpson Hall

FREE

Signature: _____

Please sign or we won't know who won!!!

THIS NEWSPAPER COULD BE EXPANDED AND IMPROVED IF IT'S READERS WOULD CONTRIBUTE MORE ARTICLES, COLUMNS, PUZZLES, QUESTIONS FOR ASK THE WARDEN, ETC. THIS NEWSPAPER WAS STARTED TO GIVE THE INMATES OF T.C.I. AN OUTLET TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS, THOUGHTS AND FEELING AS WELL AS BE INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING. ALL WRITTEN MATERIAL MUST BE WRITTEN WITHOUT SLANDER AND/OR INSULT TO ANY GIVEN PERSON AND OR ORGANIZATION. ALL WRITTEN MATERIAL MUST BE WRITTEN IN GOOD TASTE. NO INFLAMMATORY, DEROGATORY, OR INDECENT MATERIAL WILL BE PUBLISH

**Figure 1.11: "Survey Contest," *Inmate Output*, August 1984, 18.**

The inclusion of photographs also contributes to the communality of women's prison zines: a factor that is crucial in their role as zines, protest literature and collective autobiography. The polyvocal form not only offers a space for self-expression, but is also fundamental in creating and sustaining the community within women's prison zines and women's magazines respectively. Aronson argues that women's magazines had an extraordinary level of reader involvement, through feedback, reader contributions and letters

which gave the impression of "belonging to a community of equals … of feeling central as well as a part of something with influence and cultural impact."[109] This idea of print culture as a vehicle for community-making is fundamental to women's prison zines as the "community of equals" that Aronson describes is also defined by the women's status as incarcerated women, giving the contributors and readers a unifying shared experience. As well as using the sisterly tone, women's prison zines recreate the important role of letters within women's magazines and encourage contributions and suggestions from their readership in order to reiterate their community. In Vol. 21 No. 1 of *The Eagle* the editors explain:

> GIRLS OF ALDERSON: You may not know it, but this is supposedly your publication. You may submit articles which are written in the proper vein. Such articles may be humorous, fiction or non-fiction, news items or local happenings, or some experience you may have had which you feel would be of interest to others. If you would like to have your particular group or cottage represented, appoint a reporter to cover the happenings. You can write letters to the editor at any time suggesting improvements for the Eagle. (Should be a wealth of material there). The staff is anxious to publish those items which are of interest to the majority of the inmates.[110]

Issue 10 of *Inmate Output,* a prison zine from Taycheedah Correctional Institution in Wisconsin, even goes as far as to include a detailed survey on the back page for the readers to complete and send back to the editors. It is prefaced with the *Inmate Output* goal statement and editorial policy and invitations to submit work or even apply to work for the editorial team. The survey asks questions such as "I would like to see more or less of the following" and "I

[109] Carolyn L. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 12.
[110] *The Eagle,* Summer 1954, 16.

think 'Inmate Output' could be improved by."[111] In this instance, the readers are not only invited to contribute material, but also to directly influence the entirety of the publication. In doing so, women's prison zines attempt to eliminate the top-down structure of commercial women's magazines and adapt the role of reader from passive consumer to influencer (Fig. 1.11).

This community also extends to include a wider readership in other prisons across the United States. According to Isabella Kellock Coulter, by 1935 there were over 100 prison zines being produced in male, female, adult and juvenile facilities across the US.[112] Zines borrowed and shared material from each other, including informative articles, poetry, stories and jokes. For instance, Vol. 21 No. 1 of *The Eagle* includes a poem from a Minnesota prison zine titled "Sympathy Chit" and the 1961 edition of *Harmony News* contains a tongue-in-cheek article reprinted from a men's prison in Texas titled "How to be Popular in Prison." It advised: "Be sure to bob up and down in your seat when attending any of the shows. This will greatly endear you to those located behind you" and "skip a bath wherever possible. It'll make you strong."[113] Whether considered piracy or par for the course, reprinting was common practice within magazines throughout the twentieth century. Some magazines like *Reader's Digest* relied solely upon reprints for each edition in its formative years and the borrowing and sharing of material was fundamental in the dissemination of works of literature throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in the formation of a transatlantic network.[114] For the penal press, reprinting not only helped the editors fill each issue, but worked to establish and sustain an incarcerated print culture network. The borrowing and sharing of material was commonplace in women's prison zines, with the original publication seemingly always cited

[111] "Survey Contest," *Inmate Output,* August 1984, 18.
[112] Coulter, "Prison Journals in National and State Penal and Correctional Institutions."
[113] "How to be Popular in Prison," *Harmony News*, October 1961, 51.
[114] David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 59.

alongside the copied text or image. Such practices promoted the work of other prison zines and helped to strengthen a sense of community, adding more voices and more experiences to the already diverse network.

The exchange of materials between both in-house and externally edited prison zines suggests that each prison accommodated the distribution of their zine and the reception of others in order to create and sustain a network, something that became much harder with the growth of externally edited zines and institutional censorship of publications, as discussed further in Chapter Two. Nevertheless, particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, zines frequently published communication with other zines from male, female and juvenile institutions. These sections, often referred to as "Exchanges", would list the zines that they receive and communicate with, commenting on the most recent issue and sometimes offering helpful suggestions and feedback. *Harmony News,* for instance, writes to the *Clarion Corona* in California, "Nice mag. But you need more help. Why don't you try for a little humor, also short story writters [sic]. Read our magazine Harmony News. Vs [sic] girls have to strick [sic] together. I hope I'm not over confident in thinking ours is the best women's mag."[115] By suggesting "us girls have to stick together," the writer is not simply referring to the creation of the zines, but to the experience of incarceration that they share. Similarly, Vol. 27 No. 3 of *The Eagle* responds to an article included in *Pathfinder* from Saskatchewan, Alberta writing "Your article 'Pathfinder Reviews the Penal Press in North America' was very interesting. We that are in Institutions need a voice and ---- through our various types of publications we have created the small hole in the dyke."[116] This comment demonstrates the zines' role as a voice for incarcerated individuals to the outside world and, more significantly in this case, to each

[115] "Exchanges," *Harmony News,* 1961.
[116] Roberta S., "Exchanges," *The Eagle,* 1960, 32.

other. It also evidences that this penal press community extended beyond the United States to include publications based in Canada, indicating a North American prison print network.

These exchanges are a regular feature of women's prison zines and are a reinvention of the traditional "letters" page found in women's magazines. As an important and regular feature in women's magazines since the genre's inception, letters were a way by which readers could communicate with the magazine, its editor, and other readers, offering readers "a more active and participatory role than any other popular medium available."[117] Where the externally edited zines discussed in Chapter Two relied heavily on letters from their readership to make up the zine's content, in-house zines rarely included letters to the same extent. Instead, they focused on the inter-zine communication in the form of "Exchanges" to build and sustain their network. Janice Winship argues that "self-affirmation of a woman's world is the primary characteristic of all these [women's magazines'] letters … They are from women to women."[118] This is arguably also applicable to the "Exchanges" communication in women's prison zines which, like letters, established a community, although on this occasion determined by their location and status as incarcerated individuals, rather than gender. This is highlighted in an issue of *The Eagle* within the "Exchanges" feature:

> To the members of the Penal Press: Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May we take this opportunity of thanking you collectively for the many wonderful publications we received during 1954. We consider ourselves extremely fortunate to be able to read the stories; to note the originality of ideas and the truly fine creative ability of you all; to see and know the hard work involved; the handicaps you face in printing even the smallest paper and the excellent results obtained speaks for itself. The articles written

[117] Aronson, *Taking Liberties,* 13.
[118] Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987), 68.

> that take the aspects of prison life and present it so clearly, because that's how it is. You know it so thoroughly, because you like it day by day, month by month, year by year. It is our earnest wish that your efforts are not in vain, that some day, the Voice of the Penal Press will be heard throughout our Nation and the world, bringing the many changes necessary in penology, if crime is to be lessened. (Which is purportedly the reason for prisons). Again from the Eagle Staff and the nearly 600 women of Alderson, our sincere best wishes for the Holiday Season.[119]

This is followed by an extensive list of publications that Alderson receives, including *Harmony News* and *The Reflector*, and demonstrates the level of community within the publications and the importance of the cross-zine communication to the women at *The Eagle.* In Vol. 29 No. 3, the editors of *The Eagle* take this one step further to include the comments from other prison zines on their previous edition of *The Eagle* titled "What Our Readers Think Of Us." They include a caption from *The Inside News* that says *The Eagle* is "A real professional job. Your layout and design are first class. By the way, our institution has a women's section, so keep your magazine coming."[120] Although reprinting and cross-editorial communication was not unheard of in women's magazines, this inclusion of the critiques from fellow publications and obvious self-reflection was less common. It suggests growth and development as the editors reflect on their feedback, and the importance of their network beyond the sharing of materials. Communicating with other zines was as much about self-improvement and progress as it was interaction.

[119] "Exchanges," *The Eagle,* Winter 1954, 13.
[120] "What Our Readers Think Of Us," *The Eagle,* Fall 1962, 34.

## Conclusion

The summer 1962 edition of *The Eagle* opens with a goodbye note from the departing editor, Marie H. She writes:

> I'll eventually forget, I hope, the lonely train whistles and dog howls at night, the ever-present cabbage -- raw, boiled, and pickled --, the little enamel pots, the dowdy dresses and the smell of wax. But I'm not apt to forget the frightened, groping young women, the courageous ones who face endless years of time without whimpering, the sick ones who plug along anyhow, the loud ones who cuss so they won't cry, the bewildered ones, and even the ones who have built themselves into a tough shell. The lazy and the busy, the generous and the sneaky, the bright-eyed and the dull – they are all here, just like on the street.[121]

This earnest and poetical dedication to her companions at the Women's Reformatory at Alderson addresses one of the key principles of in-house prison zines in the United States: we are just like you. Zines like *The Eagle* attempted to complicate the binary notions of identity informed by stereotypes that confine incarcerated women. As spaces of relative freedom, zines offered the women a platform for self-expression and creativity, which they could shape and adapt as they saw fit. One way of doing so was through the cooption and adaptation of the content, style and form of popular women's magazines. Primarily, the inclusion of content relating to fashion, beauty and domesticity emulated popular women's magazines, but also tailored them in order to offer the women readers a sense of identity through a self-established femininity that could endure behind prison walls. Although not always inclusive or relatable, discussing current fashion trends and recipes and offering realistic health and fitness tips all

[121] Marie H., "The Bumps on Memory Lane," *The Eagle,* Summer 1962, 5.

sought to offer women access to the world outside by bringing contemporary culture and society behind bars. Fashion content was influenced by current trends but shaped by the limited availability of materials and strict prison rules. Health and fitness tips were similarly curtailed by the limited access to equipment and large spaces but attempted to offer the women similar content that met their specific needs.

If the fashion and domesticity content sought to bring the outside in, then the content relating to work, motherhood and prison life sought to bring the inside out. These articles sought to relate the contributors' experiences in prison to their status as women, complicating rigid depictions of womanhood and offering insights into incarcerated life. This type of educational content was not only aimed at the zines' external readership, however. Much of the material related to motherhood and work offered the zines' incarcerated female contributors and audience a platform from which they could envisage potentials beyond their current confinement and even beyond the limiting representations of women in the popular media. Content that discussed motherhood and employment reflected the diverse community of women incarcerated at Alderson and even offered tangible advice, elevating in-house zines from pure entertainment, to valuable and informative tools for change. Finally, women's in-house prison zines embraced the sisterly tone of women's magazines, both in the form of the editor and editorial team, and in the advisory content. This tone and style sought to humanize the women behind the zine and create a space for discussion and dialogue, built upon shared experiences. In addition to the surrogate sister role, in-house zines adapted the traditional role of letters in women's magazines, encouraging communication between zines across the United States and beyond. In doing so, the creators sought to establish and maintain a textual community of incarcerated peoples, based on the celebration and sharing of knowledge and experience.

All of these factors sought to broaden the genre of women's magazines to a more democratic and empowering publication, as the incarcerated women that contributed to and read the zines benefited from a space in which they could communicate, educate, and express and define their identity as women, mothers and incarcerated citizens. Yet as identified, some manifestations of this self-expression were not inclusive or reflective of the true diversity of women in prison. As well as the persistent absence of voices of women of colour in the zines—most likely owing to prison censorship and segregation—representations of lesbian or transgender women are virtually non-existent in early in-house zines. What Chapter Two will discuss next, is the ways in which the growth of externally edited zines in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to combat these silences, offering a different perspective of women's incarceration in the United States that had its roots in the Women in Print Movement.

*Chapter Two*

# "Sister Inside": Expanding the Women in Print Movement

> I call her sister because when I look into her blue, green, grey, black, hazel eyes, my own brown are staring back. This is when the true celebration occurs: because I can clearly see in her, the truest reflection of me.
>
> - Sadia Zoe Ali [1]

In the 1960s and 1970s, alternative print in America was reaching new heights in terms of production and readership. The underground press had been churning out thousands of radical pamphlets and newsletters since the early sixties, communicating the often misrepresented or ignored voices of modern America. Topics included left-wing politics, Communism, Civil Rights, Black Power, Indigenous Rights, Gay Liberation, Chicano Activism, and anti-war campaigns, as the creators sought to establish their own media in order to better represent their views and experiences. This period also witnessed the exponential growth of women's alternative print. According to Ann Mather, between March 1968 and August 1973, over 560 new feminist publications appeared in the United States.[2] This burst of production feeds into a much longer tradition of women's print in America, going as far back as suffragist publications at the start of the century and even earlier. But this period witnessed the most concentrated growth of feminist alternative print in America, causing Polly Joan and Andrea Chesman to argue that "more than any other movement in history, feminism has been identified with publishing."[3] This period of increased production is part of the extensive "Women in Print Movement" where women sought an "alternative communications circuit – a woman-centered

[1] Sadia Zoe Ali, editor of *Insight,* January-February 1996.
[2] Ann Mather, "A History of Feminist Periodicals," *Journalism Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1974): 82-85.
[3] Polly Joan and Andrea Chesman, *Guide to Women's Publishing* (Paradise, CA: Dustbooks, 1978), quoted in Kate Adams, "Built Out of Books: Lesbian Energy and Feminist Ideology in Alternative Publishing," *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no. 3-4 (1998), 116.

network of readers and writers, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, and retailers."[4] This new network of female publishers, writers, editors and book-keepers has garnered significant scholarly attention over the past thirty years, yet incarcerated women and their role in the "Women in Print Movement" have been overlooked. This chapter identifies how women's prison zines are part of an extensive feminist print culture at the time, and how the women contributing to zines engaged with outside organisations and popular feminist issues. I argue that because women used zines to create networks and articulate their particular concerns as incarcerated women, prisons became home to a different strand of feminism that offered alternative perspectives on feminist concerns such as motherhood, domestic violence and mental health. By examining zines as such, it offers new perspectives on the Women's Liberation Movement, expanding the boundaries of current scholarship to include other marginalized and oppressed women, and highlight the efforts of lesbian women and women of colour.

This chapter focuses on the genesis and growth of externally edited zines in the 1970s and 1980s as incarcerated women became increasingly resistant to institutional censorship and involvement, and members of the women's movement began to see prisons as physical manifestations of patriarchal oppression. As a result, externally edited zines filled the gap between in-house zines and feminist periodicals, offering a new space to discuss the experiences and concerns of incarcerated women. In order to discuss the feminism that emerges from prison, it is useful to consider what "feminism" is, and how it is defined, redefined and rejected, and the terms I choose to use as a result. At its most basic level, feminism is a variety of movements, political, social and ideological, that seek to establish equal rights and opportunities for women. Nevertheless, it is hard to think of another word that causes such

[4] Trysh Travis, "The Women in Print Movement: History and Implications," *Book History* 11 (2008), 276.

levels of debate, disagreement and distrust. To ignore the term entirely, however, seems counterintuitive.[5] In this chapter, I use the term "women's movement" to refer to the actions and achievements of women during the 1970s and 1980s, a period when many interpreted feminism as exclusionary and unrepresentative of the actions and experiences of queer women, women of colour and working-class women. By using the term "feminism" to identify the politically and socially motivated actions of women in prison specifically, I hope to continue to challenge and expand the understandings of this period of feminism, beyond the public-facing, middle-class, white narrative.

## The Women in Print Movement

Scholars have theorized The Women in Print Movement as a shift in the late 1960s towards women-centred and controlled production of printed materials. Although, as Trysh Travis argues, "feminist activists had been creating a print culture through broadsides, pamphlets, and other rough-and-ready publications for some years", the publications that emerged at the end of the decade sought to gain control over the entire process of print production, marking what Kathryn Thoms Flannery describes as the start of "an identifiably separate feminist press."[6]

[5] To structure feminism's development, critics use the "wave" model, which divides the last 150 years into chunks where each new wave continues from the last but builds on it in some new and noticeable way. Although the "second wave" of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s is the central context for this chapter, I am not choosing to utilize the term or discuss the benefits and issues of using the wave analogy. What is useful to consider, however, is that today, after years of exposing scholarship by women of colour, lesbian women, disabled women and working class women, the straight, white, middle-class centered, more "mainstream" narrative of the feminist movement, encouraged somewhat by the wave model, has been expelled. However historically (and in some cases even today) the fight for women's rights was seen as a struggle for a particular race, gender, sexuality and class of women. Black women were often seen to be motivated solely by racial equality, and lesbian women similarly singularly motivated by gay liberation, resulting in their exclusion from previous scholarly discussions of the feminist movement. The result was a singular narrative that prospered at the expense of everyone else's efforts. There is no doubt that this understanding has impacted on public memory today, and that this narrative continues to be the most popular interpretation of feminism. It is this contested context that influences my choice of terms for this thesis.

[6] Trysh Travis, "The Women in Print Movement," 278. Kathryn Thoms Flannery, *Feminist Literacies, 1968-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 27.

For the women involved, the existing publishing houses owned and run by men were literally and symbolically oppressing their creativity, freedom of speech, and social and economic advancement. Flannery expands this argument to include the male-dominated, underground, alternative press of the 1960s, which offered an extension of the sexism found in mainstream magazines and newspapers. She quotes an editor of *Off Our Backs,* the 1970s female editorial collective and newsletter, as saying the "so-called radical and movement periodicals usually retain token women on their staffs and print token articles while vital issues wind up on back pages or in wastebaskets."[7] This frustration at the extensive masculization of print resulted in women in the late 1960s seeking their own methods of production: they owned their own mimeograph machines and created their own publishing houses and bookstores.

In doing so, the movement intrinsically tied itself to the feminist objectives and ideals of the period. The Women in Print Movement sought autonomy for female art, writing and printing, and emphasised the need to create their own independent publishing spaces to more accurately and freely document and progress the women's movement. Members of the UK-based collective that produced the *Cambridge Women's Liberation Newsletter* argued that:

> One of the main purposes of it [the newsletter] is that women who felt that they want to write something will be able to do so, and have it published and distributed amongst feminists, sympathetic women. Like, if you feel particularly mad about something that's happened in the news, or you want to talk about a conference you went to, or you feel very strongly about a particular issue – it's a good place to air your feelings. Or if you're doing something in your work which you suddenly find really interesting, you can write about that.[8]

[7] Flannery, *Feminist Literacies*, 27.
[8] Eileen Cadman, Gail Chester and Agnes Pivot, *Rolling Our Own: Women as Printers, Publishers and Distributors* (London: Minority Press Group, 1981), 73.

Aside from autonomy over content, the creation of women-centered publications also gave the women's movement a location, offering their readers and contributors access to the movement and its community. For Agatha Beins, publications "created a space in which feminism's existence could be imagined across different locales" and "gave feminism an existence by showing readers where and when feminism was, is, and will be."[9] In addition, the Women in Print Movement also meant that women were able to progress in an industry that otherwise proved challenging to access. This focus within the industry on revolution over reform meant that "it would create new economic units, shifting both production and consumption patterns to benefit a women's culture that was artisanal, sustainable, and human-scale."[10] An ideological connection to the destruction of capitalism and reclamation of the profits of women's labour was an important feature of the feminism articulated by the Women in Print Movement. Supporters of the movement believed that "they could never be truly free unless they first seized ownership of the means of cultural production and then restructured and de-hierarchicalized that production, liberating the written word from the material regime that had grown up to enforce the oppressive epistemological and moral structures of capitalist patriarchy."[11] For the creators of women's print, gaining control of the printing process meant more than just representing women's voices in text; ownership of the process gave them a stake in the system both creatively and financially.

Flannery and Beins identify 1968 as the watershed year when publications such as *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement, No More Fun and Games* and *NOW Acts* began to circulate throughout the country. These publications, they argue, signalled the start of what would become an expansive print movement and a new location of feminism for many

[9] Agatha Beins, *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2017), 45-46.
[10] Travis, "The Women in Print Movement," 278.
[11] Ibid., 282.

American women. What the scholarship has left out, however, is the ways in which women in prison have interacted with and contributed to the Women in Print Movement. What becomes abundantly clear when one examines the publications produced by incarcerated women is that they feel the same desire for self-representation and self-expression found in feminist and lesbian organisations across the country. Emily Thuma is one of the few scholars to have discussed the role of feminist organisations in women's prisons and in the publications that are produced as a result. Through her research on self-defense and the increased attention it received from the feminist movement, she briefly discusses the zine *No More Cages* and the collective Women Free Women in Prison who started it. However, this is largely from an "outside-in" perspective, which gives an account of the group and why it started the publication, rather than using textual analysis to examine what incarcerated women thought and what they sought to achieve. By approaching these texts instead from an "inside-out" perspective, one can see not only how the feminism enacted by incarcerated women is similar to more mainstream feminism, but also how it differs. Through an analysis of several externally edited zines, this chapter will identify the ways in which women in prison engaged with a broader print movement by creating their own publications with the help of external organisations, and how they used these zines and their prison environment to establish their own ideas about feminism.

## Locating Women's Prison Zines in The Women in Print Movement: The Move to Externally Edited

Where Chapter One focused on in-house prison zines, this chapter examines the externally edited zines that emerged later in the century as a product of The Women in Print Movement. Although prisons throughout the country continued to publish in-house zines, the 1970s saw the creation and growth of an alternative medium. These "externally edited" zines were largely

edited, printed and distributed off-site. With the exception of some LGBT+ zines, whose editorial teams were comprised of more diverse volunteers, the outside organisers were nearly always female; they received no wages and always provided their services on a voluntary basis. These editors were sometimes individuals working alone, but more often worked as part of an organisation that had a specific interest in women in prison. Indeed, some members of these groups had previously been incarcerated themselves or had experience of the criminal justice system through family members or friends.

These new publications emerged in one of two ways. Firstly, there were women's prison zines that grew out of educational programmes. These zines bore some resemblance to in-house zines in that they were associated with one facility in particular with whom they collaborated for workshops, programmes or classes. In these cases, the publication process was still completed off-site, but the entire content comprised of the work done by women at one specific facility. These programmes were nearly always initiated by the external organisations who created the workshops in response to the lack of stimulating or valuable courses provided by women's prisons. Nicole Hahn Rafter has argued that women in prison "have fewer opportunities for job training and work-release; they have less access to social services, visitors and lawyers; [and] they are more likely to be treated as children."[12] During the 1970s, both male and female prisoners received some access to higher education, as "between 1965 and 1973 the number of college level programs in U.S prisons increased more than fifteenfold to 182."[13] Despite this, more often than not the courses offered to women were shaped by sexist preconceptions that limited their education to practical, vocational courses such as hairdressing, secretarial school and kitchen training, which one prisoner in *Women Behind Bars*

[12] Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women, Prisons, and Social Control* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), xxxi.
[13] Lee Bernstein, *America Is the Prison: Arts and Politics in Prison in The 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 76-77.

described as "a joke."[14] External organisations and groups therefore sought to offer incarcerated women alternative courses or workshops that provided them with useful skills or outlets for creativity.

The first group to introduce university-level courses to women's prisons was the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project (SCWPP). Established in 1972, SCWPP was based at the California Institute for Women, Frontera (CIW) and ran credited and non-credited programmes for incarcerated women, most of whom had not completed high school.[15] The founding member, Karlene Faith, began her involvement with incarcerated women after working in the men's maximum-security facility at Soledad. Whilst working with the men, she discovered that they "knew nothing at all of women in prison, not even the location of the one state facility for women."[16] As a result, she started working at CIW in 1972 doing participant-observation research for "up to 14-hours a day" and administered questionnaires and life history interviews with over one hundred women.[17] What she discovered was that the women she worked with felt dissatisfied with the courses on offer to them and the lack of relevant content, with many requesting more content on "women's lib." She therefore established SCWPP as "a statewide educational, political, cultural, artistic, spiritual and entertainment network" consisting of both women and men from all over California.[18] The core group based in Santa Cruz consisted of five women: Faith, Catherine Cusic (Angell), Jean Gallick, Debra Miller and Nancy Stoller (Shaw) who performed the majority of the "organizational and scheduling responsibilities, curriculum planning and liaising with the university."[19] However, over the course of the four

[14] "Introduction," *Women Behind Bars: An Organizing Tool*, 1975, Washington D.C.: Resources for Community Change, 4, http://bcrw.barnard.edu/archive/prison/WomenBehindBars.pdf.
[15] Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1993), 288.
[16] Karlene Faith "The Politics of Confinement and Resistance: The Imprisonment of Women," in *Criminal Injustice: Confronting the Prison Crisis,* ed. Elihu Rosenblatt (Boston MA: South End Press, 1996), 174.
[17] Faith, *Unruly Women,* 276.
[18] Faith, "The Politics of Confinement and Resistance," 174.
[19] Faith, *Unruly Women,* 280.

years, SCWPP had several hundred female and several dozen male volunteers who were not necessarily permanent members, but occasionally gave lectures or ran workshops. This diverse group provided a range of expertise and services on a voluntary basis. They organized poetry readings and dances; designed and coordinated university level programmes with incarcerated women; supported families and those on parole; and applied for funding and donations of textbooks, amongst an assortment of other time and labour intensive activities.[20]

The result was a programme that "broke with all assumptions of traditional penal philosophy."[21] The courses were not centered on "rehabilitation," but rather were designed by the women themselves and provided them with the tools to recognize the systems in place that lead to gendered and racialised discrimination, both in society and within the criminal justice system. Faith explains that "the intended purpose of the SCWPP was to extend to women in prison the benefits of higher education and the empowerment that accrues from gaining political knowledge, recognizing constructive life choices (despite structural goal limitations), and acquiring skills to act on them."[22] One participant of the SCWPP validates this role of the programme, explaining how "groups like the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project are very, very important. Because what they're doing is making people politically aware that they're being used and that they put themselves in positions of being used as pawns in a fucked-up system. Our lives are very restricted prior to being incarcerated and we just didn't know what was happening."[23] The first fifty women to enroll on the programme were "representative of the heterogeneity of the prison population at large."[24] They were between the ages of eighteen and sixty-plus, were serving varied sentences from two months to life, were either white, African American, Indigenous, Latina or Asian, and generally came from financially insecure

[20] Faith, "The Politics of Confinement and Resistance," 174. Faith details the other activities in her article.
[21] Ibid., 177.
[22] Ibid., 179.
[23] Interview with Joanne Johnson, "Inside View," *Women Behind Bars,* 14.
[24] Faith, *Unruly Women,* 277.

backgrounds.[25] Over the years, this initial group of enrolees grew to approximately 100 students a year who were able to influence the curriculum and courses on offer. Supported by both CIW and the University of California, SCWPP offered a variety of classes including Women and the Law, Ethnic Studies, Radical Psychology, Creative Arts and "On Being a Woman." This ideology of the SCWPP programme is in many ways complimentary to the ethos of The Women in Print Movement. It sought to provide incarcerated women with the tools to support themselves financially and emotionally inside and outside of prison. Although not solely focused on the print industry, SCWPP sought to revolutionize the education of women in prison in order to succeed independently of patriarchal oppression, epitomised by the carceral state.




**Figure 2.1: Cover images *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We Are Sisters* (1975) and *no title at all is better than a title like that!* (1974).**

SCWPP lasted just four years, and ended because of continuous harassment and pressure from some of the prison staff, as well as a general sense of "burn-out" from the

[25] Ibid.

volunteers.[26] Nevertheless, the programme had a number of tangible outcomes, including the two publications that emerged from the creative writing programme. Run by course coordinator Ellen Rifkin (Fischman), the class involved creative writing and critical analysis. Faith describes the programme:

> The first section of the course focused on writing skills in the genres of informational articles, poetry, short stories, plays, essays, and autobiography. Tutors offered critical feedback and the students shared their writings with one another and discussed and evaluated one another's work in a supportive classroom environment. The second section of the course introduced students to literary analysis and criticism in a variety of workshops, with such foci as the interpretation of modern fiction, which explored writers of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and primal myths, a study of pre-literature stories of gods and goddesses with themes such as metamorphosis, matriarchal and patriarchal cycles, initiation, rebirth and death.[27]

This description highlights the eclecticism of genres and themes discussed during the course. It emphasises the necessity of the course being broad and experimental in both language and form in order to encompass a vast range of women's experiences. From these extensive classes on creative writing and literary analysis, one of the SCWPP coordinators Debra Miller established a one-off, self-published collection of the women's poetry, short prose and artwork. Faith writes how "after what seemed like endless debates on what to call their book, they settled

[26] In *Unruly Women* Faith details the persistent problems SCWPP had with some of the prison staff. Although the first warden and some of the staff were appreciative of the programme and the groups efforts, some (normally male) guards took a particular dislike to the group, who they viewed as "commie-hippie perverts" and "weird radical kooks" and disliked the opportunities offered to incarcerated women whom they viewed as "stupid convicts" and undeserving of the courses. See Faith, *Unruly Women,* 275-324.
[27] Faith, *Unruly Women,* 193.

on *no title at all is better than a title like that!*" (Fig. 2.1). [28] The ambiguity of the title hints at the women's own desire to reject stereotypes and labels forced upon them. Poetry anthologies were a popular product of The Women in Print Movement and, for Agatha Beins and Julie Enszer, "an important part of the Women's Liberation Movement" more broadly.[29] They quote Jan Clausen's preface to the Iowa City Women's Press's publication *All Women Are Welcome to Read Their Poetry*, which argued that "poets are the movement… [they are] some of feminism's most influential activists, theorists and spokeswomen."[30] The publication and circulation of poetry anthologies helped women establish and share their culture and community. A second publication, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We are Sisters,* was published in 1975 as part of a special workshop run by Diana Block, Arlene Eisen Bergman and a third woman called Karen.[31] The one-off presentation included a slide show detailing the ongoing conflicts in Vietnam and the subsequent effects on Vietnamese women (Fig. 2.1). The participants then wrote open letters to the political prisoners, which formed the basis of the publication. For Block, the organizers "drove away from CIW grieving that [they] were to leave these new, precious friends behind bars."[32] SCWPP was not the only project to release a publication from prison workshops. Similar programmes ran across the country including in New York, Massachusetts, Arkansas and Illinois. These programmes were always connected to one individual facility with whom they ran the workshops, but the subsequent publications tended to circulate beyond the primary institution. *no title at all* appears in an advertisement in both the Vol. 3 No. 1 edition of *Big Mama Rag* and the Vol. 5 No. 9 edition

[28] Ibid.
[29] Agatha Beins and Julie R. Enszer, '"We Couldn't Get Them Printed,' So We Learned to Print: *Ain't I a Woman?* and the Iowa City Women's Press," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 2 (2013), 203.
[30] Jan Clausen, preface to *All Women Are Welcome to Read Their Poetry* (Iowa City: Iowa City Women's Press, 1973), 1, in Beins and Enszer, '"We Couldn't Get Them Printed'," 203.
[31] Diana Block, *Arm the Spirit: A Woman's Journey Underground and Back* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 68. Block does not give Karen's last name in the book.
[32] Ibid., 69.

of *Sister,* evidencing the zines compatibility and inclusion within feminist networks, and The Women in Print Movement, at the time.

The second form of external involvement removed the explicitly educational element. Activist groups operating largely outside of prison, and normally with an interest in women, the criminal justice system, the local community or all three, established zines as a way of communicating with incarcerated women, delivering news and offering help and advice. Zines published in this mode were nationwide publications that took contributions from incarcerated women across the country, with little or no tangible connection to any one facility. The editors then compiled the materials (letters, articles, opinion pieces, poems and artwork) and sent them out to incarcerated women free of charge, and to everyone else for a small fee.[33] Numerous publications fulfilled this role during the past fifty years, including *No More Cages, Through the Looking Glass, Tenacious, Bound Struggles, Black and Pink* and *The Fire Inside*.[34] These publications bore the closest resemblance to the periodicals from The Women in Print Movement. Collated, edited, printed and distributed by women, these zines enacted the movement's aim of women-controlled print production. An article recruiting members to the Women Free Women in Prison Collective detailed the various roles that members perform when creating the zine. They write how "the work involves reading and talking about the articles, poetry, etc. and production work such as layout, proofreading and typing. *You don't need any skills.* None of us had any when we started, and we learned them all" (emphasis in original).[35] In this extract, the group highlights the core ideology of the Women in Print

[33] The cost was normally explained on the front or back pages, sometimes in the banner by the title. All of the prison zines I have come across were given to incarcerated subscribers free of charge. They sometimes also offered free copies to "the poor", expecting people to pay what they could afford. In *No More Cages* they ask for "$1 – more if you can, less if you can't, FREE to prisoners."
[34] Many of these zines are discussed in later chapters. *Through the Looking Glass* and *Black and Pink* are in Chapter Three and *The Fire Inside* and *Tenacious* appear in Chapter Four.
[35] "No More Cages Is in an Emergency Situation," *Womanews*, 1985, Archives of Sexuality & Gender, 20, http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/8t7Xe9.

Movement: the woman-controlled production of all aspects of the print process, and the education and professionalization of fellow female printers.

Established in 1979 by the Women Free Women in Prison Collective (WFWP), *No More Cages* ran for six years and at its peak, was distributed to over twenty women's facilities throughout the country.[36] Similar to SCWPP, WFWP was a group that worked with incarcerated women in New York. As described by one of the members, Charoula, the collective visited women in prison and provided them with materials, organized letter campaigns, and acted as liaisons between incarcerated women and those on the outside including families and lawyers.[37] Unlike SCWPP, WFWP did not run creative writing workshops that facilitated the production of their zine, *No More Cages.* Rather, their publication was a space to "fight against that isolation [within prison] by providing a forum where women inside can speak, and through which they can learn of the similar experiences of women in other prisons." The group also felt that "such a forum will be invaluable to all of us on the outside as well: through it, we can come to understand the forms of oppression coming down on sisters behind bars, we can familiarize ourselves with their struggles, and learn how to organize around and support them."[38] The zine was a tool through which women could communicate and advance the women's movement, whilst centralizing incarcerated women's voices.

Indeed, this was a central concern to the diverse, New York-based community group. WFWP sought to diversify a feminist movement seen as largely white, straight and middle class, in order to better encompass the varied experiences and discriminations that affect women in prison and women in American society more broadly. In their statement of purpose

[36] Juanita Diaz-Cotto, *Gender, Ethnicity, and The State: Latina and Latino Prison Politics* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 380.
[37] Charoula, "Prison Work and the Lesbian Issue: A Personal Statement," in *Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community,* ed. Joan Gibbs and Sarah Bennett (New York: Come! Unity Press, 1980), 44.
[38] "Statement of Purpose," *No More Cages*, March 1981, 1.

the editors write that their "involvement with women in prison has been shaped all along by the awareness of this awesome interrelation of systems of oppression" and that "though women in prison are among the most oppressed of all women, they certainly have not received much support from the women's movement."[39] For the women of WFWP, their involvement in women's prisons and the publication of *No More Cages* provided them with an opportunity to expose these often-ignored experiences and offer a platform to incarcerated women. The statement of purpose goes on to explain that:

> In a movement where violence against women has been a primary target of organizing, women in prison should represent a major share of the struggle, for they are constantly violated, every minute of their days. But such is not the case. The lack of attention on women in prison is directly tied to the fact that much of the work in the women's movement has been done from the perspective of white, middle class women, and so it has not focused on issues primarily in the lives of women of color and poor women—and it is exactly these women that make up the majority of women in prison.[40]

The group's own membership reflected this struggle for diversity and equal representation within the women's movement. In Vol. 5 No. 2, the editors explain how the group consists of "4 lesbians. 3 of us are White Jews. 1 is a mixture of Jewish, Native American and Irish. 3 are working-class, 1 is from a mixed-class background."[41] The women constantly emphasise the need for diversity within the zine stressing that "We need to <u>all</u> share our lives and experiences because all issues go hand in hand (i.e, racism=classism, sexism/heterosexism=racism=

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 1.

classism, etc…) There is never a sole or separate issue."[42] The role that WFWP adopted, and which is outlined in their statement of purpose, identifies one of the core factors that inspired this growth of externally edited zines in this period. During the 1970s, the women's movement began to see prisons as a physical manifestation of patriarchal oppression. Feminists therefore began to interact more with women in prison as they confronted issues of rape, domestic violence, and racism with the criminal justice system. For Beth E. Richie, "behind the razor wire fences, concrete barricades, steel doors, metal bars, and thick plexiglass windows, nearly all of the manifestations of gender domination that feminist scholars and activists have traditionally concerned themselves with—exploited labor, inadequate healthcare, dangerous living conditions, physical violence, and sexual assault—are revealed at once."[43] Thus, according to Thuma, "'self-defense' was a shared and galvanizing rhetoric that transected social movements of the era, from black power to red power to women's liberation" and had its roots in the prison resistance of the period.[44]

This focus on incarcerated women influenced other forms of print culture. Feminist and lesbian periodicals such as *Mother Lode* and *It ain't me babe* regularly featured articles and content related to, or written by, incarcerated women. *Sojourner: A Women's Forum* included a feature in every issue from July 1999 to 2002 called "Inside/Outside" where the stories and opinions of incarcerated women were printed. As a result, by the time *Sojourner* ended in 2002, over 1,000 incarcerated women subscribed, free of charge, to the journal.[45] One subscriber from the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women wrote to *Sojourner* to thank the group

[42] Ibid.
[43] Beth E. Richie, "Review: Feminist Ethnographies of Women in Prison," *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 2: The Prison Issue (Summer, 2004), 438.
[44] Emily Thuma, "Lessons in Self-Defense: Gender, Violence, Racial Criminalisation, and Anticarceral Feminism," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3/4: The 1970s (Fall/Winter, 2015), 55.
[45] Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009), 129-130.

for her subscription: "It keeps me up to date on current issues that affect women daily."[46] In 1975, the organisation Resources for Community Change created a booklet *Women Behind Bars* as an "organizing tool" for abolishing the prison system in America. The introduction states that:

> We chose to focus this booklet on women prisoners for two reasons. First, the problems of women in prison are often ignored because they are a minority of prisoners in a sexist system. We recognize the grimness of the situation male inmates face, and the need for solidarity between men's and women's prison groups. But there is little specific prison information and organizing material aimed at women; this booklet is an attempt to help fill that gap. Secondly, as the women's movement grows in its scope and analysis, it seems vital for feminists to explore the common experience and oppression of women inside and women outside. This means ending the isolation of women in prison, learning from those imprisoned for resistance to unjust conditions, sharing knowledge in order to oppose the sexist conditioning and control which is even more blatant in prison than outside.[47]

This introduction, and the outlined opinions of the creators of *Women Behind Bars,* speak to the wider feminist opinions at the time: incarcerated women are an oppressed, minority group whose thoughts and opinions are often under or misrepresented and combatting this must become central to the feminist cause. Thus, as prison became a new site for resistance, the voices of incarcerated women themselves were increasingly important. And therefore, by representing their voices, the zines gave women in prison access to the wider communities of

[46] Ericka Jones, "Inside/Outside 1999-2001 Project Report," prepared for *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* (Boston, MA), in Law, *Resistance Behind Bars,* 130.
[47] *Women Behind Bars*, 4.

fellow incarcerated women and the women's movement more broadly. The external editing and dissemination of the zines meant that incarcerated women were not necessarily involved in the whole printing process, but their writing reached a wider audience as the zines provided a platform for incarcerated women's voices to be heard around the country. Articles from *No More Cages* appeared in feminist and lesbian periodicals, and women's prison zines frequently included content taken from elsewhere. This broadened the pool from which women were receiving their information and gave them access to a much larger community of fellow incarcerated women.

As well as an increased focus on incarcerated women within the women's movement, a further reason for this shift to externally edited zines was prison politics. As I argued in Chapter One, it is reasonable to assume that in-house zines faced a certain level of censorship from prison staff. Although rarely or explicitly acknowledged within in-house zines, staff were regularly involved in some stage of the editing or printing process, and anything deemed too controversial or provocative would be omitted. Therefore, the appearance of an externally edited counterpart offered incarcerated women the opportunity to write and create free of institutional censorship. This is not to say that there were no repercussions for the externally edited zines and their content. Zines created as part of educational programmes were potentially liable to some level of scrutiny and censorship from prison staff or through more general restrictions on programmes and course content. Faith describes how SCWPP managed to avoid any censorship of course content, apart from the books brought into prison. The course coordinators of the workshops, including those teaching creative writing, had to find ways to bring restricted books inside. Faith recounts how SCWPP members tore the covers from books with radical titles or cover images, as these were more likely to get banned at entry.[48] This restriction of certain materials extended to the zines themselves. The contributors and creators

[48] Faith, *Unruly Women,* 284-285.

of non-educational externally edited zines found that certain facilities, often depending on the whims of prison wardens and officials, frequently banned their publications. Vol. 9, No. 6 of the feminist periodical *Big Mama Rag* gave details of a lawsuit filed against the Ohio Reformatory for Women at Marysville for banning women access to the October edition of *No More Cages.* The article details that the edition allegedly contained content that was critical of Marysville, and that the subsequent ban restricted the "inmates' rights of freedom of speech."[49] An article detailing the same restrictions in Ohio also appeared in *The Lesbian Inciter* describing how "its [*No More Cages'*] contents allegedly pose a 'clear and present threat' to the safety of the penitentiary."[50] This example demonstrates the potential limitations to the supposed freedom that women would gain through an externally edited zine.

