



extract from

Bang Up and Smash

Women's Prisons, Bail Hostels and Probation
by ASBO

This text is an edited extract from the forthcoming book *Bang Up and Smash: Women's Prisons, Bail Hostels and Probation*. It started life as a zine, but like the “prison industrial complex” the project has expanded significantly and is now going to be a book. It will be printed in the summer by Active Distribution. It will also be free to download online. All money will go towards prison related projects.

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Bang Up and Smash:
Women's Prisons, Bail Hostels and Probation

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The content in this publication may be distressing or triggering.
All attempts have been made to ensure any legal information included in
this text is as accurate as possible.

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Aims

If these sound grandiose I do not apologise. If they sound unrealistic, it is only because our dreams have been so down trodden by those who seek to control us, inside and outside our cages. In no particular order....

. To provide people facing a custodial sentence (and those supporting them) with ideas for dealing with everyday prison life in women's prisons in the UK by combining anarchist literature, practical examples of solidarity from jail and prison related support organisations.

. To highlight gender issues in relation to the range of texts that already exist about the UK prison system, and to critically analyse feminist arguments around women's prisons.

. To show the many ways the prison industrial complex (PIC) is dependent on discrimination and multiple forms of oppression.

. To give an overview of the concept of "social exclusion", whilst critiquing organisations which promote "inclusion" as an antidote to the PIC.

. To discredit concepts such as "reform" and "rehabilitation" and

to expose them for the dangerous façades that they are.

. To use anecdotal evidence and first-hand examples of the violence of the prison regime and ‘Criminal Justice System’.

. To problematise the concept of “prison abolition” and highlight its limitations from an anarchist perspective.

. To show how the frameworks and technologies used for discipline and control extend far beyond prison walls and create the “prison society”.

Introduction

*She lives in a mansion of aching hearts,
she's one of a restless throng.*

– Roddie Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*

Prison is designed to control, to oppress, to separate and alienate. But even in “a mansion of aching hearts” there are ways to keep your head held high. It’s easy to fixate on the moment you will walk through the gate, but there are possibilities for rebellion and solidarity along the way. As Albert Libertad said: “Those that envision the goal from the first steps, those that want the certitude of reaching it before walking, never arrive”.

*We do not want the pardon of the state,
we only desire it's destruction.*

– Monica Caballero and Francisco Solar, *Prison of Villabona*, Spain

This is a practical guide, though for obvious security reasons some things are best left unsaid. You can find them out inside. Prison is messy. Relentless. Just like critique and analysis, it is ongoing (and at times painful). But it is not omnipotent.

One of my mates inside called me ASBO and I hope I will always be anti-social. The title of this publication comes from two features of prison life: “Bang-Up” (being locked in your cell) and “Smash” (or rather, the bud-

get prison issue version of it reconstituted potato) and will hopefully provide some “food for thought” when the monotony of enforced solitude and cheap carbs threatens to suffocate you in jail!

Anonymity?

There is only one way to avoid criticism and that is to do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing
– Aristotle

When you do something out of conviction, my dear, it should be because you believe it's the right thing to do. If you look for approval from everyone, you'll never be able to act.
– Leslie Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues

One of the first things I want to highlight is how uncomfortable I feel writing with a lot of imperatives or telling people what to do. I *much* prefer writing in the third person, and obviously all the random bits of information and advice outlined here are just *suggestions*. Everyone rides their sentence in their own way. All prisoners have coping strategies: spice, self-harm, sex, socialising, subitex, smoking, scandal, stories, schemes, sessions in the gym, whatever your poison, whatever gets you through (as long as it ain't snitching!)

Simply staying alive, holding onto ones individuality and keeping ones spirits and head high is in itself a form of rebellion in the context of an institution that is deliberately built to put people down and humiliate them.
Jean Weir, Tame Words from a Wild Heart

Writing this text is one of the hardest things I have ever done. I am *not* saying this for sympathy. I am saying this in order to acknowledge the complexity of feelings I have had towards this project. Everyday I mourn my loss of anonymity. Even though I am using an alias, it is probably easy for the reader to ascertain who has assembled these words.

Run from what's comfortable. Forget safety. Live where you fear to

live. Destroy your reputation. Be notorious.

– Rumi

The Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and Abolition

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems. Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other privileges.

– Critical Resistance

In 2008 it cost an average of £56,000 to keep someone in a women's prison in the UK. England and Wales have the highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe, locking up 147 people per 100,000. On the 17th June 2016 the prison population for England and Wales was 85,567. Scotland was 7,678 and Northern Ireland 1,521. There were 3,876 people women's prisons. In Leeds the men's prison was operating at 176% of its capacity.

The situation has got so bad that for the first time since their records began, the Prison Service will no longer publish monthly statistics on overcrowding. They will now be published annually because apparently “statistics for the number of prisoners held over a prison's capacity does not indicate the number of prisoners held in crowded conditions.” England has the biggest prison population in Europe and the longest prison sentences. The Prison Reform Trust has blamed “sentence inflation” (the dramatic increase in the length of sentences and tariffs) for the “chronic levels of overcrowding”, and has stated that “no future government should be allowed to preside over the decline in safety, decency and fairness that we have seen in recent years.”

The response to overcrowding is further expansion and an outsourcing of operational management to private companies, many of whom are multi-national security corporations. In recent years the government has developed plans to build a range of so-called ‘Titan Prisons’; based on the maxi-prison

model in America, in order to incarcerate a further 10,000 people over the next year. The flag-ship for this project, the Wrexham jail, will hold 2,100 inmates.

