WRITING OUT (FROM) PRISONS: CRITICAL LITERACY, PRISON ABOLITION,

AND A QUEER(ED) PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

By

MICHAEL GEORGE SUTCLIFFE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of English

MAY 2015

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of MICHAEL GEORGE SUTCLIFFE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

_____
Wendy Olson, Ph.D., Chair

_____
John Streamas, Ph.D.

_____
Kristin Arola, Ph.D.

WRITING OUT (FROM) PRISONS: CRITICAL LITERACY, PRISON ABOLITION,

AND A QUEER(ED) PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

Abstract

by Michael George Sutcliffe, Ph.D.
Washington State University
May 2015

Chair: Wendy Olson

This dissertation will demonstrate how normative discourse and neoliberal ideology have contributed to the construction and maintenance of a prison literacy complex. Justice has been swept out of the prison system in favor of a rhetorical apparatus of hegemony and capitalism, while education, particularly the acquisition of specific literacies, has been positioned as the solution to crime and the means of securing social mobility. I contend that while most writing, literacy, and arts programs do help a handful of current prisoners to better deal with their situations, they do little to challenge the systems of distribution, surveillance, and control that incarcerate millions, and, in some cases, educational programs reinforce these mechanisms. By assuming deficits in the prisoner and positing literacy as remediation or as therapy, these programs mask systemic privilege and stratification as (an exigency of) crime. Teaching prisoners to counter racist exclusion by accepting their plight or changing their behavior perpetuates the neoliberal apparatus of mass incarceration.

By rhetorically analyzing two interconnected community literacy programs in the Pacific Northwest, this project will demonstrate how, through an ideological reframing, literacy programs can "queer" their pedagogy to interrupt the ideologies necessary to the maintenance of the prison industrial complex. The counter-hegemonic memories of marginalized communities

can reveal inconsistencies and instabilities in popular "truths." By bringing excluded, silenced

voices out from behind bars, critical, community literacy efforts can effect a queer(ed), public

pedagogy to inspire the widespread, historicized criticism necessary for sustainable change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: THE PRISON LITERACY COMPLEX

The outer door slams with a tremendous, loud bang. It echoes. The inner door slides open then closed on tracks that look like they were made to move freight. The first thing that hits you is the cold. Regardless of the temperature outside the security doors, the air inside is frigid. Humming, clattering air conditioning units maintain a continuous draft and constant noise. A jumble of cacophonous but barely intelligible voices resonate in the sterile but dingy space. Grey floor tiles, painted beige concrete walls, and thick glass meshed with steel wire radiate a harshness that beats the cold into the senses. Comprehension sinks in that you can't leave, maybe for the first time in your life, but before you can look around or reconsider your decision to come to class today, bolts slide shut with a loud clack sealing the heavy door in place. Even before the echoing of the automatic locks stop reverberating down the hall, a tinny, mechanized voice directs you along the outside of a hexagonal wall covered in heavily tinted glass. You move along a walkway painted with colored lines that intersect at breaks marked with numbers and arrows: A2 this way, B2 over there, C4 straight ahead, Court down the hall. A flickering reflection betrays the presence of a living person behind a window in the hex-wall, but the one-way glass makes it impossible to distinguish human features; there is little about this place that seems human, or humane.

That is, until the next door opens and people shuffle out. Black and brown men shuffle into the hall in orange plastic flip-flops with their feet shackled with heavy chains and their wrists cuffed behind their backs. The expensive, modern technology of the overhead security cameras, alarm systems, fire sprinklers, and loudspeakers contrasts sharply with the millennia-old technologies of chain and lock. Red and orange jumpsuits are followed by another door

locking in place, another opening, and another group filing into the hall then out through another door. This group is wearing blue and they have their hands and feet free. Both groups are segregated by gender. The jail doesn't allow men and women together, although in each group, it's clear that not everyone fits into these narrow categories. Around one more side of the hexagon and the service "window" is in sight; a white guy in his twenties sits looking bored behind a grid of wire and thick safety glass. Like some sort of perverse bank-teller, he mumbles a greeting to you and passes an emergency "panic button" through the metal tray that dips under the grated window, and he points you towards yet another steel door. You clip the button to your pocket, no belts or jacket-pockets allowed in here, and walk to your door.