Externally edited zines also experienced problems with verifying sources and navigating issues relating to copyright and reprinting. Despite outlining in the opening pages that the editors of *No More Cages* "do not publish material that is racist, anti-gay, anti-Semitic or sexist. Neither do we publish material that might create divisions between women inside, that subscribes to the system's notions of who is 'criminal,' or that reflects society's bigotry against victims of psychiatric oppression", the editors still occasionally encounter problems with their content. In Vol. 2 No. 5, the editors add a note on the penultimate page explaining how:

> Since we published "Vicious Games at Muncy" in our last issue, March 1981, we have gotten letters disputing the facts in that article. We have no way of knowing what exactly happened since we are not inside. The only information we have is from the letters you send us. We decided to print the article because we want to expose the racism that goes

[49] "No More Cages," *Big Mama Rag*, June 1981 (Denver, CO, United States), 7.
[50] Dinah, "Ohio Bans Prison Newsletter," *The Lesbian Inciter,* February 1982 (Minneapolis, MN, United States), 6.

> on in every prison in this country, and the article spoke to that issue. We have chosen not to publish the letters disputing the facts, since we feel that would only continue an already divisive situation.[51]

Issues of truth and authenticity were particularly aggravated by the physical gap between the external editors and the women inside prison. Articles and letters were often taken at face value, as outside groups were unable to substantiate claims that occasionally led to issues such as this. Moreover, externally edited zines also encountered problems with copyright. Although many underground or alternative publications such as *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* frequently shared materials with each other without repercussions, they occasionally faced backlash from individuals and groups who were less blasé about reprinting. In the Vol. 10 No. 4 edition of *Through the Looking Glass*, the editors print an apology to the editors of *Between Our Selves* Aida Wakil and Raymina Mays writing, "We are extremely sorry for reprinting your copyrighted articles without permission. There is no excuse for our irresponsibility and negligence. … If at all possible, TTLG would still like to continue exchanging subs with Between Our Selves. Free women and women locked up stand to lose if all of us do not continue dialogue in the future."[52] Not all publishers were as willing to share materials, especially when, as in this case, the materials get edited and cut without permission. Nevertheless, externally edited zines had access to a much wider base of materials and contacts than in-house zines and were free from much of the institutional censorship. The combination of these two factors—avoiding institutional censorship and the expansion of the women's

[51] "Note to our Readers," No More Cages, May 1981, 44.
[52] Apology Letter, *Through the Looking Glass,* Winter 1985, 4.

movement to include incarcerated women—meant that at least six externally edited zines appeared in the 1970s and 1980s.[53]

## Expanding Feminism in Prison

The relative freedom from censorship and the growth and influence of feminist groups had a significant effect on the content of zines. Certain themes and topics were far more prevalent in the later, externally edited zines. Some of these changes were simply a sign of the times. Topics such as racism and discrimination, drug addiction, and gender equality increasingly appeared in both in-house and externally edited zines during the 1970s, and both featured less content on fashion, domesticity and beauty. However, externally edited zines also included much more content that was overtly critical of the prison system. Articles and letters frequently detailed the failings, inadequacies and prejudices of specific facilities, which led to zines often being banned or restricted (as demonstrated in the previous section). Such content appeared in virtually every edition of the non-workshop produced externally edited zines and was a product of the more uninhibited printing and editing process. In-house zines were not without politicized content, but very few included anything that directly criticized the prison system. Perhaps obviously, this overtly critical content is the starkest contrast to other feminist periodicals, many of which only sporadically featured short articles or sections on prisons. For women's prison zines, however, this was a core uniting factor and concern for incarcerated women and their allies. Contributors and editors therefore devoted much of their pages to discussing incarceration and the criminal justice system.

Externally edited zines (that were not from a workshop or education programme) also worked within a larger network. Where some in-house zines would offer updates on

[53] The externally edited zines from this period that I have found are *Through the Looking Glass, No More Cages, no title at all is better than a title like that!, Voices from Within, From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We are Sisters* and *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery.*

neighbouring facilities, the contributors were always from the individual facility. In contrast, externally edited zines would include letters, art, poems and articles from women across the United States, and regularly featured articles about international social movements. Vol. 2 No. 5 of *No More Cages* includes an extensive article about the prison movement in Greece, and gives updates on Bobby Sands's incarceration in Northern Ireland. These publications bore the closest resemblance to feminist print culture at the time. According to Agatha Beins, "feminist periodicals tended to be explicitly political, be used as mobilizing tools, circulate locally or regionally, rather than nationally, blend a mix of genres, value personal experience, and be created through collective and nonhierarchical editing and publishing practices."[54] The remainder of this chapter will detail how both forms of externally edited zines embrace this textual and ideological feminism in their content, and how incarcerated women's unique environment and experiences adapt it to create a different strand of feminism from behind prison walls.

In many ways, the feminism depicted in prison zines is a reflection of the more widespread concerns and topics related to womanhood that featured in feminist periodicals across America. Topics such as sex work and the controversy surrounding its illegality, and the rise of AIDS in the US and sexual health were regular features of feminist and LGBT+ print and occurred fairly frequently in prison zines. Although both controversial issues, even amongst feminists, zines such as *No More Cages* included informative articles and news pieces about both topics. Vol. 5 No. 5 includes several articles, including reprints, that offer information on various organisations that work to decriminalize sex work and help women engaged in prostitution. The article gives the details of an occupation of a church in Vancouver by the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP), against an injunction that named

[54] Agatha Beins, "A Publishing Assemblage: Building Book History Methodology through Feminist Periodicals," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History and Criticism* 28, no. 2 (2018), 106.

"prostitutes as public nuisances, and anyone who police deem to be soliciting in the city's West End can be arrested and jailed for up to two years if unable to pay the $2000 fine."[55] The article is followed by another piece reporting on the "S.F. Hookers Convention", describing it as an event focused on creating safer working conditions and decriminalizing prostitution. The articles are accompanied by a drawing of the protesting women from ASP, one of whom holds a placard saying, "Just cause the laws are on your side – women won't be locked inside!" (Fig 2.2). Although this topic, as evidenced by the placard, has a direct impact on incarcerated women (some of whom are in prison for charges related to sex work), it is not unique to them. Discussions of sex work in women's prison zines are general and informative, and rarely give the perspective of an incarcerated woman engaged in sex work. In this respect, the articles are similar to discussions of sex work in feminist and LGBT+ print elsewhere, and do not depict a particular perspective from incarcerated women.

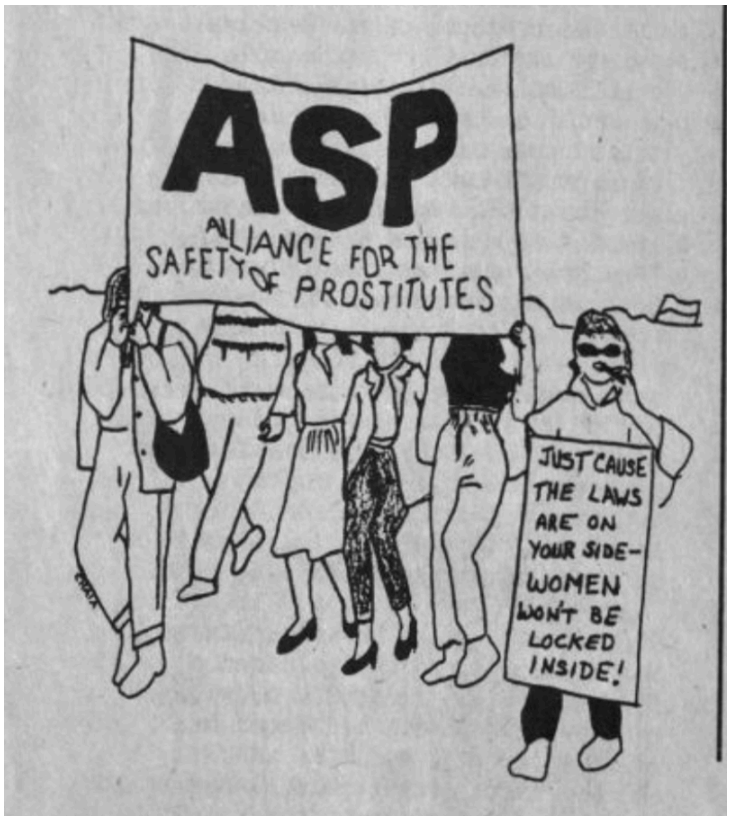



**Figure 2.2: ASP Image "At Home in the House of the Lord," *No More Cages*, Winter 1985, 6.**

[55] Marianne Van Loon, "At Home in the House of the Lord," *No More Cages*, Winter 1985, 6.

Similarly, much of the discussion related to AIDS and sexual health is informative and more generic. Vol. 5 No. 3 includes an article titled "AIDS: What you should know", which gives information on the disease, lists symptoms, and attempts to dispels myths around how AIDS is transmitted. The article concludes with ways in which people can try to prevent contracting AIDS and tips for ensuring safe sex. Yet despite the educational, authoritative sentiment of the piece, the article remains conversational and informal. The author writes "1. When fucking, have your partner always use rubbers. Don't reuse them, use a strong brand" and "If it wasn't designed to go up your ass, don't put it there" (emphasis in original).[56] Although using more expletives, this piece is reminiscent of the advice columns of in-house zines, with the author offering tangible, informal advice to their readership. Nevertheless, the advice offered, although relevant and important, was not specific to incarcerated women. Much as with discussions of sex work, conversations around sexual health and AIDS remained anonymous and factual, providing readers with the necessary facts. Both of these examples demonstrate how women's prison zines included topics that were popular amongst feminist periodicals in the period, but that their discussions of these subject matters did not deviate wildly from popular feminist thought. Articles such as these were focused more on broader education and communication, rather than depicting a particular prison experience. Nevertheless, certain topics and issues included in women's prison zines provided incarcerated women's unique perspectives. These subjects often reflect popular discussions but at the same time offer new, sometimes opposing, opinions and conclusions. The five main topics found in externally edited zines that present this strand of feminism are domestic violence and self-defence; motherhood; mental health; sexuality, and race. Despite zines offering a narrow and often intensely personal perspective on these topics, by analysing this content, it is possible to

[56] "AIDS: What you should know," *No More Cages,* June-July 1984, 6.

discern some of the overarching opinions and experiences that are often overlooked in wider feminist scholarship and debate.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, topics such as domestic violence and rape appear frequently within prison zines. Although particularly pertinent for women in prison (many of whom have some experience of domestic violence or were imprisoned for defending themselves against an abusive partner) this issue was not exclusive to incarcerated women. Feminist periodicals chose to include articles on domestic violence and sexual abuse, but also gave considerable attention to famous court cases involving women whose crimes were related to self-defence and abusive relationships or rape. Feminist periodicals were not alone in this effort. Emily Thuma has argued that violence and self-defence became coalition building topics in the 1970s that united various social movements: "'self-defense' was a shared and galvanizing rhetoric that transected social movements of the era, from black power to red power to women's liberation."[57] Famous defence campaigns such as Joanne Little's, Yvonne Wanrow's and Dessie Woods's were at the forefront of these allied movements, as they could "symbolically represent the multiple oppressions and social justice struggles of the era."[58] Thuma goes on to argue that as the mainstream media neglected to cover these cases, independent media outlets took up coverage, mobilizing support from across the country.

Externally edited women's prison zines like *No More Cages* would also include regular updates on famous cases, sometimes as frequently as every other issue. Seattle-based zine *Through the Looking Glass* included a "Shorts" feature in each edition updating readers with any developments in the on-going cases of women such as Woods, Little, Wanrow and Assata Shakur. As with other feminist periodicals, the zines highlighted these cases as they were seen as representative of the experiences of incarcerated women more generally and received

[57] Thuma, "Lessons in Self-Defense," 55.
[58] Ibid.

nationwide attention because of their intersections with other movements. Moreover, many of these women became icons within the zines, both through the written content and imagery. Hand drawn images of Assata Shakur, Dessie Woods, Joanne Little and Yvonne Wanrow featured regularly in the pages of women's prison zines and came to represent the struggles and strength of incarcerated women, and incarcerated women of colour in particular (Fig. 2.3). Beins has argued the same of certain figures within feminist periodicals. Sojourner Truth, she argues, was able to transgress "borders of race, class, gender, literacy, geography, and religion" and thus was a useful symbol of revolution against various forms of oppression.[59] The repeated use of her image across multiple issues and numerous periodicals was one factor that helped to identify and affirm a collective feminist identity.[60] The use of Truth's image in women's prison zines, however, might have extra resonance. As a free woman, Truth was accused by Ann and Benjamin Folger of attempting to poison them. Truth took the Folgers to court suing them for libel and slander and eventually won. This was one of three instances in Truth's life in which she engaged with the American legal system in court; to sue the Folgers, free her son from slavery, and prosecute a white streetcar conductor for assault and battery.[61] As a fierce legal mind who fought against violence, persecution and racism, Truth joins the imagery of other famous incarcerated women, and Black women in particular, who battled against a gendered and racialised legal system to fight for their rights. As a result, by using this iconography the creators of women's prison zines envisage an empowered, collective, confined, female identity.

However, women's prison zines went further to not only highlight these famous cases, but also to profile the cases of unknown women who were fighting their own legal battles. *Through the Looking Glass* and *No More Cages* included articles on other individual women

[59] Beins, *Liberation in Print*, 131.
[60] Ibid., 62.
[61] Christina Accomando, "Demanding a Voice among the Pettifoggers: Sojourner Truth as Legal Actor," *Multi-Ethnic Literatures and the Idea of Social Justice* 28, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 61-86.

who were incarcerated for manslaughter or murder but who acted in self-defence, such as Sharon Grigler, Janie Painter and Cassandra Peten, who were not as well-known and were not featured as regularly, if at all, in other feminist periodicals. Vol. 3 No. 9 of *Through the Looking Glass* includes a page listing fifteen women who were "Free at Last", all of whom were initially charged with, and in some cases convicted of, killing their partners. The following page lists eleven women who are "still struggling" inside prison. By featuring less well-known women, the zines treat convicted women and their cases more equally and demonstrates that these cases are not unique or extraordinary but are in fact common occurrences within the criminal justice system.




**Figure 2.3: Collection of images taken from *Through the Looking Glass* depicting several women involved in famous court cases: (from left to right) Joanne Little, Assata Shakur, Rita Brown, Dessie Woods.**

As well as articles that give the details of cases second-hand, the zines also included personal accounts from women that gave their perspectives on their cases. Where it was quite rare to hear about individual convictions in in-house zines, contributors to externally edited zines often sought guidance and support from their readers, sometimes offering their own advice based on their experiences. Vol. 2 No. 5 of *No More Cages* includes an article titled "Why Do Men Batter Womens?" [sic] which gives a personal account of a woman's experience with domestic abuse. She writes: "I remember once how my lover nearly broke my jaw, it had to be wired up. After I left the hospital he had went home and was waiting in bed for me. Sex is a wonderful thing if it done in love, not battered and destructive. In spite of all that I loved him. A funny thing about a battered woman, he doesn't make her hate him, she hold [sic] onto

the hope he'll change, but he never does, only worse."[62] The piece is then followed by an update from the author, Juanita Thomas, who was writing from a cell at Huron Valley, incarcerated for killing her abusive ex-partner. By including personal accounts of less well-known women, *No More Cages* not only offers these women a platform to be heard and seek help, but also educates readers as to the extent of cases relating to violence and self-defence.

Motherhood is another topic that contributors to women's prison zines write about in order to educate their readership. Studies have shown that almost two-thirds of incarcerated women in the United States are mothers, and that many of these women are young mothers with young children.[63] It is therefore not surprising that the subject of children and parenting appears frequently within zines, from poetry and artwork, to personal accounts and legal advice. This again reflects popular debate at the time, as motherhood was also a prevalent and divisive issue within the Women's Liberation Movement and feminist periodicals. Having children, not having children, what affect race, class or sexuality has on one's ability to parent, birth control, abortion and free choice were, and continue to be, factors that divide feminist debate. In American society, there is no part of motherhood that is not critiqued and commented on. As S. Jay Kleinberg has noted, "women have been blamed for being too devoted to their children, too neglectful of them, too preoccupied or too focused on them" and Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umanksy have argued that "in the past few decades, 'bad' mothers have moved noticeably towards center stage in American culture. The stereotypes are familiar: the

[62] Juanita Thomas, "Why Do Men Batter Womens?," *No More Cages,* May 1981, 17.
[63] In 2016, sixty per cent of women incarcerated in America had a child below the age of 18, and more often than not, are the primary or sole caregivers at the time of their arrest. Emily Halter, "Parental Prisoners: The Incarcerated Mother's Constitutional Right to Parent," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 108, no. 3 (Summer 2018), 542. It is also reasonable to suggest that these mothers are also disproportionately Black and Latina women, with one in fifteen Black children and one in forty-two Latino children with a parent in prison, compared to one in 111 white children. These figures refer generally to parents of any gender. However, between 1991 and 2007 the number of mothers incarcerated has increased by 112%, compared to 76% for fathers. Sarah Schirmer, Ashley Nellis, and Marc Mauer, "Incarcerated Parents and Their Children Trends 1991-2007," *The Sentencing Project* (February 2009), 2, https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Incarcerated-Parents-and-Their-Children-Trends-1991-2007.pdf.

welfare mother, the teen mother, the career woman who has no time for her kids, the drug addict who poisons her fetus, the pushy stage mother, the overprotective Jewish mother, and so on."[64] Ladd-Taylor and Umanksy rightly note that there is no unanimously agreed upon classification for "good" or "bad" mothers, "whether parents should sleep with the baby, when they should offer solid food, or when a child should be encouraged to read", and yet the strict societal and often public chastising of "unfit" mothers continues.[65]

Nowhere is this stereotype more pervasive than with incarcerated mothers. There are layered judgments against mothers in prison, from the initial committing of the crime, to the type of offense (such as drug abuse), and their sentencing, much of which is reiterated by the system which affirms their inability to effectively or "correctly" mother, ultimately encouraging this feeling in the women themselves. Jeanne Flavin argues that:

> As an official agent of social control, the criminal justice system responds not only to crime but also to transgressions against gender norms. By restricting some women's access to abortion and obstetric and gynaecological care, by telling some women not to procreate and pressuring them to be sterilized, by prosecuting some women who use drugs and become pregnant, and by failing to support the efforts of incarcerated women and battered women to rear their children, the law and the criminal justice system establish what a "good woman" or a "fit mother" should look like and how conception, pregnancy, birth and child care and socialization are regulated.[66]

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[64] Jay S. Kleinberg, "The no-win Mom: motherland in twentieth-century America," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (2006), 390. And Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.
[65] Ladd-Taylor, *"Bad" Mothers*, 5.
[66] Jeanne Flavin**,** *Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 4.

Although, as Ladd-Taylor and Umanksy note, "some mothers are not good mothers … there are women who neglect their children, abuse them, or fail to provide them with proper psychological nurturance," this is not directly correlated to incarceration or criminal activity.[67] In fact, as Joycelyn M. Pollock states, "contrary to the common belief that inmate-mothers had already abandoned their children prior to imprisonment, a large number of women were the primary caregivers of their children before their imprisonment and expect to regain custody upon their release."[68] Nevertheless, this stereotype persists and is particularly damaging and pervasive for low-income women of colour. As Baroness Jean Corston reflected in her 2007 report, "many women [in prison] still define themselves and are defined by others – by their role in the family. It is an important component in our self-identity and self-esteem. To become a prisoner is almost by definition to become a bad mother."[69] Thus the topic of motherhood features frequently within prison zines, as the women attempt to define what motherhood is and means to them: what makes a good mother and how being in prison does not negate their roles as mothers or their ability to parent.

In this sense, discussions of motherhood within women's prison zines deviate somewhat from the more mainstream, white, middle-class discussions at the time. Unlike some feminist debates that argued over motherhood as an extension of patriarchy or an act of female empowerment, or the right to birth control and abortion, incarcerated mothers were fighting to justify and retain their status as mothers. This is all the more pertinent for working class or poor women, women of colour and queer women, and divorced or unwed mothers who, Dorothy E. Roberts argues, "require harsher treatment and are more dispensable."[70] The

[67] Ibid., 1.
[68] Joycelyn M. Pollock, "Parenting Programs in Women's Prisons," *Women & Criminal Justice* 14, no. 1 (2003), 134.
[69] Baroness Jean Corston, *The Corston Report: A Report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System* (London: Home Office, 2007), 20.
[70] Dorothy E. Roberts, "Motherhood and Crime," Social Text 42 (Spring, 1995), 103.

content in women's prison zines relating to motherhood therefore discussed access and parental rights, and the sense of loss, pain and grief that mothers in prison experience. One contributor to *No More Cages* encapsulates this dilemma in a piece titled "Can't I Love??" writing:

> Yet since you are now here [prison], it seems to mean that you do not feel and love. You no longer feel, worry, want, for your children … It's not just relatives who seem to badger the women about giving up their children for adoption. It is the Department of Children and Family Services, ex-husbands, even, in some instances, someone's own mother and father. Suddenly everyone finally thinks that they know what is best for me … I love my child as much as anyone in the world. Somehow, this fact is totally unbelievable… All I'm asking for is a chance. A chance to have my child and not have to fight with everyone about whether or not I love her.[71]

In this piece the author demonstrates how society's views on mothers in prison are unfair and the injustice at having to validate her love for her child. She questions "how can people have such archaic thoughts about love and feelings and responsibility?"[72] In their study on maternal incarceration, Allen et al. found the interviews they conducted with incarcerated mothers were "deeply reflective – often philosophical" as the women describe their feelings of love, pride, concern and also powerlessness for their children. They noted that "many of the women also struggled fiercely with their negative self-perceptions as parents."[73] One letter from a woman at Bedford Hills states that her "daughter is just becoming aware of why 'Mommy' lives away from her upstate. I struggled to keep this child from the moment I conceived her at 15 years

[71] Marla Fender, "Can't I Love??," *No More Cages*, May 1981, 10.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Suzanne Allen, Chris Flaherty, and Gretchen Ely, "Throwaway Moms: Maternal Incarceration and the Criminalization of Female Poverty," *Journal of Women and Social Work* 25, no. 2 (2010), 165.

old. I went into an unwed mothers [sic] home and to a Mother-Child Program. During my stay there, I maintained a job as a secretary. I saved money for an apartment for my child and I took on more responsibility than I could handle."[74] Letters such as this demonstrate the women's personal struggles with their identity as mothers, and their feelings of failure or inadequacy.

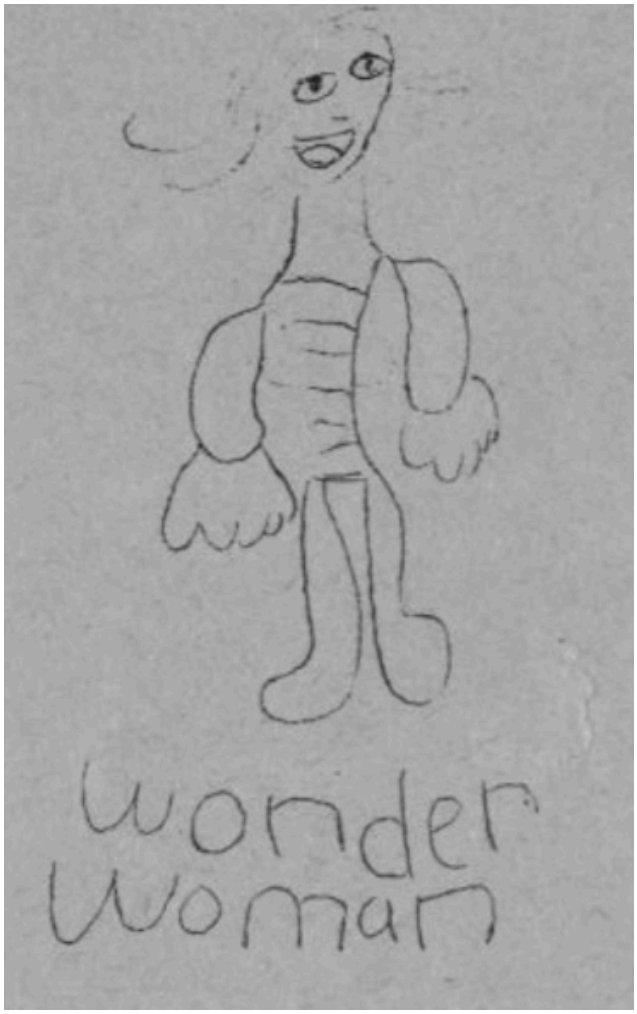



**Figure 2.4: "Wonder Woman," artist unknown, *Through the Looking Glass,* May 1976, 2.**

The advice offered by the editors of *No More Cages* also specifically caters to incarcerated mothers. In Vol. 5 No. 2, the editors give information on the organisation Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM) whose aim "is to help the inmate mother meet her parental responsibilities with the long-range goal of reuniting her family."[75] This organisation is also

[74] Dawn Bryant, "My Story – My Plea," *No More Cages,* Winter, 1985, 21.
[75] "Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM)," *No More Cages,* June-July 1984, 25.

profiled in an edition of *Through the Looking Glass* which itself is marketed as a publication focused on "women and children." This is especially prevalent in the earlier editions, which include writing and drawings by children. These childish images are scattered throughout the publication and are jarring against the often-shocking accompanying text. For instance, Vol. 1 No. 1 includes an article on the rape of a fourteen-year-old prisoner and is accompanied by a simple drawing of a woman, with some of the lines indistinct and the caption "wonder woman" written in basic handwriting (Fig. 2.4). By including the writing and art by children it complicates the dichotomy of incarceration and motherhood: although disturbing in some cases, they demonstrate the broken familial connections and the overwhelming loss experienced by mothers and children. The inclusion of content written by incarcerated youth goes further to demonstrate the damaging cyclical nature of incarceration as children and parents alike end up incarcerated.

The final page of Vol. 1 No. 4 includes a handwritten poem by a mother incarcerated in Oregon and depicts a pregnant mother awaiting the birth of her child:

Is it time?

No not yet.

Is it time?

No not yet.

Is it time?

No not yet!

… It's time.

Are you sure?

Yes, it's time!

Are you sure?

> Yes damn it!
>
> …. …. ….
>
> I can't imagine why you're crying. Women have babies everyday! In "just" two years you'll be with him again, but if you cry over every little thing it might be longer so we can be sure you're stable.[76]

This brief exchange between the mother and prison staff highlights the trauma of pregnancy and birth in prison and the subsequent separation of mothers and babies just hours after giving birth. It also acknowledges the constant threat of permanent separation if the mother is deemed "unstable", again highlighting this fear of inadequacy and of being a "bad" mother. By including the particular issues that arise around pregnancy and birth in prison, incarcerated women highlight an often-ignored aspect of motherhood. In very few instances are women's reproductive and bodily rights so fragrantly dismissed than in prison. By stressing these experiences in zines and complicating regressive or limiting ideas of motherhood, incarcerated women challenge one-dimensional views of womanhood and expand upon feminist discussions at the time.

Profiling the unique experiences of incarcerated women was of central concern to the creators and editors of externally edited prison zines. As demonstrated in Chapter One, whether because of segregation or censorship, the subject of racial discrimination almost never featured in earlier, in-house prison zines. When the process moved outside of prison, however, this topic began to feature more regularly with editors and contributors making a concerted effort to document the experiences of Black, Latina and Indigenous women in prison who have historically, and continue to be, incarcerated at a disproportionate rate. Yet, as with Chapter One, it is difficult to know the extent of the diversity of the women who contributed to the

[76] Nilla Liam, Untitled, *Through the Looking Glass,* September 1976, 10.

zines. The presence or absence of content relating specifically to race or discrimination does not necessarily equate to higher or lower levels of contribution from women of colour and it is not possible to tell from names alone (if they are even given) the race, ethnicity, age, gender or sexuality of contributors, unless they explicitly reference it in the text. It is therefore difficult to reach conclusions as to the level of diversity of contributors. Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that the women who discuss more general prison-related issues or lesbianism or motherhood are not non-white themselves, and without statistics and profiles of the contributors, it remains impossible to know for sure.[77] Nevertheless, there was a significant rise in content relating to racism and diversity in women's prison zines, both from the editors and the contributors suggesting less censorship and more inclusion.

The external editors of *Through the Looking Glass* were particularly conscious of trying to profile the experiences of women of colour in prison.[78] They regularly gave updates on famous court cases, many of which involved women of colour such as Assata Shakur and Joanne Little, and included poetry and writing by well-known women such as Irene Blea-Gutierrez, a feminist and activist who challenged the systemic racism and sexism in the US.[79]

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[77] It can prove difficult to establish the demographics of the editorial team. In an introduction to the November 1979 edition of *Through the Looking Glass* the editors write how "at this time we are 16 collective members. Most of us are white. One woman in Native American. We are from a wide range of ethnic and economic class backgrounds. Many of the people who have worked for TTLG have been locked up for varying amounts of time in our lives." Although this introduction does not go into detail, it suggests some diversity amongst the members. Nevertheless, this changes over time, and in the March 1980 edition the editors explain that "right now we are all white."

[78] Although both zines include content relating to race and diversity, for whatever reason, *No More Cages* has less than *Through the Looking Glass.* Indeed, within prison zines in general, there is significantly less content relating to racial discrimination in the criminal justice system and the disproportionate incarceration rates of Black, Latina and Indigenous women than other subjects. This is perhaps a problem with coming to these materials with my own expectations. With my knowledge of the racial climate in the period and comparisons made between prison abolition and Black Liberation in underground writing at the time, I was expecting this type of content to appear with much more frequency in the zines. However, in reality, sexuality, motherhood, and prison reform are topics that appear far more frequently in the contributors' articles and letters, leaving these important, unanswered questions around diversity and inclusion. The only exception to this is *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery* which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

[79] Barbara J. Love, *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2006), 46.

These pieces, alongside informative articles, aimed to educate their readership as well as offer support and advice. Vol. 2 No. 10 includes an article titled "reality=racism" about the unfair sentencing of Black women in America, with a similarly themed article in the following issue titled "Racism: It Don't Fall From the Sky" giving a brief history of slavery within the United States. The piece ends with five suggestions of how to tackle entrenched racism such as "remember stereotypes you were taught about people of color" and "remember a time that a person of color was oppressed in your presence and you interrupted it and how it felt."[80] The editors of *Through the Looking Glass* were clearly aware of this need for education and discussion, particularly as they chose to dedicate several issues to discussions of racism in the criminal justice system. In Vol. 5 No. 8 they write in the introduction that "this issue is on racism and how it affects women and youth in the criminal justice system." They go on to explain that "the process for this issue of TTLG has been long and sometimes difficult. We began our discussions of racism as a group 2 years ago. We made a decision at that time to prioritize our coverage of racism and to prioritize things written by women of color … to reach out to women of color to become members of TTLG, to work with people of color in coalition, and to produce this issue focusing on racism in the criminal justice system."[81] It was of similar concern for the members of WFWP who also wished to encourage diversity within their network. As WFWP member Charoula writes, "I want to be part of a lesbian community where white women will be developing an awareness which will lead us to concretely work toward achieving a tangible strong basis for unity, so that the distance between Black and white women can start closing up."[82] Discussing racism was not unusual in feminist periodicals at the time. However, discussing the complex intersections of race, gender and poverty that lead to

[80] "Racism: It Don't Fall From the Sky," *Through the Looking Glass*, January 1978, 13.
[81] "Introduction to this Issue on Racism within the Criminal Justice System," *Through the Looking Glass,* November-December 1980, 1.
[82] Charoula, "Prison Work and the Lesbian Issue," 47.

disproportionate incarceration rates was less common.[83] Some periodicals featured occasional content related to women in prison, but this was rarely a regular feature. Women's prison zines sought to centralize the experiences of women in prison and demonstrate that gendered and racialized oppressions manifest most clearly behind bars.

Therefore, in addition to the educational and informative content provided by the editors, *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* both include submissions from incarcerated women of colour about their experiences in prison and American society more broadly. One letter in *Through the Looking Glass* from an Indigenous woman at Purdy, the Washington State women's prison, gives an account of the abuse that she receives from staff at the prison: "when an ignorant prejudiced person makes unnecessary comments about one's culture, it's extremely hard to hold our tongue or fist. One such ignorant person is a white female working the graveyard shift in one of the units at Purdy."[84] An interview in a later edition with a woman called Carol Crooks from Bedford Hills details similar experiences of intolerance and racism from correctional staff. She explains that, "With the administration, white is right here. If they're Black, they have to be a damn good cheese-eater. If they're Spanish, they have to be a damn good cheese-eater. They have to be either one of them flirtatious women who flirts with the wardens or the chaplain or whatever to get whatever she needs."[85] In this account, Crooks explains that in order for Black or Latina women to avoid

[83] Racial diversity within the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women in Print Movement is another area of considerable debate in scholarship, but not something I am choosing to discuss at great length here. Many scholars have rejected the outdated, baseless claims that women of colour were either entirely disengaged with the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s or 1970s or that they only did so independently of the mainstream, white movement (See Townsend-Bell (2012), Becky Thompson (2002), Baxandall (2001) and Enszer (2015).) Although Black, Indigenous, Chicana/Latina and Asian women all engaged with and contributed to the various racial debates, movements and publications at the time, they also championed their own writing and activism that intersected with these various movements and women's liberation. Erica Townsend-Bell has argued that solely viewing the contributions of women of colour in mainstream, white feminist writing in the 1980s as a period of "multiracial feminism" undermines the prolific writing that occurred in the preceding decades that did not necessarily use the term "feminist."

[84] Anonymous, *Through the Looking Glass*, August-September 1978, 14.

[85] Interview with Carol Crooks, *Through the Looking Glass,* October 1979, 14.

trouble from prison staff, they have to be flirtatious with them or be a "cheese-eater," meaning a rat or informer. A similar article exposing the institutional racism in Purdy appears in the 1980 racism edition. They quote one woman describing "When a staff looks at a black girl, it's like they're thinking: 'she's just another dumb nigger, having to do some time.' We start feeling like it's something being held against us personally. And, because of that, you have to play yourself up – like in drafting, all the whites get As and all the blacks get Bs and Cs, even if we do just as good work!"[86] The article goes on to detail the numerous discriminations felt by Black women at Purdy from the education department, to the severity with which women are punished for homosexuality: "if it's 2 white women, nothing is said. Or if it's 2 black women, it's ok. But if it's black and white, there's all kinds of harassment."[87] The experiences depicted in the zines are not just of prison, however. Vol. 5 No. 2 of *No More Cages* includes a letter from "Moving Cloud" to "the sisters imprisoned worldwide." In this open letter the author addresses other incarcerated African American women writing that "All I had as role models have been white people. And this is where we lost respect for ourselves and our people. We were made to feel ashamed of our Black sisters and brothers, made to laugh at Black Sambo and Aunt Jemima. Always portraying the Black woman as a nothing dumbo- and the black man as a smiling, eye-stretching idiot. Some trip they laid on us." She goes on to equate the systemic racism in America to her drug addiction, self-destructive behaviour, and subsequent imprisonment, suggesting that "if we as African women are going to break away from the repeat offender syndrome, we have got to start with changing our thought patterns … to love what we are as fervently as Dr. Martin and Malcolm X did" (emphasis in original).[88] The inclusion of personal accounts of racism within prison and society by women of colour did not necessarily feature in every issue of *Through the Looking Glass,* but did feature far more than

[86] "Racism in Purdy," *Through the Looking Glass*, November-December 1980, 17.
[87] Ibid., 18.
[88] Moving Cloud, "To the sisters imprisoned worldwide," *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 24.

in other feminist periodicals. As prisons were seen as sites of concentrated racial and gender oppression, the editors of externally edited prison zines sought to preference the voices of women inside.

The LGBT+ content in women's prison zines is another topic that evidences the unique experiences of incarcerated women. The letters and writings from queer contributors offer personal accounts of the particularities of the LGBT+ prison experience and are a precursor to the more exclusively LGBT+ prison zines that emerged in the 21st century. The inclusion of content relating to lesbianism and same-sex relationships is in part a reflection of the personal interests of group members, as many of the external organisations were partly or exclusively run by lesbian women. Several scholars such as Valerie J. Korinek and Julie R. Enszer have noted the enormous contribution that lesbian women made to the feminist movement in the 1970s through print culture, despite a widespread lack of acknowledgement at the time. Jaime Cantrell has argued that the Southern lesbian feminist publication *Feminary* worked to document and archive an otherwise obscure area of the women's movement, depicting the "explicit intersectionalities" that the women faced "as blue-collar and white-collar, black, white, and Jewish lesbian feminists in the South."[89] WFWP and *No More Cages* worked towards a similar goal of visibility. WFWP member Charoula explains how the group consists of lesbian feminists, and that "While our immediate identification is with other lesbians, and our energy is best preserved by the support and energy of other lesbians, nevertheless we are women-identified women determined to wage revolution for *all* women."[90] The introduction to Vol. 2 No. 4 of *No More Cages* thanks "all the women of the NYC Lesbian Community" who helped to "get the newsletter out."[91] Such a diverse membership was not unique to WFWP.

[89] Jaime Cantrell, "Subscribe to *Feminary!:* Producing Community, Region, and Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories,* ed. Jaime Cantrell and Amy L. Stone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 314.
[90] Charoula, "Prison Work and the Lesbian Issue: A Personal Statement," 45.
[91] Introduction, *No More Cages,* May 1981, 17.

Other organisations that worked with women in prison, such as SCWPP and The Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists in North Carolina, all had lesbian members in their group, which in part encouraged the inclusion of queer content. For lesbian women, Kate Adams argues, "pouring energy into the Women in Print movement was a life-giving, life-altering activity, creating positive change in individual lives."[92] Creating and contributing to their own publications meant increased visibility and an opportunity for creating tangible social change. The fact that both WFWP and SCWPP had lesbian members and included queer content highlights the often forgotten role of lesbian women in The Women in Print Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement more broadly, but also in the prison reform and abolition movements. For Charoula, "to go in [prison] and support just the lesbians, that indeed would be divisive and destructive" and that "the prison struggle cannot be separated into neatly divided compartments."[93] WFWP's inclusion of queer content is a way of diversifying the women's movement and the prison movement, demonstrating the intersectionalities of womanhood.

Including content on sexuality in women's prison zines, therefore, was a way in which to include queer women behind bars. Yet despite the editors' own personal interests in publishing lesbian content, the letters also suggest a demand for this content from the readership. Unlike subjects such as sex work and sexual health, same-sex relationships appear far more regularly in the writing and letters from contributors. One reader writes how "I saw your ad in 'Sinister Wisdom' and being incarcerated has limited my engender of good gay material. We are prohibited from sending money for subscriptions to this type of reading. My lover and I are both here in Florida, we made a mistake together and have stayed together through 1 ½ years of trials. We greatly enjoy reading and poetry from other magazines, together

[92] Kate Adams, "Built Out of Books," 132.
[93] Charoula, "Prison Work and the Lesbian Issue," 46.

in our own free time. Well, thank you for any consideration. We would appreciate it. Sincerely, A Sister Inside."[94] In that same issue they include another similar letter:

> Ladies, I read your paper, No More Cages, and found it very interesting. A sister here was kind enough to let me read it. It's very hard to get news concerning the gay community. I'm gay and presently serving a 6 year (Y.O.A.) sentence at the Women's Correctional Center in Columbia South Carolina. Homosexuality is forbidden in this prison. The staff here says, "it's unnatural and disrespectful". Gays get hassled left and right here. I really enjoyed reading your paper and finding that others were going through the same. My heart is with you sisters all over the world. I'm proud to be gay and would'nt [sic] have my life any other way. I would be very grateful to receive No more cages if it would'nt [sic] be any inconvenience. A Sister Inside.[95]

These letters demonstrate the readers' desire for LGBT+ content and their appreciation towards WFWP for providing a space.

Indeed, as well as providing "good gay material," women's prison zines also act as a method of communication. As with feminist and queer publications outside of prison, prison zines formed networks and communities in order to unite similarly minded people. One letter from a reader in *No More Cages* is addressed to the editors but is really aimed at contacting the woman's distant partner "Peewee," recently transferred from Baylor Women's Correctional Institute to a facility in Gatesville, TX. She writes: "since she's been there for almost a year we haven't had any contact too much, we lost contact because they've moved her so many times and here where I'm at they don't care to *[sic]* much for homosexuality. They stop me from

[94] Anonymous, Letter, *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 2.
[95] Anonymous, Letter, April-May 1984, 3.

receiving her letters."[96] Although this is a particularly personal example, *No More Cages* acted as a communication tool to reach other incarcerated lesbians, friends and partners. The editors quite clearly state to male readers, however, that the zine is not "a *°**°## dating service. STOP sending us requests for female penpals (or any)" (emphasis in original).[97] For the editors of *No More Cages*, women communicating with their partners was seen to be part of the networking that the zine provided, connecting incarcerated women/lesbians from different facilities across America. Predatory male advances, however, were not.