On March 22nd, Justice secretary Liz Truss that four more new “super-sized” mega-prisons, with a combined capacity of at least 5,000, are now earmarked for construction. The sites: Port Talbot in South Wales, Wigan in Greater Manchester, Rochester in Kent and Full Sutton in East Yorkshire. The Government claims the Titan Prisons will be state-run, but the reality is that the usual suspects will be operating behind the scenes to run it. 34% of Wrexham jail will be maintained using “private and voluntary organisations”.

Within the women’s prison estate there are already two private jails, Bronze-field and Peterborough. Privately run prisons are big business for the PIC, and corporately run establishments used nearly ¼ of the entire budget of the prison estate in 2016. Only 18% of all prisoners are held in these institutions, but in 2015 1/3 of all self harm incidents, drug seizures and hunger strikes happened within them.

There is also an inherently colonial aspect to the PIC. In October 2015 the government announced plans to build a new British prison in Jamaica which will have the capacity to contain 1,500 people. The British government is spending £25million, in order to deport hundreds of Foreign National prisoners. There are currently at least 600 Jamaican people behind bars in the UK. In a further example of how the PIC and colonial control/development often go hand in hand, in exchange for the building of the new British prison, David Cameron pledged £300million of “aid” funding into infrastructure in Jamaica (to be spent on roads and bridges) to be overseen by the Caribbean Development Bank.

Apart from expansion, the daily operation and logistics of the prison regime also generate big money. In 2015 there were 95,631 transfers between jails, and 60,896 prisoners were “shipped out” at least once (Safety in Custody report 2015). Most of these transfers were unnecessary, and executed by a handful of companies; mainly GeoAmey, Serco and G4S.

The way in which the prison society extends beyond its fences and walls shows the complexity of the social war in which we are all implicated. The scale of it is clear in the arsenal of tools and methods employed by the state, both within the physical confines of the jail, and the remote forms of surveillance it employs to control those “on licence”. But rules are there to be broken. The PIC hasn’t always existed, and it can be destroyed.

PIC abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. From where we are now, sometimes we can’t really imagine what abolition is going to look like. Abolition isn’t just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It’s also about undoing the society we live in.

– Critical Resistance

Power wants us to believe that we can’t do anything. It wants to be invulnerable. But things are not like that. Power can be attacked everywhere it materialises: in its offices, institutions and uniforms. And this revolt depends only on ourselves.

– The Struggle Against the Maxi-Prison in Brussels

Psychology and prison

A certain feeling comes from throwing your good life away, and it is one part rapture..Innocence was no part of this. She knew her own recklessness and marvelled, really, at how one hard little flint of thrill could outweigh the pillowy suffocating aftermath of a long disgrace.

– Barbara Kingsolver, Flight Behaviour

It can feel like a slow and painful attack, this “long disgrace” in prison. The state and the staff inside will do all that they can to amplify and intensify your reaction to it. But it is possible to find a clear and determined path through the violence of bureaucracy, and to empower yourself and navigate the minefield that is prison life. *Bang Up and Smash* breaks down various different aspects of daily life inside a women’s prison in order to show practical ways to minimise the impact your spell inside will have on you without

having to interact too much with the screws, or ask their permission.

What after all is suicide? Suicide is the final act in a series of actions that we all tend to carry out, which arise from our reaction against our environment, or from that environments reaction against us...Everyday we commit suicide partially....one must live, one must desire to live still abundantly. Let us not accept even the partial suicides....let us be the champion of life, so that desires may arise out of our turpitude and weakness....let us love life!

– Albert Libertad, We Go On

There are many examples of the ways in which the state attempts to break people inside through “therapeutic” interventions. This will be an ongoing theme throughout the text. Psychotherapy in jails is a form of violence. Prisons are neither benign places nor therapeutic environments. The coalition government developed the concept of “broken Britain”; justifying increasingly draconian measures to punish those they deemed “anti-social”. This has led to a further extension of “post-crime” supervision “in the community”, which has been extremely profitable for social enterprise and private companies, as long term prisoner John Bowden has outlined:

“As a model of either justice or retribution, the American criminal justice system is riddled with corruption and failure, and yet Britain slavishly attempts to imitate it — in its quest to achieve absolute social control at a time when the lives of the poor are being made increasingly unendurable, and society continues to fracture and polarise.”

“Rehabilitation” and “protection” are justifications for invasive psychological programmes, sentence plans, parole knock backs, licence conditions and many other methods of control. Phrases such as “deaths in custody” hide the inherent violence of the state and brush aside the grim realities of daily life in jail. According to the ‘Ministry of Justice’ there were 354 deaths behind bars in England and Wales last year, including 119 which were apparently self-inflicted. Self-harm incidents jumped by 23% to 37,784, while there were 25,049 assaults in the 12 months to September— a rise of 31% on the previous year.

Religion

Little by little my regrets and desires fade away. I let my soul float away into emptiness and my will soften. A dangerous but delicious numbness, leading surely, but insensibly, to the edge of nothingness.

– Isabelle Eberhardt, *Criminal: Twilight*

Religion is unsurprisingly pretty popular in jail. It is a sad truth that people’s critical eye in relation to the regime and screws often overlooks those involved in the chapel. In response to a sense of the “edge of nothingness” many prisoners embrace religious doctrine, or become more devout than they were before being incarcerated.

The church, the state, the school, the magazine, think they are liberal and free! It is the freedom of a prison-yard.

– Henry David Thoreau, *I to Myself: An Annotated Selection from the Journal of Henry D. Thoreau 1837*

Every prison has a chapel, and most have a “multi-faith” room as well. These buildings are normally used for a range of activities, mostly religious but also some “entertainment”. It is also normally where non-residential programmes aimed at behaviour modification occur. The staff of the chapel will be on your case as soon as you get sent down. My advice would be steer well clear, and never show even a vague interest in religion.