The door and slanted wall around it are designed to allow a view of the entire room, and you can see the tables and chairs haphazardly strewn about the space. An air hockey table – with no puck or paddles – sits at the far end below thick glass windows that lead to another hexagon and another set of lined, marked, supervised walkways. Along the wall, two bookshelves hold a meager stock of coverless romance novels and pocket bibles donated by various churches. Graffiti, usually messages of love or solidarity, is scratched or penciled on every surface. The guard from the bank window steps out of his hexagon, opens the door to your room, and props it open with a chair. "About 5 minutes," he grumbles and he trudges off to gather participants as though you've asked him to do a chore. Sometimes the guards are like this, and other times they are friendly and genial, but they are rarely so with their residents. As the guard comes back with a group of eager, boisterous prisoners, he snaps at them and demands obedience. You glance at your watch; there are no clocks or windows here. Once everyone is in, the guard closes and locks the door. Another slam and another clack. Another reminder that this is a different world. Relief washes over you as you remember that in an hour or two, you get to leave. Your knapsack

of privileges is strikingly self evident, but, tragically, albeit strategically, that evidence is locked up in here.

In May 2011, the United State Supreme Court demanded the state of California release 30,000 prisoners because, as Justice Kennedy explained, "the medical and mental health care provided by California's prisons has fallen short of minimum constitutional requirements and has failed to meet prisoners' basic health needs" (Hing). The massive expansion of incarceration in the last four decades has left conditions in California's prisons dangerous and unhealthy, and other prisons across the country are not far behind. While there are disagreements over what possible solutions might be available, Justice Kennedy explained that the situation has become so critical that we can no longer wait for reform measures to take effect as "short term gains in the provision of care have been eroded by the long-term effects of severe and pervasive overcrowding" (Hing). California simply does not have the material and economic resources to maintain the health and safety standards required by Federal law.

California has seen overcrowding in its prisons and jails as a persistent and growing problem. Since the passage of 3-strikes legislation in 1994 and similar "tough on crime" measures, rates of incarceration have skyrocketed. According to a report compiled by the Huffington Post, California's prison population has increased "eight times faster than the size of the overall population" (Sankin). While the number of people living in the state has fluctuated with periods of immigration and exodus, the state's prison population has grown exponentially. California's budget has increased accordingly. According to the report, "spending on California's prisons and associated correctional programs has skyrocketed by 436 percent" since 1980 (Sankin). California now competes with Texas and Louisiana to lead the nation in prison

spending despite its increasingly difficult financial situation. California's other institutions are suffering dramatic cuts as a result.

In 2003, at the height of California's economic crisis, the legislature proposed budget cuts of $11 billion from K-12 education and $239 million from public universities while increasing prison spending by $40 million and moving forward with plans to build a new $595 million prison (Anand). This increase was the only area of spending slated for increase on the 2003-04 budget. Rather than recognizing the "direct relationship between how much money the Golden State spends on prisons and how much it spends on higher education," California's voters have simply tried to outspend the prison population explosion (Sankin). As more people are arrested and incarcerated, voters perceive a need for increased policing and prison construction and allocate money accordingly. Consequently, California is by no means the only state to have systematized the incarceration of its citizens. State governments across the country have followed California's lead. Since the passage of the Rockefeller drug laws in 1973, the United States has been in the business of incarceration.