This effort to form a network and unite women in prison across the United States also stretched to include another demographic of oppressed and confined individuals. Both *Through the Looking Glass* and *No More Cages* sought to include the experiences of women held in psychiatric facilities, emphasising the commonalities between their experiences of confinement and those of women in prison. The 1960s and 1970s saw the growth of the "anti-psychiatry" movement, formed of "ex-psychiatric patients, as well as intellectuals and writers, who organized to advocate for more humane treatment of the mentally ill and to question the very concept of madness and the social control inherent in the psychiatric system."[98] The movement sought to expose and challenge the damaging practises of psychiatric facilities in the United States, "including psychotropic drugging, sleep deprivation, electroconvulsive shock, brainwashing, and psychosurgery."[99] Emily Thuma has argued that this movement became an important site for coalition building during this period, suggesting that "Coalition members joined a growing chorus of prison abolitionists and health radicals who identified the prison and the mental hospital as irredeemable institutions designed to confine and subordinate

[96] Lorene Williams, "To Peewee," *No More Cages,* June-July 1984, 14.
[97] "Attention Men," *No More Cages,* Winter, 1985, 19.
[98] Heather Murray, "'My Place Was Set At The Terrible Feast': The Meanings of the 'Anti-Psychiatry' Movement and Responses in the United States, 1970s-1990s," *The Journal of American Culture* 37, no 1 (2014), 37.
[99] Emily Thuma, "Against the 'Prison/Psychiatric State': Anti-violence Feminisms and the Politics of Confinement in the 1970s," *Feminist Formations* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 27.

racial and economic 'Others,' and they disseminated their critique of how these institutions policed and punished gender and sexual nonnormativity."[100] One important platform for pursing this activism was print. Alexander Dunst writes that:

> *The Radical Therapist, Issues in Radical Therapy* and *Madness Network News* were the media through which protests were organised and where readers looked for like-minded people to start community centres, or shared their experiences as hospital patients. Spreading far beyond metropolitan centres, professional associations or single hospitals, these magazines established regional, national and increasingly international contacts and attracted new participants to the cause. In many ways, they *were* the movement. …The pages of these magazines represented a counterweight to isolation and oppression, and gave marginalised people an opportunity to share their own and learn from each other's experiences (emphasis in original).[101]

These publications interacted with other periodicals in this period, exposing the intersectionalities of institutionalization. Women's prison zines were a key site for coalition building as editors and contributors drew parallels between prison and psychiatric facilities.

Zines such as *Through the Looking Glass* and *No More Cages* borrowed material from publications such as *Madness Network News* in an effort to educate their readership on the various manifestations of imprisonment, including psychiatric. The Oct-Nov 1977 edition of *Through the Looking Glass* includes a piece titled "Chemical Chains" explaining that "The first step in prisoners taking back control of their bodies, thoughts, feelings, and actions from

[100] Ibid., 28.
[101] Alexander Dunst, "'All the Fits That's News to Print': Deinstitutionalisation and Anti-Psychiatric Movement Magazines in the United States, 1970–1986," in *Deinstitutionalisation and After: Post-War Psychiatry in the Western World*, ed. Despo Kritsotaki, Vicky Long and Matthew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 58.

the use of these chemicals is to understand what the drugs are, what are their possible effects, and what are their dangers. This article will deal with this information, and further implications of the ways these drugs are used will be explored in later issues of Through the Looking Glass." The article goes on to explain the different types of "psychotropic drugs" being used against women, and credits *Ain't Nobody's Body But Your Own* for the information. The piece concludes by asking for "any information or reactions to this article… expecially [sic] from people on the inside who have to deal with these chemicals in their daily lives" and is accompanied by an abstract image of a man with a magnifying glass examining the back of a woman's head.[102] The man's shirt is covered with the names of mental health illnesses, psychiatric drugs and treatments, and "$50 an hour" as he personifies the psychiatric system in America (Fig. 2.5).

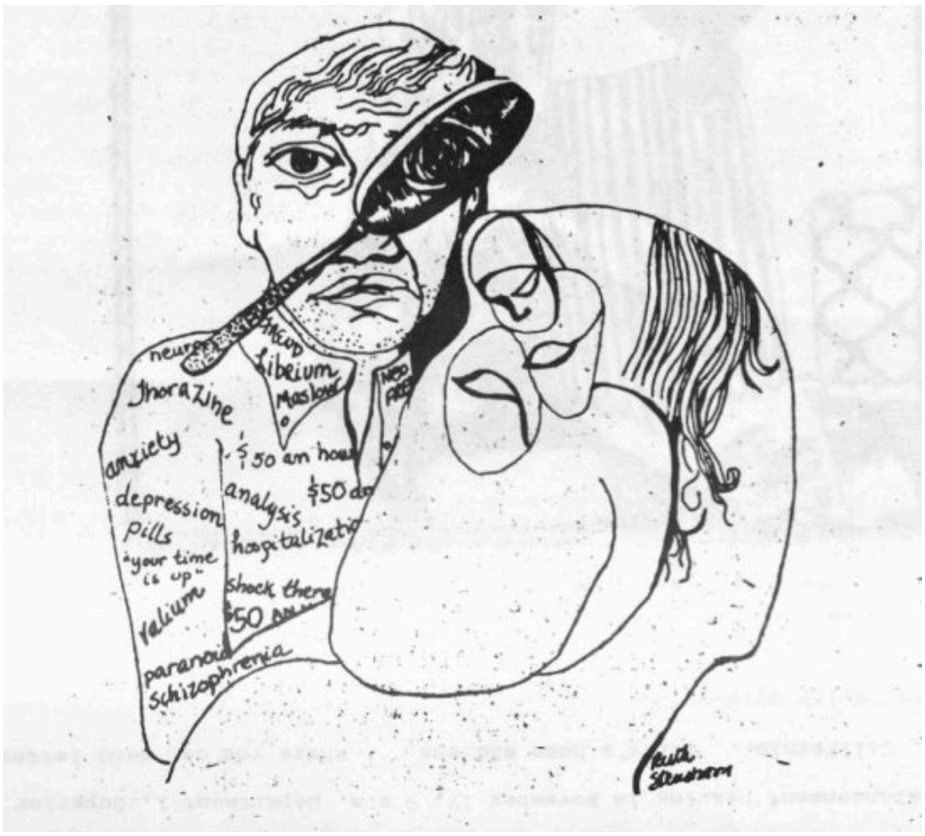



**Figure 2.5: Ruth (last name unclear), "Chemical Chains," *Through the Looking Glass*, Oct-Nov 1977, 8.**

[102] "Chemical Chains," *Through the Looking Glass,* October-November 1977, 7.

In September 1979, *Through the Looking Glass* even went as far as to publish a special issue specifically on "Mental Institutions." In an informatory article also titled "Mental Institutions", the author explains the correlations between psychiatric facilities and prisons writing, "Mental institutions are prisons because they are used for the same purpose as prisons. The primary purpose of mental institutions is to confine people and keep them removed from society. There are numerous medical and social 'justifications' of why mental institutions are necessary but they do not alter the fact that mental institutions are places of incarceration" (emphasis in original).[103] The piece goes on to list the ways in which "mental 'patients'" and prisoners are similar. It concludes, "Prison activists and activists in the anti-psychiatry movement must come to see more clearly the very close links between our struggles", and lists various contacts in the anti-psychiarty movement including "Mental Patients' Liberation Front", *Madness Network News* and *State of Mind*.[104] These correlations drawn between the anti-psychiatry movement and anti-prison movement were established for a number of reasons. Primarily, the editors of *Through the Looking Glass* and *No More Cages* sought to build coalitions between the various movements in order to encourage more intersectional forms of activism in this period. In doing so, they hoped to educate readers on the various manifestations of confinement experienced by women in America and highlight the prejudices that disproportionally effect LGBT+ women and women of colour. Moreover, they sought to offer a platform for these communities to connect with each other and articulate their thoughts and experiences. In a letter to *No More Cages,* Judith Garvey writes, "I have had many experiences during my ten years. I have been verbally and sexually abused by doctors and I have anger and bitterness towards the system. Maybe somewhere somehow we can be freed of the institutions that have harmed us so deeply. I'll close my letter with a quote: 'You can have my body but

[103] Jonnnie James, "Mental Institutions," *Through the Looking Glass,* September 1979, 11.
[104] Ibid., 15.

you'll never have my mind.' Keep up the good work."[105] By connecting with the anti-psychiatry movement, zines like *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* encouraged a sense of community and collective identity based on their shared oppressions and confinements. As the last section of this chapter will demonstrate, prison zines in the 1970s continued to expand this incarcerated community to reach internationally and in doing so, establish and encourage a "sisterhood" behind bars.

## Establishing a Sisterhood Behind Bars

The networks that *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* sought to establish through their pages were founded on a sense of shared experiences and oppressions, and a strong sense of community that in turn offered alternatives to other feminist media at the time. As a result, as well as expanding feminism to include the unique experiences of incarcerated women, the creators of prison zines also sought to establish a sisterhood from behind bars. The editors and contributors attempted to do so through crossing geographical boundaries, frequent use of the term "sister," and establishing links with women internationally. In many ways these techniques are similar to feminist periodicals whose creators also connected women on a wide scale and attempted to establish a sisterhood. Nevertheless, as with attempts to expand feminism, this carceral sisterhood was influenced by the prison environment and shaped to suit the unique relationships between women both inside and out.

A number of scholars have highlighted the role that publications play in locating and physicalizing a movement. Beins has argued that "as maps of the women's liberation movement, periodicals reflected, created, and materialized feminist activism in the 1970s, providing one site where people could connect to the movement."[106] Jaime Cantrell and Ashli

[105] Judith Garvey, Letter, *No More Cages*, Winter 1985, 11.
[106] Beins, *Liberation in Print*, 43.

Quesinberry Stokes develop this argument further in their individual discussions of women's print culture and different geographical centres of feminism. Stokes diverts attention from the dominant narratives and locations of feminism and instead examines the "rhetorics of women struggling to develop feminist selfhood or identities, which are often those located outside of the activism centers."[107] Both Stokes and Cantrell emphasise the importance of periodicals in locating the women's movement in these areas, where a sense of community and community identity were harder to access. Thus, Cantrell argues, these publications "affirmed and produced" a "southern lesbian community: spaces where women met to discuss issues such as collectivity, racism, classism, violence and capitalism."[108] For women who were geographically distant from the central areas of activism, periodicals became sites of feminism. As Baxandall describes, "membership in the women's liberation movement was informal, and most individuals participated by attending events, consciousness raising groups, and demonstrations, rather than general business meetings." She goes on to describe how "groups frequently sprang up without formal connections to others; and the circulation of leaflets, position papers, pamphlets, posters, songs, T-shirts, and buttons provided a major source of common culture and intellectual connection."[109] Print culture and general ephemera became crucial in this construction and maintenance of collective identity and community.

Women's prison zines performed this same role as a physical object and site of feminism and collective identity. Just as Cantrell, Stokes and Beins have each identified new geographical centres and highlighted the corresponding role of print culture, by expanding analysis to include incarcerated women, the full network and diversity within the women's movement is realised. Unlike most women outside prison, those inside were unable to

[107] Ashli Quesinberry Stokes, "Constituting Southern Feminists: Women's Liberation Newsletters in the South," *Southern Communication Journal* 70, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 92.
[108] Cantrell, "Subscribe to *Feminary!*," 312.
[109] Rosalyn Baxandall, "Re-Visioning the Women's Liberation Movement's Narrative: Early Second Wave African American Feminists," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 2001), 226.

participate in any marches or meetings. They could not collect badges, t-shirts or other ephemera, and therefore zines became a crucial entry point for incarcerated women into the women's movement. As prisons separated and distanced women from each other, zines acted as a way to break down physical barriers and connect to a common cause and a community. As Beins has argued of feminist periodicals, "the newsletter *is* the movement", and in the same way, women's prison zines became sites of feminism.[110] Moreover, this site of feminism is shaped by and for an incarcerated readership, as the content is aimed at highlighting their experiences and educating others. The importance of this prison-centred feminism is emphasised in the letters sent to *No More Cages,* which thank the publication for providing an important space for incarcerated women. In Vol. 5 No. 3, one reader comments "I was kicking back in my cage when a friend turned me on to your rag. I must admit I was impressed and read your libre word per word. I never realized how bad other women had it throughout other joints – Shit."[111] Similarly, another letter states "I truly enjoyed reading your paper and would look forward to receiving a copy in the future. This newsjournal will be passed around to my fellow inmates in this institution so they can be enlightened to the changes our sisters are going through in other prisons throughout the United States."[112] *No More Cages* became a site for reliable information on prisoner activism and communication. As one letter attests, "Here I am in Indiana Women's Prison looking for a good women's prison newsletter to keep me posted on what going [sic] on in other women's correctional institutions. And Guess Who I have chosen? The one and only No More Cages."[113] Another writes: "I do not think I can make it. Pray for me, please. I need a friend. Please send me your women's prison newsletter. Thanks a lot. A girl let me read your book. I like what I seen in it. May God Bless you all. A Sister

[110] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 51.
[111] Letters, *No More Cages,* June-July 1984, 2.
[112] Ibid., 3.
[113] Arlene Baker, Letter, *No More Cages*, April-May 1984, 8.

Inside."[114] These examples demonstrate the desire for publications that document the experiences of women in prison specifically, and also evidence the internal circulation networks that happen behind bars and the sense of support that the publication offers. Women share and borrow the zines in order to reach the largest audience and take comfort in the solidarity offered.

Nevertheless, women's prison zines were not designed solely with an incarcerated readership in mind. They were intended to reach women outside of prison as well. This role of the zine was well known to the editors of *Through the Looking Glass* who, in Vol. 6 No. 3, included an article on communication describing the particular difficulties that incarcerated women have communicating with those outside and connecting to a movement. They write, "communication between inside and outside is a frustrating issue for prisoners and prison workers. Both groups are familiar with the cycles of rumours, miscommunications, delayed information and divisive tactics used by authorities that disrupt our work. There seem to be few answers for coping with our massive communication problems - - only lots of questions." Yet they conclude that "this article is a beginning word on the subject, not the last one. We are interested in hearing from prisoners and prison workers on how we can resolve the communication problems that exist, and move on to the work that we need to do."[115] This idea of connecting across prison walls is reiterated in Vol. 2 No. 5 of *No More Cages,* which includes an article by a woman incarcerated in a facility in Indiana detailing the on-going sexual harassment she and others had received from prison guards at the facility. At the end of the piece, the author writes that "this is not merely a prisoners [sic] issue. This is a women's rights issue. The right to be free from sexual harassment and exploitation... it is necessary that I have support from my sisters throughout the nation who are in agreement with me on this issue."[116]

[114] Anonymous, Letter, *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 19.
[115] "Communications?," *Through the Looking Glass,* May-June 1981, 19.
[116] Carol Ann Wilds, "Sexual Harassment," *No More Cages,* May 1981, 41.

In this example, it is evident that the author is seeking to reach a wider readership who have an interest in women's rights, fitting her experiences into a broader narrative of sexual violence against women. In doing so, the incarcerated contributors are able to demonstrate the relevance of their experiences to the broader values of the Women's Liberation Movement, whilst also centralising the experiences of women in prison in the movement's narrative. Externally edited zines such as *No More Cages* created a space where incarcerated women could locate the women's movement *and* shape it to fit their expectations.

The ways in which zines discussed geographical sites of feminism was also similar. Like women in prison, outside members of the women's movement who were not near centres of activism were often unable to engage in the meetings, protests, marches or boycotts. They therefore sought engagement through the pages of the periodicals, which gave details of events, locations of meeting places, feminist bookstores and women's centres, as well as local resources and materials. Much of this content was intended specifically for members of local chapters of the women's movement who wanted to learn about nearby activism and communities in their area. However, as incarcerated women were unable to engage with local politics or activism, prison zines did not supply details on nearby events or centres. Instead, editors adapted the content of the zines to be more relevant and useful behind bars. Both *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* regularly included a list of resources and all of the publications that were freely available to women in prison. This list included mainly lesbian feminist periodicals, including *Sinister Wisdom, Feminary,* and *Azalea,* and over time, grew to list over thirty publications. Similarly, Vol. 2 No. 5 of *No More Cages* includes details of a new publication *Writing for Rights: Voices Behind Prison Walls* aimed at "breaking down the walls that separate those of us imprisoned inside from those of us imprisoned outside."[117] These examples not only demonstrate the vast number of publications that were available to, and

[117] "Sisters of Inner-Connections," *No More Cages,* May 1981, 5.

aimed at, incarcerated women, but also suggests that, in lieu of the physical involvement that was unavailable to women in prison, publications and zines became the primary source of feminist activism and engagement that the women received. The zines were also the primary method of contact for establishing a community, which furthered their role as a site of feminism. Beins and Enszer argue that for Iowa-based periodical *Ain't I A Woman?,* "the objective in publishing was not just to distribute as many copies as possible at as low a cost as possible, but to build a community of activists."[118] I discuss this idea of communication and collective identity at greater length in Chapter Three and establish women's prison zines as collective autobiography. However, it is important to note that this role was also prevalent in feminist publishing as a way to establish and maintain the movement. By encouraging women to write to and engage with the zines, women's prison zines and their editors were able to establish a network of likeminded women and incarcerated contributors could thus seek solace and advice from women in similar situations.

This sense of community was heightened and emphasised by the use of the term "sister." According to Agatha Beins, during the 1970s "sisterhood was everywhere: in feminist books, pamphlets, periodicals, correspondence, and song lyrics; on bumper stickers, clothing, jewelry and watches, posters, and key chains; in the names of feminist businesses and organisations."[119] This pervasiveness also extended to women's prison zines. Letters were often addressed "Dear Sisters" and signed "A Sister Inside", "A Sister Alone in Darkness" or "Your Sisters" and calls for support frequently appealed to their "sisters." Publications used the term, Beins argues, as a way of establishing a collective identity and envisioning an idealized community and movement. An article by a woman incarcerated in Florida reiterates this idea by appealing to fellow incarcerated women, writing "Sisters wake up, we need to join

[118] Beins and Enszer, "'We Couldn't Get Them Printed,' So We Learned to Print," 192.
[119] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 91.

hands and receive what is rightfully ours … We need change and the only way we can get this is by joining together. They might slow us down, separate us bodily, threaten us with illegal promises or revoking privileges, but they will never stop us. Sisters Unite!!"[120] Beins also argues, however, that women used the term as a way in which to critique this collectivity and tackle the limitations of "sisterhood" itself.[121] As a term, Beins argues, "Sister" is fraught with complications, as it has historically excluded "primarily but not exclusively women of color, poor women, and lesbian women."[122] Sisterhood within the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s is most often seen as aspiring to be a united, balanced relationship based on kinship and the inherent similarities of womanhood. However, as Lynet Uttal rightly notes, it is the experiences of white, middle class women that define these commonalities, and in doing so, erase any sense of difference or contrast, including the experiences of minority women.[123]

There is occasional evidence of a similar critique within women's prison zines, as some contributors problematize the inclusiveness of sisterhood. One piece titled "Sister, Can You Hear Me" asks "And i wonder do i really have any sisters? And i wonder for all of us in here do we really have any sisters? Or was it only in some vague and unreal dream where i XPERIENCED/WITNESSED [sic] some beautiful and magical circle of SISTERS that gathered their energies and sang good songs of how they know about the anger of their sisters in prisons, how they felt, how they cared" (emphasis in original).[124] In this piece, the authors are articulating the limitations of sisterhood for women in prison who, they feel, have been forgotten by the women's movement. "Is there anyone out there that can come in here as a free person to teach/share classes of movement?" they ask, suggesting that "if it helps for some of

[120] Marla Fender, "Women Behind Bars in Florida," *No More Cages*, March 1981, 2.
[121] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 95-97.
[122] Ibid.*,* 92.
[123] Lynet Uttal, "Nods That Silence," in *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color,* ed. Gloria Anzaldua, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute): 317-20, in Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 98.
[124] Flying Thunder Woman and The Captured Racoon, "Sister, Can You Hear Me," *Through the Looking Glass*, September 1979, 20.

y'all to forget about the thief i've been, as the doper i've been, the who-knows-what-else that i've been, then think of me and the # in this prison that i am now."[125] The authors of this piece are questioning the real bounds of sisterhood, suggesting that, as incarcerated women, they are rejected from the movement and overlooked by their sisters outside. As such, there is sometimes greater emphasis placed on a specifically incarcerated sisterhood. One letter in Vol. 5 No. 5 from previous contributor Ramona Bolden explains how:

> It truly made me feel good just knowing that I put fourth [sic] an effort to the sisters and brothers that are going through so much oppression, degradation, racism and so much more. I feel that unity among inmates would be the first step in the right direction in overcoming our oppressors. As long as we fight and keep confusion between ourselves, we'll never move ahead. We as a whole have more strength and bondage than our oppressors; and believe me they know this. As long as we're divided, they will never fear us but once we realize that together we're stronger and form a great threat, we may get some better results.[126]

This letter suggests that for Bolden, overcoming oppressions requires unity and collaboration between incarcerated individuals, rather than a specifically female sisterhood. Indeed, one letter in Vol. 5 No. 2 of *No More Cages* explains that the writer "has no one on the outside" and that she "need[s] a friend" and requesting to be sent a copy of the zine.[127] In the final editions of *Through the Looking Glass,* the cover caption identifies the publication as "a women's prison support network and quarterly paper" insinuating that that zine functions as

[125] Ibid.
[126] Ramona Bolden, Letter, *No More Cages*, Winter 1985, 13.
[127] Anonymous, Letter, *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 19.

more than a publication, physicalizing the network of women that contribute to and read its pages.

This emphasis on an incarcerated sisterhood or community also reaches internationally within zines. Although patriarchy and gendered oppressions are some of the core unifying features within women's prison zines, the editors of *Through the Looking Glass* and *No More Cages* also sought to unite the oppressions and experiences of women in prison all over the world. The editors included updates and information on international social justice movements from across the globe, including Central and South America and Africa. Vol. 9 No. 2 of *Through the Looking Glass* includes various brief pieces on colonization and the discrimination against Black women in South Africa, a Sri Lankan women's march involving over 500 women, and the arrest of dozens of women in Chile on International Women's Day. These various articles, reprinted from elsewhere (*Womanews, Off Our Backs*), attempted to demonstrate the commonality of womanhood and the universality of gendered oppressions. Beins and Enszer have argued that feminist periodicals in the 1970s and 1980s included international struggles in an attempt to demonstrate the intersectionality of the "different forces that privilege and oppress women." However, they note that often these attempts at seeking a universal sisterhood can be counterproductive, as this "commonality (usually oppression by the patriarchy) is presumed to unite women throughout the world" despite differing experiences and more nuanced manifestations.[128] For externally edited prison zines however, they also include information specifically related to incarcerated women internationally. Vol. 9 No. 2 of *Through the Looking Glass* includes an article on a women's strike in Jerusalem against poor conditions in a Palestinian women's prison. The article details the brutal conditions of the prison, and then the powerful resistance of the women striking on their behalf: "The women

[128] Julie R. Enszer & Agatha Beins, "Inter- and Transnational Feminist Theory and Practice in Triple Jeopardy and Conditions," *Women's Studies* 47, no. 1 (2018), 25.

are a diverse mixture of old and young, Palestinian and Jewish, some dressed in jeans and sweatshirt, others in traditional Beduin dress and scarf, some defiant and angry, others quietly weeping. What they all share in common is their concern for the fate of the Palestinian women prisoners in Neve Tretsa prison near Ramleh."[129] In this extract, the shared commonality is the incarceration, which unites the women inside and out, as well as the women of *Through the Looking Glass* and their readers, who also seek to liberate women in prison. Similarly, Vol. 2 No. 10 includes an article on "Women Prisoners in Latin America." The article concludes by saying "there are many ways for us to support the women, and all people, of Latin America fighting for the return of their freedom and their countries. International pressure has won the release of many prisoners and it must continue. Letters can be written demanding an end to the torture and imprisonment of all people" and proceeds to list several addresses.[130] Again, the unifying feature of this piece is not so much gender, but rather all prisoners in Latin America and worldwide.

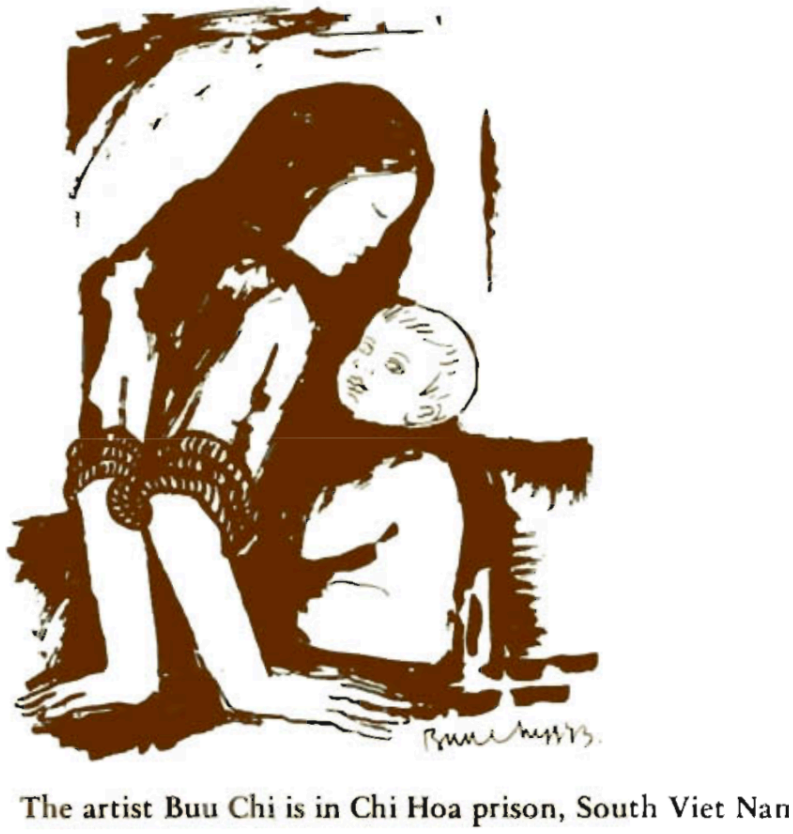
This sense of a unified, international incarcerated community and its supporters is especially evident in the SCWPP publication *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We are Sisters.* Diana Block visited CIW, along with her colleagues Karen and Arlene, to present a slide show about Vietnamese women as part of their group Women Arise. Block worried that the presentation "would seem distant and abstract", but instead found that the women "laughed uproariously at the traditional patriarchal saying: 'one hundred women are not worth a single testicle' … were angered by slides showing women being raped by American GI's," and "cheered at the picture of the small woman who had captured the B-52 pilot."[131] When they began discussing "women in cages—the prisoners being held by the South

[129] "Palestinian Women's Prison Strike," *Through the Looking Glass,* July 1984, 8. In this instance, I believe they are referring to Neve Tirtza Prison, the only women's prison in Israel located in Ramla.
[130] "Women Prisoners in Latin America," *Through the Looking Glass*, December 1977, 8.
[131] Block, *Arm the Spirit*, 68-69.

Vietnamese government because of their political resistance—the discussion exploded in an angry denunciation of rape, torture, and the imprisonment of women all over the globe."[132] Block writes how the organisers came away feeling victorious that for a few hours they had transcended "the barriers that male powers had erected between oppressed women in different parts of the world."[133] The publication that followed the workshop included all of the women's letters to the women in Vietnam, and was printed in 1975 by The People's Press. The dedication is to Hien Long, who wrote the introductory lines "sing out again so our hearts may burst into flame/And our burning blood may finally melt these chains," and to "all other women in prison."[134] The zine is specifically for the correspondence between women at CIW and women incarcerated in Vietnam, yet, as the dedication suggests, is intended to be applicable to incarcerated women throughout the world. In the introduction, written by workshop leader Arlene Eisen Bergman, she explains how, on her visit to Vietnam, "over and over our Vietnamese sisters told us, 'Your struggle is our struggle. Your victories are our victories.'" She goes on to explain that when visiting the headquarters of the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government) in Hanoi, a group of South Vietnamese women "openly cried for the pain of their sisters in CIW" and "smiled" upon hearing of the women's resistance "eager for more good news."[135] Bergman is keen to evidence the commonalities between the women at CIW and women in Vietnam, suggesting that women in prison in the United States and in Vietnam are all victims of US imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy. She quotes member of the Executive Committee of the Women's Union for the Liberation of South Vietnam Bui Thi Me writing, "We're part of a world-wide family of militant women. We here in Viet Nam [sic] follow the women's liberation movement in the U.S. very closely. Your movement and ours

[132] Ibid., 69.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Dedication, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We are Sisters*, 1975.
[135] Arlene Eisen Bergman, Introduction, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam,* 1.

are complementary. The ocean cannot separate our emotions of unity."[136] Following the introduction, the first half of the zine comprises typed and handwritten letters from the women at CIW who each emphasise their solidarity with the Vietnamese women against a "common enemy."[137] One woman writes "I too am in prison within the prison of Amerika … As a child, I was brainwashed – but now, through sisters here and abroad, I learn more every day."[138] By referring to America as a prison, and using the alternative spelling with a "K", the author is identifying the country as a whole as a repressive system and echoing a lot of the Black Liberation rhetoric at the time: even outside of prison, American society is no freer for people of colour. Indeed, many of the contributors reference their race in the letters, coupling their struggles as Black women with their resistance to the Vietnam War.



The artist Buu Chi is in Chi Hoa prison, South Viet Nan

**Figure 2.6: Image by South Vietnamese artist Buu Chi, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam*, 15.**

[136] Ibid, 2.
[137] Lolita Cabral, Letter, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam,* 6.
[138] Karen Lessinger, Letter, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam,* 7.

The second half of the zine includes a letter from The Vietnam Women's Union, which reiterates the united resistance against the United States, explaining that "every activity against the enemy, every victory won by you constitutes a source of great encouragement and assistance to our Vietnamese people."[139] The zine concludes with information on Thieu's prisons in Vietnam and CIW, and suggestions of how to help the women and protest against the war. The zine also includes various images throughout. Some are hand drawn and taken from *no title at all* or *Clarion,* and others are generic images related to chained women and political prisoners. The cover image is in bright orange and red and depicts a circle of women holding hands and raising their fists, some wearing nón lá: the traditional Vietnamese hat (Fig. 2.1). This image, the inside cover notes, was printed on scarves by the San Francisco Women's Union for the women in Vietnam as a "solidarity gift" and are seen on a group of women in a photograph a few pages later. Despite this more obvious imagery on the cover, some of the pictures in the zine are more personal, and work to emphasise the collaborative, cross-cultural intention of the zine. Page 15 includes a drawing of a woman and her child, provided by a prisoner in Chi Hoa prison, South Vietnam (Fig. 2.6). Similarly, the photographs seemingly manage to resist any stereotype or ambiguity more commonly found in some feminist periodicals. Beins lists four recurring features of the imagery relating to Vietnamese women in feminist periodicals: they regularly include guns or weapons; have vague captions or no captions at all; are set against a rural, agricultural backdrop; and frequently include children. These features, Beins argues, positioned Vietnamese women as a "radical Other," utilized by "American activists" to imagine "new political identities and new ways of organizing society."[140] The photographs in *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam,* however, feature neither guns, children, nor agricultural backdrops, and have detailed descriptions

[139] The Vietnam Women's Union, Letter, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam,* 16.
[140] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 140.

beneath each image explaining the photographs' content and giving names of the women (Fig. 2.7). This was not common for all women's prison zines however. It is only this one edition of *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam* that has this international collaborative element. However, it does emphasise, on a greater scale, the carceral sisterhood that is encouraged by various other prison zines.



My is the second woman from the right. The other women are from the Viet Nam Women's Union and the PRG delegation in Hanoi. Scarves are a solidarity gift from the San Francisco Women's Union.

**Figure 2.7: Photograph, *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam*, 3.**

## Conclusion

After running concurrently for several years, both *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* had ceased production by the 1990s. As with SCWPP, both organisations had struggled financially, and regularly appealed to their readers for help with costs, editing and printing: "Sorry we're late" the editors write in Vol. 5 No. 2 of *No More Cages,* "the reason is because we're trying to get some money. A benefit is happening, in support of No More Cages. It is

being put on by a Coalition of Womens [sic] groups who include: Asian Lesbians of the East; Di Yiddishe Shvestern (The Jewish Sisters); Salsa Soul Sisters Third World Women, Inc. and Dare (Dykes Against Racism Everywhere)."[141] In the final edition of *Through the Looking Glass* in 1987, the editors write "it is with sadness and regret that we tell you this is the last issue … Two or three of us is not enough to carry on with all the work involved in putting it out, which involves funding, publicity, doing the mailing list, and innumerable other tasks."[142] A few years later, the reverberations from the absence of both zines were still being felt by groups across the United States. An issue of *Gay Community News* features an article addressing the absence of *No More Cages* and *Through the Looking Glass* writing:

> Until a year or so ago there were two excellent support groups for women in prison, each with its own newsletter that gave insiders and outsiders a forum for both social and political communication as well as for individual/personal relationships and support. Now, both are gone. It's a sign of the times… These two losses are serious, for all of us, not just for women in prison. They allow the further isolation of members of our community to a place where the only "news" comes from the prison Public Relations office.[143]

This piece laments the loss of the zine and reiterates its crucial role as a communication tool for individuals inside and out of prison. But like the Women in Print Movement, this network and aspiration did not die with the end of these zines. According to Kate Adams, despite the Right-wing backlash in the 1980s, the Women in Print Movement continued to progress

[141] Linda, Bonni, Chaia and Karyn, "Dear Sisters Inside," *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 1.
[142] "Last Issue!," *Through the Looking Glass,* Summer 1987, 2.
[143] "Now More than ever…," *Gay Community News,* August 23-September 5, 1987 (Boston, MA, United States), 16.

throughout the remainder of the century and in doing so, "created some of the most lasting alternative institutions of cultural feminism."[144] In many ways, this movement could be seen as a precursor to the growth of zines in the 1990s. This new incarnation of self-publication and self-articulation, influenced, as Elke Zobl argues, by "other artistic, social, and political movements such as dadaism, surrealism, situationism, agitprop, anarchism, and punk, in addition to lesbian, queer, and transgender liberation movements", reflected some of the key philosophies of the Women in Print Movement. Women's prison zines have also reflected this steady continuation, with many other zines appearing in the 1990s and 2000s reflecting their historic and ongoing relationship to the Women in Print Movement. Indeed, as this chapter has demonstrated, women's prison zines incorporated many of the key aspects and ideologies of the Women in Print Movement in their own publishing and distribution methods. Incarcerated women engaged in externally edited zines as a way in which to seize control of the process and centralize women's efforts.

"Sisterhood is powerful" became a rallying cry for members of the women's movement in the 1970s, and yet as scholars have noted, this sisterhood was perceived by many to be exclusionary or lacking in diversity.[145] Nevertheless, what women's prison zines in this period show, is that sisterhood, when built on confinement and shared adversity, was a powerful and uniting force for many incarcerated women. Like the sisterhood of the women's movement, this sisterhood was not all encompassing and did not have the same effect on all women in prison. For some, however, it offered a sense of community and belonging that other groups, environments and movements did not by vocalizing incarcerated women's opinions and experiences. By expanding popular feminist debates of motherhood, mental health, race,

[144] Adams, "Built Out of Books," 136.
[145] See Hazel Carby, "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," *The Empire Strikes Back: race and racism in 70s Britain,* London: Hutchinson (1982) and Nancie Caraway, "The Challenge and Theory of Feminist Identity Politics: Working on Racism," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 12, no. 2 (1991).

sexuality and self-defence to include and centre incarcerated women, zines questioned the limitations of certain, more mainstream manifestations of feminism. The contributors and editors of externally edited zines sought to add the experiences of incarcerated women to these discussions in order to highlight the pervasiveness of domestic violence and cases of self-defence; challenge rigid ideas of motherhood and the damaging labels forced upon incarcerated mothers; demonstrate the unique challenges brought upon incarcerated LGBT+ people and women of colour inside of prison; and engage with issues of mental health and a fellow community of confined individuals. In doing so zines vocalized a specific strand of feminism, shaped by women's incarceration that challenged dominant ideas of womanhood, liberation and collectivity. As the next chapter goes on to demonstrate, this textual community defines women's prison zines as collective autobiography: a genre shaped by incarcerated women's interactions with prison time and space and the desire for a collective identity.

*Chapter Three*

# "Sister Can You Hear Me?": Women's Prison Zines as Collective Autobiography

There are women here of young and old

Telling their stories of the untold

- Phyllis Winfrey, "On the Grounds at Huron Valley" [1]

The particular environment of the prison is one structured around negotiations of time and space. From the food hall to the cell, and from the recreation yard to the editorial office, spaces structure and define life in prison, whilst time becomes something to "get" and "do," a tangible force that acts separately from "street time."[2] Foucault has argued that the intended environment of a prison is designed to isolate and disempower the prisoner, eroding any sense of identity and eliminating personal relationships.[3] For incarcerated women, the majority of their spatial and temporal interactions behind bars are allocated and prescribed by those in positions of authority. Events such as eating, showering and exercising rigidly structure a prison day minute by minute, whilst events such as visiting days differentiate longer periods of time. These activities navigate carceral spaces as women are confined and supervised at all times. Nevertheless, incarcerated women find new, autonomous ways to demarcate the passing of time within the confines of institutional scheduling and inscribe new meanings to spaces that allow for expressions of community and individuality outside of prescribed roles such as

[1] Phyllis Winfrey, "On the Grounds at Huron Valley," *Determined Action for Women Now*, March 1985, 9.

[2] From his own experiences of "doing time," Rik Scarce defines four types of time in jail: "administrative" (the official, bureaucratic time of the facility), "inmate" (when individuals in prison are able to interact with each other), "individual" (influenced by the former times and refers to how individuals mentally manage their prescribed time) and "street" (the clock and calendar time happening outside of prison). Rik Scarce, "Doing Time as an Act of Survival," *Symbolic Interaction* 25, no. 3 (2002), 305.

[3] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London: Penguin Books, 1977.

prisoner or woman.[4] These acts can include engaging in extracurricular activities, using communal spaces for prohibited activities such as smuggling food, or decorating cells with personal objects, calendars or posters. This chapter will consider how incarcerated women use the publication, distribution and consumption of prison zines to navigate carceral temporalities and spaces. I argue that by doing so, they establish a form of "collective autobiography," a term used here to encapsulate the collective, polyvocal, and intensely personal narratives that emerge from behind bars. This collective autobiography established by prison zines is not necessarily symptomatic of the incarcerated female experience as a whole. But rather, the gathering and centring of incarcerated women's voices in zines creates a community of women who are able to share, connect, advocate and even disagree.

In this chapter I argue that collective autobiography is a product of incarceration and is shaped by the idiosyncratic aspects of prison time and space. The physical and ideological space of the literal prison and the textual prison zine engender multiple manifestations of community and (dis)harmonious content, while the ambiguous, dislocated nature of prison time disrupts traditional, linear timeframes and autobiographical forms. The result is a genre that both incorporates and discards formal autobiographical structures. Collective autobiographies reject individual authorship in favour of multiple, regularly changing authors with varied and contrasting opinions; they are produced serially (or at least have that intention initially); reject a linear timeframe to jump between pasts, presents and futures; and seek to establish a form of collective identity based on involvement and contribution from their readership. All of these aspects work to redefine the collective autobiography genre and offer new ways to interpret the female incarceration experience beyond those depicted in single-authored autobiographies. In

[4] Teresa Dirsuweit, "Carceral Spaces in South Africa: A Case Study of Institutional Power, Sexuality and Transgression in a Women's Prison," *Geoforum,* 30 (1999), 75.

doing so, prison zines offer a contrast to the individualistic narratives that populate western life-writing and instead embrace the inconsistencies and diversities of collective identity.

## Defining Collective Autobiography

The term "collective autobiography" has been defined and redefined, reshaped and rejected to the extent that no one definition is appropriate for all that the genre encompasses. Many scholars have written about collective autobiography or the "collective self" in literature. Lynda Marin and Doris Sommer argue that Latin American women's testimonials and their collective stance attempt to bridge the gap between public and private spheres. Both use the term "testimonials" as opposed to autobiography as "they are strikingly impersonal. They are written neither for individual growth nor for glory but are offered through the scribe to a broad public as one part of a general strategy to win political ground."[5] In some sense women's prison zines could also be seen as a form of testimony as they speak "from the margins to and about the systems which oppress that speaking."[6] However, there is a crucial difference between these examples. Sommer uses "testimony" as her authors all write individually but emphasise the collective. The term therefore is used in contrast to autobiography which is seen as inherently individualistic and incapable of representing the collective self. Women's prison zines, however, subvert traditional autobiography as they are written by multiple authors and thus reject individualism from the outset. It is because of this subversion that the term collective autobiography is preferable to testimony or even collective testimony.

Nevertheless, the aversion to the term autobiography, particularly when referencing non-Western, female writers, has meant that collective autobiography is not a term widely

[5] Doris Sommer, "'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's *Testimonios* and the Plural Self," in *Life Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography,* ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 109.
[6] Lynda Marin, "Speaking out Together: Testimonials of Latin American Women," *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 3: Voices of the Voiceless in Testimonial Literature: Part 1 (1991), 52.

employed in scholarship.[7] John Downton Hazlett is one of the more prominent advocates of the term and defines it in terms of generational identity whereby standout texts by individual authors come to represent the generational experience of many.[8] Similarly, George Hovis uses the term for Randall Kenan's *Walking on Water,* which he defines as a single-authored text that grapples with collective Black identity in America in the 1990s.[9] Several authors have also used the term to self-define their texts, insisting that it represents more than an individual narrative. Daisuke Kitagawa, for instance, claims that *Issei and Nisei: The Internment Years* is "*autobiographical,* but it is not my autobiography. If anything, it is a collective autobiography of the Japanese American community" (emphasis in original).[10] All of these understandings of collective autobiography suggest that individual authorship is capable of articulating group identity. Yet there are obvious limitations to this definition. Although interviews, empathy, and even imagination can add depth to a text and help to emulate multiple voices, it is not possible for one author alone to authentically replicate the complexities of collective identity. For multi-authored texts, the established collectivity is as much in the disharmony as it is in the harmony: contrasting opinions and perspectives alongside the shared experiences are what justify the community. As such, collective autobiography is truly collective when multiple voices contribute to and shape the narrative.