Because space is limited, all the religions recognised by the prison have to share space and resources. Most world religions are represented in the chapel. This means the chapel is also the site of a fair bit of tension. Mutual animosity can be quite high between different factions. As is often the case with religions outside prison, it’s pretty sad to see how quickly people become territorial and suspicious when they feel that their dogma isn’t being respected.

If you are facing a custodial sentence and looking for information on the religious aspects of life inside, then this publication is not for you.

Punishment

In *The Prison Works* Joe Black and Bra Bros outlined the triple function of prisons: deterrence (fear of incarceration), incapacitation (containment of individuals) and rehabilitation (of “offending behaviour”). They have also discussed criminological theory, the increased use of “thought crime” within the judicial system and prison estate and the inconsistencies upon which the system is dependent.

The law does not pretend to punish everything that is dishonest. That would seriously interfere with business.

– Clarence S. Darrow

The concept of “punishment” has been discussed elsewhere, and so it is not the intention of this text to outline a broad critique of prison theory, but to break down and investigate the everyday ways in which the prison system impacts upon, and controls, people inside women’s prisons.

Many politicians have sought to cut their teeth on the prison system in the UK, using the language of “rehabilitation” to create a benevolent façade whilst promising to create tougher conditions inside.

Rehabilitation, as a modern concept, is metaphorically derived from the ancient practice of banishment, whereby the individual lost his dignity by being cast naked into the wilderness to contemplate his anti-social behaviour...The French word 'habiller' means “to dress” or “to wrap up”; to be rehabilitated is to start life anew, once again fully “clothed” in the garb of respectability with one’s dignity restored.

–Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance*

‘Justice Secretary’ Liz Truss, has outlined plans for increased disciplinary powers for screws and prison staff including: body cameras for prison staff, greater Governor autonomy, extended tests for drugs use and no-fly zones (to stop drone drop offs). She also plans to build five new “community houses” for women, and 10,000 new adult places in jails.

The prison system controls its populations using the concept of “divide and rule”. Issues surrounding class, race, gender and sexuality are just some of the ways in which prisons— and prison staff—play their captives off against each other and seek to perpetuate a culture of alienation. It is not my intention to get caught up too much in issues surrounding so-called “identity politics”. However, it *is* important to highlight the way these issues play out inside, specifically within women’s prisons.

No foul prison could ever hold this rebellious, iconoclastic spirit of mine; now less than ever! Oh delightful hour that gives me all the feverish intensity of spirit, I love you! I would not give up all the bitterness that you bring me for all the mediocre sweetness in the world.

– Novatore, The Howl of Dynamite 1919

Abolition?

Many mainstream groups call for an abolition of the prison estate, and some of these have been outlined here. However it is beyond the scope of this publication to provide an overview and critique of all responses to the prison industrial complex and justice system, so please see the resources section for more information. These topics and tensions will be analysed and critiqued more in *Bang Up and Smash*.

Some of the timidity in the fight against warehousing humans in cages for part or all of their lives results from the lethal synthesis of abandoned optimism and calculated convenience....The challenge seems so enormous that many desperately conclude it’s better to save the “deserving” weak (women and children or addicts) and cross their fingers that everyone else can swim on their own.

-Dan Berger, The Struggle Within

Berger is critical of abolitionist practices which lack what he calls a “focused element”. It is easy to criticise reformist organisations and the demands they make on the state. However, it is just as important to maintain a critical approach to the concept of prison abolition. The prison industrial

complex is not going to disappear quietly! Many abolitionist texts emphasise the need for positive alternatives to the prison system, and community resources:

It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives.

Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.

-Critical Resistance

Prison abolition is not a call to suddenly fling open the prison doors without enacting alternatives. Nor is it an appeal to a utopian ideal. Abolition is a broad based, practical vision for building models today that practice how we want to live in the future.

-Lamble, Transforming carceral logistics

It is important to emphasise that if none of the examples of alternatives to prison work, that does not legitimise its existence now. Like reform, restorative and transformative justice will not bring an end to the prison society without revolutionary solidarity and ongoing attack.

There are two types of solidarity. A passive one that all too often serves only to wash away conscience for someone's own inactivity and that does not bridge the gaps between words and deeds. And then the active, concrete, real solidarity that some call revolutionary, created in silence and anonymity, where only destructive actions speak even through the words that follow.

Needless to say which one I prefer.

-Alfredo Cospito in *A Few Words of Freedom*

There are many publications and groups which outline alternatives to the prison system and PIC (see resources). As this text is *only* concerned with surviving the prison regime in its current form they will not be discussed in detail here.

It is important to critically reflect upon (and interrogate) the general understanding of what “prison abolition” is, and never to become complacent in imagining the scale of the struggle that lies ahead if we are ever to see it

become a reality.

Reform is a pathway to more insidious forms of subjugation and disguises itself as humanity, hope, freedom, and possibly may end up destroying us in the end.

-Stanley and Smith, Captive genders

A broader interrogation of the prison system must include a rejection of the organisations that support it. In his analysis of the PIC in America Kilgore has argued that “a key social change underlying the advance of mass incarceration has been an increasing respect for the absolute authority of the law and those involved in law enforcement.” This is a critical feature of the prison society. Prisons are the end of the road for many people in a journey which is instigated and enforced by those in authority. An attack on the prison regime must therefore incorporate an attack against the police, the courts and all features of the “justice” system. It is not enough to resist the physical manifestations of the PIC, constant vigilance and awareness is required in order to remember how systemic and far reaching it is.

For a continuous attack against “the absolute authority of the law and those involved in law enforcement!”