Because of the massive growth of prisons and the immense economic impact incarceration and prison building has had upon communities, especially communities of color and queer communities, Angela Y. Davis coined the term "Prison Industrial Complex" in a 1997 speech, and uses it to refer not only to the physical prisons that house detainees but also to the other physical structures like jails, work centers, courtrooms, police stations, and administrative buildings and to the laws, ordinances, regulations as well as the police, guards, lawyers, and politicians that are involved (Prison Industrial). Further, as explained by Critical Resistance writer Rachel Herzing, "'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 what are, in actuality, economic, social, and political problems"
(Herzing). The prison industrial complex maintains current systems of power by responding to
social and economic instability (i.e. economic, racial, gender inequities) with policing and
detention and with neoliberal economic policies that distribute resources and agency according to
economic status. Though the term Prison Industrial Complex is used less widely than phrases
like "criminal justice system," it more accurately depicts massive expanse of the systems,
structures, and ideologies that strip justice from society.

As explained in a later chapter, the prison is the enforcement wing of a perverted sort of
neoliberal checks-and-balances. David Harvey describes neoliberalism as "a theory of political
economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating
individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by
strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Neoliberalism 2). The role of the
neoliberal state is to create institutional (and ideological) frameworks to protect private property
rights rather than public access and equity. State intervention should, according to the neoliberal
world-view, never countermand market signals and should only occur when necessary to
deregulate and privatize new markets, such as recent efforts to privatize water for corporate retail
bottling or land for mining and timber sales. The prison reinforces market primacy and the
economic advantage of the wealthy by physically removing resistant people from society and
preventing them from sharing testimony that could point to contradictions in the economic status
quo. Rather than a poverty class disenfranchised by the state, the criminal legal system protects
neoliberalism by legislating their exclusion as poorly made choice.

While there is some disagreement about the exact number of Americans behind bars at
any given moment, Tara Herivel and Paul Wright reported over two million American men

11

incarcerated in state prisons in 2003, and explained that over half of these men were Black and many were illiterate by GED standards (Herivel 2). A decade later, Wagner and Sakala reported that 2.4 million adults were being held in U.S. federal and state prison facilities at the time of their report in 2014, and several million more were under custodial supervision. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 688,000 people are released from prisons each year and almost 12 million people cycle through local jails annually. At any given time, approximately 722,000 people are being held in local jails and detention centers.

As states rush to meet congressional mandates to decrease prison populations, prisoners are moved from state prisons to county jails swelling resident populations at facilities designed for transient, short-term use. While designed for temporary detention, sorting, and transfer processing, county jails have become the long-term home for many prisoners. Some are held in jails because they are unable to make bail and are awaiting trial; however, an increasing number are transfers back from over-crowded state prisons or have been deferred to serve sentences locally instead of being sent to prison. Because of their designation as temporary holding facilities, jails are not generally equipped to support long term health much less rehabilitation. For example, few jails offer even the meager GED programming or chemical dependency treatment provided in prisons. Jails do generally have emergency medical staff but rarely have provisions for routine medical care. Overcrowding also leads to shortages of resources like food, clothing, and bedding often making conditions worse in local jails than in state and federal prisons.

The distribution of arrests, detentions, and incarcerations in the United States is far from being representational of the nation's demographics. Black Americans make up 48.2% of the adult prison population while comprising 12.7% of the U.S. population; a Black man in the

United States has a 32% chance of serving prison time during his life; and two-thirds of the adult prison population in the United States is comprised of people of color (Corrupting). The demographics of the prison in the United States differ dramatically from the demographics of our cities and states. While these numbers have not always been this way, they appear to be stabilizing in a skewed but consistent distribution. According to data tabulated from the 2000 and 2010 US censuses, a Black man born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of being imprisoned during his life and a Latino born the same year has a 1 in 6 chance; 2.3 of every 100 is imprisoned among Black men while less than 1 of every 200 White men (Composite).