*Look for me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21* is an example of collective autobiography written by multiple authors. Created by "sixteen of the original New York Panther 21 defendants," *Whirlwind* is, in H. Bruce Franklin's description, a "living epic" that juxtaposes the lives of each author "giving an overwhelming sense of

[7] Scholars such as Jeanne Costello (1991) and Caren Kaplan (1988) have written on the limitations of "women's autobiography" in particular, arguing that life writing, self-writing or testimony are more useful terms for describing female writing.
[8] John Downton Hazlett, *My Generation: Collective Autobiography and Identity Politics* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).
[9] George Hovis, "'I Contain Multitudes': Randall Kenan's Walking on Water as Collective Autobiography," *The Southern Literary Journal* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 100-125.
[10] Daisuke Kitagawa, *Issei and Nisei: The Internment Years* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), xi.

truthfulness, heroism and inevitability of their collective commitment to the liberation of their people."[11] The authors define their text as collective autobiography in the title in order to emphasise the inclusivity and polyvocality of their work. For the contributors, their various, unique life stories not only demonstrate their individuality, which had been denied to them by the mainstream media at the time, but also the variety of Black experience in America. This is encapsulated in the opening epigraph written from prison by Marcus Garvey:

> Look for me in the Whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.
>
> Marcus Garvey, writing from Atlanta Prison, February 10th, 1925.[12]

*Whirlwind* was a powerful experiment in autobiography that grappled with multiple authorship and a non-linear structure as it informally merged the authors' experiences. Published in 1971 as a one-off book, however, and one now out of print, its singularity suggests finality. Singular narratives, particularly for collective writing, become a restricting form once critics expand the boundaries of traditional autobiography to include other canons and media forms such as diaries, oral histories, photography, textiles and film. As a result, seriality has become a prominent new feature in identifying life writing and for defining collective autobiography. Felicity Nussbaum has argued that diary writing is able to capture the complexities of identity

[11] Ramsey Scott, "A Primer for the Politics and Literature of Resistance: *Apparitional Subjectivity* in The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21," in *Human Rights, Suffering and Aesthetics in Political Prison Literature*, ed. Yenna Wu (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 140. H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist (Expanded Edition)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 250.
[12] Kuwasi Balagoon et al, *Look for me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21* (New York: Random House, 1971).

as it allows the individual to contemplate both a fixed and changing sense of self.[13] Regularity is especially pertinent for collective autobiography because it allows for dialogue between contributors and reflection on previous content. In doing so, it removes any sense of a conclusion; the next instalment is always expected to offer a sense of continuation as well as growth.

One example of a periodical that identifies itself as collective autobiography is the Californian publication *The Grand Piano.* Consisting of ten editions, *The Grand Piano* ran from 1975 to 1980, publishing the essays, poetry and fiction of members of the San Francisco Language School of Poets to form a "multiauthored experiment in collective autobiography."[14] Through both familiarity and diversity within each new edition and a non-linear timeframe, *The Grand Piano* avoided "any univocal narrative of development or futurity", grounding the publication in a timeless series of "microhistories" from different, and sometimes disagreeing, writers.[15] This erasure of a linear timeframe and inclusion of dissenting microhistories is crucial for collective autobiography as it avoids the definitive time periods (beginning, middle and end) of an individual text that would suggest closure or resolution. Rather, having a continuous text with no obvious conclusion allows for consideration of previous issues and demonstrates the limitations of attempting to conclude something that is endless and continually changing.

This diversity in content relates to the final defining feature of collective autobiography. The serialized, open-ended form and the multi-authorship of women's prison zines encourage a responsive, engaged readership. As I have argued in the previous chapters, women's prison zines have consistently emphasised the importance of the active roles their readers take. Readers are encouraged to write in and add their opinions and experiences, crafting a dialogue

[13] Felicity A. Nussbaum, "Towards Conceptualizing Diary," in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 134.
[14] Barrett Watten, *Questions of Poetics: Language Writing and Consequences* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 109.
[15] Ibid., 119.

between other incarcerated women and men and allies on the outside. Until this point, scholars have not included reader involvement as a defining feature of collective autobiography. However, as this chapter proves, the limited space and freedoms of prison mean that contributions from readers are fundamental in the formation of a collective voice. Janet Galligani Casey has highlighted the limitations of autobiographical theory through an analysis of letters to the women's magazine *The Farmer's Wife.* She argues that the correspondence gestured "beyond the writer-editor relation that provides their purported form, assuming the presence of a responsive, collective, consuming body that will affect, or be affected by, them."[16] Contributors to women's prison zines assume the same audience participation and letters that offer their own experiences, reassurances and support are frequently written in response to pieces from previous issues.

The core components that define collective autobiography—multi-authorship, seriality, collective identity and reader involvement—are a result of a confined environment and are not necessarily limited to American incarceration. Other scholars have written about how confinement inspires collective writing. Kitagawa's *Issei and Nisei* gives an account of Japanese internment in the United States and Sue Vice theorizes World War Two children's narratives as a form of "choral narration." Although these confinements and subjects vary considerably, they all attempt to expose an invisible narrative and archive an ignored past, creating their own "oppositional power of writing," as Paul Gready has argued, that acts against dominant narratives oppressing and restricting them.[17] But to go one step further, as well as writing for self-empowerment, confinement also breeds the desire for community: for a sense

[16] Janet Galligani Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory," *Journal of Modern Literature* 28, no. 1: Autobiography and Memoir (2009), 92.
[17] Paul Gready, "Autobiography and the 'Power of Writing': Political Prison Writing in the Apartheid Era," *Journal of South African Studies* 19, no. 3 (September 1993): 489-523. Gready uses Foucault's "power of writing" theory to argue that prison writing acts against dominant narratives used to objectify and subjugate incarcerated individuals, thereby creating their own power of writing as a form of self-empowerment.

of shared oppression within an isolating environment and for a shared articulation of those oppressions that manifest themselves in collective autobiography. This is not to say that women's prison zines speak for the entire incarcerated female population. Literacy, prison hierarchies and regulations all affect the accessibility of reading and writing within prison. However, compared to single-authored autobiographies, the breadth of experience in zines is considerably greater. Margo Culley has argued that autobiography is "the most democratic of genres" because it takes and combines many different forms and attracts a rich variety of writers.[18] These writers include, as Bonnie Gunzenhauser argues, the "famous and obscure, rich and poor, male and female, whites and persons of colour," all of whom "have used the form to reflect on what it means to be human, to live in society, to be educated, to find a vocation, to develop principles and live accordingly."[19] Traditional autobiography, however, is still explicitly individualistic, focusing primarily on the experiences, opinions and reflections of one person (the author) and on one life (theirs). Therefore, the democracy that Culley and Gunzenhauser write of is decidedly monolithic, offering singular interpretations of experiences. In contrast, collective autobiography manages to decentralize the experiences of one person, adding it instead to a compilation of voices offering different and sometimes conflicting opinions. This chapter will demonstrate that by focusing on confinement and how it influences the formation of collective autobiography, an analysis of women's prison zines can help to define the genre and give shape to what was previously an ambiguous field. In doing so, analysis of women's prison zines sheds light on the literal, textual and imagined communities that are formed when print culture is produced under conditions of confinement and can better expose the complex realities and identities of incarcerated women.

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[18] Margo Culley, *American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 5.

[19] Bonnie J. Gunzenhauser, "Autobiography: General Survey," in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms Vol. I A-K,* ed. Margaretta Jolly (London/Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 77.

**Multiple Authors**

Established in February 1937, *The Clarion* began as a small project at the California Institute for Women (CIW) at Tehachapi (soon to be moved to Frontera).[20] According to the mission statement, *Clarion* was created "as a medium of self-expression and to encourage self-improvement" and ran for over forty years.[21] During this time, hundreds of women submitted articles, poetry and artwork to the zine with at least eight different women contributing to each issue. In doing so, *Clarion,* and women's prison zines more broadly, offer a textual space for incarcerated women to express themselves collectively, subverting the classic format of autobiography by removing the omnipotent author and instead presenting the lives and experiences of many. This is in large part due to the nature of incarceration. The varying lengths of time that women are permitted to work with the zine corresponds with their sentences and are determined by a higher power. Contributors and editors can therefore change regularly as women come and go from the facility. Indeed, unlike *The Grand Piano,* the contributors to *Clarion* were not fixed individuals that identified as members of a group, but rather were part of a forced community of incarcerated women.

As a result of this diversity in contributors, the form, style and content varies quite significantly within the zine. Despite the overall structure of *Clarion* remaining largely the same, content could range from updates on penal policies to poetry about children, and accounts of a recent riot, to a review of the visiting circus. These pieces, all written by different women, read differently. Women use slang, punctuation and spelling to articulate themselves, resulting in disjointed content that refuses to flow from one piece to the next. This is not necessarily a detrimental feature, but rather evidences the variety of contributing voices that offer differing perspectives. For example, one article titled "Friday's Child" details the events

[20] *The Clarion* was shortened to just *Clarion* during its run.
[21] Front Matter, *The Clarion*, Spring 1948.

leading up to the "Great Taco Shake" when the women at CIW were searched leaving the cafeteria for smuggled food. The author's writing style is casual and comedic. She writes: "How strange. What are all those 'police' doing standing at the door (???) Pick up our trays and through the line we go. HAPPINESS IS MUNCHING ON TACOS……. Boy this is really our lucky day, they're giving second servings. Eat one; stash one" (emphasis in original).[22] The conversational tone reads as if the author is recounting the story orally to friends and is juxtaposed against a following article that formally lists the winners of the American Penal Press Contest.

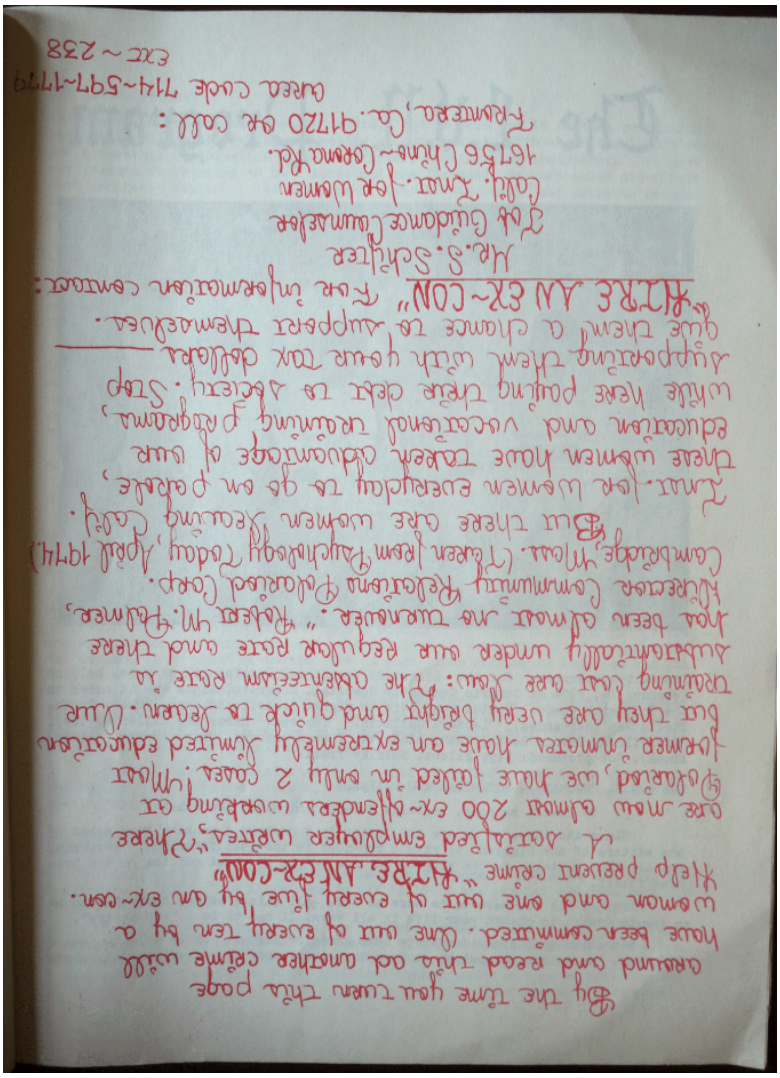


**Figure 3.1: Anon, "Hire an Ex-Con," printed in *Clarion* upside-down, April-May 1974, 15.**

[22] Anonymous, "Friday's Child," *Clarion,* January-February 1972, 2.

As with the language and writing style, *Clarion's* form and layout also evidence this assemblage of content, with each page distinct from the last. For example, an article about employing ex-incarcerated women in the April-May 1974 edition is sandwiched between two typed reports on the Licensed Vocational Nursing program and Alternatives to Prison Forum. The article stands out not only because it is handwritten in red pen, but also because it is printed upside down (Fig. 3.1). The article reads: "By the time you turn this page around and read this ad, another crime will have been committed."[23] Although this technique was unusual in *Clarion,* it demonstrates how variation in the zine's form, as well as the changing authorial voice, echoes the diversity in content and highlights the different contributors. Despite retaining some permanent features (such as an editorial page), each edition of *Clarion* was different in both appearance and content, with even the cover page changing with each new edition. This variation in appearance and content is a result of the numerous contributors to the zine as well as its non-commercial nature and is a crucial identifying feature in collective autobiography. No two pieces sound or look the same because no two authors are the same, and the commitment to a brand or model is not pertinent to the DIY, underground nature of women's prison zines. To enforce standardized language, punctuation or form would be to the detriment of the zine's role as collective autobiography and is the reason why many of the editors of women's prison zines refuse to edit or correct submissions that they receive. In one article in the Jan-Feb 1972 edition of *Clarion,* a member of the editorial team writes "can't spell? ..neither can I. But we have a dictionary and I finally figured out how to use it… We would prefer typewritten copy, but tell you what I'll make a deal with you. I won't turn anything down just because it's written in long hand."[24] Similarly, the introduction to *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery* states that the individuals editing and producing the zine

[23] Anonymous, "Hire an Ex-Con," *Clarion,* April-May 1974, 15.
[24] Anonymous, "Anyone Out There?," *Clarion,* January-February 1972, 3.

"made absolutely no 'editorial' changes, like not even changing the 'spelling or grammar.' So, everything you will soon get into is exactly what the sistas did/felt."[25] This tension over editorial intervention even became a point of controversy for the editorial team of *Through the Looking Glass.* According to Donna L. Rowe's source "Jane," the team ranged from four to fifteen contributors per issue and "were always struggling as a group with our politics and our stances" including debates around literacy: "There was all this judgment about what somebody's written. Or if they've written it well enough… I had just learned to read back then. I started on this newsletter before I could read it. So there were always issues around that. And I'd say 'well I can read it, it must be all right! What's the matter with it?'"[26] Formality and accuracy are not essential aspects of women's prison zines, but rather it is their familiarity and nonconformity—both products of multiple authorship—that define the genre.

The creation of women's prison zines such as *Clarion* can be interpreted as a product of, and a challenge to, the confining environment of prison as zines provide a textual space for incarcerated women to engage with one another. Anita Wilson has argued that "space within a prison…must be understood in both metaphorical and physical terms, as wide a concept as the entire prison estate, as individual as a cell, as personal as the mental sphere, or as minute as the palm of the hand holding a scrap of paper."[27] Metaphorically speaking, prison zines represent a textual space behind bars whereby women can communicate and connect. However, in some instances the existence of a prison zine also establishes a physical space behind bars for the writing, editing or printing of the zine in an office or library. For *The Clarion,* this space, known as The Globe, was created out of the former rabbitry and also served as a projection room. The women "ripped out the hutches, installed windows, tar-papered the roof, laid a pine floor, wall-

[25] Jinni M. Stroman, Introduction to *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery,* 1976, 2.
[26] Donna L. Rowe, *From the Inside Out: Women Writers Behind Prison Walls* (PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 2004), 82.
[27] Anita Wilson, "Four Days and a Breakfast: Time, Space and Literacy/ies, in the Prison Community," in *Spatializing Literacy Research and Practice,* ed. Kevin M. Leander, Margaret Sheehy (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 72.

boarded the inside, drenched the outside with whitewash, and then sat back and admired their work."[28] This physical space meant that the editorial team of at least a dozen women could gather to discuss, edit and print. According to Superintendent Florence Monahan, *The Clarion* was the only prison publication printed on-site at the time and women were able to learn how to print, a skill usually restricted to men. For these women it was considered "the highest campus honor … to be named to the *Clarion's* staff." "One inmate makes a wood-block," Monahan writes, "of a timely subject for each monthly issue and departments, in addition to poetry, include local and world news, exchanges, book reviews, and features such as fashions, fiction and domestic arts."[29]

For the women on the editorial staff, their participation was usually part of a work placement and was often dependent on good behaviour. Yet for some, involvement in the zine was more than just an "honor." For women held in restricted units, their involvement in *Clarion* meant the creation of a physical as well as creative space. Leslie Van Houten, a member of the Manson family incarcerated for murder in 1971, was housed in the Special Security Unit (solitary confinement) in CIW between 1972 and 1976. For Van Houten, her involvement in *Clarion* meant a chance to enter the main prison each day to write and edit the zine. In her letters she writes: "I feel good today. I wrote an editorial and it's pretty good… I moved to a new office. I do more work since I moved. It's fun, and I hope to get [the office] functioning smoothly soon, with pictures on the wall."[30] For women like Van Houten, the zine represented not just a creative space, but also a literal space outside of the confines of a cell where they could write, produce, and engage with other women. This idea is reiterated in a piece in the Jan-Feb 1972 edition of *Clarion* titled "The Saga of Shaag." The author explains that a member

[28] Florence Monahan, *Women in Crime* (New York: Ives Washburn Inc., 1941), 207.
[29] Ibid., 208.
[30] Karlene Faith, *The Long Prison Journey of Leslie Van Houten: Life Beyond the Cult* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 169.

of the editorial team "Shagg" used her free afternoons to work recreationally on *Clarion* until "they" changed her state assignment work hours so that she was unable to continue. The article mourns the loss of Shagg's contributions and is accompanied by an image taken from another zine, *Eye Opener*, which depicts a bolted door with various signs crossed out (Fig. 3.2). The writing on the door gives the evolution of terms for solitary confinement including "The Hole", "Solitary", "Administrative Segregation", "Isolation", "Quiet Room", "Security Cell" and finally "Loss of Privilege Module" which is the only one not crossed out. By equating Shagg losing her role at *Clarion* to solitary confinement, the editors are spatializing creative freedom as literal freedom, and suggesting that the restrictions on her involvement with the zine are akin to physical confinement.

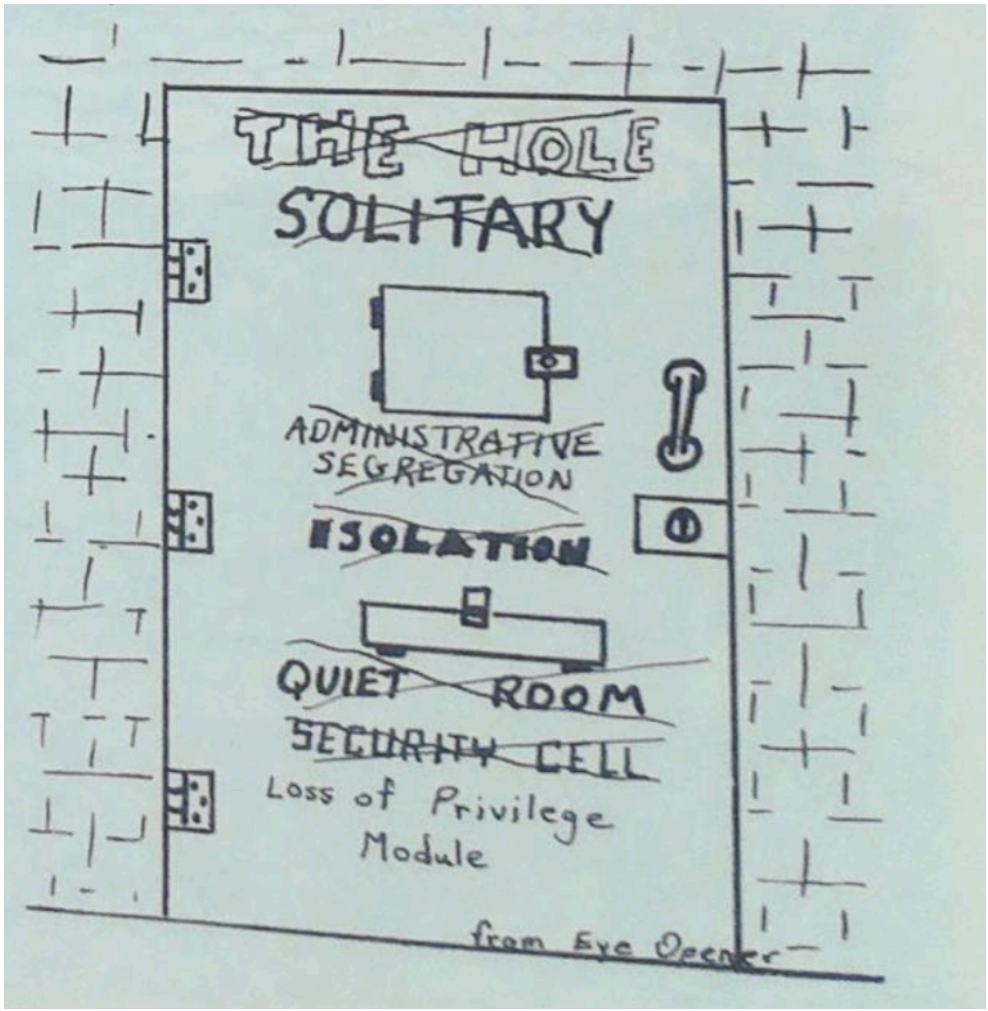



**Figure 3.2: Image taken from *Eye Opener*, included in *Clarion*, January-February 1972, 5.**

As an example of an in-house zine, *Clarion* demonstrates how prison zines can formulate both literal and textual spaces within the individual institution in order to bridge divides. However, those edited externally offer these spaces in different ways. Where *Clarion* had its roots at the California Institute for Women, Seattle-based zine *Through the Looking Glass* had no explicit ties to one facility. Started in 1976, *Through the Looking Glass* was a newsletter that ran for eleven years, switching from monthly to bi-monthly in 1980 as the staff decided that they would alternate with *No More Cages,* producing fewer editions in order to focus on fundraising, campaigning, educating and writing themselves.[31] At its peak 1,500 copies were printed and distributed throughout the country to libraries, community centres, prisons, and bookstores such as Left Bank Books and It's About Time Bookstore.[32] The organisation formed around a collective objection to working-class women being jailed for minor offences and discrimination by the Seattle law enforcement against members of the LGBT+ community. This led to involvement with the Purdy Correctional Facility in Washington where the publication evolved as the editors strove to expose poor conditions and maltreatment.[33] From here, the newsletter grew to cover a broader range of facilities and prisoners outside the Seattle/Washington State area. The organisation's manifesto, printed in each edition, begins "Through the Looking Glass is a monthly newsletter that focuses on women and children incarcerated in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the world." This statement encapsulates the key difference between *Through the Looking Glass* and *Clarion*, as outside editors were able to access people and resources that would not be accessible from inside prison and can consolidate them within one text. As such, *Through the Looking Glass* broadens the relatively limited reach of an in-house zine through nationwide distribution and,

[31] Anonymous, "What's happening with TTLG?," *Through the Looking Glass*, July 1980, 2.
[32] Rowe, *From the Inside Out,* 69.
[33] Ibid., 71.

as seen with *No More Cages* in the previous chapter, stronger connections to other underground, feminist print culture networks.

Despite lacking the physical space such as an in-house editorial office within which incarcerated women could co-create a zine, *Through the Looking Glass* was free of institutional censorship and was able, for the most part, to cross prison walls. Anyone was invited to contribute to the zine that provided a platform "where women and children in prison can communicate with each other and people on the outside. If you are locked up, feel free to use us to express your thoughts and feelings about your life."[34] As with *Clarion,* no two editions of *Through the Looking Glass* were the same, with new contributors from all over the country in each issue. The zine's appearance reiterates its DIY form with bracketed messages and notes from the editorial staff and some of the text and images hand drawn. These written additions could be page numbers, titles and subheadings, or notes of encouragement ("Now just don't read about this, folks, do it!"[35]). But they also reveal aspects of the zine's publication process. Handwritten notes such as "Many thanks to our friends who help us, especially Linda, who has typed for us for three years" appear inconsistently, but they uncover some of the editorial work that goes on behind the scenes (Fig. 3.3).[36] Agatha Beins, writing on feminist periodicals, has argued that "professional publishing erases traces of those bodies 'bent over the layout table,' whereas these feminist periodicals highlighted the labors of publishing to bring them to readers' view." "Naming oneself as the typist," she continues, "and thanking people for help with mimeographing calls attention to the fact that a periodical is not just a being but also a doing."[37] For women's prison zines, notes such as these emphasise their status as collective

[34] Anonymous, "Who we Are," *Through the Looking Glass,* November 1979, 1.
[35] Handwritten note beside the article "Write On!," *Through the Looking Glass*, April 1978, 9.
[36] Handwritten note on the back page of *Through the Looking Glass,* January 1979, 31.
[37] Agatha Beins, *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 73.

autobiography. Roles like Linda's are acknowledged as being part of the community that allow *Through the Looking Glass* to exist.

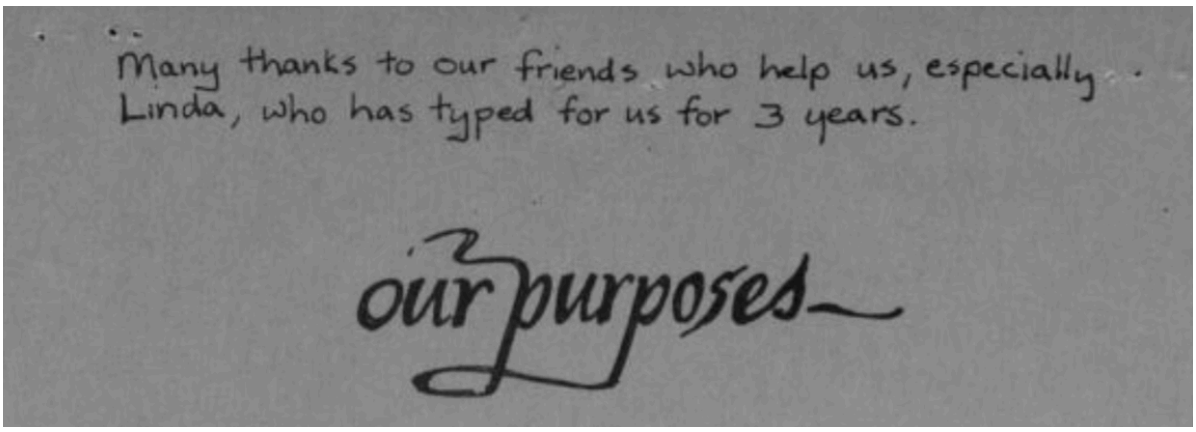



**Figure 3.3: "Many thanks to Linda," *Through the Looking Glass*, January 1979, 31.**

Nevertheless, even the inclusion of individual names was not a consistent feature in women's prison zines. As the April-May 1974 edition of *Clarion* demonstrates, contributors regularly attached pseudonyms such as "Iguana", "Buttons", "Friday" and "Blinky" to their work, with some women preferring to remain anonymous. The same is the case for *Through the Looking Glass* where women's names were often omitted, with some signing their work or letters collectively as "the women of the Seattle King County Jail" or "the sisters of Bedford Hills." There are various reasons for authors to remain anonymous. Primarily, contributors could be worried about the repercussions of having articles printed in their name, either owning to the sensitive nature of the content or because their work challenges the prison system in some way. For *Through the Looking Glass,* the relative freedom for women to be able to publish their work without censorship would not necessarily mean that printing sensitive or compromising material would be without risk. Women's prison zines were frequently banned from institutions because of fear of inciting violence or encouraging unrest, suggesting that staff were aware of the different prison publications and monitored them for their content. Indeed, as evidenced in their letters section, *Through the Looking Glass* was frequently censored coming into specific facilities with copies never reaching their subscribers. One

woman described how "At the beginning of October I received a notice through the mail room forbidding me to receive your publication 'Through the Looking Glass.' I was informed that it was a threat to security. I have received issues before. I have reason to believe it was an article about some going on in this institution. Your immediate reply would be most appreciated." The editors followed the letter with a note detailing the offending article and commenting that the withholding of issues is "NOT LEGAL!"[38] In this instance, the affected individual did not even write the banned article, but still faced repercussions from prison staff.

In addition to personal safety, the choice to omit individual names is also an ideological one. Publications written and produced collectively occasionally favour anonymity owing to the shared, communal nature of their work. Beins has argued that "the visibility of a writer's name could erase the labor of the other women who played vital roles in the publication process – the editors, typists, mimeographers, collators, and distributors."[39] What is more, the majority of the themes and content within the zines are not unique to the individual author. Instead, authors emphasise the communality of female incarceration and show that their "individual experience is not unique or even extraordinary, but typical and representative."[40] Anonymous content emphasises the shared narrative of incarcerated women and offers strength and support. As incarcerated woman Pat Williams writes in her article "But What Can I Do?", "no individual is strong enough to change the system. We, as prisoners, cannot revise the laws or elect the officials. But we can, as individuals and as part of a collective, make the public aware. And this awareness will hopefully result in changes beneficial to convicts and ultimately to society as a whole ... No one is going to do it for us."[41] Collectivity and multiple authorship were celebrated aspects of both *Clarion* and *Through the Looking Glass.* The collective voice of

[38] Anonymous, Letter, *Through the Looking Glass,* Winter 1985, 5.
[39] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 89.
[40] H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 250.
[41] Pat Williams, "But what can I do?," *Clarion,* April-May 1974, 9.

incarcerated women, with its variations and inconsistencies, demonstrated strength and resistance, encouraging individuality through writing and form whilst simultaneously seeking solidarity through the sharing of common experiences.

**Establishing Collective Identity**

Unlike traditional autobiography which can be seen to emphasise the self, collective autobiography emphasises the plurality of human experience, including its contradictions. Therefore, amongst the diverse content, form and style, collective autobiographies also seek to craft a collective identity that unites contributors and offers a sense of solidarity. As evidenced in the previous chapter, this identity is rooted in confinement and shared oppressions, as incarcerated women use prison zines to establish and emphasise a sisterhood and community behind bars. But this collective identity is not immutable or monolithic. Rather, it is built on diversity and inconsistencies, and seeks to accurately represent incarcerated women. Contributors refer to shared histories, experiences and oppressions to connect with one another and ground their collective identity, but emphasise individuality and the limits of community, utilising reader letters to voice their discontent. This dichotomy is a result of incarceration and the forced communities found behind bars: networks and relationships are formed as a result of confinement, but circumstance does not constitute a unified collective identity.

That being said, many of the contributors and readers of zines such as *Clarion* and *Through the Looking Glass* find reassurance and solidarity in their shared experiences. Part of this solidarity is based on shared histories, cultures and oppressions. As incarcerated women, voicing their experiences of the criminal justice system was a fundamental way of connecting with each other and establishing collective identity. But for many contributors, linking this to a longer history of confinement and oppression also helped to define their sense of a collective self. One example of an articulation of this shared history is the poem "This is Not the First

Time" by Manh Ngozi (also identified as Celinda Courtney) in Vol. 6, No. 3 of *Through the Looking Glass.* Despite being written by a named individual, the theme of the poem speaks to the shared experiences of women, specifically African American women, tying them to a long history of Black female oppression and inequality. The poem does this initially through its title. "This is Not the First Time" is repeated at the beginning of each stanza and is followed by various accounts of abuse, violence, discrimination and injustice. In doing so, it posits that African American women (as well as women more generally) have been exposed to these types of oppressions for hundreds of years, and that Ngozi's experiences are not radical or new, but rather the reality for countless women through history. The poem opens, "This is not the first time / that i have seen your face / as you stepped on my back."[42] Despite using the first person singular, the "I" is being used here more broadly to refer to all African American women. In an interview in 1990, Maya Angelou described her autobiographies as "following a tradition established by Frederick Douglass—the slave narrative—speaking in the first-person singular, talking about the first-person plural, always saying 'I,' meaning 'we.'"[43] Ngozi's poem pre-empts Angelou's idea, as the "I" can also be interpreted as "we" when Ngozi writes "i have seen your leer follow me" and "i have been fired upon." The events she depicts are not unique to her, despite using the first-person singular to describe them. Significantly, she rejects the standard capitalised "I" as using the lower case decentralises the narrator and removes any authorial authority. Additionally, when she writes "I have seen your face before" she presents a similarly unspecified oppressor that transcends time and place, who is responsible for "unemployment" and is guilty of "thievery" and rape.[44] The "you" that Ngozi is addressing

[42] Manh Ngozi, "This is Not the First Time," *Through the Looking Glass,* May-June 1981, 10.
[43] George Plimpton, Interview with Maya Angelou, "The Art of Fiction No. 119," *The Paris Review,* Issue 116 (Fall 1990).
[44] Manh Ngozi, "This is Not the First Time," 10.

condenses the institutions and authorities that uphold the systems that oppress her and her "sistahs."

Despite offering a seemingly pessimistic view of their circumstances by suggesting that there has been no progress for women—and Black women in particular—over the last century, Ngozi also finds solace in the historical resistance to such oppressions. "This is Not the First Time" includes the names of various famous African American women who fought for liberation, including Sojourner Truth, Angela Davis and Joann Little. As argued in the previous chapter, referencing Truth in art and poetry was a popular tool in women's prison zines, tying the current experiences of Black women to enslavement, drawing similarities from the various forms of oppression despite slavery's abolition. Ngozi writes how Truth led women "through the labyrinth" and Angela Davis brought "the torch within our grasp", suggesting that these women have offered liberation, knowledge and agency.[45] Naming specific women in the poem may seem counterintuitive to the idea of collective identity, but it is not Truth as an individual who is important, but rather what she represents. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Beins argues that Truth is synonymous with strength, and that "recuperating figures like Truth as part of feminism's history and depicting contemporary radicals narrates them as part of a feminism's present" adding to the contributors' and readers' collective identity.[46] Featuring images and quotations of famous women in feminist print culture throughout the 1970s and 1980s offered symbols and points of reference for the movement. The women's prison movement was similar in so much as zines such as *Through the Looking Glass* regularly included images of and updates on famous women and court cases such as Angela Davis's and Joann Little's. In doing so, these women united different factions of the movement through shared content and iconography. Nevertheless, the experiences of Davis and Little are

[45] Ibid., 11.
[46] Beins, *Liberation in Print*, 134.

presented in the poem as part of the broader female experience. Ngozi writes that "Joann Little know that it is not the first time," suggesting that even well-known women in famous court cases are still casualties of the same gendered and racial oppressions that affect all women.[47]

This engagement with a collective history is something that features regularly in the zine, in particular with marginalized groups who have experienced various manifestations of confinement. Deena Rymhs, although referencing the Canadian Aboriginal experience more specifically, argues that reservations, residential schools and disproportionate incarceration rates make imprisonment a "collectively known experience" for Indigenous communities and that "the prison is not just an apparatus of detention and punishment, but a structure signifying the colonization, criminalization, and suppression of a people."[48] Incarcerated Indigenous contributors to *Through the Looking Glass* frequently allude to this structure of oppression and dehumanization in their writing, tying their incarceration to a broader history of racialized violence and confinement. One poem titled "The Broken Indian Nations" plots a history of the United States in a similar way to Ngozi, tying the modern industrial prison complex and disproportionate incarceration rates to settler occupation and the forced removal of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous author Ruth Roberson writes:

> Once our people were the proud owners of
> Buffalo robes that stilled the night
> And kept the spirit warm;
> But now these mighty beasts are no more
> Than a mere handful.
> Now my brothers must gaze upon them in awe

[47] Manh Ngozi, "This is Not the First Time," 10.
[48] Deena Rymhs, *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 2.

As they stand behind meshed wires
Enclosed as I, in a white man's world
Obeying a white man's law.[49]

In this stanza, it is not clear if Roberson is referring to her brothers or the buffalo, trapped behind "meshed wires." By merging the fate of both, she speaks more broadly to the loss of traditional culture that has been "buried beneath the white man's skin." Rymhs argues that Indigenous writing behind bars, which echoes traditional oral culture, "could be viewed … as evidence of cultural continuance and adaptability" as it helps to sustain a sense of community behind bars between those inside and outside of prison.[50] While Rymhs is speaking to the Indigenous experience specifically, her concept of collective identity can be applied to the incarcerated state more broadly. Alluding to this history and culture in prison zines is an important aspect of establishing the "collective" in collective autobiography. Theorizing community publishing, Paula Mathieu et al describe how "the simple act of putting a pen to paper, fingers to keyboard, and, perhaps, voice to tape" are part of "a collective attempt to understand the past and to project a future."[51] Poems like "This is Not the First Time" and "The Broken Indian Nations" try and reconcile a shared history with a shared present, and how past confinements can affect future generations.

In addition to shared histories, women's prison zines establish collective identity through the letters section. The opening pages of the Summer 1986 edition of *Through the Looking Glass* include a selection of letters submitted to the zine by incarcerated readers. Sent from institutions across the country, the letters fill the tabloid-sized sheet and spill onto the

[49] Ruth Roberson "The Broken Indian Nations," *Through the Looking Glass*, March 1978, 10.
[50] Rymhs, *From the Iron House*, 74.
[51] Paula Mathieu, Steve Parks and Tiffany Rousculp, *Circulating Communities: The Tactics and Strategies of Community Publishing* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 1.

next page. "I received your letter of March 21 yesterday along with the Winter edition of TTLG", one woman writes. "I have passed it on to the other women as well as the address so they can send articles. Some women said it sent shivers down their back to read some of the poems that express so well the way we feel."[52] The shift from third person pronoun "they" to first person pronoun "we" not only aligns the writer's feelings with those of her friends, but also suggests the presence of a much broader collective experience echoed in the zine. The "we" alluded to in the letter is therefore not just reflective of the writer of the letter, Ann Hansen, and her friends, but rather of a wider community of disenfranchised women behind bars. Blurring the line between inside and out, letters indicate the extensive and diverse readership of women's prison zines and redefine ideas of space to reach outside of the walls of an individual prison. This was particularly the case for *Through the Looking Glass*, which relied on reader submissions to populate the zine. Women frequently wrote in to protest about something at their facility or to raise awareness. A woman speaking for "the sisters of Bedford Hills" wrote a letter to *Through the Looking Glass* to enlighten readers on the Special Housing Unit (or SHU/solitary confinement) at the facility, and accompanied it with a list of demands such as "illegal disciplinary measures must end" and "non-sexist vocational training and access to skilled jobs such as carpentry, wiring, plumbing etc."[53] Similarly, a letter written from Shirley Keller at Pleasanton opens:

> I hope that my sisters at Through the Looking Glass will print all of these papers. I have sent them to circulate, make copies of, pass out and prove to each and everyone [sic] of you in these prisons in the United States that Carter and the Government and rich elite are liars, murderers and capitalistic swine, sick, insane nuts who will not

[52] Ann Hansen, Letter, *Through the Looking Glass,* Summer 1986, 3.
[53] Anonymous, "Bedford Hills Again…," *Through the Looking Glass*, December 1978, 5-7.

> only lock you away for as long as they wish but will also brainwash you, control you, program you – take your very soul and mind and spirit away from you to keep that position, power and money they have.[54]

The letter is accompanied by numerous papers that *Through the Looking Glass* "does not have the space or finances to reprint." Both of these letters show how the zine was used as a tool for protest, communication and resistance, something that Chapter Four will discuss further. In the Vol. 4 No. 7 edition, the editors of *Through the Looking Glass* explain their justifications for including women's letters in a handwritten note, writing that they "cannot know if everything we print from women inside is 100% accurate", but "we do know that 1) conditions inside prisons are so bad that inmates deserve every opportunity to expose them and voice their protest" and that the "straight press" does not represent incarcerated women's views (emphasis in original). With that in mind, they write: "we will continue to print letters from women inside the joints as long as they are not exploitative or oppressive."[55] The letters and submissions from women acted as a vessel through which incarcerated women could bypass their confinement and connect and communicate with women beyond prison walls. These interactions are a crucial aspect of collective autobiography as they contribute to the collective voice and shared experiences.