*Sometimes I think this whole world
Is one big prison yard.
Some of us are prisoners
The rest of us are guards.*
-Bob Dylan, George Jackson

Disclaimer

Within the war we are all waging with the forces of death, subtle and otherwise, conscious or not— I am not only a casualty, I am also a warrior.

– Audre Lorde

Firstly, some context. It is absolutely *not* my intention to attempt to speak for *all* women in jail. At the risk of further making my identity obvious, I am an able bodied, middle class, white, queer, cis-woman. English is my first language. I do not have any children or dependants. I am saying this because my experience of jail was wildly different from those facing multiple forms of oppression and discrimination inside. In many ways I had an easy ride compared to some of my mates inside. The support and solidarity I received was overwhelming (and at times frankly embarrassing!) and I will never, ever forget that or take that for granted.

During the drafting of *Bang Up and Smash* I read a collection of historical accounts of French Anarchists. I found it refreshing in it's reflection on (and inclusion of) half formed ideas, incomplete theories, and assorted quotations:

We approached this project not as a deformed remembrance of an idealised past that never was, nor as an exercise in nostalgia, but as an action: a campaign of guerilla historicism that has as its goal a paradigmatic hijacking and a sweeping overhaul of existing, received doctrines concerning anarchism. Retracing the elusive rhizomes of bona fide, non-diluted anar-

chist though necessitated some digging, but it was delightfully dirty business — for to sort through the remains of anarchism is also to sort the viable seed for future plantings.

– Ardent Press, *Disruptive Elements: The Extremes of French Anarchism*

The creation of this text has also been a “delightfully dirty business”. It has meant visiting some dark corners of my mind. The quotes used may seem unusual in their randomness, but I believe in a diversity of tactics in attacking the state, and I believe in using a diversity of expressions in analysing this process. The quotes included here do not mean a whole sale subscription to the beliefs of that author, nor are they an endorsement of that author’s wider political views and projects.

It is not enough to simply criticize other’s actions —anarchy is drowning in critical words and empty theories— one must act.

– Wild Fire, An Anarchist prison newsletter no.1

We know that the texts aren’t sufficient enough to replace the beauty of live communication, but on the other hand we understand that the condition of confinement does not allow many options beyond the written contribution of thoughts ideas and proposals appealing to anyone who believes he can get something out of them.

– Conspiracy of Cells of Fire Chaotic Variables, reprinted in Dark Nights #46

One of the biggest challenges in writing *Bang Up and Smash* was the selection of labels. How to articulate the situation inside jail without employing the rhetoric of the state, or damaging stereotypes? The language of law is the language of domination and I do not want to perpetuate that.

Certainly many people who never go to court are offensive people, and the greater someone’s social power the greater their opportunities to impose their offensiveness on others.

– Karlene Faith

We have not learned how to talk about prisons as institutions that collect and hide away the people whom society treats as it’s refuse.

– Angela Davis

I use the term “people in women’s prisons” to refer to those that the state has labelled “women” and then imprisoned in it’s gendered institutions. I do *not* assume that *all* the inmates of these miserable places identify as women. Nor do I assume that women’s prisons house *all* the prisoners within the system who identify as women, as there are many trans women held captive within men’s jails, Youth Offending Institutes, Immigration Removal Centres and so on.

Many articles concerning women’s prisons state in a strident shower of liberal outrage that “women” should not be in jail. Reformist organisations and criminologists claim that this incarceration destroys families, and lives, and that women have “complex needs” that jail does not address. Let me be clear: *no one* should be in jail. Prison is poison. Calls to end the imprisonment of women are dangerously simplistic and do not address the root cause of the problem. Women have “complex needs” but so do many other people, and the impacts of these needs not being met affects *everyone*, not just those who are held within the walls of women’s prisons.

The state reinforces gender stereotypes at every level within the prison system, from the clothes, and courses it offers to the the punishments it imposes on those who dare to act in ways which are not deemed suitable for women. The prison system both patronises and controls it’s captive populations, making token attempts to promote so-called “equalities” and through concepts such as “safer custody”. Like the locks and bars of prison architecture, discrimination enables the prison to segregate and alienate individuals inside it. People in women’s prisons are more than numbers to be processed. As Jean Weir has stated: “We must never forget that beyond the anecdotes and reminiscences prison consists of so many reinforced boxes that millions of people all over the world are locked up in day and night. The latter are hostages of the state and live at the mercy of a hierarchy of vile cowards 24 hours a day.”

During my time inside I conducted a few interviews, and some quotes from them are included throughout *Bang Up and Smash*. They are *not* meant to be representative of any particular group. They are merely a small collection of voices from a corner of the prison estate aimed at highlighting some of

the key issues that are commonly faced inside.

Political Prisoners?

Political prisoners occupy a crucial position in freedom movements around the world; their incarceration signals the terror of state repression, and their activism defines the principled, long-term commitments of our movements.

–Dan Berger, *The Struggle Within*

The label ‘political prisoner’ is not used in this publication because I reject it as a categorisation. It implies that some people inside have a supposedly higher moral dimension than others. In employing this hierarchy of status, others are therefore implicitly renounced or looked down upon as acting (or allegedly acting) for selfish (or self-serving) reasons.

The ‘Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme’, the categorisation (and re-categorisation) of prisoners and the language of “reform” and “rehabilitation” are all used to divide the prison population, and prisoners who get caught up in these processes do the dirty work of the state. The use of the label “political prisoner” is just another example of how pervasive and dangerous this discourse is. Some people in jail reject authority everyday, in order to survive, and thrive, despite the best efforts of the system. All these actions are political.

The next time we're shocked and outraged by an experience of being targeted, harassed, or otherwise mistreated by law enforcement or society in general, we should be stopping to recognize how much respect we owe to the people all around us who face much more than that every day of their lives.