While women historically have comprised a smaller population in the criminal legal system, this status, unlike the racialized distribution of arrests, is changing. In 2009, women comprised approximately 7% of the population of U.S. state and federal prisons; however, "between 1990 and 2000, the number of women in prison rose 108%, from 44,065 to 93,234. The male prison population grew only 77% during the same time period" (Law 1). Women now represent the fastest growing single demographic among incarcerated people. Similar to the male population, women of color have been incarcerated at much higher rates than white women and make up much of the increased rate of arrest and imprisonment. While researchers disagree on the primary source of the increase, most cite decreases in available employment or rate of pay, decreasing access to education, and a corresponding need to provide for children. During the years marked by significant rate increases, approximately 30% of women arrested were receiving public economic assistance prior to arrest, only 40% of those arrested completed high school or earned a GED, and over 65% identified as mothers of children under age 18 (2). A Stanford Medical School study found the corresponding effect on communities and families to be devastating and significantly more impacting than when men are removed: "when men go to

prison, potential role models are lost. When women go to prison, families most often fall apart" (Understanding). The incarceration of women most often means the destruction of the family unit.

Neoliberal economic and social policies financed by the human suffering of incarceration are not contained to adults. Children in the United States, particularly queer youth and young people of color, are increasingly being subjected to the same suspicion and scrutiny as their parents and adult relatives. Police are a regular sight at public schools, and the media has picked up on the addition playing a pivotal role in adding kids to the mythology of who and what we understand to be "criminal." Popular TV crime dramas like Law and Order, Criminal Minds, Oz, and Orange is the New Black coalesce with news reports to create and amplify feelings of fear and vulnerability, and these feelings are frequently directed towards children. As one CNN television special labeled them, "Killers in our Midst." Capitalizing on shocking and sensationalized messages and images pads media conglomerate profit margins and adds fuel to the fire of panic and fear in what Henry A. Giroux calls "a profound moral and political contradiction." He says, "The notion that children should be treated as a crucial social resource and represent for any healthy society important ethical and political considerations about the quality of public life, the allocation of social provisions, and the role of the state as a guardian of public interests, appears to be lost" (Critical 93). Rather than representing a robust public life and the promise of hope and future, youth in the United States are most often seen as a threat of looming crime that must needs be sorted and contained. Youth, tragically, now serve as a touchstone for the depth of neoliberalism's depravity and the breadth of its wreckage.

Outside prison walls, the results of mass incarceration are no less devastating as communities of color have been stripped of working age men and repopulated with a criminal

class unable to gain or hold legal employment. Neoliberal economic policies have simultaneously disappeared solvent employment and shredded state support services through deregulation, the dismantling of unions, and a progressive weakening of corporate restraints. Women are most often left to tend to children and to pick of pieces of broken communities with little healthcare or mental health support available. Under enormous stress, women often turn to black market remedies (drugs) as both self-administered medication and a source of income. In a 2008 study of women detained for methamphetamine related charges in Portland Oregon, Strauss and Falkin found that while women did recognize the complications brought to their lives by meth use, most, nevertheless, "considered the experience of Methamphetamine production or distribution a positive one" (81). They felt their lives were easier economically and socially because of it. With jobs inconsistently providing subsistence wages, their involvement in dealing or making Meth "allowed the women to support their drug use and to make the money they needed for both essentials and extras" (92). Strauss and Falkin concluded that for recovery programs to be successful, they must not only highlight the long term impacts of meth use and the benefits of abstinence, but they must also provide women with adequate options for economic and mental health support of themselves and their families. Drug use, in this light, is not a choice or a moral failing but rather an economic solution for those with very few options.

The process of legislating criminality perpetuates control and maintains the prison as a robust sorting mechanism. The police and the courts target not only specific actions but also specific groups of people while maintaining a myth of criminality as a violation of a shared, communal morality. As John Irwin explains, criminality is a mechanism by which to sort according to cultural capital: "The difference between crimes is not seriousness or prevalence; it is offensiveness, which is determined by social status and context" (17). Essentially, laws are

discursive technologies employed to punish people for being offensively out of place. These "instruments," as Michel Foucault calls them, "render visible, record, differentiate and compare" both before and after intake into the criminal legal system (Discipline 208). Prisoners are classified into a sub-labor "criminal" class in ways that "serve only to manufacture new criminals and to drive existing criminals even deeper into criminality" (Prison 40). Former laborers are removed from the workforce and (permanently) reclassed as unemployable criminals. Criminality, then, is both the means by which people are sorted (primarily along class lines) for incarceration and the result of incarceration. Incarceration is not simply a set of institutions, laws, and facilities, but is also "a state of mind" (Corrupting).