As previously noted in Chapter One, Janet Galligani Casey has argued that the letters in the women's magazine *The Farmer's Wife* assume the "presence of a responsive, collective, consuming body that will affect, or be affected, by them."[56] She argues that, unlike more mainstream women's magazines, *The Farmer's Wife* "created a hospitable space for their [the

[54] Shirley Keller, "Open Letter," *Through the Looking Glass,* March 1979, 10.
[55] Anonymous, "From T.T.L.G," *Through the Looking Glass,* August 1979, 6.
[56] Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory," 92.

readers'] self-narratives."[57] Women's prison zines also carve out a space for marginalized incarcerated women to communicate with relative freedom and articulate their own experiences and opinions, without prejudice or discrimination, knowing that there is a responsive audience of like-minded people. This added dynamic of reader involvement disturbs the conventional idea of autobiography: women were able to write in and comment on something that they had read, adding their own interpretations or even their own similar experiences. One letter from a woman incarcerated at Alderson opens: "Dear Friends, I hope that you will be able to give me some advice and aid in my current situation. I read the plight of our sister, Lori Johnson, in Through the Looking Glass today. I am in a similar situation." She goes on to explain the details of her incarceration and give her account of an assault and rape that she endured two months earlier. The letter closes: "If you can help me in any way, I will surely be glad to hear from you. Even if it is just a letter of support. I can use all I can get. Please, care."[58] This heartfelt plea demonstrates the importance of the letters within women's prison zines. As Jennifer Sinor has argued, "zines link people across geographic boundaries" and their creators can "develop intimate relationships with one another without actually meeting, let alone gathering in one space."[59] The confined, isolated nature of incarceration limits the opportunities for help and advice or simple interactions with other people. The letters therefore act as access to a community that would otherwise remain distant, offering women the opportunity to share and advise.

But these practices do not just occur in externally edited zines. The Michigan-based in-house zine *Determined Action for Women Now* (also known by the acronym *D.A.W.N*) also emphasises the importance of women's prison zines for communication and community

[57] Ibid., 94.
[58] Ms. S. F. Anderson, "RAPE: Letter from Alderson," *Through the Looking Glass,* December 1979, 30.
[59] Jennifer Sinor, "Another Form of Crying: Girl Zines as Life Writing," *Prose Studies* 26, no. 1-2 (August 2003), 244.

building. One anonymous article titled "The Real Prison" states that "the real prison is a loneliness that sinks its teeth into the very soul of men and women. Its [sic] an emptiness which leaves a sick feeling inside… The real prison is an inmate writing a letter to herself, because she knows that she will get an answer."[60] Zines counteract these feelings of loneliness and invisibility as the women are aware that writing to the zine will mean that they are heard and are part of a community. The editors of *D.A.W.N* even adapt the concept of letters to create the feature "Friendly Frazes": "Friendly Frazes may be dropped into the DAWN Box located in the school lobby. Frazes will be restricted to family and friends on the outside only. Frazes may also be sent directly to the DAWN from family and friends on the outside."[61] Friendly Frazes represents an alternative to the normal letters section and expands the readership and community to include friends and family outside the individual prison.

This therefore demonstrates how zines manage to expand the spatial dynamics of prison. Through letters, articles and images, incarcerated women are able to cross borders in order to connect with one another. These spatial dynamics become all the more pertinent when one considers the role of zines amongst communities of transgender individuals within prison. As the carceral state is structured entirely on gender binaries, transgender prisoners are often seen to be "problematic" for correctional staff as they defy strict gender rules, identifying as one gender but possessing the genitalia of the other. Many trans women are thus housed in male facilities, which can lead to disputes over housing, access to medication, and discrimination or sexual abuse and violence from incarcerated individuals and prison staff.[62] As minorities within the male prison complex, trans women occupy a different space,

[60] Anonymous, "The Real Prison," *Determined Action for Women Now*, October-November 1982, 4.
[61] Anonymous, "Support your local Friendly Fraze," *Determined Action for Women Now*, April 1982, 14.
[62] For more detailed information on the status of transgender prisoners in the USA see Sexton et al, "Where the Margins Meet: A Demographic Assessment of Transgender Inmates in Men's Prisons," *Justice Quarterly* 27, no. 6 (December 2010): 835-866 and Routh et al, "Transgender Inmates in Prisons: A Review of Applicable Statutes and Policies," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 61, no. 6 (2017): 645–666.

sometimes physically in segregated housing, but also psychologically as they represent a different subsection of the prison community. In Lori Sexton and Valerie Jenness's study of collective identity amongst transgender women in male prisons in California, they argue that "transgender women in prisons for men are bound by a common social location within prison and commonality of experience that flows from it", despite demonstrating "considerable diversity amongst themselves."[63] As a result, their study found, "transgender women in prisons for men identify primarily, but not exclusively, with other transgender women in prisons for men. They frequently refer to other transgender prisoners not just as 'community,' but also as 'family.'"[64] This community (or family) represents a different social space to the rest of the prison where they are able to live and act as their authentic selves.[65] Therefore the various zines that are intended for trans or LGBT+ prisoners more broadly represent a textual manifestation of this community, offering a space for communication and solidarity.

The zine *Black and Pink* was established in 2010 by Jason Lydon "for gay, lesbian, bisexual, same-gender loving, queer, transgender, and gender non-conforming people who are locked up to have a place to gel out their stories and feel connected to a broader community of people."[66] This vision statement reflects the wider aims for the Boston-based organisation (also called Black and Pink), which included prison abolition, communication (specifically through their zine and the pen-pal program), support and activism. Since then, *Black and Pink's* readership has grown exponentially with over 13,000 copies sent to prisoners in October 2017.[67] The zine includes art, poetry, news and letters from LGBT+ individuals currently and

[63] Lori Sexton and Valerie Jenness, "'We're like community': Collective identity and collective efficacy among transgender women in prisons for men," *Punishment and Society* 18, no. 5 (2016), 550.
[64] Ibid., 560.
[65] Ibid. This is not to say that all transgender women in prison feel this same sense of community or view each other as similar or equals, but rather Sexton and Jenness' study shows that the women they interviewed overwhelming felt commonality with other transgender prisoners rather than the prison population at large.
[66] Jason Lydon, Introduction*, Black and Pink*, February 2010, Boston MA, 1 http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.
[67] "Newspaper," *Black and Pink,* accessed October 22, 2017,

previously incarcerated across America. The zine overwhelmingly substantiates Sexton and Jenness's findings and consistently emphasises the family dynamic of minority communities represented on *Black and Pink's* pages. Many letters start "Wassup Family?" or "How's my family doing out there?" identifying and validating the sense of community amongst the incarcerated LGBT+ population.[68] For transgender individuals in male prisons, the removal of spatial restrictions and confinements is especially significant. As minorities in a predominantly hostile environment, bridging gaps between other transgender individuals can mean the formation of a community or family and visibility for an often overlooked or ignored population both within prison and outside. As one poem "Hope" by Reggie West emphasises:

> Black and Pink, who, what, where,
>
> a light at the end of that dark tunnel.
>
> My life started to change.
>
> You gave me a voice to be heard.
>
> I have cast off the shackles of the walking dead.
>
> I have a voice again.
>
> People are listening now.
>
> I am a person again, with a story to be told.
>
> I write and cast off the clouds of darkness.
>
> I am alive again through my published words.
>
> To write heals my soul, patches my torn spirit.
>
> Justice may again be within my grasp.[69]

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http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.

[68] Letters from Damon and Sincere (respectively), *Black and Pink,* January 2018, 15-17, http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.

[69] Reggie West, "Hope," *Black and Pink,* March 2010, 7, http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.

Many of the poems, letters and artwork in *Black and Pink* stress the desire to be seen and heard. Paula Mathieu et al argue that community publishing offers contributors a "self-directed, unmediated sense of control that speaks to the essence of the publication – an effort to tell their truth unfiltered by established organisations, such as educational, governmental, or religious authorities."[70] As West's poem emphasises, zines such as *Black and Pink* offer this opportunity for exposure and communication beyond the communities within individual facilities and without censorship (whether self-imposed or other) and filters. As Figure 3.4 suggests, trans freedom is about the removal of violence and borders as the central figures pull away the bars of the cells that surround them. But this freedom is also about self-expression and visibility, emphasised by their bare skin, bright hair and physical pose with their hands raised up against the backdrop of prison cells.

As West's poem suggests, much of the content in prison zines is expressly personal. Every issue of zines such as *D.A.W.N*, *Black and Pink* and *Through the Looking Glass* includes first-hand accounts of individual life experiences and personal thoughts and opinions, often representing a significant proportion of the zines' content. This focus on experience, and the affection with which the women write in response to one another, is not completely alien to commercial periodicals, but does not appear with the same regularity. Experience is, however, a defining feature of other, non-prison-based zines known as "per-zines." Stephen Duncombe describes per-zines as "personal diaries open to the public; shared notes on the day-to-day life, thoughts and experiences of the writer."[71] Women's prison zines serve a similar purpose, using personal content for public consumption and regularly utilise a familiar or "sisterly" tone. However, unlike per-zines, which more typically document the thoughts and experiences of an individual, women's prison zines reflect a collective. The contributors are not necessarily in

[70] Paula Mathieu et al., *Circulating Communities,* 2.
[71] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (London: Verso, 1997), 11.

agreement with one another, but rather form a collective per-zine; a collective autobiography. For example, the first few editions of *Black and Pink* begin with stories from various individuals such as "Andy's Story" and "Paula's Story." Each is no longer than a page but offers a glimpse into the lives of incarcerated LGBT+ people across the country. Lilly's story opens:

> In the February issue of Black & Pink I read an article which was written by Paula W. The article was about the physical, emotional and sexual abuse that this sister had to go through in the prison system. My heart and my sympathy goes out to this sister and every other GLBT that had to deal with these kind of horrible, violent savage acts that continue to happen here in the U.S. Prison system! I too was a victim of prison gang rape and sexual abuse when I was sent to jail for 3 weeks. The things that happened to me are horrible, disgusting and disturbing, and I hope and pray that no one will ever have to go through what I went through.[72]

The piece continues to describe the events in detail and offer hope for a future with more acceptance and respect. Lilly's story evidences the personal nature of prison zines as she recounts her experiences of rape and assault. But moreover, by referring to a previous submission from Paula W. who also survived rape and various forms of abuse behind bars, it also demonstrates the shared pasts, presents and futures, both from individuals and within the zine itself.

[72] William (Lilly) P., "Lilly's Story," *Black and Pink,* May 2010, 8, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/05-2010.




**Figure 3.4: Micah Bazant, "Remember Trans Power," *Black and Pink* cover image, October-November 2016, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/oct_nov_2016_list_1__english_most__**

As Lilly's story demonstrates, content in *Black and Pink* often interacts with stories, articles or letters from previous editions, reiterating the presence of a "responsive, collective, consuming body" of readers.[73] Responding to the same piece from Paula W. in the February 2010 edition, Cameron "Cali" Willett sent in a response for the next edition of *Black and Pink,* writing:

[73] Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory," 92.

> Dear Paula, You're in my heart. I love your strength. I love you. You are beautiful. You are a woman. I hope in the future one day to shake your hand, give you a hug and kiss you upon your forehead and both cheeks and let you see the tears on my face. To let you know how much you and everyone like us, means to me.[74]

This response, as with Lilly's Story, evidences the role of readers within prison zines as they provide confirmation of a supportive audience and expand the network and community beyond the limits of a single facility. Through the role of letters and the form and content of the zines, their status as collective autobiography becomes evident. The specific spatial limitations of prison results in particular spaces (both physical and ideological) for breaking down barriers, and the multiple, changing authors with differing styles and opinions attempt to navigate the isolating, restrictive environment of incarceration. In addition, this increases the importance of the role of letters and articles from the readership, as zines reach beyond prison walls to substantiate a community both inside and out.

Nevertheless, the letters section also evidences the limitations of collective identity within zines. One contributor Sally Moore writes in and comments that, "I certainly hope I will be getting T.T.L.G now as I've always enjoyed it (even when I disagree with what's said)."[75] Indeed, the shared experiences and oppressions that appear in zines such as *Clarion* and *Through the Looking Glass* can also feature alongside sometimes contrasting content. Watten describes this amalgamation in *The Grand Piano* as "a state of not-yet-achieved community" as the publication existed somewhere between similarity and difference.[76] However, for

[74] Cameron "Cali" Willett, Letter, *Black and Pink,* March 2010, 4, http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.
[75] Sally Moore, "Letter From Alderson," *Through the Looking Glass,* November 1979, 7.
[76] Watten, *Questions of Poetics*, 125.

women's prison zines, this *is* the community. The contrasts and parallels identify the writers as a disparate community of incarcerated women and the zines as collective autobiography. Women's prison zines are able to walk the fine line between embracing originality and articulating a common struggle. Just as with the tone and format within the zines, the content demonstrates similar diversity and inconsistency. Owing to their incarceration, the women contributing to the zines are from different backgrounds and do not necessarily share common interests or opinions, meaning that their articles, poetry and drawings all vary and even contradict each other. In some cases, this even extends to some contributors challenging the sense of community within the zine, with one author going as far as to write "I do not like you."[77] Similarly, another woman writes of the limited reach of activists and women on the outside in an untitled poem:

You circulate newsletters
That print tears of my crying
You act concerned
Some of the time
You express the desire
To learn of this place
On visiting day
I don't see your face [78]

This example shows the potential limitations of outside organisations and externally edited zines. The activists and groups are criticized in the poem for printing the women's writing but

[77] Friday, "Land of the Free," *Clarion,* Jan-Feb 1972, 10.
[78] Anonymous, Untitled, *Through the Looking Glass*, May-June 1982, 2.

failing to provide support beyond that, such as attending visiting days. These examples demonstrate some of the disparity in content. Women voice their dissatisfaction with the zine itself, and in doing so, separate the ideas of collective autobiography and a harmonious community. It is not essential that contributors to a publication are in agreement, even in relation to the zine itself. Rather, collective autobiography (and the collective identity that is established within) is made up of the discrepancies and disagreements that arise from a group of individuals.

## Serialization and Non-Linear Structure

By rejecting individual texts in favour of serialized publications, women's prison zines demonstrate another departure from traditional autobiographical forms. Publishing women's prison zines periodically, or at least initially forming them with that intention, results in an incomplete, continuing narrative that changes and grows with each new edition and that, in turn, reflects the diversity in authorship and readership. The serialization of prison zines also adds another temporal dimension to prison life. The monthly or bimonthly publication of a zine can act as an informal distinction of time for both those producing the zine and those reading it. As a result, serialized publications are not only better able to represent the collective experience of incarcerated women but can also act as another measure of time within prison that acts both with and in some senses against the imposed institutional temporalities.

Primarily, the serialization of prison zines allows more women to contribute to each issue, thus establishing the opportunity for multiple authorship to exist. The monthly and bi-monthly publication of zines like *Clarion, Black and Pink* and *Through the Looking Glass* offered different individuals the opportunity to contribute. Unlike commercial periodicals, this change in authorship is largely to do with convenience and accessibility. It is rare for women (outside of the editorial team) to contribute to externally edited zines when released from prison

and almost impossible for those created in-house. Much of the women's involvement is therefore dependent on the length of their incarceration. This transience of contributors and even editorial staff is therefore another way in which the environment of the prison impacts upon the formation and process of collective autobiography. One's involvement in a zine is often (although not exclusively) dependent on temporal factors outside of one's control, which influences the ability to contribute. The February 1986 *D.A.W.N* editorial bids farewell to fellow contributor Cynthia Lupo: "we at the D.A.W.N would like to extend to Ms Cynthia Lupo, our wishes of years of happiness for her future… For months you have hung in there and helped us publish some of the best newsletters possible, considering what we had to work with."[79] The column is followed by a welcome note to "Mr R. Robinson, the new RUO of Unit 2", demonstrating, perhaps unconsciously, the cyclical nature of incarceration. The serialization of women's prison zines therefore embraces the impermanence of incarceration in order to reflect and include the continuous cycle of contributors. In some instances, zines had regular contributors whose names or pseudonyms appear in several or more editions, especially in-house zines where the pool of contributors is much smaller. Nevertheless, none of the zines discussed thus far have entirely the same women contributing in the last issue that they did in the first.[80] Therefore, autobiographies that are not serialized and are instead published as standalone texts (such as *Look For Me in the Whirlwind*), limit the opportunity for profiling a range of diverse voices and experiences. Prison zines, on the other hand, consistently encourage new contributors and varied discussions. Half-way through its run, *Through the Looking Glass* developed special issues to encourage particular content such as "Children and Youth", "Racism", and "International Women's Day", whilst the editors of

[79] Karen Thomas, "Editors Column," *Determined Action for Women Now*, February 1986, 13.
[80] The exception to this is *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery,* a zine I discuss in more depth in Chapter Four. This zine was a standalone text that emerged as a response to a riot at the facility and as such, has a fixed group of individuals who contributed to it.

*D.A.W.N* regularly included messages of encouragement and calls for content such as "Determined Action for Women Now!!! Join our family!!! Submit your articles and poetry for publication. We welcome you!"[81] Editors of women's prison zines, particularly in-house zines, consistently emphasise their desire for more contributors, not merely to populate the zine but also in order to more thoroughly represent the diversity amongst their incarcerated community or "family."

Multiple authorship and the serialization of zines also affects the traditional linear timeframe of autobiography. Where the singularity of the form and the structure of one person's life dictates the beginning, middle and end of a traditional, single-author autobiography, collective autobiography in women's prison zines follows neither template. Articles, poems, photographs and letters all disrupt the linearity of autobiography, moving between the various pasts, presents and futures of individual women's lives. Therefore, unlike traditional autobiography, collective autobiography has its own temporal qualities that exist outside of an individual's lifetime and beyond any linear structure. For Barrett, the multiple authorship of *The Grand Piano* suspends "any particular account of origin and end" as the authors refuse to differentiate any narrative arcs, so that "the end can be found anywhere… or it may be endlessly deferred."[82] The same is the case for women's prison zines which often jump between pasts, presents and futures, converging around the transitory period of the women's incarceration and thus avoiding any sense of conclusion or closure. As with *The Grand Piano,* this lack of a linear timeframe within the content of women's prison zines is a by-product of seriality and multi-authorship and is crucial for collective autobiography. Despite all of the contributors being in prison, the circumstances that led to their incarceration and their experiences thereafter are unique, and even their impressions of imprisonment vary greatly. It

[81] Anonymous, "Behind Prison Walls," *Determined Action for Women Now*, June 1986, 7.
[82] Watten, *Questions of Poetics*, 130.

would therefore be impossible to follow a traditional linear timeframe. What occupies one woman on a given day might not correspond with somebody else, and therefore the content and chronology are not always in unison. The somewhat random themes, as a result of the constantly changing authorship, means that there is no beginning, middle and end; when women leave, others come to take their place. Women discuss their lives prior to their incarceration, their families and the events that led to their imprisonment, as well as their current experiences inside, abuses or injustices they face, and friendships or achievements they acquire. These discussions appear alongside musings on the future as women contemplate life outside of prison and what jobs they will be able to get. All of these elements discussing the past, present and future appear in no particular order. An article on the quality of food within a facility might be followed by a different woman's account of domestic abuse prior to her incarceration, and that followed by a letter of support in response to a previous edition. For example, in the February 1986 edition of *D.A.W.N.* an article titled "Memoirs of a Normal Childhood", in which a woman recounts her experiences of sexual abuse as a child, is bookended by the minutes of the commissary meeting and information on a grant from the Judith Magid Trust fund.

This collective past, present and future constructed and documented by the zines is also a way by which women who contribute to and read the zine are able to use it as a measure of time that distinguishes it from the stasis of prison. Where ties to individual pasts and any sense of a progressing present are (temporarily) lost for incarcerated women, zines are a means by which they can form a shared, textual understanding of the passing of time. Cover pages reflect the seasons, poems and articles give accounts of "doing time," and some zines even include calendars for women to hang on their cell walls. Another way in which the content of zines suggest progression is through the inclusion of photographs. As argued in Chapter One, on the whole, the photographs included in women's prison zines are a departure from the celebrity or

model photographs found in women's magazines as they depict the everyday lives of women behind bars. *Insight*, based at Florence Crane's Correctional Facility, regularly included photographs in the zine that gave visual updates on the facility. These included photographs of the unit's softball and volleyball teams with their current rankings, and women dressed in graduation gowns followed by a list of names of the women who graduated from school or from vocational training (Fig. 3.5). These photographic features are reminiscent of high school yearbooks which signal ends and beginnings (the end of school, the beginning of adulthood) capturing a defining moment in someone's life as the women celebrate their completion of courses and sporting successes. For women's prison zines, these beginnings and ends are different from yearbooks—unlike completing high school, the end of courses does not equate to the end of a sentence—but act as a similar mark of progress and growth. Therefore, in this instance, time within prison and the temporalities established by serialized zines share similar qualities. James Mussel argues that "periodicals have a peculiar way of moving on by staying put."[83] In a similar way, incarcerated women grow, age and develop whilst remaining static behind bars. Both incarcerated women and the zines are able to progress by gaining qualifications and producing new issues, but ultimately remain rooted to where they are (prison) and what came before (previous issues). One contributor to *D.A.W.N* comments that "Prison can be also be characterized as a form of suspended animation. We are living and functioning in our world behind walls. However, we are unaware of the real happenings outside."[84] By featuring events in a zine such as those documented in the photographs, they become collective: a shared history and a shared progression with the other contributors and readers when all other concepts of time in prison appear stagnant.

[83] James Mussell, "Repetition: Or, 'In Our Last'," *The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals* 48 (2015), 349.
[84] Larry Walton, Letter, *Determined Action for Women Now*, January 1983, 3.




**Figure 3.5: "Cheese Spread," *Insight*, May/June 1996, 12-13.**

The zines' form as well as its content is another way in which women are able to measure time from behind bars. Mark W. Turner has argued that "magazine day, that much anticipated moment when the monthly magazines were all published at once, was one way of organizing time."[85] The same is applicable to publications produced daily, annually, or bi-annually, as they all move to their own rhythms and produce their own temporal structures. Women's prison zines also each have their own publishing patterns that add structure to the lives of their readers, which is significant in terms of collective autobiography as it is a temporality that is shared. Outside of institutional schedules and timetabling, the serialization of women's prison zines creates a temporal rhythm for their readers, both with the zine's scheduled publication, and the period of waiting in between when women read, absorb, communicate and respond. Barbara Adam notes how "meaning cannot be communicated if everybody speaks at once; it depends on people taking turns in speaking and listening, since

[85] Mark W. Turner, "Periodical Time in the Nineteenth Century," *Media History* 8, no. 2 (2002), 188.

communication is a serial, single-order medium."[86] Women's prison zines provide this space (temporally speaking) within which women can communicate and digest collectively.

This textual progression is particularly evident in letters where readers are able to temporally engage with the zines by reflecting back on old editions and participating in the present. One contributor to *Black and Pink* writes, "It's me PAPI, a NEW writer to B&P, to share a few word's [sic] with each of you!" (emphasis in original), whereas others note their previous experience of writing in: "This is my second time writing. I have been receiving Black + Pink for a couple of years. I would like to say that Black + Pink is a great zine that has helped me out a lot."[87] By referencing their past interactions with the zine, the letters in *Black and Pink* are able to offer readers and contributors another way of measuring the passing of time behind bars. As all activities in prison are carefully timed and regulated, they remove any sense of autonomy or individuality, and are repetitious with little sense of moving forward causing time to feel stagnant or, as Michael Hardt argues, "empty."[88] Days spent in prison, he argues, are "indistinguishable. They fold into each other like the bellows of an accordion. Time spent seems to have no duration, no substance, because of the precise repetition of its component parts, the homogeneity, the lack of novelty. Prison time is devoid of chance, it is fated time. Nothing is unforeseeable."[89] Indeed, Azrini Wahidin and Shirley Tate's 2005 study of a group of elderly incarcerated women found that the repetition of prison routine and the lack of new experiences led the women to feel as if their time in prison was not progressing. One participant of the study commented: "Time has stood still while I have been in prison. Time has stood still in that everything goes on and on in the same repetitive way. It is as if the twenty years could

[86] Barbara Adam, *Time and Social Theory* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), 31.
[87] Papi and Edward, Letters, *Black and Pink,* December 2018, 7-13, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/bpdecember2018_40pages.
[88] Michael Hardt, "Prison Time," *Yale French Studies* 91, Genet: In the Language of the Enemy (1997), 65.
[89] Ibid.

have all been fitted into one year."[90] This "Groundhog Day" sense of progression bound by repetition defines time in prison and thus those incarcerated find new ways to demarcate the passing of time, creating other, non-temporal ideas of progress. This could be the act of learning a new skill, for example, which leads to progression in time by measuring milestones or achievements and can act to counter the repetition of daily prison routine.[91]

Letters therefore offer contributors regular engagement with zines that can act as markers of progress. One contributor to *Black and Pink* writes, "It's Lee again Just [sic] checking in to see how everyone is. I've been super busy in My Recovery [sic] groups and Vocational class." [92] Lee then goes on to detail the intricate details of their day, hour by hour. In this instance, letters like Lee's are a way in which readers and contributors can mark progress, differentiating between past, present and future issues, and reflecting on the time in between and personal growth. Referring to per-zines, Jennifer Sinor argues that "the fact that zines are produced serially, with writers referring back to previous issues, forces the writer to consider how she is and is not the same person every time she takes her pen in hand. As one zinester says quoting Whitman, they "contain multitudes." And with multitudes comes endless possibilities. They revel in the porous nature of identity, boundaries, and genre."[93] Although Sinor is referring here to individual zinesters, the idea is also applicable to multi-authored zines and collective identity. By having new and old content and contributors overlapping within each issue in the form of articles, poetry, photographs, drawings and letters, zines demonstrate the variances and inconsistencies of women in prison. No two pieces are the same and each

[90] Azrini Wahidin and Shirley Tate, "Prison (e)scapes and body tropes: older women in the prison time machine," *Body and Society* 11, no. 2 (2005), 65.
[91] Michael Flaherty from Eckerd College, USA discussed some of these theories in his conference paper "The Shoreless Ocean of Time: Temporal Experience in Prison" at the 2018 EBAAS conference in London. His current research project, "The Cage of Days: Time and Temporal Experience in Prison," is not yet published.
[92] Lee, Letters, *Black and Pink,* December 2018, 12, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/bpdecember2018_40pages.
[93] Sinor, "Another Form of Crying," 247.

edition offers something new whilst simultaneously reflecting back on the old. Women's prison zines, and the women creating them, "contain multitudes," both in the individual sense but also in the collective sense, and obliterate any notion of a traditional, chronological autobiography.

By considering the new temporalities that are introduced to prison through serialized publication, it not only identifies another measure of time within prison, but also emphasises the self-established temporalities that incarcerated individuals carve out for themselves alongside institutional structures. This "zine time" does not work separately from official prison time, but rather exists alongside it. Indeed, unlike other periodicals, all aspects of engaging with prison zines occur within and engage with institutional time. For incarcerated women, these activities include attending workshops or visiting office spaces in order to create a zine and using personal or "cell" time to devise content or read. Moreover, the weekly, monthly or bimonthly distribution of zines cannot happen without the sanction and efforts of prison staff. These actions in some respects reiterate the repetition found within prisons as the serialized zines are released weekly, monthly or bi-monthly. Yet there remains a certain amount of agency in these interactions. Despite zine time functioning within institutional time, by choosing to create, subscribe and read prison zines, incarcerated women are consciously interacting with another temporality that offers a different structure and rhythm to other imposed, institutional activities. Although unpredictable (as finances, volunteers and censorship all influence the regularity of publications' release date), the different rhythms created by serialized publication, combined with the variation in content and style, work to challenge the rigidity of institutional time. What develops as a result, is a temporality that works within and also against prison time: it follows formal scheduling and structures, but also is a temporality that women choose to engage with. As such, the act of engaging with prison zines is as much a feature of collective autobiography as the content itself. Within prison, these moments of freewill offer a sense of empowerment not commonly found in the system as, '"by

definition, prisons dramatically limit individual autonomy and freedom. In other words, Logan Lee argues "incarcerated people are allowed few meaningful choices."[94] Engaging with zines, therefore, and the temporalities that they offer is a means by which incarcerated women can act against the regulatory aspects of prison to self-structure their time behind bars.

Nevertheless, in order for zines to be created and reach their intended audiences they must work alongside carceral temporalities. The women who contribute to prison zines have to work within allotted institutional timeframes and meet deadlines, working with the constant precarity of a prison publication as staff could take it or their prescribed time away. Many women are able to use their free time to write or draw, carving out zine time from their own free time. In other instances, educational or classroom time is utilised to create content, with students of English or creative writing classes contributing their writing for publication. Similar temporal limitations are also placed on the editors of in-house zines who are allotted specific time per day or week where they are permitted to work on the zine. Outside of these times, editors may be unable to access the office space or materials thereby making them reliant on scheduling outside of their control. The March 1985 edition of *D.A.W.N* includes a note explaining that the two-month delay in publication was "due to the fact our printer and coordinator Mr. Scott was in the hospital for major surgery."[95] Institutional limitations were not always because of loss of privileges or censorship, but were reliant on the presence and assistance of prison staff nonetheless. In addition, one would also assume that there are set dates per month for the editorial team to meet in order for prison staff to check and censor before publication, although none of the zines explicitly allude to it. By assigning specific time to create content, prison authorities restrict the time prescribed for women to be creative as

[94] Logan Lee, "The Power of Choice in Prison Programming," *University of Oxford Faculty of Law Website,* 23rd July, 2019, https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/centres-institutes/centre-criminology/blog/2019/07/power-choice-prison-programming.
[95] Editor, "So Sorry For Delay Of DAWN," *Determined Action for Women Now*, March 1985, 7.

they are reliant on institutional scheduling and might not have the equipment or space needed during their down time. This restriction is evidenced in a letter to *Black and Pink* where the contributor writes, "I am sorry for being out of touch for sooo long; a lot of B.S. has been happening, including me being drugged with K2, etc. and being in and out of the hole where I could not write because they only give that privilege to their favourite pet rats."[96] Even with externally edited zines, which are less beholden to prison schedules, the creation and distribution of the zines remains at the behest of prison officials. Incarcerated contributors might be unable to write or send content and, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, publications are occasionally banned or removed entirely.

The serialization of prison zines also encourages a certain amount of familiarity in the publications, which helps to establish collective identity. Editorials, letters and articles refer back to past editions and future issues are alluded to and expected. The present, in which the current issue exists, is an extension of the past whilst also a departure from it. The content is familiar enough to suggest continuation, but individual enough not to be seen as repetitive. This familiarity is not exclusive to prison zines but is an important aspect of their role as collective autobiography. As periodicals, zines retain certain features in each edition meaning that although their readership can expect new content, they can rely on the format, structure and themes of the zine to remain largely the same. For example, between 1980 and 1987, *D.A.W.N* followed a largely consistent format, including poetry; games or puzzles; religious (primarily Christian), legal, and facility-specific content; opinion pieces and cartoons in almost every edition.[97] This is a significant aspect of periodicals as they offer familiarity but also

[96] Jaina Yukari Sakura, Letters, *Black and Pink,* December 2018, 13, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/bpdecember2018_40pages.

[97] Based at Huron Valley Women's Correctional Facility in Michigan, *Determined Action for Women Now* began life as *The New Dawn: Determined Action for Women Now* before alternating between the two names (and two mastheads) in 1982. The collection held at the Wisconsin Historical Society contains copies of *D.A.W.N* and *The New Dawn* from 1980 to 1987. However, as these start at Vol. 3 No. 15, there are a number of editions that come before and potentially after these that I have not been able to find.

difference with each publication. Writing about feminist periodicals in the 1970s, Agatha Beins has argued that "reading a periodical over multiple issues illuminates how repetition reinforces and complicates feminist politics and identity."[98] The collective identity that is established in women's prison zines is also a product of repetition, as the reoccurrence of certain iconography, content and themes offer points of connection for readers. Beins goes on to argue that through serialization, these publications "produced a feminist past" by covering events and issues, and through promoting future events, "allowed readers to imagine and anticipate a future."[99] For women's prison zines, the repeated monthly or bi-monthly publication created a space within which a community exists. Women were able to refer back to old issues, read current issues, and anticipate the publication of future issues. For Beins, "periodicals gave feminism an existence by showing readers where and when feminism was, is, and will be."[100] As collective autobiography, it is crucial that women's prison zines were produced periodically, as it was the regularity of their publication that maintained the shared space in which collective identity could develop.

## Conclusion

In her departing editorial, *D.A.W.N* editor Sadia Ali writes, "My dear sisters, all of you must know, as I have shared with you many times in the past … 'Life is a journey and not a destination.' Please don't let this time imprison your mind" (emphasis in original).[101] In this farewell note, Ali warns against the psychological repercussions that "doing time" can have on individuals. Indeed, the spatial and temporal confinements of incarceration control and punish people mentally as much as they confine bodies. Yet within the restrictive and isolating

[98] Beins, *Liberation in Print,* 62.
[99] Ibid.*,* 58.
[100] Ibid., 46.
[101] Sadia Ali, "From the Desk of the Editor," *Insight*, May/June 1996, 2.

environment of prison, women use collective autobiography to create networks and articulate the shared histories and oppressions that unite them. In doing so, they establish a form of collective identity, exposing the diverse identities and realities of incarcerated women, and redefining the spatial and temporal structures of incarceration.

The collective autobiography displayed in women's prison zines rejects the traditional defining features of single-authored autobiography in order to better represent the collective. Primarily, zines encourage familiarity and informality through their use of multiple authorship. There are no set styles or forms, and many editors do not employ spelling or grammar checks, yet their serialization and repetition of certain themes, features and iconography establish and reiterate a collective identity. Contributors offer shared experiences, histories and oppressions in an effort to establish commonalities between women and better understand the present. As one editorial feature in *D.A.W.N* highlights:

> We have experienced these feelings. We know what prison does to a man or a woman. We know what it doesn't do! We find strength in knowing that in each other we find friendship and understanding. We, at DAWN, present the women's review from behind prison walls. We invite you to come with us and get to know DAWN- Determined Action for Women now!!! Join our family!!![102]

Similar to this editorial, contributors use letters to emphasise a sisterhood or family behind bars that listen and respond to one another. Interaction from readers expands the confining limitations of incarceration to involve women outside of a single facility and even the prison industrial system itself, in order to establish a network and community that would otherwise remain separate.

[102] Anonymous, "Behind Prison Walls," *Determined Action for Women Now*, June 1986, 7.

This sense of community is validated by the serialization of the zines. The regularity of publication means that there is no beginning, middle or end as the next issue is always expected to continue from the last. This disrupts the traditional linearity of autobiography as it is not structured around one person's life, but rather depicts multiple pasts, presents and futures, centring around the women's incarceration. In doing so, women's prison zines form their own temporal rhythms that offer readers and contributors a collective way to measure time within the rigid, oppressive structures of prison. The monthly or bi-monthly publication dates employ the repetition that structures prison life in order to offer an alternative temporality and sustain a sense of ongoing community by creating a textual space where women are able to communicate, digest and respond. In this sense, collective autobiography is also about action: creating, contributing, reading and responding to the zines are what make up the genre, not merely the text itself.

Taken together, these aspects demonstrate the importance of relationships and collective identity within prison, but also the conflicting nature of community within women's prison zines and collective autobiography more generally: the contributors write collectively, but this does not equate to similarity or unanimous agreement. Rather, the community within women's prison zines is built upon disorder and disagreement and harnesses the cacophony of imprisoned women's voices. The nonconformist and varied form and style emphasises the diversity of contributors and the articles and letters offer women a platform to offer their opinions and even disagree. Prison zines therefore encapsulate the complex realities of identity: for collective autobiography, establishing differences is just as much part of what sustains community as similarity is. They also exhibit the resistance and collective, textual protest of incarcerated women who defy the oppressive spatial and temporal structures of the prison industrial complex. As Chapter Four will explore further, women's prison zines are part of the

American protest literature tradition, demonstrating the pivotal role of collectivity in protest writing.

*Chapter Four*

# "We Asked For Life!": Women's Prison Zines and the Protest Literature Tradition

> Sistas/Bruthas everywhere join in our united efforts to break the chains and bars of injustice.
>
> - Ann Willett, "NCCCW -1865" [1]

On Sunday June 15, 1975, 150 women incarcerated at the North Carolina Correctional Centre for Women (NCCCW) refused to return to their rooms for evening lockup. Described as "an intensification of all the sistas' opposition to racism, sexism, oppression and repression", the protest continued until the following Thursday when it culminated in a violent conflict between the protestors and prison staff.[2] Although few tangible benefits resulted from the protest and many of the women were moved to solitary confinement or transferred to higher security facilities, the four-day protest contradicts the often-held assumption that incarcerated women do not organise and resist. But prison resistance does not solely take the form of physical protest. The events at NCCCW resulted in a one-off zine, *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery,* printed one year later with the help of the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF) and the North Carolina Hard Times Prison Project. As with other prison zines, *Break de Chains* evidences the powerful protest aesthetic women create under conditions of confinement. To date, zines remain absent from writing on the American protest literature tradition. This chapter redresses this omission, arguing that prison protest zines are an important subgenre of protest literature that offer new perspectives on that tradition. Through style and content, zines encourage and enact direct action and protest, both physical and textual, within and outside of prison. As a medium that combines collective writing and resistance, prison zines include

[1] Ann Willett, "NCCCW -1865," *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery,* 1976, 22.
[2] Jinni M. Stroman, introduction to *Break de Chains*, 1.

poetry, essays, autobiography, photographs, illustrations and letters, articulating a polyvocal struggle through a multimedia form. Zines also act as a vehicle for education and communication, offering incarcerated women a platform for self-expression and articulation, and in doing so, are able to challenge negative stereotypes and establish a self-defined and shared identity. As a result, prison protest zines can be considered a form of "intersectional protest literature," a term I use to describe polyvocal, multi-issue protest writing that is based on personal experience. Adding prison zines to the protest literature tradition also decentralizes the "radical" 1970s, thus complicating the popular narrative of prison resistance and instead tracing a much longer and more complex history rooted in print outputs.

As with the other key genres discussed in this thesis, I argue that women's confinement is responsible for the distinctive features of protest zines. The confined environment and forced community of women broadens protest literature's style and form to include more varied and unconventional forms of text and imagery, and the zines take on new meaning as they manifest acts of protest and help establish communities. The creators' confinement is also responsible for demarcating the genre as a form of intersectional protest literature. As I identified in the previous chapter, prison protest zines are an assemblage of multiple narratives, multiple authors and therefore multiple influences and identities that collectively address race, gender, sexuality, economic inequality, the prison system and law enforcement, drug addiction, mental health, disabilities, rape and violence against women. The forced proximity of a diverse prison population produces content that intersects with multiple movements, themes and causes that would not ordinarily coincide, resulting in holistic and inclusive pieces of collective protest literature.

## Defining Protest Literature

Described by Tim McCarthy as "one of those things where you know it when you see it, but you can't necessarily define it", protest literature has received much scholarly attention in recent years.[3] Yet to date, the only attempt to define its characteristics is John Stauffer's foreword to Zoe Trodd's *American Protest Literature.* He writes that the genre attempts to "transform the self and change society" and emphasises the significance of the effort that "strives to give a voice to a collective consciousness, uniting isolated or inchoate discontent."[4] This effort is particularly pertinent for the writers of prison protest zines who are both within and outside of American society. As citizens with "unalienable rights" they have access to society but, owing to their incarceration, are unable to actively participate. By being "locked up" therefore, they are also, by default, locked out. Incarcerated individuals are therefore in a unique position; able to offer a liminal perspective on American society from the margins. Their incarcerated status also makes the forging of a collective consciousness all the more significant. As part of a forced community established by confinement and united by experience, incarcerated women are unwittingly brought together and yet dispersed across the United States. Zines therefore act as a tool to unite contributors and challenge society from the margins. In addition to these factors, Stauffer goes on to define three rhetorical strategies: empathy, which encourages the reader to participate in the writer's experiences; shock value, which invites outrage; and symbolic action, the ambiguity of which offers dialogue and debate. The creators of women's prison zines incorporate all of these features in zine content, whilst remaining closely connected to their personal experience. The zines' tone and serialised form also keeps the dialogue open-ended in order to invite discussion, involvement, and encourage

[3] Daniel J. Rubin-wills quoting Tim McCarthy, "Panelists Discuss Protest Literature," *The Harvard Crimson,* April 4, 2005, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2005/4/4/panelists-discuss-protest-literature-while-many/.
[4] John Stauffer, foreword to *American Protest Literature,* ed. Zoe Trodd (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), xii.

future action. This chapter argues that women's prison zines are an important part of the protest literature tradition. In theorizing the idea of intersectional protest literature, it will build upon Stauffer's definition and offer new avenues for discussion.

Prison protest zines are part of a long history of protest writing and confinement literature in America and share many features with other forms, such as slave narratives and prison autobiographies. During the latter half of the twentieth century, famous African American political prisoners such as Malcom X and Eldridge Cleaver popularized the incarceration narrative of crime and redemption, whilst female writers such as Angela Davis and Assata Shakur protested against the American justice system and the racism and sexism rife in America. However, for whatever reason, these narratives are often omitted from the American protest literature tradition, and any discussion of collective prison protest writing by women is virtually non-existent. Dan Berger has described male prison print culture as the "backbone" of prison organizing, arguing that "these publications marked a new era in prison politics, enabling prisoners to continue functioning as political actors—to read the news, write their opinions, and debate political theory—after the high tide of prison organizing had ebbed."[5] This chapter will expand Berger's brief examination of print in the 1970s, to demonstrate that not only are prison protest zines an important subgenre of protest literature in their own right, but that their extensive literary history covers nearly a century. This is not to say that all forms of zine protest are the same during this period: there are multiple levels of protest affected by censorship, literacy or accessibility. Moreover, the reach and efficacy of zines stretches deep into the prison system to include secret or coded messages and posters used to occupy institutional and restricted spaces such as cell walls. Nevertheless, at their most

[5] Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 226.

basic level prison protest zines act as an important tool for education, communication and resistance.