Every prisoner is a political prisoner.

– Kelly Rose Pflug-Back, *These Burning Streets*

Statistics

Revolt needs everything: papers and books, arms and explosives, reflection and swearing, poison, daggers and arson. The only interesting question is how to combine them... Breaking with everything, especially with our ways of understanding the world.

– At Daggers Drawn with the Existent, its Defenders and its False Critics

The statistics here have been included to provide context and a framework for understanding the scale of the problem of women's prisons. I have tried to use the most reliable sources possible. All statistics should be viewed with suspicion, and many of the organisations included in this publication are promoting a reformist agenda. It is inevitable that there will be a tension between the broader political analysis of this project, and the desire to impart random (hopefully useful) bits of practical information for those engaging with life inside.

Audre Lorde famously stated: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." *Bang Up and Smash* contains some legal precedents and an overview of the "PSIs" (prison service instructions; the government guidelines for prisons) *not* because of my faith in the legal system, but because when you are in jail you need to utilise all that you can to challenge staff and this can mean using some random acts and figures. PSIs only apply to England and Wales. Prisons in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey do *not* have equivalents. The PSIs are all online, and all prison libraries have paper copies. Even if you are on "basic" or "seg" (segregation) you are entitled to access them.

Places

Immigration centres, juvenile justice facilities, county jails, military jails, holding rooms, court rooms, sheriff's offices, psychiatric institutes, along with other spaces build the vastness of the PIC's [Prison Industrial Complex] architecture.

– Stanley and Smith, Captive Genders

The government uses the phrase “prison estate” to describe all its prisons (including private jails). This “estate” is dependent on many additional institutions, though they are often run by the usual suspects, such as G4S, Serco and MTCnovo (who ran Abu Gharaib in Iraq). Immigration Removal Centres (aka Detention Centres or Immigration Prisons), Youth Offender Institutions (YOIs or “Juvie”), Secure Training Centres (also used for young people) and Closed Supervision Centres (CSCs) use many of the same tactics outlined here. However, it is beyond the scope of this text to go into the details of all the workings and procedures of these establishments. The focus here is women’s prisons in the ‘United Kingdom’. Many of the legal precedents cited can be applied across the prison estate, and some PSIs are the same in both “men’s” and “women’s” prisons, but it is not always the case.

England and Wales top the international league tables for dishing out childhood criminal records, and young people within these countries are much more likely to be incarcerated. In 2013/14 over 60,000 cautions and convictions were handed out to children in England and Wales. According to the Home Office, the number of people entering detention in the year ending June 2015 increased by 10% to 32,053 from 29,122 in the previous year. Many people held captive within these Immigration Prisons do not have any release date or legal representation. Like those in jail on IPPs (Imprisonment for Public Protection), the level of uncertainty surrounding the length of their stay within the prison system has a huge impact on peoples mental health.

The prison is not some building “over there” but a set of relationships that undermine rather than stabilise everyday lives everywhere.

– Ruth Gilmore, Golden Gulag

Contents

*B*ang Up and Smash is an overview of the processes/organisations those facing time in a women's prison will go through, including: the Criminal Justice System, Her Majesty's Prison Service (including private prisons) and the National Probation Service. As well as providing a detailed overview of these processes the publication will also contain resources available to those inside (and people supporting them).

Part One: Inside

The current system is definitely not “mis-guided”; it’s very successful in its actual goal: keeping oppressed communities in a perpetual state of chaos and agony.
– David Gilbert

Part One shows the ways in which the “perpetual state of chaos” of the prison administration imposes itself on those incarcerated. It will look at different aspects of discrimination including: gender and women's prisons (family life, trans/gender queer issues and sexuality) and racism and intersecting forms of oppression (including Foreign National Prisoners and Travellers).

The discourse around inmates of women's prisons is an ever expanding

field. Many academics and criminologists have discussed at length some of the ideological issues connected with these institutions. More women than ever are being given custodial sentences, and this is reflected in the proposed expansions of the women's prison estate (and 'approved premises' or bail hostels). There are 12 Women's Prisons in the UK.

The unruly woman is the undisciplined woman. She is a renegade from the disciplinary practices which would mould her as a gendered being. She is the defiant woman who rejects authority which would subjugate her and render her docile. She is the offensive woman who acts in her own interests.

– Karlene Faith Unruly Women

Many criminologists have highlighted the “associated social deprivations” (poverty, racism and so on) that impact on those in women's prisons. *Bang Up and Smash* argues that these issues impact on *all* prisoners and those supporting them. Trying to establish a “feminist criminology” is deeply problematic because it perpetuates the idea that “criminality” is a *measurable* condition, and this leads to the legitimization of repressive social control rather than examining social context.

In mainstream culture, “women prisoners” are presented as promiscuous, uncaring mothers and unfaithful partners. The pervasiveness of this stereotype means that people who are perceived as women by the state are punished for not complying with state norms, and for behaving in a traditionally unmotherly or unfeminine way. Historically, the construct of the “reasonable person” in English law is a white, able bodied, middle class male. This is a clear example of how claims that women are ‘disadvantaged’ by the prison system are overly simplistic, and ignore the intersectional nature of many forms of oppression. The PIC is inherently racist and an attack on the working class. It relies on discrimination to control and separate, encouraging competition and suspicion. These quotes from mates inside show this process.....

“Issues around racism are much more acute in jail because you are in a small environment where you cannot escape it. Outside you can Walk away.”

“Racism manifests itself within prison in different ways. Inmates will use verbal, whilst from officers it’s more about general attitude. The staff aren’t directly racist, but they do take the racists side by not putting a stop to it. If you don’t act you are part of it. There is a difference between disagreeing and saying “no you cannot do this”.