Education is believed by most to be a panacea for crime. Politicians, parents, teachers, and most students believe that a "good education" is a pass or "meal ticket" to success and economic independence. Unlocking economic opportunity and lifting oneself upward from historically disadvantaged social stature is believed to be achieved through schooling and hard work. Underlying the putative American Dream ideology is a belief in meritocracy and the equal opportunities that reward individual efforts. The evidence of material realities such as unequal distributions of wealth, property, health, and so on, is off-set by an ideological investment in the idea that equality secures the opportunity to pursue these goods. As Jennifer Hochschild explains, "so long as we live in a democratic capitalist society – that is, so long as we maintain the formal promise of political and social equality while encouraging the practice of economic inequality – we need the idea of equal opportunity to bridge that otherwise unacceptable condition" (8). In America, equality is understood to mean opportunity, and poverty and crime evidence individual inadequacies or disinterest rather than an unequal system of distribution or

access. Revoking the public's support of incarceration means re-teaching some very entrenched beliefs.

Because the lives of prisoners offer painfully tragic evidence of dehumanization, most advocates seek quick solutions to crises, and rightfully so. As a result, however, most media coverage and policy negotiation address these concerns through a largely unchallenged ideological framework of prison reform. Reformers accept incarceration as a generally sound concept that has just been poorly executed or overtaxed. They seem to believe that the criminal legal system is merely "broken" and in need of repair. As a result, suggested policy revisions improve specific conditions but without substantive change to the sorting, or othering, or the numbers of prisoners. Further, the culmination of institutions ideologically aligned in support of isolating and segregating "offenders" lends tacit support and recursive ideological maintenance in a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Gramsci wrote, "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (Notebooks 350). Incarceration is not simply a product of legislation, but it is a product of a culture of incarceration that is taught across many contexts. Churches, families, schools, media, and more make us complicit in the propagation of criminality, yet they simultaneously posit it as a simple, natural reaction to threats and deviance. This oversimplification masks or completely effaces the systemic from media analyses, from community memory, and, as a result, from legislative sessions and voter ballots. When shown only the arrest report of an incarcerated person of color, white voters largely (dis)miss the historical roots of racism and disenfranchisement and see only a behavior.

However, the testimony of those most intimately aware of economic and social marginalization is suppressed by legislation and by physical segregation, and educators who work directly with prisoner populations seem to be lost directing their attention only inward.

Most descriptions of teaching and learning in incarcerated spaces go something like this: writers describe the physical conditions; the emotions in the room; the lack of funding and materials; the prison politics between inmates and guards, guards and teachers, inmates and teachers, or inmates and inmates; or the lack of interest from administrators, colleagues, and even community members who respond to anecdotes about teaching in prison with comments like "why waste your time on *them*?" or "why do *they* get schooling when *I* have to pay for it?" Narratives by those working behind bars remain somewhat constrained to descriptions of space, process, or states of being. In her foreword to a special prison-literacies issue of *Reflections*, Tobi Jacobi says that "impulses to communicate the material challenges and realities of accessing and teaching incarcerated students permeate much of the available scholarship on prison literacy and education" (1). Writers write about the things that surprise them or will surprise their readers. They write about the pain their students feel, the boredom they express, or the difficulty of teaching and learning inside. Most who teach in or around prisons or who work with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated writers comment on the injustices in our nation's prisons and jails, but they seem to situate their narratives around past and future behaviors of the prisoners, the oversight of current or past administrators, or the current conditions of the facility itself. Even those who do write about the obvious racism and privileging of the legal system, write more about its effect on and in the classroom than as a call for revolution or even reform.