The most noticeable factor that influences the different forms of prison zine protest is the variation between those produced externally and those produced in-house. As suggested earlier in this thesis, this is hardly surprising as in-house zines are subject to far greater levels of censorship and interference from authorities, which limits the contributors' ability to be overtly critical or provocative. One way to analyse this disparity is by considering intent through an analysis of zines' mission statements or introductions. One can discern several notable disparities between the two forms. Primarily, the prison staff, and sometimes the creators of in-house zines themselves, often emphasise the intended rehabilitative nature of their publication, and opportunities for "self-expression and self-improvement."[6] For example, the opening editorial for The *Lanedale Newsy-News* states:

> The Lanedale Newsy News is published by and for the Women of the Women's Reformatory, Rockwell City, Iowa, for their entertainment and helpfulness. It affords them the opportunity of self-expression and constructive criticism. The paper is also published in order that those interested in the Institution may know of our activities and see the effort put forth. Our policy is one of humor and cheerfulness, and we hope to promote this spirit. All opinions expressed or implied in this publication are the original ideas of the authors unless otherwise designated. They are not necessarily the views or opinions of the editorial staff of this paper. No responsibility is assumed by us for plagiarism.[7]

[6] The opening page of The California Institute for Women's in-house zine *Clarion* explains that it is "Edited and published by and for the Inmates of the California Institution for Women, as a medium of self-expression and to encourage self-improvement." *Clarion,* June 1944.
[7] *Lanedale Newsy-News*, January 1960, 1.

The *Lanedale Newsy-News'* mission statement also shows that in-house zines act as informational and educational tools for readers other than incarcerated women, allowing them to see inside the facility. This intended audience of individuals "interested in the institution" potentially influences the content of zines. Oftentimes the external readership of an internally edited zine includes people who work in the criminal justice system or law and order more broadly, meaning that contributors might voluntarily or otherwise avoid any potentially sensitive subjects or criticisms of the penal system in their work. Conversely, many externally edited zines emphasise the need to create a community of likeminded individuals in order to speak freely and in some cases critically. This community primarily includes fellow incarcerated women, but, as evidenced in the statement of purpose for *No More Cages,* also extends to include readers outside of prison who are ideologically or emotionally empathetic towards incarcerated women's struggles:

> We hope that this newsletter will fight against that isolation by providing a forum where women inside can speak, and through which they can learn of the similar experiences of women in other prisons. Such a forum will be invaluable to all of us on the outside as well: through it we can come to understand the forms of oppression coming down on sisters behind bars, we can familiarize ourselves with their struggles, and learn how to organize around and support them. Outside prison groups can use this forum to find each other and unite our struggles as well as reaching a large number of people who are not yet aware of the work that needs to be done. We can use this space to explore the parallels between prisons and other institutions used to lock people up, and to build the dialogue between the prison movement and the anti-psychiatry movement. Finally, we

> can use these pages to write of the struggles going on outside the prisons and how they reflect and relate to the struggles inside.[8]

This statement of purpose also indicates the importance of centralising incarcerated women's voices in prison zines and allowing those contributors to speak without fear of censorship or regulation. These variations in the intended purpose of the zines alter the types of protest that are created in them. As this chapter will go on to show, these features involve physical or textual acts of protest, community building and communication, and even simply providing a platform to speak. Regardless of these variations in intent and application, each prison protest zine is able to act against the confining and isolating prison environment in order to centralise women's voices and experiences.

## Action Inside

The emphasis on the male prison experience and famous riots such as Attica has resulted in the erasure of women's protest. Yet scholars such as Victoria Law argue that women in prison challenge the prison system in many different ways including prisoner-organised programmes, written complaints to the administration, and physical riots and protests.[9] Over the years, many facilities have been sites of physical acts of protest, including Bedford Hills where, in 1974, incarcerated women held seven staff members hostage for two and a half hours in protest at the savage beatings of a fellow inmate.[10] Similarly, in 1971, the women at the Federal Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia held a four-day work strike in frustration at the lack of progress with reform at the facility. Born out of a similar sense of dissatisfaction,

[8] "Statement of Purpose," *No More Cages,* May 1981, 1.
[9] Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009).
[10] Kathryn Watterson Burkhart, *Women in Prison* (New York: Popular Library, 1976), 166.

the protest at NCCCW in 1975 began as a response to the inhumane living and working conditions at the facility. Women objected to poor medical conditions, solitary confinement, inadequate diet and harassment from prison guards, all of which they regarded as manifestations of the discriminations and inequalities felt outside of prison. The protestors emphasised the hazardous conditions of the prison's laundry room where they washed all the state's correctional and psychiatric facilities' laundry with no protective clothing or safety precautions. One anonymous woman described her experiences of the washroom: "I along with others had to handle infested clothing from sanitoriums, local hospitals and various institutions along with N.C.C.C.W.'s clothes. We had no protection what-so-ever from any such germs that came in those clothes. And with our bare hands we sorted through those clothes because we were forced to."[11] The lengthy sixty-five-page zine *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery* includes the "articles, poems, and drawings done since June of 1975" when the protest took place. The women at NCCCW viewed the event as a "turning point … when they demonstrated to be treated and recognized as human beings."[12] The inclusion of artwork and writing documenting the events of the protest at NCCCW demonstrates one form of prison zine protest. The writing vividly depicts the events of the four-day protest, describing the violent resistance that met their "peaceful struggle":

> About 4:45 a.m. Monday morning we heard footsteps and we saw Mr. Kautzky and Mr. Kea coming to the circle we had made with the benches. Mr. Kautzky asked that we peacefully go to the auditorium and that if we refused he would order the guards to move in. None of us moved and the guards came at us with riot sticks. Some went on their own, others were carried by the guards. The first blow was struck by the guard to

[11] One, "Open Letter to the People," *Break de Chains*, 28.
[12] Stroman, Introduction, *Break de Chains,* 2.

> a prisoner while on the front lawn. Others were carried by guards and thrown in the auditoroum [sic] on top of one another.[13]

This piece resembles much of the writing in *Break de Chains*. Its use of locations, dates and time evokes journalistic writing. The women offer these accounts in an attempt to counter false reports of the events in June 1975 and to make their own voices heard. By recording their experiences of the physical events in a published zine, the women extended their protest both geographically and temporally. *Break de Chains* circulated throughout the state and the country, which created a wider readership beyond just those physically close to the event, and an extended influence as the zine was able to outlive the physical protest. *Break de Chains* was featured in local mainstream press, including *The Carolina Times* which, in July 1977, published an advert describing the zine as "A book of articles, poetry and graphics exploring the lives and thoughts of 10 women who are incarcerated in one of the most repressive prison systems in this country" and was accompanied by an image of hands breaking chains (Fig. 4.1). A further article from *The Carolina Times* lists "*The Durham Carolina Times*, Raleigh's *Carolinian*, *The Anvil*, *The Progressive Seven Days* and the *North Carolina Sun*" as other state newspapers that advertised *Break de Chains* for free.[14]

Women's prison zines across the country also reported on the riot at NCCCW and the publication of *Break de Chains*. The circulation of news from each institution, including accounts of riots and protests, demonstrates the underground prison print culture network's interconnectedness and reciprocity as each event became a shared experience. For example, the 1977 edition of *Through the Looking Glass* included information on the rebellion at NCCCW offering support to the women and reiterating the importance of outside support for

[13] Anne C. Willett, "In Our Peaceful Struggle," *Break de Chains,* 4.
[14] "'Break de Chains of Legalized U.$ Slavery' Banned," *The North Carolina Times,* Saturday May 7, 1977, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org.

the women involved: "isolation is so powerful because it leaves the individual with no resources. She is completely at the mercy of her keepers. This is why it is so important not to let the prisons isolate the women inside them."[15] For the creators of *Through the Looking Glass,* the network of women's prison zines is not merely for circulating texts, but a means of eradicating isolation and segregation through education and collaboration. The events at NCCCW were therefore not viewed in other prison zines as isolated or exceptional events, but rather acts of protest that represented the collective struggle that could be—and were—affecting incarcerated women everywhere. Indeed, the article in *Through the Looking Glass* concludes by noting that: "this is just one story of women demanding their rights in prison. It's clear that the government is not going to answer their demands without a fight. These women are not going to give up. They are continuing the struggle. In the next issue of Through the Looking Glass will be the story of another struggle."[16] The Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF), as well as offering logistical support, also brought *Break the Chains* publicity through their own feminist zine *Feminary.* Started in 1969 as a space where feminist lesbians could write "to fill the silences that have obscured the truth about our lives and kept us isolated from each other," the zine had a readership that stretched beyond its North Carolina base.[17] As well as *Feminary,* other feminist zines advertised *Break de Chains,* including *The Amazon* which featured the zine in both their 1979 summer edition and in December 1976. Similarly, the *Liberation News Service* (LNS)*,* a New Left, antiwar, underground press publication based in New York also published an advert for *Break de Chains.* As an organisation aimed at the centralizing of "newsgathering and dissemination of the underground media," the inclusion of a publication like *Break de Chains* suggests that women's prison zines interacted with the

[15] Anon, "Women in Prison – Organizing," *Through the Looking Glass,* July 1977, 2.
[16] Ibid., 3.
[17] Jamie Harker, *The Lesbian South: Southern Feminists, the Women in Print Movement, and the Queer Literary Canon* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 46.

underground print culture network and demonstrates the potentially extensive readership that evolved as a result.[18] By including and referencing *Break de Chains,* these publications reinforced the idea that women's prison zines were central to the feminist and lesbian print culture networks I discussed in Chapter Two.[19]

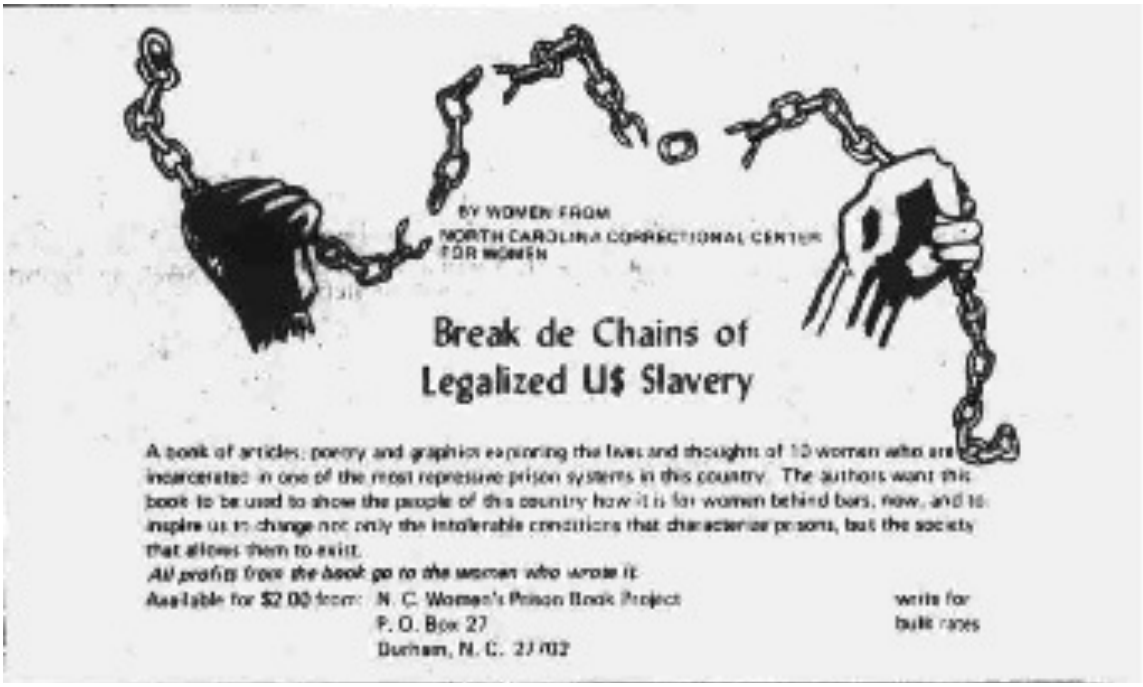



**Figure 4.1: Advertisement *for Break de Chains of Legalized U.S. Slavery* from *The North Carolina Times* (Saturday January 8, 1977), 5, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org. The same advert is also found in feminist publication *The Amazon* (Summer 1979), http://voices.revealdigital.com.**

The women's accounts in *Break de Chains* are accompanied by photographs from the four days depicting protestors (both individually and in a group), supporters from outside of the prison, and various rooms inside NCCCW. The photographs authenticate the women's accounts and resemble the approach of photojournalism or muckraking (Fig. 4.2). The composition of the images, however, also suggests that they go beyond any such seemingly self-evident status to visually demonstrate the women's experience of perpetual confinement,

[18] John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 83.
[19] *Feminary* was also occasionally utilized for fundraising purposes. One such advert read "Nine people from two groups Triangle Area Feminists and the North Carolina Hard Times Prison Project---are collecting and printing the book. One thousand dollars is necessary for its publication. This money will cover materials. Labor is being donated." *Feminary,* July 4, 1976, http://atthekitchentable.blogspot.co.uk/2007/07/fighting-fire.html.

as well as their resistance to it. Many photographs are taken through the wire fences and from behind metal bars casting a shadow around the women and the empty beds of a medium custody dormitory. Such angles aestheticize the women's perennial imprisonment as the methods of confinement, be it bars or fences, obscure some of the scene and dominate the image. This imagery is reiterated in a corresponding piece by Anne Willett who writes that "the steel-barred door of my brick cell casts a shadow over my entire body; it follows me; there is no escape."[20] One image positions the photographer behind heavily armed guards who are lined up ready to disperse supporters. This composition, much like the images taken through the bars, gives the viewer a sense of being a witness—being outside but also being a participant—and acts itself as a call for support. Photography scholars argue that the positioning and framing of images "may help transform viewers from consuming spectators into participant witnesses who self-critically reflect upon their own subject positions in relation to the conditions depicted in the image while simultaneously being aware that an adequate response to the image is not possible."[21] For those viewing the images in *Break de Chains,* this sense of being a witness aims to inspire action as they unintentionally look on at the events at NCCCW.



**Figure 4.2: Photographs from *Break de Chains* (left to right): "Injured prisoner after first night of assualt [sic] by guards," 18; "Armed agents of the state holding back supporters prior to attack on June 19th," 21; and "One of the demands was to close down this laundry," 28.**

[20] Anne Willett, "Life's Shadow," *Break de Chains,* 24.
[21] Frank Möller and Susan Sontag, "Rwanda Revisualized: Genocide, Photography, and the Era of the Witness," *Alternatives* 35, no. 2 (2010), 114.

Yet despite the bars and guards, the photographs also show the women's resistance as they hold up their clenched fists and are captured, mid-shout, with their mouths open. This, in contrast to the blurred fences and guards, suggests resistance behind bars and emulates one prisoner's poetical subversion of the famous Civil Rights song *We Shall Overcome*:

> so listen here whitteys,
> i think it's time you pass,
> cause you got a whole lot of sistas,
> on your mutha-fucking ass,
> and we ain't giving up,
> and we ain't gonna run,
> we gonna keep on trucking,
> till we overcome.[22]

This poem is also an example of the explicitly political creative writing in *Break de Chains* that aims to further the women's cause at NCCCW. Kirsten MacLeod identifies this type of content as crucial to "periodicals of protest" in an earlier period that "often contained literary content of some kind … usually in the service of a social or political agenda."[23] *Break de Chains* includes multiple poems by the women at NCCCW that discuss the issues prompting their protest or the issues they face more generally in society. Tarishi Maisha's poem "What do You Say to Hungry Children Amerikkka?" asks the country what it does for children—in this sense meaning a child of the state rather than an infant—who are hungry for food, education, employment, housing and freedom. In each instance the response is damning. The

[22] Shirley J. Herlth, "Til We Overcome," *Break de Chains,* 20.
[23] Kirsten MacLeod, *American Little Magazines of the Fin de Siècle: Art, Protest and Cultural Transformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 15.

poem suggests that "you [Amerikkka] ignore his calls for help" and "put those chains on him/Before he/was born/His Daddy/Wore them too" evoking images of the legacy of American slavery, and suggesting an oppression that is present even before birth and inherited in a new form.[24] This use of imagery such as Maisha's shackles is something that Zoe Trodd claims is a feature of much protest writing; placing ideas and imagery into new contexts creates a "living protest legacy."[25] Just as Civil Rights and Black Power protestors utilized abolitionist protest techniques and images of slavery, the creators of women's prison zines use ideas of whips, chains and bars to highlight the similarities in the injustices of their incarceration and the permanence of racism in the United States. The poem ends with another call to arms as Maisha writes "Join with me in arms/My bruthas/sistas/For We/Can Save the Children!" inciting support from their readers.




**Figure 4.3: "Liberation: Revolution In Our Time," *Break de Chains*, 43 and "…Give me Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses Yearning To Breath [sic] Free," *Break de Chains,* 4.**

[24] Tarishi Maisha, "What do You Say to Hungry Children Amerikkka?," *Break de Chains,* 41-2.
[25] Trodd, *American Protest Literature,* xxv.

The poem is accompanied by an image of Black and white women wearing uniforms and carrying heavy-duty weapons (Fig. 4.3). Sketched into the side of the gun is the name "EMORY," evoking the Black Arts Movement artist Emory Douglass's work that often critiqued the state and the prejudiced justice system. The image suggests that artwork and creative tools, represented here by the inscribed gun, can be used as weapons for revolution. James P. Danky has argued that "print culture is most frequently thought of as words on paper, or on computer screens. But the visual world in which art is a component is also a crucial arena for social protest. Paintings, cartoons, street banners, graffiti, even the lowly bumper sticker, are all sources of visual protest."[26] *Break de Chains* is full of powerful pieces of protest art that act to substantiate and advance their cause. The opening article "In Our Peaceful Struggle" is accompanied by an image of a prison guard wearing a Nazi-inspired uniform with KKK written on the belt, and clutching an object dripping with what resembles blood (Fig. 4.3). The caption under the image quotes Emma Lazarus's sonnet "The New Colossus": "Give me Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses Yearning to Breath [sic] Free." The juxtaposition between image and sonnet mirrors the disparity between the violent struggle for freedom experienced by the women at NCCCW and the promised ideals of freedom and equality inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty.[27] The cover image is the only one in full colour and shows a half-naked Black woman with natural hair kneeling over the Pan-African flag, holding up a chained world with "U.$.A" written on it (Fig. 4.4). This powerful, anti-colonialist image shows strength despite adversity, and immense responsibility for the unidentified woman who is chained to the world and supports it alone with a bowed head. This image evokes ideas of the Greek Titan Atlas who was condemned to hold up the sky for eternity and who has been

[26] James P. Danky, preface to *Protest on the Page: Essays on Print and the Culture of Dissent Since 1895,* ed. James L. Baughman, Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen and James P. Danky (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), xi.

[27] "The New Colossus" was written by Emma Lazarus in 1883. The sonnet was cast onto a bronze plaque at the base of the statue of liberty in 1903 and included the now famous lines "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

represented in many works of art. Reimagining Black women at the centre of classical mythology suggests that the individual carrying the burdens of the world is Black and female and that, like this woman symbolically holding the weight, the women in *Break de Chains* are also suffering under the strain of American oppression.

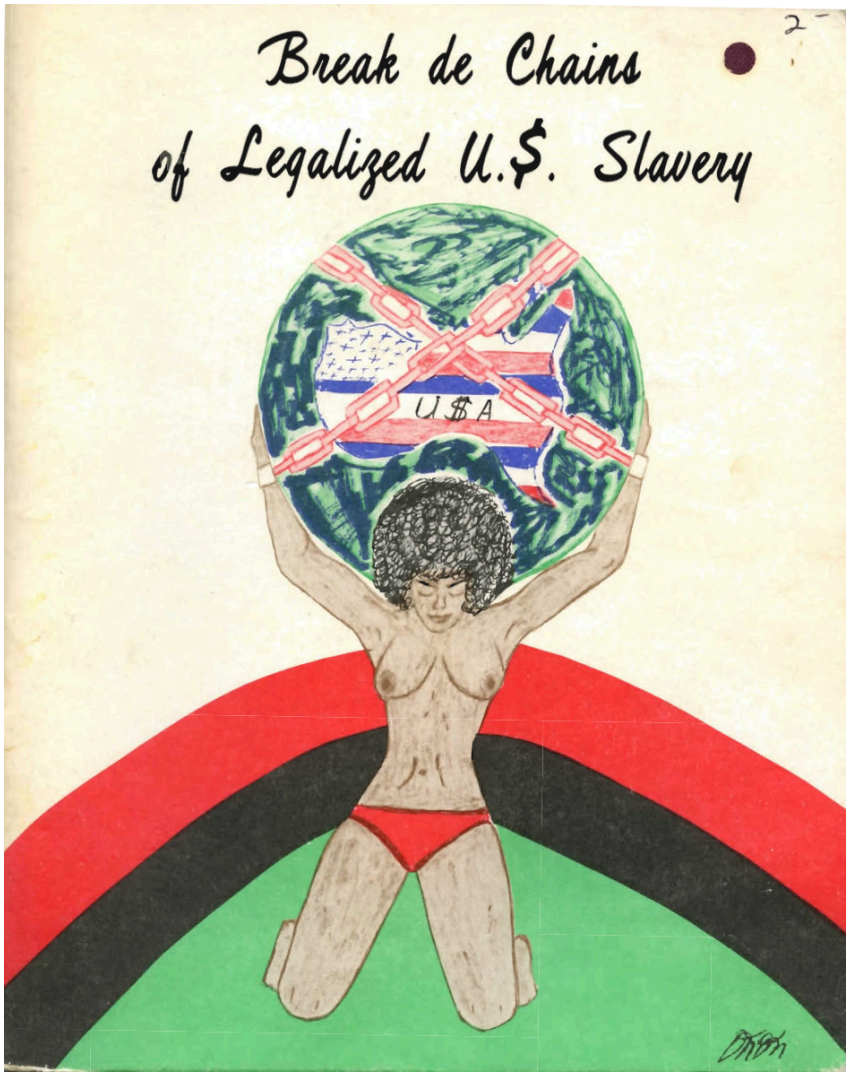



**Figure 4.4: Cover image, *Break de Chains.***

Not all of the women who contributed to *Break de Chains* were Black, however. Despite engaging with African American history and demonstrating a clear Black aesthetic, judging by some of the contributors' photographs, at least two of the ten contributors were white.[28] This could potentially be problematic as the white contributors could be seen to be

[28] It is always somewhat problematic to assume someone's race or ethnicity from a photograph alone, however the protest itself included a racially diverse group of women and the issues in *Break de Chains*

appropriating Black culture by utilizing the terminology and aesthetic of The Black Freedom Struggle, such as replacing "C"s with "K"s. Yet the same examples could also be interpreted as acts of solidarity, uniting their experiences of imprisonment and American gendered and class oppression and demonstrating the intersectionality of the zine. Indeed, the contributors write about the intersections of race and gender within the confines of American capitalism, highlighting the injustices of the penal system that incarcerates the most vulnerable members of society whilst allowing the most powerful to "walk free." Contributor Anne Willet writes, "Taxpayers, its [sic] your money these government officials are taking to become superrich. You wonder why we rebel-becuase [sic] of the fascism/racism/imperialism that exists in this state and country. My people grow tired, citizens, of paying for the bigger mans' crime. How long are you going to permit this to continue?"[29] Zines like *Break de Chains* attempt to expose the intersectionality of their protest by exploring the ways in which class, race and gender coalesce behind bars. Vol. 4 No. 9 of *Through the Looking Glass* includes an interview with a woman incarcerated at Bedford Hills who also acknowledges the particular racial and class-based intersectionalities that affect women in prison, arguing that "us Blacks and poor whites are never gonna be upper class so that's a dream that everyone needs to forget."[30] Although all rooted fundamentally in prison reform/abolition, there is no zine that focuses on one single issue as the contributors know it would be detrimental to the wider community. Moreover, many of the contributors show an awareness of the interconnectedness of incarceration and the underlying social issues that sustain it, acknowledging that issues such as poverty and racism must be tackled if prison abolition is to be achieved.

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are not limited to racial discrimination (although heavily informed by it and its historical roots in the United States). As such, based on this and the accompanying photographs, it is believable to assume that a portion of the contributors are not African American.

[29] Anne C. Willett, Untitled, *Break de Chains,* 40.

[30] "Carol Crooks," *Through the Looking Glass*, October 1979, 16.

*Break de Chains* experienced immediate success. The initial print run of 1,000 sold out in just over five months and a second round of printing was scheduled for the following May. Yet the publication was not without opposition. In May 1977, *The Carolina Times* published an article explaining that although the ten women who contributed to *Break de Chains* received a copy inside prison, a further four inmates who requested copies were denied. The *Times* quoted commissioner Ralph Edwards as saying "these articles read together call for violence and criminal activity from the inmate readers." Going on to refer to the facility's policy, Edwards argues that "inmate publications intended to exert pressure on correctional officials or create tension between inmates or between inmates and staff will not be tolerated." Edwards's justification suggests that *Break de Chains* was deemed too provocative for circulation amongst the prison population. His reasoning that the zine calls "for violence" from the readers suggests that a prison publication has the power to influence an entire group of individuals into action. However, The *Times* then includes the written response of an unnamed contributor to the zine arguing that:

> This book gives accurate, detailed information of the conditions, treatment and events that necessitated the protest. Because of these truths that are expressed in this book, the department of Corrections and Director Ralph D. Edwards has "banned" the book from entrance to this prison. We believe our expresses [sic] feelings to be just and non-incitive, and that Mr Edwards' statement of denial to be without base and results from prejudiced analization.[31]

[31] "'Break de Chains of Legalized U.$ Slavery' Banned," *The North Carolina Times,* Saturday May 7, 1977, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn83045120/1977-05-07/ed-1/seq-11/#index=0&rows=20&proxtext=break+de+chains&searchType=basic&sequence=0&words=Break+Chains+De&page=1.

For the women who contributed to *Break de Chains,* banning the zine impeded their freedom of speech and their ability to articulate their own experiences and communicate with each other. Yet what this news extract evidences is the potentially controversial power of women's prison zines; a text deemed too provocative or incisive can itself act as a weapon of protest.

Recounting personal experiences of physical protests is one aspect of prison protest zines and is not limited to externally edited zines. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the January-February 1972 edition of *Clarion* includes an account of the "Great Taco Shake" that occurred earlier in the week. The article recounts how prison guards stopped and searched women as they left the cafeteria and confiscated stolen food, and how these actions then led the aggrieved women to break windows the following day. The author writes: "as we said, it is against the rules to take food from the dining room. Perhaps this is one of the many small rules that need looking into, changing … So far we can find no one who will admit to ordering 'the taco shake' … When the line of communication is broken, all that is left is frustration. In a caged society, like this, frustration can be a dangerous, deadly thing."[32] In this instance, the intended audience is women at the facility; the writer implores the imprisoned women and the administration to open up lines of communication in order to resolve issues such as the "taco shake" and avoid any potential violence or conflict in the future. In contrast, the writers of *Break de Chains* appear to target a wider audience. Marjorie Marsh writes: "to ensure these needed changes the support of the people is essential. Many were brutalized during our stand; but we do not complain. Can you/will you continue to turn deaf ears on a cry for help. Stand my people! Save a life and end oppression!"[33] The language is impassioned and has the oratorical zeal of speeches from the Civil Rights or Black Power movements as the women beg their readers to offer support and action on their behalf. The writers frequently use the terms

[32] Anon, "Friday's Child," *Clarion,* Jan-Feb 1972, 2.
[33] Marjorie Marsh, "Life for a Life – Unity to Live," *Break de Chains,* 13.

"sistas" and "bruthas" to refer to their readership, echoing popular phrasing at the time, but also suggesting kinship and a sense of shared identity. The contributors incorporate literary strategies often used in protest writing and speeches such as rhetorical questions and bold exclamations, applying Stauffer's identifying features of protest literature: empathy and shock value. Prison protest zines, however, are not just vehicles of protest for women campaigning behind bars. As the next section goes on to demonstrate, zines rely upon the involvement and action of those outside of prison as much as they sought to represent the women inside.

## Action Outside

Prison protest zines are a particularly material form of protest literature as they become a physical form of resistance themselves. As well as providing updates on recent riots through textual and visual depictions of physical events and individual experiences, prison protest zines also include letter templates, manifestos, lists of demands or correspondence between incarcerated women and allies. *Break de Chains* includes a four-page proposal addressed to "Rev. W.W. Finlator and Members of the N.C. Advisory Committee to the N.C. Commission of Civil Rights" and listing suggested changes for NCCCW. These proposals are categorized into several subheadings including "Criteria for Staff", "Prisoners' Community (Prison)", "Medical Department", "Educational/Vocational Programs", "Disciplinary Committee", "Visiting" and "Parole Board."[34] By including written demands, prison protest zines are able to support a movement beyond the single event, demonstrating the informative and practical role of the text as it acts as a vessel for communication and change. For externally edited zines, the inclusion of manifestos or demands from women at facilities across the US helps to build and sustain a network and rally support from a nationwide readership both inside and outside prison. *Through the Looking Glass* frequently contained lists of demands from women and men

[34] Marjorie Marsh and Anne Willett, "Proposal," *Break de Chains,* 36-39.

in facilities across the United States. In Vol. 3 No. 4 they detail the events of a hunger strike at King County Jail in Seattle and the next issue contains details of similar events at both Tacoma Jail and Snohomish County Jail, all listing the strikers' demands for rights such as better food, access to medical care and more exercise. Similarly, in Vol. 2 No. 5 of *No More Cages*, Donna Radford Murphy from CIW writes in to document her experiences of poor medical care, mail tampering and lack of decent education at the facility, writing that "we women in CIW ARE going to beat the administration and all of their petty games, and we want to remind them of the fact as much as possible!!!" (emphasis in original).[35] Many who write in include addresses to send either letters of support to the women, or letters to administration as a form of protest. Vol. 5 No. 2 includes an anonymous letter from "a sister who didn't forget" about several women at the Renz Correctional Center in Cedar City, Missouri, who are "serving what is called 'The 50 year stipulation,'" meaning that "when those sisters are sentenced the judge stipulated they must serve 50 years flat. Without seeing the parole board."[36] The letter ends with a note encouraging readers to write letters objecting to the women's unjust sentencing. By encouraging action from readers, the women use the zines as another tangible form of protest.

As well as broadening the exposure of their various demonstrations, the zines also encouraged, and in many cases achieved, action and involvement from their readership. In the introduction to *Break de Chains,* Jinni M. Stroman from the N.C. Hard Times Prison Project describes how "Comrades in minimum [referring to 'minimum security,' a term used by Stroman to identify those living outside of prison but still within capitalist society] from all over, even Holland, have now established bonds with them [the women at NCCCW], and have lent much concrete support … All of you, in your own way, have greatly contributed to the book's formation."[37] In some cases this involvement became a substitute for the women's own

[35] Donna Radford Murphy, "A Word From CIW," *No More Cages,* May 1981, 27.
[36] Anonymous, Letter, *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 7.
[37] Stroman, introduction to *Break de Chains*, 2.

acts of resistance. In these instances, zines such as *The Fire Inside* act as a form of recruitment as well as the medium through which the women and their supporters communicate. First published in 1996, *The Fire Inside* was created by the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) as an attempt to challenge the invisibility of women prisoners in California.[38] This decision was a response to the *Shumate v. Wilson* class-action lawsuit filed a year earlier by a group of incarcerated women from the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla and the California Institute for Women at Frontera against the state of California. The lawsuit demanded better standards of health care for women in prison and inspired the zine's title:[39]

> [*The Fire Inside*] got its name from a former prisoner who identified the passion, determination, strength and bravery of the women who were willing to put their names publicly on the class action lawsuit *Shumate v. Wilson* demanding that the CDCR treat all prisoners as human beings and provide adequate medical care. It was the fire from inside the prison walls that gave CCWP its start and sustains the work today.[40]

[38] According to Diana Block, "CCWP took off after the International Women's Day event. The large meetings we held every couple of weeks included women from a range of backgrounds, experiences and motivations. There were former prisoners who were looking for a way to advocate for the sisters they had left behind; there were radical activists who saw women prisoners as a focal point for feminist anti-racist organizing; and there were women who were new to politics but had been moved by the description of abuse and wanted to help in some way. We wanted to build an organization that took direction from the women inside and offered a place where former prisoners and women of color could develop their leadership. We wanted CCWP to become a community as well as an organization. LaTonya, a former prisoner, came up with a slogan to express this sensibility – CCWP/Caring Collectively for Women Prisoners." Diana Block, *Arm the Spirit: A Woman's Journey Underground and Back* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 328.

[39] "History of CCWP & Charisse Shumate: Fights for Our Lives Film/California Coalition for Women Prisoners," *CCWP* website, accessed February 6, 2017, http://womenprisoners.org/?p=54.

[40] "Fifty Issues of 'The Fire Inside', Reflections Inside and Out," *The Fire Inside,* Summer 2014, 1, https://womenprisoners.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/FI50final1.pdf.

According to CCWP member Diana Block, the new title "clicked." She argued that "not only would the newsletter be a vehicle for popular education, it would also nurture the fire of creativity and the resistance of women prisoners."[41] With this title, the editors allude not only to this fire in the prison, but also the fire within the women themselves that encourages them to write and speak out. The hope is that this determination and passion will spread to other women such as a fire spreads.

The first edition totalled only four pages and included features on *Shumate v. Wilson* and healthcare abuses more generally. Since then, the zine has grown to sixteen A4 pages and is released approximately four times a year with a circulation of over 2,800.[42] It includes work from incarcerated women, formerly incarcerated women, and allies on the outside, providing a "space for women, transgender & gender non-conforming prisoners and their supporters to communicate with each other and the public about the issues and experiences they face through articles, art and poetry."[43] This amalgamation of content from women in prison and their allies outside reflects another form of shared protest in the zine. Where incarcerated women are unable to actively resist themselves, they use the zine as an intermediary tool to encourage supporters on the outside to act on their behalf. The special edition for *The Fire Inside's* fiftieth issue includes short testimonies from contributors who explain the importance of this intermediary role. "Thank you *Fire Inside,* for being the voice outside prison walls for the ones that have no voice inside" wrote AnnaBell Chapa, while Urszula Wislanka described how "*The Fire Inside* has been an indispensable organising tool for activists inside and out."[44] There is much evidence in the zine of tangible, physical action taken by non-incarcerated members of CCWP on behalf of the women inside. For instance, the fiftieth issue also includes a letter

[41] Block, *Arm the Spirit,* 329.
[42] "What We Do," *CCWP* website, accessed February 6, 2017, http://*womenprisoners*.org/?p=57.
[43] Ibid.
[44] AnnaBell Chapa and Urszula Wislanka, "Reflections on 'The Fire Inside' Issue Number 50," *The Fire Inside,* Summer 2014, 1, https://womenprisoners.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/FI50final1.pdf.

template campaigning against the proposed opening of a private prison costing nine million dollars. Instead the women felt that the money would be better spent implementing release programs to combat overcrowding. The letter is prefaced by an instruction telling readers to "please sign this letter and send it back to CCWP. We will present all letters to legislators."[45] Similarly, Issue 46 includes an article on the conversion of a women's prison into a male facility to combat overcrowding. It concludes with a request for support and action: "To sign a petition opposing the conversion of VSPW into a men's prison, go to: http://www.womenprisoners.org/news/001066.html Contact CCWP for paper petitions to circulate."[46] In both instances, the women on the outside perform the actions on behalf of the women inside who have limited scope to organize and resist.

In that same issue, the zine evidences the extent to which the women outside are able to act in lieu of the women in prison. One article documents the events at an "Occupy 4 Prisoners" protest attended by members of CCWP in San Quentin, describing how "the crowd of around 800 that day was entirely peaceful. Colorful banners, artwork and passionate speakers created a liberated zone even in the 'valley of the shadow of death' that is San Quentin."[47] But more significantly, the article mentions how "CCWP participants ensured that incarcerated women's voices and issues were an important part of that day. Statements and poetry by women in the San Francisco County Jail were read, as well as a statement by Jane Dorotik at the California Institute for Women, detailing the high cost to society of imprisoning women."[48] In this respect, it is not just the presence of CCWP members at these events nor their petitioning that is important, but rather their role as mediator and representative of the

[45] "Stop the McFarland GEO Women's Prison!," *The Fire Inside*, Summer 2014, 14, https://womenprisoners.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/FI50final1.pdf.
[46] "VSPW - Closure or Conversion?," *The Fire Inside*, Spring-Summer 2012, 3, https://womenprisoners.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Fire-Inside-Issue-46-Spring-Summer-2012.pdf.
[47] "Occupy 4 Prisoners: A Bold Beginning," *The Fire Inside*, Spring-Summer 2012, 8.
[48] Ibid.

women's absent voices. In this regard, the zine becomes a literal voice to the outside for incarcerated women. The zines therefore extend protest geographically and temporally as it reaches women both inside and outside prison and beyond the single event. In addition, women's prison zines regularly feature updates on events that have been included in previous editions, and sometimes report on how their action has resulted in changes or triumphs. The Spring 2018 edition of *The Fire Inside* includes an update on CCWP's "Drop LWOP" campaign, listing their current victories since October 2017. The article also includes information on the upcoming action as part of "Drop LWOP", including a postcard campaign, a governor letter campaign, and a guide created by CCWP to help with the commutation application. All of these techniques, they argue, are "inspiring the LWOP community to believe that winning freedom is possible", concluding with a further call to action: "Help us expand this campaign and keep the pressure on. It's working!"[49] Articles such as these show where the movement has been and where it is going, and contribute to a sense of open-endedness.

## Form as Action

It is not just the content that gives the protest in women's prison zines a sense of open-endedness. The form of the genre itself provides the zines with continuity through their seriality. Writing of protest essays, Brian Norman has argued that they "draw on the open-endedness of the traditional essay, but for immediate political ends: they incite readers to continue their projects, often by ending with questions, plans of action, or calls for a direct response."[50] The same can be said of prison protest zines as each edition uses similar persuasive techniques to remain open-ended, offering readers and contributors a platform to become

[49] "Drop LWOP Campaign Updates," *The Fire Inside,* Spring 2018, 10, http://womenprisoners.org/the-fire-inside-2/. LWOP stands for Life Without Parole.
[50] Brian Norman, *The American Protest Essay and National Belonging: Addressing Division* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), 37.

involved and ways to take action. However, prison protest zines go one step further than protest essays. As the majority of zines are serialized, their repetition and frequency results in a continuation of the conversation beyond a single text. Their protest is therefore ongoing: later editions include updates on campaigns, and new movements arise with each new issue maintaining a momentum within the zines that might otherwise be lost in physical protests or single texts.

The zine form is also utilized more directly for protest. Prison zines are easily comparable to the DIY movement, a modern incarnation of an ideologically well-established phenomenon whereby participants of the movement seek new forms of education and knowledge dissemination removed from capitalist structures and "The Establishment."[51] David Hemphill and Shari Leskowitz discuss the various methods used by the DIY movement such as "piracy, skillshares, Internet/open source media, the streets, and self-published zines" and how these practises are inherently political, providing free information to the masses in "Robin Hood"-esque acts of intellectual justice.[52] With similar ideological goals, prison protest zines freely provide education and empowerment to a wide readership of disenfranchised individuals cut off from society. As with the philosophy of the DIY movement, prison zines are created not for profit or exchange-value, but rather, as Holtzman et al argue of the movement more broadly, for use-value in that they provide a worth to their readers separate to monetary gains.[53] Every zine discussed in this thesis is free to people in prison. Prisons are cashless societies and many people inside have little or no money. For Anthony Rayson, the zines he publishes are also "anti-copyright" as he is "not trying to sell anything. Except ideas, and that's not for sale.

[51] Holtzman et al trace the DIY movement's origins back to the 1970s. Ben Holtzman, Craig Hughes, Kevin Van Meter, "Do It Yourself… and the Movement Beyond Capitalism," in *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization,* ed. Stevphen Shukaitis and David Graeber (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 47.
[52] David Hemphill and Shari Leskowitz, "DIY Activists: Communities of Practice, Cultural Dialogism, and Radical Knowledge Sharing," *Adult Education Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2012), 69.
[53] Holtzman et. al, "Do It Yourself," 45.

They're free."[54] This emphasis on accessibility and affordability is not only practical but ideological. Prisons are inherently capitalist institutions, from the societal and economic structures that cause mass incarceration to the private prison system and cheap labour behind bars. By making zines free, they push back against American capitalism and the for-profit model of prisons.

Hemphill and Leskowitz go on to critique the DIY movement, however, claiming that "if the DIY activists do want to reach out and educate their surrounding communities, they are currently not particularly well suited for this outreach" as "their activities are often insular, self-referential, and off-the-grid."[55] Women's prison zines could be similarly critiqued insomuch as they circulate largely within an insular network of other prisons and likeminded communities. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in this thesis thus far, there is a substantial capacity within prison zines for community building and knowledge exchange for both those inside of prisons and those out. Information is borrowed and shared from multiple resources providing content that would otherwise be unavailable to women behind bars and those outside. This type of protest therefore is less about reaching and affecting those outside of the network, but rather empowering and encouraging those within. Indeed, active resistance is only part of the empowerment generated by prison protest zines. The creation, publication and circulation of these underground resources sought not only to enact and inspire action, but also to highlight women prisoners' voices, address misrepresentation and archive a forgotten or ignored past and present. For the rest of this chapter I will look at the ways in which incarcerated women utilize prison zines as protest tools beyond acts of physical resistance such as protest, riots and letter campaigns.

[54] Temporary Services interview with Anthony Rayson, *Publishing 'Zines for Prisoners: An Interview with Anthony Rayson (*March 2015), 12.
[55] Hemphill and Leskowitz, "DIY Activists," 74.