“There is a common misconception that loss of freedom equals loss of rights. But we Travellers don’t have rights even when on road. Therefore we don’t question the prison system as much as other people because we aren’t used to having the rights many take for granted in the first place.”

Part One of *Bang Up and Smash* highlights issues connected to gender and drug use, especially in relation to ‘Spice’ and New Psychoactive Substances. A report published by Inside Time in 2016 claimed that 14% of men and women in jail were sentenced for so-called “drug offences.” According to the House of Commons: “almost half the prison population have an addiction to drugs.”

Banged up 23 hours a day in a large toilet with someone you have never met before— who wouldn’t want a mind-altering substance?
– Former prison governor, quoted in Inside Time

Part One also outlines the many ways the prison system attempts to manufacture obedience; through discipline, administration and organisational structures, psychologically invasive tactics such as “rehabilitation” and “therapeutic programmes”, and compulsory programmes (ie. work and education). *Bang Up and Smash* provides examples from a wide range of the interventions the prison enforces, and argues that they *all* contribute to the culture of self-policing and conformity that the system relies on to control it’s captive population. My mate who lived on a residential detox unit described one of these programmes...

“There is a *lot* of bitching and shit stirring. You are encouraged as part of your treatment to grass on each other (“being honest”) this creates people exaggerating or entirely making up stuff-not just claiming people using but also “inappropriate behaviour” like being too loud, trying to use gym, associating with individuals off the unit. All behaviours/coping strate-

gies get lumped together under the umbrella of “addictive behaviour”, even if they are positive, like trying to do exercise.”

As part of the overview of life inside, part one also investigates the legal structures related to the prison regime and the evolution of disciplinary procedures employed by the PIC. The ‘Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme’ was introduced in 1995. The IEP scheme appeals to a liberal approach to dealing with “female offenders” and perpetuates a middle-class view of criminality. Individual self-governance is promoted, and women are perceived not as victims but agents in their own “rehabilitation”. This disproportionately punishes women who are not middle class, and who do not wish (or who are unable) to conform with the accepted expressions and methodologies for addressing their “offending behaviour”. Solidarity to those resisting their poxy “privileges”! (especially the author of the quote below....love ya! :-)

“I think to myself: whatever I want is outside prison. Nothing I want is in here in this situation. So if they want my telly, let them take it. I don’t care.... Most people crack and grass after seven days...Go to bed at night time with a clear conscience, know that you have done all that you can in that day. Don’t dwell on the stuff outside your control. Ignore staff and their silly games and attitudes. Most of all: laugh and smile.”

In 2016, David Cameron promised a so-called “rehabilitation revolution”. Governors were to be given greater autonomy over budgets, prisoners were to be not seen as “liabilities to be managed” but “assets to be harnessed”. *Bang Up and Smash* argues that attempts to “harness” prisoners are a continuation of a long standing tradition of coercion within the system, one of the main ways in which the prison regime seeks to control its inhabitants, and a key feature of the expansion of the PIC.

The prison itself was born from early reformers’ calls to replace corporal and capital punishment with the extended loss of liberty. Imprisonment, reformers argued, would provide the opportunity for those convicted of crimes to reform themselves through hard work, silence and solitude.

– Victoria Law

In Foucault's influential analysis of punishment; prisons are an example of "juridico-economic and technico-disciplinary" procedures; where the traditional use of force and violence is replaced by the "gentle efficiency of total surveillance". The individual may never really know why they are the subject of the disciplinary procedure; or where it has come from. Reform is part of this system, disguised as positivity and efficiency.

The impact of these "juridico-economic and technico-disciplinary" procedures is most keenly felt upon the thousands of long term prisoners who do not have release dates and who are often swallowed up by the system, especially if they reject the demands the state puts upon them in order to be released. *Bang Up and Smash* includes a detailed overview of the different types of indeterminate sentences in the UK (mainly Lifers and IPP prisoners) and interviews with prisoners serving them. All prisoners subject to Life imprisonment or IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) are now, for the purposes of their management, classed as indeterminate sentence prisoners (ISPs). ISP people have no automatic right to be released. They are given a "tariff" which is the minimum term they will serve, then they can start the process of applying for release.

"We can't plan for the future because we don't know where we will be. Not only that but even when we are released we still have to do a minimum on licence, such as 10 or more years. I got a four year tariff on my IPP sentence for arson. I don't know why there's a tariff because everyone goes over."

There are currently 11,505 ISPs. This is 16% of the total prison population. 7,372 are Lifers and 4,133 are IPP. 81% of IPP prisoners are held over tariff, by an average length of 44 months (but many for considerably longer). Even IPP prisoners who manage to "earn" their release can face the *rest of their lives* on licence. These quotes, collected from my mates inside with me show the psychological impact an IPP sentence has.

"The emotional process of preparing for parole is hard. You have to be really careful not to get any negative IEP's or put on basic. I have to be really careful of what my mates are doing and my partner because it has an impact on me. My girlfriend was really naughty when we got together, now

she finds it hard to be good.”

“I have support from my family, on visits and so on. Girls in here help too. There are a few women in this jail who are IPP. A lot of my friends are Lifers. Last year I had a two year parole knock-backs and a lot of psychological reports. This was tough. You have to prepare a lot of reports as an IPP: for OMU, for psychologists.”