Even when community literacy programs move inside with the intent of creating change, they almost always assume a mantle of instruction and, usually, remediation. Prisoners may be *taught* to write poems or short pieces of creative fiction that are of cultural and therapeutic value but are of little use for political-social activism against the dominant legal-political frame. Other programs teach participating prisoners vocational writing, or writing for specific trades and

purposes as forms of functional literacy; however, as Kirk Branch explains, "the pedagogic discourse of vocational education cannot be understood apart from the economic interests it serves, apart, that is, from its various sponsors" (95). The systems of economic distribution that maintain a compliant working class and an elite bourgeoisie are maintained by the discourses taught through programs that, ultimately, do little more than make workers, or prisoners, more comfortable with where and who they are. Ostensibly, prison literacy programs exist to re-enfranchise prisoners upon release so they teach from the outside in. I want to suggest that these programs make up a Prison Literacy Complex as their attempt to reenfranchise prisoners assumes a benign or benevolent system and culture waiting to accept wayward members back into the fold. In effect, these programs act as a mechanism to reinforce disenfranchisement by leaving current prisoners criminally under prepared and ill equipped to tell their stories as moments of political resistance. In essence, they do little to stop the next generation of youth from becoming prisoners.

We will only achieve systemic, widespread change with programs that critically bring the personal experiences of those whose lives are resistant into conversation with those who are blinded by the myths of hegemony. Rather than teaching-in, we need conversations-out about *systems* rather than *symptoms* of domination. Angela Y. Davis suggests we discard notions of prison reform and instead shift our attention and efforts towards prison *abolition*:

> Imagine a constellation of alternative strategies and institutions, with the ultimate aim of removing the prison from the social and ideological landscapes of our society. . . envision a continuum of alternatives to imprisonment – demilitarization of schools, revitalizations of education at all levels, a health care system that provides free physical and mental health care to all, and a justice

system based on reparation and reconciliation rather than retribution and

vengeance. (Obsolete 107)

Because the prison industrial complex is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy with

implications for economics, education, politics, media, and more. Abolition aligns policy

makers, voters, activists, teachers, and learners in vastly different fields under a shared vision of

lasting alternatives to detention and surveillance.

This dissertation is an attempt to empower literacy programs as agents of social change

by mapping ways that literacy programs can mobilize prisoners' expertise to re-teach those

outside. Chapter two provides an overview of the rhetorical means by which the prison maintains

its ideological power and suggests a means by which to challenge its popular public support.

Through uses of language and particular ways of constructing knowledge, individuals are

defined by criminality in recursive, self-fulfilling cycles; however, there is a possibility for

change in the reinfusing or re-membering of resistant historical narratives into public discourse

and community memory. Chapter three maps the roles that literacy education programs play as a

mechanism of validating popular myths and beliefs. Charting literacy programs' definitions of

literacy, I argue that while most attempt critical, liberatory literacy, they fail to recognize the

knowledge and expertise of their participants and instead replicate the systems that racialize,

gender, and privatize justice. In chapter four, however, I profile two interacting programs that

have crafted an approach to critical, community literacy that, I believe, can contribute to lasting

social change. Drawing upon prisoners' voices and their experiences with gender norming and

homophobia, these programs use a "voices out" orientation to cut against popular narratives of

meritocracy through texts and acts that reach out to the public from incarcerated spaces. When

authorized and validated as expertise, narratives told by those on the inside point to the un-

truthiness of commonly accepted "truths" and myths destabilizing and "queering" the ideologies that maintain hegemony and the prison system. Chapter five concludes this dissertation with an overview of how "out" uses of literacy can be queered as critical, public pedagogies and mobilized to continue an abolitionist project.