## Education as Protest

As well as documenting and encouraging the physical acts of protest, women's prison zines also emphasise the roles of community and education in facilitating change and empowerment. Incarcerated women are able to use zines to reach out to one another and share their experiences, finding solace in their commonalities and offering advice. This technique also functions as an educational tool as women are able to simultaneously use the platform to counter stereotypes, and redress common misconceptions or prejudices. For externally edited zines in particular, a significant proportion of these shared experiences are dedicated to exposing the injustices of the criminal justice system and championing prison reform and/or abolition. Contributors speak of the unsanitary and inhumane living conditions, the violence and abuse from prison staff, and the systemic prejudices of the justice system. Yet these common experiences also extend to injustices and abuses felt elsewhere. Although topics relating to race, ethnicity and racism appear with varying frequency in most externally edited zines, *Break de Chains* is the most vocal example of a zine that tackles the racial discrimination that permeates the criminal justice system and American society more widely. The zine's title "Break de Chains of Legalized U.$ Slavery" is a call to arms and suggests that incarceration is a modern and legal manifestation of slavery. But like other protest art and writing of the time, the title suggests that American slavery is endemic; African Americans are not only being incarcerated at disproportionate rates, but are no freer outside prison in American society, with the "200 years of freedom" reserved for "the Select Few Kapitalists" (emphasis in original).[56] Ann Willett writes: "The State of N.C. … holds the prisoners as slaves" and asks that "Sistas/Bruthas everywhere join in our united efforts to break the chains and bars of Injustice."[57] She titles the piece "NCCCW – 1865," comparing the facility and their acts of

[56] Anne C. Willett, Untitled, *Break de Chains*, 47.
[57] Anne Willett, "NCCCW – 1865," *Break de Chains,* 22.

resistance to the United States and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 which made slavery illegal. Julia Sudbury goes as far as to compare women's prison writing to slave narratives as it "can be deployed strategically against dehumanizing official and popular discourses, in this case about female offenders and evil criminals."[58] The borrowing of transatlantic slavery imagery is a conscious choice, not just because the spatial-symbolism of chains and bars is applicable for both slavery and prison, but because the comparison of incarcerated women with enslaved women suggests that systemic prejudices lead to confinement. The injustices that led to racialized slavery, the contributors to *Break de Chains* argue, are also evident in the modern American legal system: "For too long we have been used and abused by this so-called Amerikkka, a land of bondage" writes Aminah Aliyah, referencing the legacy of slavery in the United States but also the ongoing abuse and confinement experienced by the African American population. [59] This argument, as well as the replacement of "C"s with "K"s in the women's writing, was a feature of Black radical protest literature in the 1970s and is used throughout *Break de Chains*. This technique is particularly prevalent in Tarishi Maisha's "Open Letter to Amerikkka", which lists her address as "Morganton Slave Kamp, Morganton, North Karolina, United States of Amerikkka."[60] The use of alternate letters and varied spellings, as well as sending an anti-establishment message and making obvious connections with the Ku Klux Klan, suggests that the women need to form an alternate language in order to express themselves, as the dominant language (in this case English) is inadequate due to its racially coded inflections that commit acts of dehumanization and invisibilization. The subtle differences therefore offer individuality and self-definition from within official language's confinements.

[58] Julia Sudbury, "From the Point of No Return to the Women's Prison: Writing Contemporary Spaces of Confinement into Diaspora Studies," *Canadian Woman Studies* 23, no. 2 (2004), 159.
[59] Aminah Aliyah, "A Luta Continua," *Break de Chains,* 48.
[60] Tarishi Maisha, "Open Letter to Amerikkka," *Break de Chains*, 8.

Lee Bernstein argues that the Black Power and Black Arts movements had a significant influence on prison literature, writing that:

> In particular, the cultural life of American prisons became intertwined with the Black Arts and Black Power movements in shared ideological goals, aesthetic principles, and institutional arrangements throughout the 1970s. By the end of the decade, the two movements would symbolically embrace the plight of incarcerated African Americans as symptomatic of the broader black experience in the United States.[61]

This influence is clearly visible throughout *Break de Chains* as the women employ various features and aesthetics of both the Black Power and Black Arts movements such as the regular use of "K"s. Many of the women use alternative names, usually African in origin, emphasizing their cultural roots and Black identity: Bessie Bouler is Aminah Aliyah, and Shirley Herlth is Tarishi Maisha. Dan Berger stresses the influence of Black prison writers in the sixties and seventies by arguing that "black prison narratives helped popularize an idea that prison was both a metaphor for and the epitome of the hidden constraints in American society."[62] Yet Berger manages to go one step further to include radical feminist writers who "made similar arguments about the confining limits of patriarchy." He references Pat Halloran of the Free Our Sisters Collective who "defined the prison as a ubiquitous component of patriarchal power. 'For women, to be outside the walls of jail is in some sense an allusion [sic]… We must work not only to break down the stone walls that enclose some of our sisters, but to break down the barriers of written and unwritten laws that would call us criminal if we refused to be slaves.'"[63]

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[61] Lee Bernstein, *America Is the Prison: Arts and Politics in Prison in The 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 99-100.
[62] Berger, *Captive Nation,* 164.
[63] Pat Halloran, "Free Our Sisters!," *The Anvil,* 1971 (7, ECP, Carton 4, Folder 33) cited in Berger, *Captive Nation,* 164.

Black Power and feminist influences can both be found in *Break de Chains*. They give the zine a distinct aesthetic style and suggest that the contributors are aware of a female prison writing tradition. Anne Willett urges readers to "join the women's movement now. Become a part of the beautiful army of comrades/sistas such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Assata Shakur and the sistas of N.K. Koncentration kamp."[64] This acknowledgement, albeit of a specifically Black female tradition, demonstrates a literary lineage of confinement protest literature going as far back as slavery. This type of content serves as an educational tool, informing readers of the multiple manifestations of discrimination and confinement that affect incarcerated women. But it is not just African American women that vocalize the racial discriminations that they face in prison zines. Indigenous and Latina women in particular also contribute to prison zines describing the myriad of ways in which these communities have experienced confinement in the United States.[65] *Through the Looking Glass* regularly included updates on Indigenous and Latina women incarcerated in the United States including Yvonne Wanrow and Jo Ann Yellow Bird. The editors, however, also include informative pieces that seek to provide a broader perspective of racial discrimination and imperialism, including articles on Puerto Rican sterilization and the American Indian Movement.

Education was not just a method utilized for externally edited zines, however. For the creators of in-house zines, education was an important tool for empowerment as they provided

[64] Anne C. Willett, Untitled, *Break de Chains*, 44.

[65] Similar to African American rates, Latina and Indigenous women and girls are incarcerated at a much higher rate than their white counterparts. A 2015 study conducted by the Lakota People's Law Project found that Indigenous peoples are incarcerated at a rate thirty-eight percent higher than the national average, and that Native women are admitted to prison at six times the rate of white women. (https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/lakota-peoples-law/uploads/Native-Lives-Matter-PDF.pdf). For Indigenous youth, a study conducted by The Sentencing Project found that as of 2019, Indigenous girls are more than four times as likely as white girls to be incarcerated (134 per 100,000), which is higher than African American and Latina girls (110 per 100,000 and 44 per 100,000 respectively). (https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/incarcerated-women-and-girls/). The rates for Latina women are similarly disproportionate. Since 2000, the incarceration rates of African American women have been slowly decreasing (although still remain higher than other demographics), whilst the rates of white and Latina women have been rising. In 2017, Latina women were imprisoned at 1.3 times the rate of white women (https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/incarcerated-women-and-girls/).

women with helpful information relating to their incarceration and worked to counter stereotypes and prejudices. Although this type of educational content could be deemed less radical than zines like *Break de Chains,* it served a different purpose and was often considered less controversial by prison staff which therefore made it easier to circulate. Even for externally edited zines which functioned outside of formal prison structures, institutional censorship restricted the forms of radical resistance they could print. As evidenced earlier by commissioner Ralph Edwards at NCCCW, any materials deemed too inflammatory or threatening were highly restricted in prisons. Zine publisher and head of the South Chicago ABC Zine Distro Anthony Rayson encounters this problem frequently when attempting to send zines to prisons. He describes how his success "varies, and it varies by the temperament of who's on the clock at that time even… [I]t may depend on whether the person likes who it's addressed to. There's no rhyme or reason. There's no consistency. There's no accountability… Especially if it's to the author himself or herself and they are talking about the prison. That is the one thing they can't stand. They don't want what is going on in that prison to get around."[66] This ad hoc censorship can have serious repercussions for contributors and readers, Rayson argues, as "they'll go to the S.H.U. [Secure Housing Unit], they'll send them to a more restrictive prison, they'll assault them, they'll tear up their cells and take all of their personal pictures to make them feel horrible for doing this."[67] As a result, other forms of more subtle or palatable protest are used. These techniques were also common in the earlier in-house zines which were less able to include or incite overt acts of protest and instead placed far more emphasis on correcting negative misconceptions of the female prison experience.

[66] DePaul Librarian Michelle McCoy interviews Anthony Rayson, South Chicago ABC Zine Distro., Homewood, IL, 2008. Self-published booklet by Rayson. Included in *Publishing 'Zines for Prisoners*, 4.
[67] Temporary Services interview with Anthony Rayson, *Publishing 'Zines for Prisoners,* 8.

That being said, there is a danger in viewing these types of informative articles superficially. Content describing the women's surroundings occasionally appeared in early in-house zines that praised the facility and emphasised the exceptional care they received. In the September 1938 edition of *The Reflector,* one woman writes how "during the last four years great improvements have been made in the institution under the able and kindly administration of Superintendent Estelle Jamieson whose advanced ideas in penology have placed Shakopee in the front rank of women's prisons. The institution strongly resembles a boarding school where all are as happy as people who have forfeited their freedom and have private griefs of their own can be."[68] She goes on to describe the prison's extensive facilities including a dairy and a laundry, and a piano, radio and sewing machine for each cottage. The article concludes with extensive descriptions of the facility's library; its various educational, cultural and music programs; and details of their publication *The Reflector* which they view as "not only a medium of expression for the entire population but an outgrowth of the work in English."[69] Although there is no evidence that the women were in any way coerced into writing the article, one can assume that it is far easier to write positive rather than critical articles about the prison in an in-house zine. These pieces therefore have to be viewed critically, with the knowledge that information presented as fact is not always the whole or even partial truth.

In addition to these facility-based articles, however, prison protest zines contain another form of informative article. These pieces of writing correct false assumptions about incarcerated women, such as the "bad mother" stereotype, and instead offer honest, first-hand accounts of incarcerated women's own experiences. From conducting their own prison writing workshop SpeakOut!, Tobi Jacobi and Elliott Johnston found that many incarcerated students involved in the workshops "compose autobiographical narratives with explicit intent to share

[68] "State Reformatory for Women," *The Reflector,* September 1938, 4.
[69] Ibid., 5.

their experiences and life choices with others in order to educate them – often with the hope that their own reception upon release will be greeted with compassion and to encourage others to choose a path alternative to their own."[70] Julius H. Bailey views these corrective pieces of self-expression as essential forms of protest in African American writing, arguing that literature is "employed to express dissent and disapproval" and to offer "a corrective to erroneous assumptions and representations" as well as "proactively persuad[ing] through earnest, passionate, and sometimes solemn declarations and assertions of truth."[71] Brian Norman identifies a similar responsibility in protest essays which he argues exist in part "to insert details of injustice into a public record that might otherwise ignore them."[72] These writings appear in prison protest zines partly in response to the press's restricted access to prisons, which has tightened considerably in the past forty years. Previously the public and members of the media were encouraged to visit prison facilities, in part to deter others from committing crimes, but also to monitor facility conditions to ensure no mistreatment or abuses were taking place. As prisons modernized, however, official inspections took the role of public opinion, and subsequently affected the access rights of the press as well. It was not until the 1970s that a number of court cases restricted press (and public) access to prisons. In *Houchins v. KQED* and *Saxbe v. Washington Post Co.,* for instance, the Court refused to recognize the media's access to prisons as part of "freedom of the press" under the First Amendment, justifying the facilities' ban on any media interviews with incarcerated individuals.[73] Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, contact between journalists and incarcerated men and

[70] Tobi Jacobi and Elliott Johnston, "Writers Speaking Out: The Challenges of Community Publishing from Spaces of Confinement," in *Circulating Communities: The Tactics and Strategies of Community Publishing*, ed. Paula Mathieu, Steve Parks and Tiffany Rousculp (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 144.
[71] Julius H. Bailey, *Race Patriotism: Protest and Print Culture in the A.M.E. Church* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), xii.
[72] Norman, *The American Protest Essay and National Belonging,* 29.
[73] Leonard G. Leverson, "Constitutional Limits on the Power to Restrict Access to Prisons: An Historical Re-Examination," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 18 (1983): 409-56.

women has been heavily restricted and policymaking is generally left in the hands of the facilities' wardens and staff, who largely prefer limited exposure.

Journalists are frequently not permitted access to many facilities in order to prevent them acting as "a public relations vehicle for prisoners." Where they are allowed, they are often denied cameras, recording devices, and even paper and pencils.[74] Leonard G. Leverson argues, however, that "by prohibiting outsiders from interviewing prison inmates, the state does more than prevent the public from learning about one aspect of government operations; it seriously hampers prisoners' ability to communicate with the outside world, and thus burdens a channel of communication that is critical to prisoners' ability to seek redress of grievances."[75] From this perspective, Leverson argues that press access constitutes the right to petition as part of the First Amendment, as the press (and the public) act as a mediator between the imprisoned population and those in positions of power. Therefore, by removing this contact, Leverson argues, it directly violates the incarcerated individual's constitutional rights. The role of zines for women in prison could therefore be seen as an alternative expression of their First Amendment rights. When the usual medium of communication is removed (in this case the press), new methods of interaction with the outside world and those in power become established, with women using the written word and outside organisations to act on their behalf. The March 1947 edition of *The Clarion* echoes this belief by including a short piece titled "Freedom of the Press" in which the author writes, "I am the servant of justice, the slave of truth, and the sentinel of liberty. I am non-partisan and free from all obligation except that of fidelity to the public interest. I am as AMERICAN as the statue of liberty, the Declaration of Independence, and the Grand Canyon. I AM THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS!" (emphasis

[74] Peter Y. Sussman, "Media on Prisons: Censorship and Stereotypes," in *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment,* ed. Marc Mauer and Meda Chesney-Lind (The New Press, 2002), 265.
[75] Leverson, "Constitutional Limits on the Power to Restrict Access to Prisons," 445.

in original).[76] Despite the (perhaps unintended) irony of the emphasis on freedom, liberty and justice within a censored prison publication, the inclusion of this piece reiterates the importance of some form of press within prisons (whether mainstream or penal) linking it to democracy, equality and a sense of nationalism.

Yet as identified earlier, prison protest zines do more than offer prisoners a platform for petitioning. They also provide the women with the opportunity for self-expression in order to counter any false narratives. Eleanor M. Novek argues that prison newspapers "contain the discursive and self-reflexive resistance of an oppressed population 'sharing a unique history and destiny' and struggling for a sense of solidarity and support."[77] These writings do not necessarily ask for overt action or change in a prison facility, but rather provide a platform to document what would otherwise be marginalized, forgotten or ignored experiences that act against dominant narratives attempting to speak for them. The act of writing, therefore, becomes an act of resistance in itself. For Victoria Law, "the act of expressing oneself… becomes not only a means of drawing attention to prison conditions but also an act of subversion against both their own lack of agency and the isolating effect of prison."[78] For incarcerated women who are denied a voice in mainstream media, having a platform such as a zine offers them the opportunity to write, communicate and define themselves. For example, the July-August 1985 edition of *D.A.W.N* included a piece titled "Real Prison" which gives an honest depiction of what the reality of prison is really like from one woman's perspective. The author writes, "The real prison is not the one outsiders have been led to believe. The real prison is much to the contrary." She goes on to describe the "emotional and spiritual confinement" and "emptiness that leaves a sick feeling inside."[79] Even in an in-house zine, this author seems

[76] L.R., "Freedom of the Press," *The Clarion,* March 1947, 17.
[77] Eleanor M. Novek, "'Heaven, Hell, and Here': Understanding the Impact of Incarceration through a Prison Newspaper," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (2005), 284.
[78] Law, *Resistance Behind Bars,* 129.
[79] Cynthia Lupe, "Real Prison," *Determined Action for Women Now,* July-August 1985, 6.

able to describe her negative experiences of prison, and counter any false ideas that the public have been led to believe.

These counter-narratives were not limited to the subject of incarceration, however. The thirtieth edition of *The Fire Inside,* includes a poem titled "So Address Me As Such" that dispels the misconceptions and prejudices that follow the author as an incarcerated Black woman. She writes:

> I can see right past your intricate masks,
> Give a sophisticated answer to any question you ask,
> Raise 1 or 10 children through struggle and strife,
> Run a major corporation and be a supportive wife,
> Converse with the big wigs or holla atcha in the hood,
> Say "absolutely wonderful" or "haay, it's all good!"
> Put you in your place without saying much
> **I'm an intellectual Black Sista so addreess** [sic] **me as such** (emphasis in original)[80]

In this first stanza the author attempts to counter any prejudices or stereotypes that are used against her by emphasizing her intelligence regardless of how she speaks or what job she does. Each stanza then ends with "I am a strong(/loving/passionate) Black Sista so addreess [sic] me as such." However, by the end of the poem, she expands this view to refer to Black women more generally and the stereotypes that confine them. She concludes, "I'm not your hoochie, your bitch or your hoe,/I'm the center of life, more than you'll ever know./I'm your sister, your auntie, your niece, your mother,/And I stand beside you, not behind you my brother./I come in

[80] MM, "So Address Me As Such," *The Fire Inside,* Spring/Summer 2005, 12, https://www.womenprisoners.org/fire/issue_30_springsummer_2005.html.

different shapes, shades and sizes/And no one can deny me when this sister rises."[81] This final stanza evokes Maya Angelou's evocative poem "And Still I Rise" whilst also decentralizing the author to refer to the Black female experience more broadly and the prejudices that persist, emphasizing the women behind the offensive terms and labels. The author is therefore not just referring to her individual experiences, but rather speaking to a collective personhood that experiences injustices and dehumanization. This approach is something that Richard Newman et al argue was used in African American periodicals from 1790 to 1860. They argue that in this period, African Americans used print to cultivate a "public literary identity" and in doing so, carry "black voices through space and time: space, so that a broader national community of black leaders and white citizens could see African-American arguments; and time, so that subsequent generations of black as well as white readers could refer back to African-American documents."[82] For incarcerated women, like the author of this poem, prison protest zines were tools for dispelling misconceptions and archiving an authentic collective identity that could circulate nationally, and even internationally, in their own words.

By viewing education as a form of resistance within prison zines, it also elongates the history of protest within the tradition. Rather than focusing purely on the heightened periods of physical resistance within prison (such as the 1970s) zines offer an alternative view of prison protest that challenges expected forms of resistance such as riots and hunger strikes, to offer subtler, but no less important expressions. For Victoria Law, "these ways are not always recognized by outside researchers and are sometimes belittled by other women in prison" but indicate "that women do not passively accept their circumstances, but attempt to change them in any way possible."[83] Sharing information, educating the public and forming bonds "may not

[81] Ibid.
[82] Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, Phillip Lapsansky, *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 4.
[83] Law, *Resistance Behind Bars*, 14.

seem threatening to prison control and security" but actually work to undermine "the operations of a system that seeks to foster an atmosphere of alienation and isolation."[84] Therefore by including these less overt acts of resistance in discussions of prison activism, it decentralizes the 1970s as the sole period of prison protest and instead centres the enduring role of print and prison protest zines, establishing a new narrative of prisoner resistance.

## Community as Protest

The establishment, acknowledgement and sustainment of a community is another form of protest in prison zines. As identified in every chapter thus far, prison protest zines provide a platform for women inside and outside of the prison system to communicate with each other, offer advice and share common experiences. In doing so, they offer support and validation to their readers and contributors and is crucial to providing the education outlined in the previous section. Without varied and regular contributors, prison zines would lack a lot of the essential information that is shared from behind bars. This sentiment is echoed in the March 1947 edition of *The Clarion,* as one contributor named VJN describes how the first year of her incarceration was helped by various people and systems in the prison including the Alcoholics Anonymous group, the high school diploma she was working towards, and "last but not least" *The Clarion.* She writes how it is:

> A grand little paper which acts as a medium of exchange between the institution and the outside world, and gives a chance for the expression of ideas that may be seen in print. We know there is a lot of worthy talent on the campus so come on gals and pass it on to some of us less fortunate ones […] The day will come when I will be taking my place in society once more and I know when I leave I shall be taking with a wealth of

[84] Ibid., 27.

> knowledge some of which I've gained from books, and the rest which I have gained by learning to sincerely understand my fellowman which will follow me thru out [sic] the years to come. The greatest thing I have learned is that to have friends, you must first be a friend.[85]

Here VJN is stressing the educational capacity of zines, but also how that information is reliant on the contributions of others and, similarly, on the diversity of incarcerated women and their experiences so as to more accurately represent a collective.

This is a crucial aspect of prison protest zines. Where other forms such as protest essays are normally associated with one or sometimes two particular causes, women's prison zines embrace the multiple identities and varied oppressions that influence their contributors in order to create a more holistic form of protest literature. As they are texts rooted in personal experience, the narratives that arise as a result are more varied, meaning that women's prison zines are broader and more encompassing than other forms of protest literature. This intersectionality is a direct result of women's incarceration; it is their forced confinement and subsequent collaboration that results in an amalgamation of issues related to sexuality, gender, race, incarceration, class, motherhood, immigration, drugs, domestic violence and much more. Indeed, despite centring around incarceration, it is not imperative that the contributors write about their confinement, but rather have the freedom to write about whatever topics concern them. In-text, this intersectionality can manifest in a variety of ways. For California-based *The Fire Inside,* each edition since Issue 19 in 2001 contains at least one article (normally the editorial) translated into Spanish, acknowledging the disproportionate incarceration rates of

[85] VJN, "One Year," *The Clarion,* March 1947, 15.

Latina women in the US and attempting to make the zine more accessible to them.[86] CCWP sees the Spanish translations as a modern-day necessity owing to the number of Spanish-speaking immigrant women who are incarcerated in Californian prisons and jails. In a 2005 edition of the zine dedicated to "all the immigrant women who are incarcerated in the U.S." they explain that:

> The number of people locked up in California who are not citizens has been on the increase for the past dozen years. Almost half of people incarcerated in United States Federal prisons are not native English speakers. An incarcerated woman who does not speak English in California's English-only prisons has trouble seeking medical or legal help and certainly cannot function within the prison system on an everyday basis.[87]

*The Fire Inside* thereby acts as an educator and mediator of news for all women, regardless of their backgrounds or language.

This emphasis on a broad set of narratives and experiences is not just evident in the language of the zine. CCWP's mission statement emphasises the intersectionality of the female prison experience and the systemic oppressions of women everywhere:

> CCWP is a grassroots social justice organisation, with members inside and outside of prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC, and we prioritize the

[86] According to the Sentencing Project, in 2014 Latina women were incarcerated at 1.2 times the rate of white women, see "Incarcerated Women and Girls," *The Sentencing Project,* June 6, 2019, https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/incarcerated-women-and-girls/.
[87] "Editorial," *The Fire Inside,* Spring/Summer 2005.

> leadership of the people, families and communities most impacted in building this movement.[88]

In addition, as mentioned in Chapter Two there is a similar acknowledgement of the complexities and diversities of incarcerated women by the editorial team of *No More Cages* which they hope to reflect. The editors write:

> We are 4 lesbians. 3 of us are White Jews. 1 is a mixture of Jewish, Native American and Irish. 3 are working-class, 1 is from a mixed-class background. We did not work alone: special thanks to all the other lesbians who have helped. We <u>always</u> need more women to work with us. We need to <u>all</u> share our lives and experiences because all issues go hand in hand (i.e, racism=classism, sexism/heterosexism=racism=classism, etc…) There is never a sole or separate issue.[89]

For the editors of *No More Cages* and *The Fire Inside,* the issues affecting women in prison cannot be viewed or challenged individually as they all intersect to create an all-encompassing, systemic oppression of incarcerated women both inside and outside prison. To focus on one topic or issue at the expense of another would be to alienate or ignore a whole sub-community of incarcerated women. As such, prison protest zines such as *No More Cages* and *The Fire Inside* attempt to act as a form of intersectional protest literature from the editorial team outwards that is inclusive and representative.

This diversity in readers and contributors also raises another crucial identifying feature of prison protest zines: as numerous women inconsistently contribute to these texts, the authors

[88] "CCWP Mission," *The Fire Inside,* n.d.
[89] Linda, Bonni, Chaia and Karyn, "Dear Sisters Inside," *No More Cages,* April-May 1984, 1.

are nearly always unknown or anonymous, unlike the well-known writers of protest novels, poetry or essays. This affects the tone of the zines by decentralizing the author in order to better articulate the shared, intersectional experiences of incarcerated women. Barrilee Bannister from the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) in Oregon, believed that her "goal was to unite women prisoners and get their stories to the outside world. … I wanted the voices of women in prison—who are also mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts and nieces—to be heard."[90] Bannister, along with several other women incarcerated at CCCF, had made numerous attempts over the years to establish a women's prison zine at the facility or contribute to external radical publications. The prison staff met whatever action they took, however, with resistance and disciplinary action. Facing institutional opposition and denied access to equipment such as printers, writing materials and postage, in 2002 the women at CCCF contacted freelance writer and editor Victoria Law. Following several years of involvement with women in prisons across America, Law accepted the women's invitation to print, copy and distribute a zine on their behalf from outside of prison walls. In an interview she described how "women in prison have been told their lives don't matter, their words don't matter, and no matter what they say or do, nothing is going to change. … To be able to have their stories and their words matter is an important step to realizing that they are able to enact change."[91] Law, along with women at CCCF, established the zine *Tenacious: Writings from Women in Prison*, which included art, poetry and writing from women incarcerated in facilities all over the country. The zine was initially coordinated by several women, but over the years the others left because, Law felt, "zine-making can sometimes be a very solitary experience," and that

[90] Law, *Resistance Behind Bars*, 135.
[91] Mollie Pyne, "Prison Zines 'Tenacious' Offers Female Prisoners a Chance to Speak Out," *Broadly,* March 20, 2016, https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/prison-zine-tenacious-offers-female-prisoners-a-chance-to-speak-out.

"working with people in prison can sometimes be this long extended process in which you don't feel like you are making much of a difference" leaving Law to run the zine by herself.[92]

Each issue of *Tenacious* consists of around thirty-two A5 pages, not including the cover and back pages, and is a mixture of colour and monochrome. The introduction in an early edition of the zine signals the importance of establishing and nourishing a likeminded community by outlining the significance of the zine's name:

> te-na-cious adj. 1: not easily pulled apart: COHESIVE, TOUGHT <a~metal> 2: holding fast <of her rights> 3: retentive <a~memory>
>
> te-na-cious: adv.
>
> te-na-ci-ty: n.
>
> We associated with "Tenacious" strongly believe that everyone has a story to tell, something to share and are in need of someone who will listen and offer some kind of support and/or understanding. It is important to us that women (in and out of prison) find the power of their voice.

Although the definition was soon removed from the description, the latter paragraph is included in each edition, appearing in the "Call for Submissions" page. For the women who contribute their work, *Tenacious* acts as a platform for sharing and educating, binding the women together through mutual experiences and oppression. Victoria Law notes how "*Tenacious* connects women with each other, even if they can't meet face-to-face, to show each other that their experiences aren't unique, that the problems are more systemic."[93] This is a fundamental way

[92] Daniella Capistrano and Victoria Law, "Q&A with Vikki Law, Editor of Tenacious," June 16, 2013, http://poczineproject.tumbler.com/post/54142410323/zine-spotlight-tenacious-art-and-ariting-from.
[93] Maxwell Williams, "For These Incarcerated Women, Print Sure As Hell Ain't Dead," *GOOD Magazine,* September 4, 2014, https://www.good.is/articles/tenacious-zine-women-in-prison.

in which prison protest zines are protest literature: they vocalize a struggle, trauma or injustice that is then shared with others in order to educate, unite and ultimately resist. By Howard Zinn's definition, protest literature "should move people to think more broadly, feel more deeply, and begin to act… [it] says to the reader have hope - you are not alone. And if it does nothing but that, it has done something profoundly important."[94] For one participant of the SpeakOut! workshops, her writing does exactly that. She comments how, "I enjoy seeing my writings/poems in print. It gives me a sense of accomplishment and pride. And it's definitely an emotional booster especially in jail or prison. And also to possibly reach someone that is going through the same stuff so they know they're not alone!"[95] Another contributor writes that the publication is for "Anyone who is going through some triumphs in their lives, so that they can see what I've been through and realize that they are not going through anything that they cannot persevere through."[96] As emphasised in the previous chapter on collective autobiography, letters, personal articles and poetry all offer this reassurance to zine readers and reiterate the presence of a "responsive, collective, consuming body" of readers.[97] In the July 2011 issue of *Black and Pink* a reader pens a letter in response to the previous issue. They write "I've got to say ole' Warrior K's article in the May 2011 issue of the Black & Pink Newsletter really got me fired up. I, too, file grievance after grievance and as a result have been strip searched, locked up in solitary, had my property 'stolen,' money frozen, and every inch of my cell searched with a fine tooth comb. But I go on ... for the struggle!"[98] In this example, the correspondent Ricky is able to find direct comparisons between his experiences and Warrior

[94] Howard Zinn, afterward to *American Protest Literature,* ed. Zoe Trodd, 2006, 517.
[95] Jacobi and Johnston, "Writers Speaking Out," 182.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Janet Galligani Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory," *Journal of Modern Literature* 28, no. 1: Autobiography and Memoir (2009), 92.
[98] Ricky M., "Beyond Grievances," *Black and Pink,* July 2011, 2, http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.

K's, finding solace in this shared oppression and the strength to continue fighting, "for the struggle."

As well as offering shared experiences and support, letters in prison protest zines can also act more directly as a form of protest. As mentioned earlier, public letters sent to zines can include lists of demands or manifestos and invite signatures from readers to engage in acts of protest. Yet acts of resistance can also materialize in more personal correspondence. Often seen as a safe or liberating space, some individuals use zines as a vehicle for personal letters, using the public format to reach friends or loved ones. When one considers that homosexuality, physical contact and even masturbation are prohibited and heavily surveilled behind bars, textual communication that defies these restrictions by expressing love and longing for another become acts of resistance. Although insisting that they are "not a *°**°## dating service", externally edited zines like *No More Cages* occasionally included correspondence between partners. These included publicly printed letters, but also private correspondence.[99] In Vol. 11 No. 4 of *Through the Looking Glass* the editors write, "We print full names and addresses, but if you can't correspond with another prisoner, let us know and we will forward mail for you."[100] In doing so, these women were able to use the zines to defy the strict regulations and isolation behind bars. This communication is not just for romantic partners, however. The Vol. 11 No. 2 edition introduces a new Pen Pal project whereby they include the names, details and addresses of incarcerated women for readers to get in touch with. These short bios include details such as "Leo Lesbian would love to correspond with other gays, male and female inside and out. Has open correspondence with other prisoners. My interests are many including poetry, music and the outdoors. No games please, just those interested in forming serious friendships."[101] The 2012 Spring/Summer edition of *The Fire Inside* reiterates the zine's role

[99] See Chapter Two for "Peewee's" letter to her partner at another facility.
[100] "Pen-Pals," *Through the Looking Glass,* Winter 1986, 2.
[101] "Pen-Pal Project," *Through the Looking Glass*, Summer 1986, 2.

as intermediary as, at the same Occupy 4 Prisoners event referenced earlier in this chapter, CCWP created "a message wall for people to speak from their hearts to incarcerated loved ones."[102] Some examples from the 200-plus messages tied to the fence were included in *The Fire Inside* such as "Unshackle the women! Love and strength to AnnaBell, Terah, Joy, Tara" and "From the outside to the inside, we're fighting for you and we'll never give up until justice is met."[103] The messages are displayed in the zine as typed, computerised notes, in an attempt to recreate the real messages from the day, along with photographs of the event in order to close the gap between the women in prison and those outside (Fig. 4.5).




**Figure 4.5: Two page spread for the "Occupy 4 Prisoners" Protest at San Quentin including text, photographs and examples from the "San Quentin Message Wall," *The Fire Inside*, Spring-Summer 2012, 8-9.**

Much of the content within *Tenacious* is also typed, having been sent to Law in the post or even by email, but occasionally it includes scanned images of women's work. Tabitha

[102] "Occupy 4 Prisoners: A Bold Beginning," *The Fire Inside,* Spring-Summer, 2012, 8, https://womenprisoners.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Fire-Inside-Issue-46-Spring-Summer-2012.pdf.
[103] Ibid.

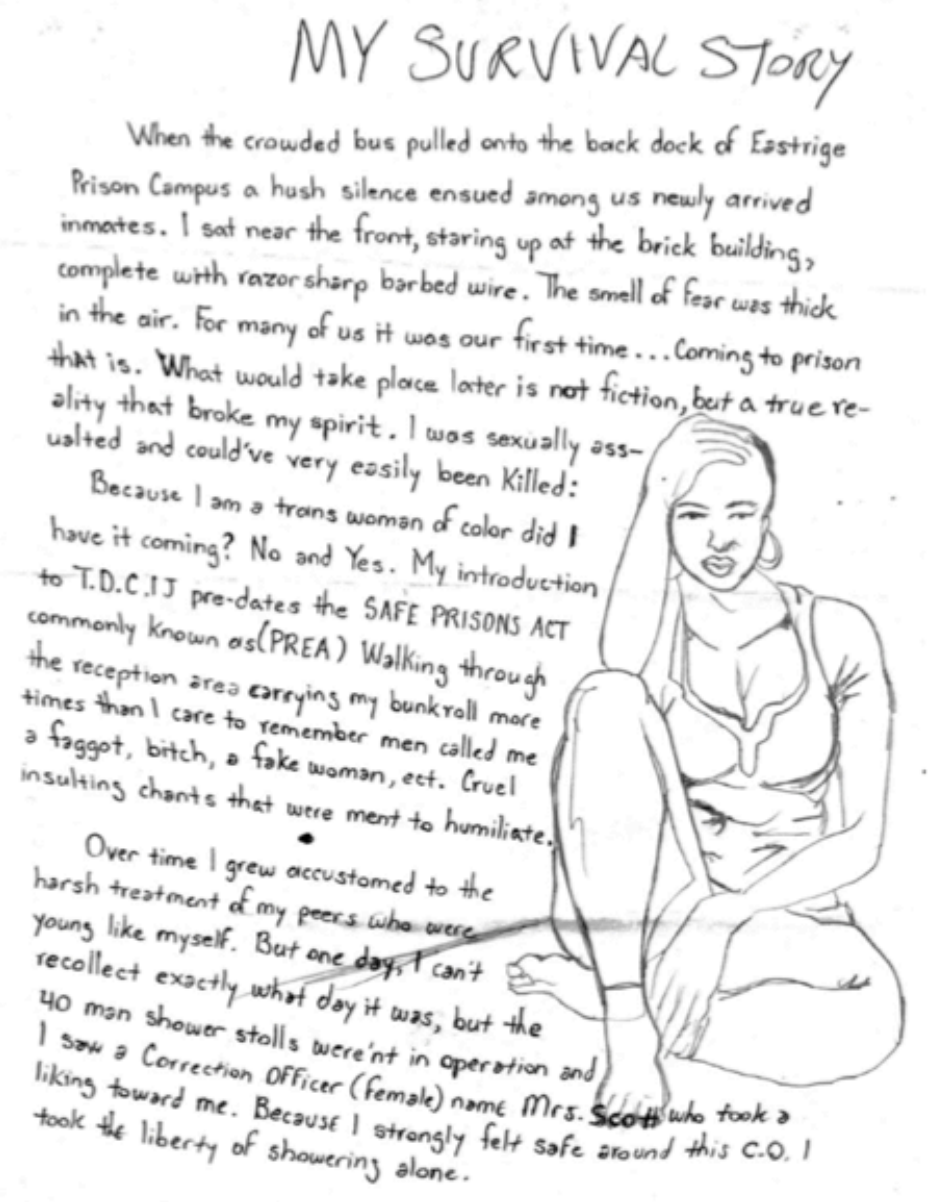
Swords's piece "Penitentiary flu!" is a combination of typed, handwritten and hand-drawn work. The typed poem and computer image of a raincloud are almost obscured by the added hand-written words and drawings around the page which act like a stream of consciousness to show the flaws in the prison system and pose rhetorical questions such as "Wheres [sic] all the Help at?" and "What would you do!"[104] Including handwritten work adds a personal element to the zine that breaks down barriers between reader and writer and emphasises the women behind the writing. In another handwritten account in *Tenacious,* transgender prisoner Nicky Riley details her harrowing experience of being sexually assaulted whilst in the prison shower room:

> Looking in the direction of those voices, a man I had noticed earlier that day was crouched behind a wall holding a sharp metal object in his right hand, while gesturing with the other for me to be quiet. A heavy lump formed in my throat. A justifiable fear of being sexually assaulted froze me standing. What happened next is "very" hard for me to go into the detail, but I was encouraged by Vikki Law to tell my story. A man punched me in the stomach, as he covered my mouth, cutting off my scream. Then two others entered the facility with every intent of raping me. They took their turns pounding me… I lost my will to live that day and hated what I was. No one deserved this type of treatment! But I **survived.** I lived. My past does not define me. I am worthy… (emphasis in original).[105]

The account is also accompanied by a hand drawn image by Nicky of a woman sitting on the floor with her legs tucked under her and her hands gripping her leg and head in a vulnerable

[104] Tabitha Swords, "Penitentiary Flu!," *Tenacious: Art and Writings by Women in Prison,* Summer/Fall 2014, 8.
[105] Nicky Riley, "My Survival Story," *Tenacious,* Winter 2014, 26.

pose (Fig. 4.6). This harrowing account of sexual assault is deeply private and emotive and is published in handwritten form. The individuality and inimitability of an individual's handwriting makes the piece far more personal than if it were typed and emphasises the woman behind the narrative. Yet despite the specificity and intimacy of Riley's account, it acts as support and encouragement for other transgender women who might have survived similar traumas elsewhere.



MY SURVIVAL STORY

When the crowded bus pulled onto the back dock of Estrige Prison Campus a hush silence ensued among us newly arrived inmates. I sat near the front, staring up at the brick building, complete with razor sharp barbed wire. The smell of fear was thick in the air. For many of us it was our first time... Coming to prison that is. What would take place later is not fiction, but a true reality that broke my spirit. I was sexually assaulted and could've very easily been killed:

Because I am a trans woman of color did I have it coming? No and Yes. My introduction to T.D.C.I.J pre-dates the SAFE PRISONS ACT commonly known as (PREA) Walking through the reception area carrying my bunkroll more times than I care to remember men called me a faggot, bitch, a fake woman, ect. Cruel insulting chants that were ment to humiliate.

Over time I grew accustomed to the harsh treatment of my peers who were young like myself. But one day, I can't recollect exactly what day it was, but the 40 man shower stalls were'nt in operation and I saw a Correction Officer (female) name Mrs. Scott who took a liking toward me. Because I strongly felt safe around this C.O. I took the liberty of showering alone.

**Figure 4.6: Nicky Riley, "My Survival Story," *Tenacious: Art and Writings by Women in Prison*, Winter 2014, 25.**

Establishing and sustaining a dispersed community is also fundamental in other definitions of protest literature. Discussing the war in Vietnam, Derek Seidman writes, "dissident troops may have been separated by geography, but the GI press provided them a sense of larger community and a collective narrative that centred around the idea of a global movement of rank-and-file soldier protest."[106] Reiterating Zinn's notion that protest literature tells readers they are "not alone," Seidman argues that GI newspapers allowed their readers to feel part of something by creating a textual space, much like that provided by the feminist underground media discussed in Chapter Two. In this sense, GI newspapers are very similar to women's prison zines as they both centralise a specific community and conversation. But the GI press also mirrors prison zines as they are collectively written with many soldiers represented in each issue: "Hundreds of soldiers wrote letters to the papers in which they poured out their frustrations and reported on their own protest activities. Many of these letters were in turn published in the papers, turning the GI press into a joint project between editors and readers, a bottom-up platform for soldiers across the world."[107] For Brian Norman, "protest writers offer collectivity in the face of division" by "seek[ing] a 'we': a collective space to speak among and across lines of a divided audience."[108] However, "the aim of the protest essay," Norman argues, "is not necessarily to create an autobiographical 'I' but rather to speak for those bodies denied a public voice."[109] As a result, many forms of protest literature take on a collective "we" that encompasses all members of a disadvantaged, silenced or ostracized group, despite being created by individuals. In doing so, these writings can sometimes end up speaking *for* groups, rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. In contrast, prison

[106] Derek Seidman, "Paper Soldiers: The *Ally* and the GI Underground Press During the Vietnam War," in *Protest on the Page: Essays on Print and the Culture of Dissent Since 1895,* ed. James L. Baughman, Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, and James P. Danky (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 183-184.
[107] Ibid., 183.
[108] Norman, *The American Protest Essay and National Belonging,* 6, 17.
[109] Ibid., 27.

protest zines (and GI newspapers to a certain extent) allow individuals to write as part of a collective autobiography, creating individual work about personal experiences in a collective framework. In doing so, the individualistic "we" of protest essays is replaced by an "I" that is representative of or applicable to a larger group. For prison protest zines, this "I" also avoids being too individualistic or specific as pieces appear alongside art or writing from other women that are unrelated or depict contrasting opinions as part of the genre's interdisciplinary protest.