*Stacked life upon life, year upon year,
Rising upwards in four tiers,
Landings and centre like a giant clock wheel,
Stands the warehouse of lost years.*
– Mark D Lawless, Ode to Strangeways

Work and education are two of the main ways in which all prisoners are controlled and distracted. The average wage for a prisoner in 2016 was approximately £10 per week. As Foucault has argued: “the labour by which the convict contributes to his own needs turns the thief into a docile worker.” *Bang Up and Smash* looks at the historical context of these forms of discipline, the companies who profit from them, and gives practical suggestions and legal information for those engaging with prison labour.

*Prison work is slavish work....The prisoner may learn a handicraft,
but he will never learn to love his work. In most instances he will learn to
hate it.*
– Peter Kropotkin, 1887

Part One also contains an overview of the practicalities of “everyday life” inside including: arrival in jail (reception/induction), physical health and impairments, the ageing prison population, drugs, mail and visits, canteen and legal information. It will finish with an overview of earned “freedoms” such as Home Detention Curfew (“Tag”), Open Prisons and Release On Temporary Licence (ROTL).

*We cannot let the illusion of freedom
Endow us with a false sense of security as*

*We walk the streets
The academies and the super cops
Struggling to define institutionalised racism
As we continue to die in it's custody*
– Benjamin Zephaniah, *The Death of Stephen Lawrence*

Part Two: On Road

Part two gives an overview of life on licence (“in the community”), including information on the National Probation Service, release and recall, licence conditions, practical support and Approved Premises (bail hostels). It gives examples of the psychological and legal processes the state uses in an attempt to obtain information and control those on licence, specifically those relating to “extremism” and anti-terrorism legislation . It also shows how the tactics and technologies the state uses inside jail get replicated and refined outside the jail during this period of “supervision” and the impact these processes can have on an individuals mental health.

Without rigorous self-reflection about your thoughts, emotions and actions you cannot be certain that you will still think and act rationally — something you took for granted before.
– Klaus Viehmann, *Prison Round Trip*

Being on licence gets under your skin, because without the visible structure of the jail to fight against it can be easy to turn on yourself. I would never, ever accept a licence again. Everyday felt like a compromise. To quote the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire: “People are not determined by the conditions in which they live (for example, imprisonment) but what really characterises them are the choices they make.” I refused to engage with their “privileges” inside. However, I *did* accept the bureaucratic noose of my licence in order to build bridges with my family. This was *really* difficult, but in every moment they sought to control me, the pain that I felt condensed into rage.

The massive increase in the use of community supervision orders as a form of social control has created a veritable ghetto of marginalised people in poorer communities who exist constantly in the shadows of

imprisonment and the omnipotent power of their supervising officers.

– John Bowden

The use of ‘Approved Premises’ (APs) by probation is a clear example of how supervising officers and hostel staff flex and exert their power in attempts to control individuals residing within them. APs are critically analysed in *Bang Up and Smash* and placed in a historical context. There are 101 APs (bail hostels) in the whole of England and Wales (four in Wales). Out of this 101, only six are for women. The total capacity is around 2,200 beds (of which 112 are for women).

Using my licence restrictions as a case study, *Bang Up and Smash* shows the most common forms of restriction and control used by the state in relation to anarchist prisoners. For obvious security and legal reasons, I will not outline specific ways to avoid these forms of discipline/recall, but the text does provide an overview of ways to minimise the impact the restrictions can have on your mental health. Part Two also shows the affect the fear or dread of recall can have on those on licence, how probation use this as a method of control, and also the impact that the states dependency on “recall” has had on overcrowding in the prison estate. According to the Howard League for Penal Reform, over the last 20 years, the number of prisoners recalled has increased by 4,300%. Between September 2015-2016 22,094 people were recalled, including 7,798 for “failing to keep in touch”. Recall is used indiscriminately and excessively. As well as using recall, the state has recently developed a period of “post-sentence supervision” which is separate from a time on licence. Part Two gives an overview of the administrative and legal structures which provide the framework for these processes.

Part Two of *Bang Up and Smash* outlines the emotions that arise when you finish your sentence (whether that be on licence or in custody) and return home. It provides some practical information for prisoners (and those supporting them) on this issue, and highlights the complexities (and depth) of some of the ways in which an individual responds to prolonged periods of repression. Part Two will give a brutally honest analysis of this process, but also provides some examples of hope, resilience and solidarity.

Conclusions

If you can do prison, you can do not being in prison. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves of that...It might suck, I might not like it, but if I'm strong enough to survive the worst that my enemies can throw at me, I'm strong enough to survive life.
– Jeff Luers, *After Prison*

Prison wasn't 'the best days of my life'. But, when a number of very particular human beings who are forced to cohabit against their will make it to come together on the basis of this common denominator, and simply be themselves for a moment with their exquisite idiosyncrasies, a strange alchemy occurs that transcends all walls and becomes the moment of freedom, and a threat to the status quo of the prison.
– Jean Weir, *Tame Words from a Wild Heart*

I read a famous Bangladeshi proverb which states: “You go into prison fast. You come out slowly”. To me this saying encapsulates the insidious creeping nature of life under “supervision”. But even though I am “coming out slowly”, I am not sorry that I have been to jail. It has only condensed my desire to attack it, and made every moment of this random life of mine feel more precious.

*I woke up this morning, you know?
And the sun was shining and everything was nice
and I thought...this is going to be one terrific day, so you better live it up,
boy..... because tomorrow, maybe, you'll be gone.*
– James Dean, *Rebel Without A Cause*

One of the aims of this text was to show the multiple forms of oppression that exert themselves upon prisoners at any one time. I also wanted to highlight the many factors in social exclusion: poverty, negative experiences of education, abuse, violence, sexual abuse, being in care, drug/alcohol issues, homelessness/inadequate housing, sexual exploitation, racism and health. These factors all interconnect and are examples of why the PIC and CJS must be attacked and abolished. I hope that *Bang Up and Smash* addresses the aims it outlines and welcome any critiques of it. As stated in the introduction, it is an attempt at the beginnings of a dialogue, and I hope it at least provides some practical information for those contemplating life inside.