By revealing the unequal valuing of multiple, divergent literacies, learners outside prison walls could begin to recognize the extent to which their values and assumptions are products of what they've been told more than what they have experienced. Juxtaposing memories that refuse to comply with popular narratives against those that do interrupts dominant ideologies long enough to see the ways that our understandings of community and criminality reflect our identities more than our choices. Hegemony's institutional apparatus pressures those without privilege into a limited set of options while offering tokenized exceptions as models for reform efforts that ultimately do little more than suppress would-be revolution. Given the urgency of the inhumane treatment of those living behind prison walls, the pervasive intrusion of surveillance and incarceration into public life, and the privatizing nature of our neoliberal, capitalist hegemony, it is clear that we, as a society, need to hear from those most oppressed by these mechanisms and institutions. An authentic pursuit of social justice must take seriously the abolitionist commitment to ideological, social, and economic alternatives by bringing voices normally silenced by incarceration and isolation into conversation with those who would otherwise remain contently oblivious.

CHAPTER TWO: AN APPARATUS OF STATE POWER

Systemic oppression (racism, ageism, trans and homophobia) happens incrementally, often-invisibly, and through complicity and consent. Advertising, news reports, online conversations, and even memes continuously define ideas like crime, justice, and safety and these ideas propagate ideologies of state-sponsored control and incarceration regardless of the writer or speaker's intent or apparent lack of it. Middle class values tell us to shy away from talk about religion, income, or crime as these topics point to contradictions that can disrupt comfortable, safe social situations. Kenneth Burke explains that in the accumulation of ideas into ideology, there is a resultant "partial, hence to a degree deceptive, view of reality, particularly when the limitations can be attributed to 'interest-begotten prejudice'" (Rhetoric 104). The inertia of comfortable ideas and social acceptance overshadows problematic aspects of political-economic history making them invisible to observers outside their immediate influence. For middle class white people, the menace of police violence, unwarranted searches, detention, and incarceration are foreign concepts, usually misunderstood, and easily dismissed.

Nevertheless, events of the last few years have made it clear that legal inequity and state-sponsored violence have become so egregious and commonplace as to be un-ignorable, even by those whose social and economic privileges remove them from harm's way. Reports of the abysmal conditions and obviously racist demographics inside prisons along with DNA exonerations of death row prisoners and non-convictions of police and military perpetrators of violence have eroded trust and left many feeling that there is little justice left in our criminal legal system. Congress seems deadlocked and unable (or unwilling) to respond. Acts of public resistance and protest are increasing, and public discourse, as a result, is beginning to change.

While the tensions and hurdles that social justice activists contend with are generally thought of as the province of sociology and thus viewed through lenses other than those employed by rhetoricians, the central philosophical conflicts faced by these activists can be better understood by understanding our inherited Platonic notions of good and right and Plato's mistrust of rhetoric. This chapter will map the history and evolution of these idea(l)s in order to unpack mass incarceration's discursive and economic production of surveillance and control and its function as a producer of gender normativity. This chapter will show how the prison acts as an apparatus of state power, using language and an inherited positivist epistemology to suppress resistance and reposition would-be liberal reformers as agents of hegemony.

An Inherited Way of Seeing & Knowing

In a positivist worldview, people commit crimes by choice and the criminal legal system adjusts accordingly. The prison, through this lens, is a means of reintegrating members of society who "cope immaturely with life's problems" and "see themselves as pawns of life and victims of injustice" (Johnson 9). Robert Johnson recognizes that the prison *as it has manifested* does propagate specific injustices "in ways that are essentially racist" but feels that overall the prison's role is reparative, and with its "goal is citizen building," it teaches inmates how to respond "maturely" to injustice and difficulty (13). Johnson explains the discourse of criminal codes, penal policy, and judicial decisions, and even news coverage as the result rather than the exigency of material conditions. Prisons, in this view, are a natural and necessary component of civilization, and the pain and suffering of retribution is the counter and insurance for the citizen who is "dealing with life's problems like a responsive and responsible human being, one who seeks autonomy without violating the rights of others, security without resort to deception and

violence, and relatedness to others as the finest and fullest expression of human identity" (98). Claims of rampant inequality are cited as evidence that some, but not all, are destined for rehabilitation.