## Conclusion

Prisons continue to act as important sites for protest in the United States. In 2018, strikes broke out in prisons across America and Canada as hundreds of incarcerated individuals protested against the high numbers of deaths in custody, unpaid labour and poor mental health services. Yet as this chapter has demonstrated, these physical acts of resistance are only one part of a long history of protest in American prisons. Although it is these extreme and often dangerous acts that attract mainstream media coverage, the underground network of prison protest zines demonstrate that prison resistance manifests itself in countless ways, much of which happens outside of the popular historical periods and go unnoticed by the general public. However, these textual acts of resistance provide continuity for the incarcerated community, who repeatedly use zines to document, educate, communicate and resist.

Women's prison zines enact protest through action (inside and outside of prison and through the zine's form itself) and archive as they educate their readers and create and maintain the crucial aspect of community and collectivity identified in the previous chapter. By recording the events of physical acts of protest, the creators of women's prison zines are able to extend their protest beyond a single event and widen the overall impact of their actions by reaching a bigger audience. Additionally, women use their zines to broadcast information such as manifestos or lists of demands which not only broaden the reach of the protest but can

also encourage active involvement from their readers. This call to action and subsequent reader participation makes the zines open ended, as the actions of others and serialized zine publication continue the movement, even after the physical action has ceased.

Even without the physical acts of protest, prison protest zines maintain a form of textual resistance. The creators of both in-house and externally edited zines use the publications as a medium through which they can educate the public, either about prison conditions or the women themselves, dispelling stereotypes and popular narratives promulgated by the mainstream media. These personal accounts are rooted in the experiences and opinions of unknown women; together they promote the voices of a grassroots collective. Yet despite these immensely personal accounts, the authors of prison protest zines rarely discuss individual crimes or attempt to exonerate themselves. Rather, the contributors emphasise the collective experience of incarcerated women, and the pursuit of freedom in both prison and wider American society. It is because of this universalizing of the prison experience that prison protest zines act as a form of intersectional protest literature, embracing women's multiple identities and multiple oppressions. This is unique to prison protest zines and is a direct result of women's confinement and the forced proximity of the various and unique contributors.

Finally, the writers and readers of women's prison zines, a disparate and decentralised community forcibly removed from society, use the zine medium to connect, collaborate and communicate in a way that amounts to a form of resistance. The zines achieve this aim primarily as they include letters to and from the incarcerated women, providing them with the opportunity to get their voice heard and reach out to others in a similar position. Some zine creators, such as the editors of *Queer and Transgendered Prisoner Solidarity*, even request that this is done independently of the zine: "Included in this zine you'll find information about the case of the New Jersey 4, resources and tips for being a prison pen pal, and most importantly, the names and addresses of a huge range of folks who need our love and our solidarity. We

haven't included much information about these folks. Write them! Get to know them! … Until every prison burns, Bash Back!"[110] In this extract, the editors highlight the importance of communication to protest; it provides solidarity and support to incarcerated individuals. As one letter to *Through the Looking Glass* puts it, "Your paper gave me a special lift yesterday. I wasn't so alone for a while."[111] This community of incarcerated individuals acts as a final, crucial form of protest. Where other communities are distanced by geography (such as zinesters more broadly) incarcerated women are also held captive, a fact that impacts more directly on their ability to connect. As one contributor to *Black and Pink* emphasises:

> For me I got to honestly admit Black & Pink is the bomb, the Newsletters and now Newspaper have been a burden lifter. I've been receivin' [sic] the Newsletter since November 2011, and the poems and letters have been medicine to my soul, each word has soothed my pain of mental distress, while I'm confined to a one man cell 24/7. I've learned so much from the Newsletters, it has put me up on myself and the corrupt system I'm secluded to ... All I have to say is Black & Pink, continue to make the Newspaper what it is- powerful. Never allow anything get you back, let all haters drown in their hatred, 'cause if they join the Black & Pink family, their hate will fade. So never let up, never be ashamed of who you are, be you and stay true.[112]

This results in greater emphasis on the zines' role as community builder and movement localizer. Establishing a collective offers the women as much support and reassurance as physical acts of resistance; it also confirms that they are, as Zinn argues, "not alone." And although this particular desire for a community is unique to incarcerated or imprisoned

[110] "An Introduction," *Queer and Transgendered Prisoner Solidarity,* 2009, 3.
[111] Janet Valento, Letter, *Through the Looking Glass,* Fall 1986, 3.
[112] Slice, Letter, *Black and Pink,* February 2010, 3, http://www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/.

individuals, it also speaks to a greater human need for unity and kinship to which any individual, incarcerated or not, can relate.

*Conclusion*

# "Freedom in her mind": Confined Creativity and the Women's Prison Zine Tradition

Stone walls do not a prison make,

Nor iron bars a cage;

Minds innocent and quiet take

That for an hermitage;

If I have freedom in my love

And in my soul am free,

Angels alone, that soar above,

Enjoy such liberty.

- Richard Lovelace, "To Althea, From Prison" [1]

"Stone walls do not a prison make or iron bars a cage!" But prison is prison, as Alderson proves, even if there are no walls and few bars.

- Elizabeth Gurley Flynn [2]

As much as this thesis has demonstrated the positive, liberatory possibilities of prison zines, it is necessary to remember the limitations of the genre and the stark reality that there are over 200,000 women in prisons and jails in the United States.[3] For these women, the daily reality of incarceration, as Flynn suggests, cannot be avoided or understated, or forgotten through art, writing and creativity. For these women, being separated from their friends, families and

[1] Richard Lovelace, "To Althea, From Prison," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Tom Paulin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 183-4.
[2] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *My Life as a Political Prisoner: The Alderson Story* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 67.
[3] A total of 1.3 million women 1.3 million women "under the supervision of the criminal justice system." "Fact Sheet: Incarcerated Women and Girls," The Sentencing Project (June 2019), https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Incarcerated-Women-and-Girls.pdf.

children, confined behind bars and in cages, and stripped of any sense of individuality or personhood cannot be negated through making zines. However, this existence is not binary and what this thesis has shown is that the extensive and robust tradition of women's prison zines, spanning nearly a century, has offered incarcerated women a platform for self-expression, communication, education and resistance against the isolating and confining environment of the prison industrial complex. This environment is one grounded in physical and psychological confinements. The system's manipulation of time and space is intended for maximum punishment, eroding any sense of identity, individuality, personal relationships or growth. Yet, as I have argued, this environment, and incarcerated women's resistance to it, also creates the conditions that shape and define women's prison zines. These core defining features that I have identified—community, confinement aesthetic and resistance—are products of confinement and identify women's prison zines as a distinctive sub-genre of American literature that builds upon and redefines existing traditions and genres. Taken together, these features distinguish prison zines as cultural artefacts and powerful pieces of artistic activism that complicate one-dimensional narratives about incarceration, print culture and womanhood.

As this thesis has shown, the unique brand of collective, creative resistance found in women's prison zines is ultimately rooted in wider American literary traditions. They are simultaneously influenced by American culture and society and exist as unique cultural artefacts in their own right. Prison zines borrow and adapt features from mainstream women's magazines, utilizing certain aspects of the genre's form, style and content in order to make it directly applicable to incarcerated women and their environment. Externally edited zines further expand scholarship and understanding of The Women in Print Movement to include the publications coming out of prisons and jails across the United States and acknowledge the complexities of womanhood to also include the particular oppressions that affect women in prison. By viewing prison zines as products of confinement, they are also able to offer a new

definition of collective autobiography, one that is rooted in multiple voices and experiences, and the disharmony that can arise as a result. Finally, zines are an important, unacknowledged strand of the American protest literature tradition that can offer new perspectives on how protest is enacted textually within the confines of prison, and how women work collectively within zines to offer an intersectional perspective on confinement and American society. By reflecting on the role of women's prison zines in expanding and adapting these genres, it broadens the canon of American literature to vocalise the experiences of a marginalised community and expands our understanding of collective writing during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Candace Kruttschnitt et al discovered that within two female facilities in the United States, "the friendships inmates established with each other were a critical component of the way they did their time" (although the degree to which this occurs changes between institutions).[4] Whether it is with a friend, workmate, sexual partner, bunkmate or even a member of staff, relationships give structure to prison society. The communities established within prison zines are another manifestation of these relationships, beyond those created in-person at an individual facility. As demonstrated in each chapter of this thesis, zines reflect the human desire for connection and communication. Whether between editors in the in-house "exchanges" columns, or internationally to fellow women incarcerated in Vietnam, the women contributing to prison zines reach out to each other in acts of solidarity, support and friendship. These communities are not self-identified groups that coalesce in order to create zines around niche subjects and interests like other zinester communities are, but rather consist of a forced group of imprisoned women whose engagement is, to an extent, dictated by their incarceration. Yet this unique community, forced together through confinement but united by their shared

[4] Candace Kruttschnitt, Rosemary Gartner and Amy Miller, "Doing Her Own Time? Women's Responses to Prison in the Context of the Old and the New Peneology," *Criminology* 38, no. 3 (2000), 703.

experiences, actively choose to engage with zines and participate in the communities that form as a result offering incarcerated women the opportunity for autonomy and self-direction against the controls of prison hierarchy.

What becomes apparent therefore when reading zines is the emphasis on the collective over the singular. The textual networks that form within and around zines reach out from behind bars to engage with and establish feminist and LGBT+ communities. Contributors' full names are often omitted as they share their experiences, opinions, drawings and photographs in order to create and reiterate the presence of a community, encourage solidarity and emphasise the collective struggle. In Chapter One, I argued that this community borrowed features from women's magazines, using advice columns and sisterly editorial voice to familiarize the editors and readership, democratize the genre and represent more accurately the experiences of incarcerated women. This content is often individualized, offering personal accounts and experiences but within a collective format. Experiences are not necessarily given to be unique, but rather are offered in solidarity. Indeed, the activism documented in prison zines is intersectional, not preferencing one voice or experience over another and is thus seen as part of a collective struggle that effects incarcerated women everywhere. This is, in part, an attempt to reflect the diversity and inconsistencies within collective identity. By emphasizing the plurality of experience amongst incarcerated women, zines expose the problems with stereotypes and labels that often reduce women in prison to degrading typecasts and instead seek to provide a holistic perspective that acknowledges the differences in collective identity. This is aided by the zines' form. As I argued in Chapter Three, the zines' serialization and non-linear structure supports this effort to decentralize the female incarceration experience, removing the presence of an omnipotent narrator or linear timeframe. In addition, the use of letters demonstrates the presence of, as Janet Galligani Casey argues, a "responsive, collective,

consuming body of readers."[5] The communities created by zines involve active participation as readers respond to content and offer their own experiences and opinions. Letters can offer advice and encouragement, enact protest through manifestos and external support, connect women across geographical distances in order to forge new relationships and maintain old ones, and emphasise, as Howard Zinn writes, that they are "not alone."[6] This is perhaps the most significant aspect of collectivity in women's prison zines as they physicalize a community for incarcerated women. Against the isolating environment of prison, zines reassure women that their experiences are, if not shared, then heard. As one letter to *Black and Pink* notes, "Everytime [sic] I receive one of your newsletters, it helps me to feel like someone is thinking of me."[7]

This community that is created within the pages of prison zines is also reiterated by certain phrasing or terminology. Adopting the term "sister" from feminist and lesbian print culture and using it in externally edited zines helped to envision an idealized community as incarcerated women reached out to one another and to allies outside. This idealized community built on womanhood and confinement stretched beyond the United States to include imprisoned women across the world, and occasionally removed any gender specificity to acknowledge a much wider community of confined individuals. Similarly, in Chapter Four I argued that the use of the terms "sistas" and "bruthas" in zines like *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery* sought to reiterate this confined community and articulate a shared identity. This terminology borrowed from Black culture and protest at the time, tying prison zines to a longer struggle against imprisonment and racial prejudice and creating, as Zoe Trodd calls it, a "living protest

[5] Janet Galligani Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiographical Theory," *Journal of Modern Literature* 28, no. 1: Autobiography and Memoir (2009), 92.
[6] Howard Zinn, afterward to *American Protest Literature,* ed. Zoe Trodd (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 517.
[7] Luke E., Letter, *Black and Pink,* July/August 2018, 29, https://issuu.com/blackandpink/docs/list_1__7-2018__most.

legacy."[8] This adoption of certain tropes also connects to the second defining feature of prison zines: a confinement aesthetic. The creators of women's prison zines use terminology and iconography grounded in imprisonment to reaffirm their collective identity. By using figures such as Assata Shakur, Joanne Little and Sojourner Truth to represent incarcerated women's struggle, the creators of prison zines tie their current situation to a longer history and aesthetic of imprisonment, specifically racialized confinement. In doing so they establish a collective, confined, female literary tradition going as far back as slavery and identify the systemic prejudices that remain in the United States today.

Additionally, as well as the content and style, the form and production of prison zines are also a by-product of confinement. As a form of collective autobiography, zines demonstrate the plurality of print and collective identity. Prison zines have numerous contributors with differing perspectives, and despite offering very personal content, the serialized publication schedules and lack of linear structures removes the focus from the individual. The serialization of the zines also enacts a form of protest that is ongoing. New editions document new struggles and sharing women's activism within the network expands their protests geographically and temporally. In *Break de Chains* this is supported by the use of documentary-style photographs which capture the women's activism and hold the viewer to account. In later prison zines photographs were used to not only document women's experiences behind bars, but also to demarcate the passing of time with women pictured receiving graduation certificates and winning sporting awards. Over time, these images visualised a collective identity that pushed back against the stereotyped images of mugshots, chains, and orange jumpsuits that dominate ideas of incarceration. The cover image of the 2016 summer edition of *The Reflector,* for instance, shows a group of women posing and smiling in the sunshine dressed in graduation

[8] Trodd, *American Protest Literature,* xxv.

gowns, with the caption "What are YOU afraid of?" typed above (emphasis in original) (Fig. 5.1).




**Figure 5.1: Cover image of *The Reflector*, Summer 2016.**

The final defining feature of prison zines that results from their carceral environment is resistance. All of the prison zines mentioned in this thesis enact different forms of resistance. To return to Victoria Law's definition referenced in the introduction to this thesis, resistance is "not necessarily the militant kind that you might think of when you hear the word. Not so much the fist-in-the-air riots and strikes, but the simple, robust fabric of survival so often woven by women prisoners. In that fabric can be found rich, textured lessons about solidarity, social

change, political evolution – about how human beings and society as a whole can transform."[9] As with the resistance that Law alludes to, the resistance found in prison zines is not necessarily linked to physical or explicitly dangerous acts, but still evidences the multifaceted ways in which incarcerated women protest and endure. Indeed, in Chapter One I argued that against the dehumanizing environment of the prison, incarcerated women seek out ways in which to affirm their identity and femininity through zines. By bringing content relating to fashion, fitness, motherhood and domesticity inside of prison, incarcerated women are able to express and engage with an identity and community that is otherwise restricted. Moreover, by adapting this type of content that is traditionally found in women's magazines, the creators of zines are able to actively engage with cultural norms but sculpt them to be more useful and interesting to incarcerated women. This adaptation of content is also evident in externally edited zines which, in the 1960s and 1970s, filled a gap between the women's movement and incarcerated women's experiences and expectations. Prison zines acted as physical sites of feminism for women in prison as they distributed news and information, connected prison zines to other feminist print of the period, and offered incarcerated women's perspectives on crucial issues such as domestic abuse, mental health and racism. By documenting their particular experiences, incarcerated women in both in-house and externally edited zines sought to educate their readers on the realities of incarceration and incarcerated female identity.

Beyond education, prison zines also physicalised certain aspects of protest. Zines included letter campaigns and manifestos and encouraged support and active involvement from their non-incarcerated readership. All of this was documented in the pages of the zines, extending any physical activism temporally and spatially. The ideology of the zines' publication, especially externally edited zines, is also another act of resistance. As free (at least

[9] Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009), iii.

for women in prison), non-commercial products, zines push back against American capitalism and the for-profit model of prisons, encouraging the free exchange of ideas and circulation of resources that zines invite. The forms of resistance that are evidenced in zines might not be as explicit as riots and hunger strikes, and rarely receive the same amount of publicity. However, for the communities in which they circulate zines represent a very tangible form of protest that is sustainable within the confines of the carceral state.

As a neglected topic amongst carceral, literary, historical and American cultural studies scholarship, there is still much more to be said about women's prison zines. What this current scholarly neglect has exposed is the gendered discriminations that exist not just in the prison industrial complex, but within scholarship as well. Although there have been a lot of recent studies that seek to document the particular experiences of women behind bars and diversify the way we look at prisons, feminism and literature, women's prison zines have consistently been overlooked or undervalued in scholarship. In an effort to correct this omission, this thesis has traced the entire women's prison zine tradition in the United States from the earliest independent women's publication in 1933 to present day. But as a tradition that still continues to grow today, there are many more avenues to explore within this subject and many more zines to be mined from the archives. In particular, I hope that this tradition could extend beyond the United States to consider a much larger history of women's prison zines. Scholars have already noted the presence of zines in the Canadian penal system and how they interacted with zines in the United States, but one might broaden this network to consider a transatlantic or international tradition. I hope that this thesis and the following appendix offer a springboard for future researchers from all disciplines to continue to profile women's prison zines and push back against the forces that silence them.

As women's prison zines continue to be published in the United States, one might also consider the other cultural outputs that incarcerated communities are producing today. In 2017,

San Quentin State Prison embarked on a new project with artist Nigel Poor establishing the facility's first podcast *Ear Hustle*. Since its founding, *Ear Hustle* has received widespread acclaim as a show that "provokes thoughts about mass incarceration, race, justice, regret, violence, and moral complexity through small-bore stories about cellmates, food, sibling rivalry, isolation, and even pets."[10] In many ways, *Ear Hustle* resembles a prison zine. Although not a textual publication, the podcast is created in San Quentin's media lab with the outside help of Poor and Radiotopia. It is produced serially and released every other week, documenting the lives and experiences of the men confined in the prison. An article in *The Atlantic* suggests that where "contemporary first-person accounts of prison life can be hard to find … *Ear Hustle* and shows like it return some of the humanity that the carceral system removes and provide a link between inmates and outsiders."[11] Functioning in a similar way to women's prison zines, podcasts like *Ear Hustle* offer a new direction for prisons and creative production and an alternative format for profiling forgotten voices. I am sure that in the coming years other facilities will develop their own podcasts and with it, establish a new carceral creative tradition that seeks to further break down the walls that separate incarcerated communities from the rest of the world.

I have tried to approach these materials with as few preconceived ideas and assumptions as possible, and instead let the zines and the women's experiences held therein speak for themselves. Moreover, although this thesis is interdisciplinary, it has focused largely on women's prison zines as literary and cultural productions and has not attempted to offer a social sciences approach or outline any modes of reform or abolition (beyond those alluded to within the texts themselves). What becomes abundantly clear when studying these sources,

[10] Sarah Larson, "'Ear Hustle': The Podcast Made Inside San Quentin," *The New Yorker,* August 17, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/podcast-dept/ear-hustle-the-podcast-made-inside-san-quentin.
[11] Galen Beebe, "The Podcast Made From Inside Prison," *The Atlantic,* August 27, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/08/making-a-podcast-from-prison/537774/.

however, is that the prison system in the United States punishes and isolates the most vulnerable members of society, reiterating the cyclical nature of crime and punishment and creating lasting damage that transcends the individual to affect families, friends and society at large. It is my hope that by studying materials such as women's prison zines, not just in the United States but world-wide, we are able to form a more nuanced, educated and considered understanding of the carceral state both historically and today. In doing so, we might reflect on the supposed benefits of prisons and the ultimate cost that they have on society, and instead envisage a future that tackles the root causes that sustain mass incarceration: the systemic racism, homophobia and bias within the criminal justice system, and inequality, poverty and intolerance that pervades American society. As one contributor to *The Eagle* wrote in response to a member of the public: "So you see, Mr. John Q. Public, mind-molding society, it is not entirely up to the individual. You must assume your share of the load. You must abide by the standards you set as well as I. You must stop your blind groping for Truth along the dark alley of fear, suspicion, prejudice and ignorance. When you do this, we both will be better citizens."[12]

[12] Louise N., "A Reply to John Q. Public," *The Eagle,* Fall 1963, 12.

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# Appendix

| Zines I Own: | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Title** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **What Editions I have** | **State** | **City** | **Prison Name** | **In-house v. Externally Edited** | **Associated Organisation/ Individual** | **Readership** | **Contributors** | **Locations** |
| *The Daytona Industrial Advocate* | | | Vol. 1 No. 5 (March 1907), Vol. 13 No. 9 (May 1917) | Florida | Daytona Beach | Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls | In-house | Mary McLeod Bethune | | GIRLS | Vol. 1 No. 5: State Library of Pennsylvania. Vol. 13 No. 9: WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 60-4615 |
| *The Daisy Leaf* | 1926 (July) | | Vol 1. No. 16 - Vol. 2 No. 21 | Connecticut | | Long Lane Farm | In-house | | "Sent to friends of the institution, girls on parole, other institutions and schools, and former employees etc"* | GIRLS | Connecticut State Library |
| *Tuba Oppidi* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | Vol. 2 No. 1 (Jan 1924) - Vol. 2 No. 5 (May 1924) | Michigan | | Girls Training School, Michigan | In-house | | | GIRLS | Library of Michigan |
| *Woods Haven Echoes* | 1931 | | Vol. 1 No. 1 (April 1931), Vol. 1 No. 2 (Aug 1931) | Delaware | | Delaware Industrial School for Girls | In-house | | "It is sent to trustees of the school and other industrial schools"* | GIRLS | Delaware Public Archives |
| *De-ho-co* | 1932 | 1936 | May 1936, Oct 1936, Nov 1936, May 1937, Sept 1937 | Michigan | Plymouth | House of Corrections | In-house | | "Outside circulation of 600 and is sent to libraries, teachers, prisoners' families, other penal institutions, social service workers, public officials etc"* | MEN/WOMEN | BHL, University of Michigan Call no. EA 172 D323 D323. |
| *The Eagle* | 1933 | | Issues 21-32 (Summer 1954 – Christmas 1965) | West Virginia | Alderson | The Federal Prison Camp | In-house | | "Outside circulation of 30"* | WOMEN | MPLSC Central Library Periodicals. |
| *The Reflector* | 1935 | Present | November 1935 – 2018 | Minnesota | Shakopee | Correctional Centre | In-house | | | WOMEN | MHSL, Gale Family Library, "The Reflector" HV 9305.M6255.R3 |
| *Mother's Club News* | 1937 | 1937 | Volume I, issues 4-6, 10, 13, 14, 27-28 and July 17th and 30th 1937 | Massachusetts | Framingham | Reformatory for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | SLHU, Papers of Miriam Van Waters 1861-1971, Subseries 4 Student Writings and Activities |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Seed* | 1933 | 1934 | 1st (1933) and 3rd (1934) editions | Massachusetts | Framingham | Massachusetts Reformatory for Women | In-house | | "Circulation of around 50 copies a year, chiefly to those who have visited the institution and know of its work"* | WOMEN | SLHU, Papers of Miriam Van Waters 1861-1971, Subseries 4 Student Writings and Activities |
| *Cookbook* | 1939 | - | 1939 (one off) | California | Tehachapi | California Institution for Women | In-house | Printed in the Clarion press place | | WOMEN | UCSD Special Collections & Archives, TX 715.C355 1939 |
| *The Adamstown Herald* | 1940 | | Fall 1940, Spring-Summer 1941, March 1942 | Wisconsin | Taycheedah | Taycheedah Correctional Institution | In-house | Addam's Book Club | | WOMEN | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 01-12980 |
| *The Acorn* | 1936 | | 1936-1969 | Florida | Ocala | Florida School for Girls at Ocala | In-house | | | GIRLS | UFA, UF022506874 |
| *Ledge Echoes* | 1941 | | March 1941, Winter Issue | Wisconsin | Taycheedah | Taycheedah Correctional Institution | In-house | | | WOMEN | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 01-12979 |
| *Harmony News* | 1945 | 1966 | 1954, Oct 1957, Dec 1957, 1961 | Massachusetts | Framingham | State Correctional Institution | In-house | | | WOMEN | SLHU, The Papers of Miriam Van Waters, 1861-1971 |
| *Our World* | | | Dec. 1952 (Christmas Special) | Indiana | Indianapolis | Indiana Women's Prison | In-house | | | WOMEN | State Library of Louisiana |
| *Forest Hill News* | 1953 | | June-Oct 1954, Jan 1955, July 1956, Sept 1957, Feb 1958, May 1959, March 1960, April 1961, June 1962, Oct 1963, Dec 1964, Aug 1965, Feb/May 1966, Dec 1967 | Florida | Lowell | Florida School for Girls at Forest Hill | In-house | | | GIRLS | UFA, UF030598553 |
| *Clarion* | 1937 | | Aug 1944, June 1944, Dec 1945, March 1945, Jan 1947, March 1947, April 1947,April/May 1948, Jan/Feb 1972 ,April/May 1974, Aug/Sept 1976 | California | Frontera | California Institute for Women | In-house | | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | Spring 1948: CSA, Earl Warren Papers, Administrative Files, “California Institute for Women.” Jan-Feb 1972: UMSCL, Call No. HV 8301.C57. April-May 1974: WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 84-3693 |
| *Lanedale Newsy-News* | | | Jan 1960, Feb 1960, March 1960, April-May 1960, Nov 1960, Dec 1960, Jan 1961, Feb 1961, March 1961, April 1961 Oct-Nov 1961, Dec 1961, Jan-Feb 1962 | Iowa | Rockwell City | Women’s Reformatory, Rockwell City | In-house | | | WOMEN | University of Iowa, Main Library, 01IOWA ALMA |
| *The Bulletin* | 1965 | | 1965- | Minnesota | | Home School for Girls, Minnesota | | | | GIRLS | MHSL, Gale Family Library |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Belles Behind Bars* | | | 1974 (Vol. 1 No. 3) - 1974 (Vol. 1 No. 6) | Louisiana | St Gabriel | Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | State Library of Louisiana |
| *no title at all is better than a title like that!* | 1974 | - | 1974 (one off) | California | Frontera | California Institute for Women | External | The Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | The Freedom Archives PDF: http://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC510_scans/Prisons_Women/510.CIW.no.title.at.all.V1.N1.1974.pdf |
| *Voices from Within* | 1975 | - | 1975 (one off) | New York | Bedford Hills | Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women | In-house | Ann McGovern | | WOMEN | BCRW online archive PDF: http://bcrw.barnard.edu/archive/prison/VoicesFromWithin.pdf |
| *Through the Looking Glass* | 1976 | 1987 | Full run (May 1976 – Summer 1987) | Washington | Seattle | Nationwide | External | Through the Looking Glass, Seattle | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | RRBML, Duke University, Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Periodicals Collection, 1962-1994, Box 41, Folders 25 – 31 |
| *Break de Chains of Legalized U.$. Slavery* | 1976 | - | 1976 (one off) | North Carolina | Raleigh | North Carolina Correctional Centre for Women | External | Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists, North Carolina women's Prison Book Project | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | Library Service Center, Rare Books, RRBML, Duke University and www.freedomarchives.org |
| *The Turning Point* | | | 1976, 1977 | Massachusetts | Framingham | Massachusetts Correctional Institute | In-house | | | WOMEN | Harvard University (1976) University of California at Berkeley Library (1977) |
| *Society of Forgotten Women* | 1977 | 1977 | 1977 (Vol. 1 No. 1) - 1977 (Vol. 4 No. 4) | Louisiana | St Gabriel | Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | State Library of Louisiana, Louisiana Documents Collection Call No. I90.7/1: |
| *No More Cages* | 1972 | 1994 | 1981 (Vol.2 No. 4) -1985 (Vol. 5 No. 5) | New York | - | Nationwide | External | Women free Women in Prison | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | Winter 1984: RRBML, Duke University, Women's and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Movements (LGBT) Periodicals Collection, 1957-2017, Box 13. March 1981, May 1981, Nov-Dec 1981, April-May 1984, June-July 1984, Fall 1984: RRBML, Duke University, Guide to the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Periodicals Collection, 1962-1994, Box 31 |
| *Voices / Voices from St Gabriel* | 1979 | | 1981 (Special Edition and Fall), Spring 1982 | Louisiana | St Gabriel | Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | 1981: State Library of Louisiana, Louisiana Documents Collection Call No. I90.20:Vo/. 1982: from WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 78-313 |
| *Poppy* | 1980 | 1982? | Dec 1980 (Vol 1 No 1.), March 1982, April 1982, May 1982 (missing issue 6) | California | | The California Rehabilitation Centre | External? | Bright fires Creative Writing Workshop | | WOMEN | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection, 84-4146 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dawn (Determined Action for Women Now)* | | | April/May 1980 (Vol. 3 No. 15) - July 1987 (Vol. 10 No. 5) | Michigan | Ypsilanti | Huron Valley Women's Facility | In-house | | "By the residents for the residents" | WOMEN | WHSA, Microfilm, P92-5975 N87-943 |
| *Inmate Output* | 1983 | | Issue 1 - Issue 59 (November 1983 - June 1989) some missing | Wisconsin | Fond du Lac | Taycheedah Correctional Institution | In-house | | | WOMEN | WHSA, Microfilm P07-258 N93-85 |
| *The Insider* | 1987 | 1990 | Winter 1987 (Vol 2. no 1.), July 1988, Fall 1988, Spring 1989, Fall 1989, Winter 1989, Jan 1990, Summer-Fall 1990 | Wisconsin | Madison | | External | The Women's Jail Project | | WOMEN | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection: Super Oversize 95- 3193 |
| *The Outside Agitator* | 1988 | | August 1988 no.2 | New York /Chicago /San Francisco | | | External | National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Women's Control Unit | | WOMEN | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 01-5926 |
| *Benedict Center Newsletter* | 1992 | | Summer 1992 (Vol. 1 No. 1), Fall 1995, Summer 1996, Summer 1997, March 1998 | Wisconsin | Milwaukee | The Benedict Centre | External | | | | WHSA, Pamphlet Collection, 01-8825 |
| *Girl's Talkin'...* | 1995 | | 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000 | | | | In-house | | | | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project |
| *Insight* | | | Jan-Feb 1996 – May-June 2000 | Michigan | Coldwater | Florence Crane Women's Facility | In-house | | | WOMEN | WHSA, Microfilm P17-89 |
| *The Fire Inside* | 1996 | Present | Full run | California | San Francisco | Nationwide | External | California Coalition for Women Prisoners | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | Issue 46 Spring/Summer 2012 - Issue 53 Feb 2016 PDFs from website: http://womenprisoners.org/?page_id=1061. Current Issues: WHSA, Pamphlet Collection |
| *Real Conditions* | | | Vol 1. No 4. (August 2000), Vol. 2 No. 4, (July 2001) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County Jail, Women's Division 4, and the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center | External | | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 7, Folder 2 |
| *Writing Free, Writing Bold!* | 2001 | - | 2001 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County | External | Different ones from different divisions. This one is from 'The Women of Division K-1, Division 4 | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 2, Folder 5 |
| *Tenacious: Writings from Women in Prison* | 2002 | Present | Issue 2, Issue 10, Issue 3 (Winter 2002), Issue 6 (Fall 2003), Issue 12, Issue 13 (Fall 2007), Issues 31-37 | New York | - | Nationwide | External | Victoria Law/Blackstar Publishing | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | Editions from Victoria Law via email. Issues 3,6,12,13: DPUA Anthony Rayson Zine Collection Box 6, Folder 24 |

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| *Voices and Visions* | 2002 | - | 2002 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County | External | From Division 4 | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 2, Folder 6 |
| *Voices Loud and Proud* | 2003 | - | 2003 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County | External | From Division 4 | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 2, Folder 7 |
| *Bold Women, Bold Words* | 2003 | - | 2003 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County | External | From Division 4 | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 2, Folder 8 |
| *Strong Women, Wise Words, New Poetry!* | 2003 | - | 2003 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Cook County | External | From Division 4 | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 2, Folder 10 |
| *Bound Struggles: Voices of Women in Prison* | 2004 | 2008 | 2004 (Number 1), Spring 2005 (Number 6), 2007, (Number 7) 2008, Spring 2006, Summer 2005 | Illinois | Chicago | Nationwide | External | Chicago Books to Women in Prison | Inside/Outside | WOMEN | No. 1: PDF from https://archive.org/details/BoundStrugglesVoicesOfWomenInPrisonVol.1August2004. No. 6 and 7: DPUA, Anthony Rayson Zine Collection Box 6, Folder 18. Spring 2005: Box 16, Folder 46 (2007/2008). Spring 2006/Summer 2005: WHSA, Pamphlet Collection 01- 10602 |
| *Sista's Speak Up* | 2005 | - | 2005 (one off) | | | | External | | | WOMEN | DPUA, Anthony Rayson Zine Collection, Box 9, Folder 11 |
| *We Sore Above All* | 2005 | - | 2005 (one off) | Illinois | Chicago | Dwight Correctional Centre | External | The women of the Women, writing and Incarceration Poetry Workshop | | WOMEN | DPUA, Women, Writing and Incarceration Project Records, Box 3, Folder 8 |
| *Queer and Transgender Prison Solidarity* | 2009 | - | 2009 (one off) | | | | External | | | LGBT+ | DPUA, Anthony Rayson Zine Collection, Box 16, Folder 12 |
| *Black and Pink* | 2010 | 2020 | 2010 - present | Massachusetts | Dorchester | Nationwide | External | Black and Pink | Inside/Outside - sent to over 10,000 prisoners in 2016 | LGBT+ | PDFs from website: www.blackandpink.org/newspaper/ |
| *Hidden Expressions* | | 2014 | Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 | | | | External | | Inside/Outside | LGBT+ | PDFs from website: http://tjlp.org/services/hidden-expressions/ |
| *Old Bloom* | 2016 | | Spring 2017 (2nd edition) | | | | External | | | WOMEN/ LGBT+ | Emailed from editors |
| *The "Drug War" Preys on Young Afrikan Women!* | | | One off | | | | External | | | WOMEN | DPUA, Anthony Rayson Zine Collection, Box 19, Folder, 39 |
| * These figures are from a questionnaire taken in 1935 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Found but don't own | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| **Title** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **What Editions are available** | **State** | **City** | **Prison Name** | **In-house v. Externally Edited** | **Associated Organisation** | **Readership** | **Contributors** | **Locations** |
| *Our Companion* | | | Vol. 12 No. 12 Dec 1901 | Ohio | Cincinnati | House of Refuge | In-house | | | GIRLS | WRHS: http://norton.wrhs.org/starweb/d.skclmarc-opac/servlet.starweb?path=d.skclmarc-opac/skclmarcfastlink.web&search1=001=ocm34506519 |
| *Campus Gazette* formerly *Training School Chat* | April 1932 (Training School Chat began in 1911) | | 1911-1917 / 1930s | Illinois | | State Training School for Girls, Illinois | In-house | Mimeographed first, then printed at the State training school for Boy's, St Charles, IL. | "Outside circulation of 110 and is sent ot libraries and friends of the institution"* | GIRLS | Illinois State Library |
| *Sunflower Gazette* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | Kansas | | Girls Industrial School, Kansas | In-house | | | GIRLS | University Santa Barbara |
| *Greenbank News* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | Delaware | | Women's Prison Delaware | In-house | | | WOMEN | University of Delaware Library |
| *Hilltop News* | 1940 | 1990s | Recent 80s copies /1941-93/1940-46 | Maine | | State School for Girls, Maine | In-house | | | GIRLS | Central Michigan Libraries (1941-93)/Bentley Historical Society (1940-46) |
| *The Beat Within* | 1996 | Present | All | California | San Francisco | San Francisco Juvenile Hall (Originally, now all over US) | External | The Beat Within | - | GIRLS/BOYS | http://www.thebeatwithin.org/category/publications/ |
| *Cooking in Prison: From the Big House to Your House* | 2010 | - | One off | Texas | Gatesville | Mountain View Unit | | Rebecca Sanford and Dr. Eleanor Novek | | WOMEN | http://womenandprison.org/social-justice/view/cooking_in_prison_from_the_big_house_to_your_house/ (On Amazon) |
| *Out of Time* | | | 1994-2010 | California | San Francisco | | External | Out of Control Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners | | WOMEN | University of Michigan, Special Collections Labadie Collection, HV 7231.O98 |
| *Meadow Lark* | | | 1939-1940 | Montana | | Vocational School for Girls, Montana | In-house | | | GIRLS | University of Montana |

| Know of but not found | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Title** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **What Editions are available** | **State** | **City** | **Prison Name** | **In-house v. Externally Edited** | **Associated Organisation** | **Readership** | **Contributors** | **Locations** |
| *Perceptions* (formerly *The Insider*) | 2002 | 2006 | | New Jersey | | Edna Mahan's Correctional Institute | In-house | | | WOMEN | Referenced in 'Resistance Behind Bars' |
| *Her Echo* | 1961 | | | Washington D.C | Occoquan | District of Columbia Women's Reformatory | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Eagle Cry* | 1993 | 1997 | | Alaska | Eagle River | Hiland Mountain and Meadow Creek Correctional Centers | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Perryville Times* | 1982 | 1986 | | Arizona | Goodyear | State Prison | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Hour Glass* | 1942 | 1942 | | Connecticut | Niantic | State Prison and Farm for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Fla-Co-Lo* | 1957 | 1966 | | Florida | Lowell | State Correctional Institution | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Voice* | 1931 | 1931 | | Florida | Tallahassee | Federal Reformatory | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Pathfinder* | 1949 | 1966 | | Illinois | Dwight | State Reformatory for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Communique / S.E.E.D.* | 1982 | 1986 | | Illinois | Dwight | State Correctional Center | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Chit Chat / 15 Acres* | 1957 | 1966 | | Indiana | Indianapolis | State Prison for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Lancer* | 1965 | 1966 | | Kansas | Lansing | State Industrial Farm for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Soundings* | 1950 | 1966 | | Maryland | Jessup | State Correctional Institution for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Voice* | 1935 | 1966 | | Michigan | Plymouth | Detroit House of Correction | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Ad Lib* | 1960 | 1966 | | New Jersey | Clinton | State Reformatory for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Muncy Times* | 1942 | 1942 | | Pennsylvania | Muncy | State Industrial Home for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Prism* | 1962 | 1966 | | Pennsylvania | Muncy | State Correctional Institution | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *ETC* | 1963 | 1966 | | Vermont | Rutland | State Women's Reformatory | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Citizen* | 1941 | 1966 | | Virginia | Goochland | State Industrial Farm for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |

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| *The Star* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | Connecticut | | Connecticut State Farm for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Trail Blazer* | | | | Illinois | | State Reformatory for Women, Illinois | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *Demi-Tasse Dispatch* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | Louisiana | | State Industrial School for Girls, Louisiana | In-house | | | GIRLS | Mentioned in 'Prison Journals' masters paper (PDF) |
| *The Oriole* | | | | Maryland | | Montrose School for Girls, Maryland | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Threshold* 1934-35 (name changes each year) | | | | Massachusetts | | Industrial School for Girls, Massachusetts | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Home School Journal* | | | | Minnesota | | Home School for Girls, Minnesota | In-house | | | GIRLS | Minnesota Historical Society have copies of 'The Bulletin'. Seems to be from the same place but in the 60s |
| *New Deal* | | | | Missouri | | State Industrial a Home for Girls, Missouri | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Hello* (quarterly) *Progress* (annual) | | | | Missouri | | Industrial Home for Negro Girls, Missouri | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *School Spirit* | | | | New Jersey | | NJ State Home for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Assembly Observer* | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | New Jersey | | NJ State Reformatory for Women | In-house | | | WOMEN | |
| *G.I.S World* | | | | Ohio | | Girls Industrial School, Ohio | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Climbers Record* formerly *Cross Road* | | | | Oklahoma | | State Industrial School for Girls (white), Oklahoma | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Hi-Lights of T.V.S* | | | | Tennessee | | Tennessee Vocational School for Girls (white) | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| Kilbourne Chronicle’ | | Dis-continued by 1935 | | Virginia | | Virginia Home and Industrial School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Booster* | | | | Virginia | | Virginia Industrial School for Coloured Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | Referenced on Janie Porter Barret's Wikipedia page |
| *Campus Echoes* | | | | Washington | | State School for Girls, Washington | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Industrial Breezes* formerly *The Sparks* | | | | West Virginia | | West Virginia Industrial Home for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Argus* | | | | Idaho | | Industrial Training School | In-house | | | GIRLS/BOYS | |

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| *Oakdale Trail Blazer* | | | | Illinois | | Training School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The Ormsby Village News* | | | | Kentucky | | The Louisville and Jefferson County Children's Home | In-house | | | GIRLS/BOYS | |
| *Hilltop News* | | | | Maine | | State School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Pegasus, The Eagle* | (name changes each year) | | | Massachusetts | | Industrial School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Meadow Lark* | | | | Montana | | Vocational School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *The News Box* | | | | New York | | Albion Training School | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Climbers Record* | | | | | | State Industrial School for Girls (White) | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Question* | | | | Pennsylvania | | Sleighton Farm School for Girls | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Highlights of TVS* | | | | Tennessee | | Tennessee Vocational School for Girls (white) | In-house | | | GIRLS | |
| *Agenda* | | | | Washington | | Washington State Penitentiary | In-house | | | WOMEN/MEN | |
| *The flow: females learning other ways* | 1985? | | | Michigan | | Florence Crane Women's Facility | In-house | | | WOMEN | Michigan Library |
| *Teen Times* | 1964 | | | Illinois | | Indiana Girls' School | In-house | | | GIRLS | |