Abolition is not some distant future but something we create in every moment when we say no to the traps of empire and yes to the nourishing possibilities dreamed of and practised by our ancestors and friends... Abolition is the practice of transformation in the here and now and the ever after...It is to begin speaking what we have not yet had the words to wish for.

– Bassichis, Lee and Spade, *Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got*

In the relentless power struggle between the state and those who refuse to conform to its violent logic and domination, there is no space for complacency or reform. My experience of the prison system has compounded my rage, and that the restrictions the state placed upon me are a declaration of war.

We desire to incriminate social neutrality and to constantly create a polarized condition which will force everyone to pick sides and lay out the dilemma: being an accomplice of authority or being with the law of rebellion.

There are no middle ground solutions, no intermediate states. Neutrality must die because we have a war.

– Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, *Chaotic Variables: A Theoretical Contribution in Proposal for an Informal Anarchist Platform*

When an individual is on licence they are exiled from their comrades, their loved ones, and often their home. The war that CCF have outlined can eat you up when you are on licence. The combination of isolation, a narrowing

of the forms of expression available to you, and the relentless interrogation of the state can suffocate.

My advice to anyone on licence would be, get away with what you can, ask for as little as possible, and never, ever lose sight of who your enemy is. Being on licence can feel like a gross sell-out, a compliance, and a dilution of your political beliefs. But it is possible to use this time as a way to gather strength and access resources. They are *not* omnipotent and there are always *cracks* to be exploited in the system. Robert King famously said “I was in prison but it was not in me” and it is vital to remember this everyday when you are on licence.

*Prison is the only place where power is manifested in its naked state,
in its most excessive force, and where it is justified as moral force...
it's practice can be totally formulated within the framework of morality.
Its brutal tyranny consequently appears as the serene domination of Good
over Evil, or order over disorder.*
– Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Even at it's most “excessive” the force of the state can be attacked and there is always the capacity for rebellion and subversion. The aim of probation is to try to break down someone's “offending behaviour” in order to remodel them as more acceptable individuals who will conform to legally acceptable practices. If an someone has refused to comply in jail, probation and licence conditions give the state a whole new tool kit of ways to try and break the individual and remodel them.

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*
– Dylan Thomas, *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*

One of my Probation Officers used to say “what resists persists”. This is a commonly used approach by probation, a way to try to soften an individuals attitudes towards the system by giving them a slightly longer rope by which to hang themselves. Embrace, nurture, and strengthen resistance to this, especially when they are attempting to lure you in with promises of

more relaxed conditions, or a slightly bigger cage. I never, ever want to lose the rage that I have against the system, and the contempt I feel for those who are part of it.

One thing prisons taught me is to be very strong, and that I am a worthwhile person. Nobody likes to have their freedom taken away from them, but all the abuse and everything they threw at me— it just made me stronger each time.
– Ex-prisoner 1988

We cannot win and winning is not our intention. We do what we have to do, all we can do, is keep at them until it becomes unbearable. To provoke them, and make them mad.
– Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*

Fire to the prisons! Solidarity, love and rage.....more to come :-) ASBO X

Words I never want to hear...

Probation, rehabilitation, education, recommendation, adjudication, consideration, legislation, documentation, intervention, collaboration, protection, condition, application (your app is different from my app).

Regime, pro-social, scenario, risk, management, community, dialogue, meaningful, development, safety, initiative, treatment, safeguarding, compliance, enabling, non-violent, minimising, duty of care, restraint, constructive, productive, offending behaviour, psychological profile, extremist, anti-terrorism, secure/security, approved/approval, justice, meaningful, opportunity, curfew.

Digital resources

This is an edited version of the resources section in *Bang Up and Smash*, which contains a much more comprehensive overview, especially for prison related support organisations in the UK and printed literature relating to the prison system/prison industrial complex.

.Prisoners Advice Service - Registered charity offering free legal advice and support to adult prisoners in England and Wales.

<http://www.prisonersadvice.org.uk>

.325 - Anarchist / anti-capitalist information clearing house and DIY media network for social war. <http://325.nostate.net/>

.Bristol Anarchist Black Cross Prisoner solidarity, letter writing and publications. www.bristolabc.wordpress.com

.Smash IPP - Campaigning for the release of prisoners who are still in jail under the IPP laws. <https://smashipp.noflag.org.uk>, <https://smashipp.wordpress.com>

.Bent Bars - Bent Bars Project provide additional support to LGBT prisoners and publish newsletters. bentbarsproject.org

.Act for Freedom Now - News of insurrection and resistance from around the globe. <http://actforfree.nostate.net/>

.Empty Cages Collective - People who have been imprisoned/engaged in prison-related struggle. prisonabolition.org

.Community Action Against Prison Expansion (CAPE) - Grassroots coalition of groups fighting prison expansion. <http://www.cape-campaign.org/>

.The Abolition Tool-kit - Practical ideas for prison abolition and community organising. <http://criticalresistance.org/resources/the-abolitionist-toolkit/>

.Instead of Prisons Handbook: A Toolkit for Abolitionists
www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/instead_of_prisons/

.The Incarcerated Worker - IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) union for prisoners and campaigning on wage-slavery. <https://iwoc.noblogs.org/>

.Critical Resistance - International movement to end the PIC by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. <http://criticalresistance.org>

Big up to everyone who has supported me this last while. I am so lucky to have such solid friends, comrades and family. You know who you are.

This text is dedicated to all those resisting and rejecting authority inside and out.



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