Positivist rhetoric omits, however, any consideration of the observer's subject location and its interference with the observed. Instead of considering how the observer's identity and history privileges a particular view and leads to a corresponding interpretation of a situation, a positivist rhetoric instead validates pre-existing belief as known truth and focuses the speaker-writer's attention on its transmission through a style-arrangement-delivery rhetoric. The invention of meaning and the consideration of the observer's place in the context of the situation, "need not be taught since the business of the writer is to record careful observations or the reports of fellow observers" since truth is certain if carefully observed (Berlin 9). Its epistemology of meritocracy assumes the equality of all observers suggesting a *tabula rasa* beginning. Plato's rhetoric validates the "rights" taught by faith and tradition while Aristotle's technical rhetoric, stripped of invention, not only focuses our attention on style, but positions style and linguistic dialect as indicators of class and deservedness. Whiteness, capitalist ambition, gendered and sexed normativities become identity traits infused into language with rhetoric mobilized as a discursive weapon in a war of attrition, or more accurately, a class-based massacre over resources and easement.

James Berlin explains that "the term rhetoric refers to a diverse discipline that historically has included a variety of incompatible systems. While one particular rhetorical theory may predominate at any historical moment, none remains dominant over time" (Berlin 3). In the western-euro traditions that have evolved from classical Greek origins, "every rhetorical system is based on epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality, the nature of the knower,

and the rules governing the discovery and communication of the known" (4). The creation or discovery of meaning and the role of rhetoric in relation to it are the central discerning factors among these theories. Their relative positions can best be seen by mapping their origin. Among Classical texts, a three-way division is commonly made between the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and the Sophists (6). This division allows us to perceive the lineage of modern epistemologies and better understand the ways that contemporary conflicts are struggling with an ages old inheritance. In other words, a contemporary rhetorical analysis allows us to understand and critique our epistemological inheritance.

Plato's two most widely considered texts (at least in the discourse of rhetoric), *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, create dialogues between Socrates and an audience (a group of men in *Gorgias* and the lone *Phaedrus* in the later) to discuss the nature of rhetoric. For the Greeks, in general, rhetoric refers to a philosophy of composition used in courtrooms on the Senate floor, and the debate between opposing or diverging definitions usually deals with the nature of truth in relation to speech. In the earlier *Gorgias*, Plato presents a scathing critique of rhetoric as artifice that obscures the nature of truth. This is typified through Gorgias's response to Socrates regarding the use of expert medical opinion that is ignored in favor of a persuasive argument; a true good is forsaken for a seductive bad (90). Plato later softens his position, and in the *Phaedrus*, Plato allows for uses of rhetoric that are in service of truth but cautions that writing is a poor replacement for memory as it cannot respond to reader's questions. As Chaim Perelman explains, Plato's rhetor, motivated by an awareness of truth, "can use rhetorical technique to communicate it and make his audience accept it" (154). Truth, for Plato, exists in an alternate space that is knowable to humans through memory. The ideal truth is the source of knowledge and thus it is philosophy that is epistemic; rhetoric, in this sense, is nothing more than language

use and is merely a "knack." However, it can, at least according to the Plato of the *Phaedrus*, be used to move an audience from an incorrect understanding of truth towards a correct one. Significantly, Plato does not see his own work as rhetoric but rather simply as the stating of truth.

Aristotle, in mapping rhetoric across its applications in deliberative political argument, forensic legal dialogue, and epideictic speeches made to honor or commemorate, defines rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle 7). Relegating truths to logic, Aristotle positions rhetoric as the art or technique of negotiating *probable* truths through the use of reason and argument. As Perelman explains, "In Aristotle's view, every audience is a judge which in the end must decide the superiority of one disputed thesis over the other when neither is obviously compelling" (155). While for Plato, truth is stable and the source of meaning, Aristotle deals with the movement of an audience towards meanings and interpretations that the speaker *thinks* will be best overall. This distinction between certainty and probability is at the center of rhetorical conversations throughout the history of rhetoric. Aristotle's relegation of truth to logic becomes the precursor of materialism, or the belief that meaning exists in the world as perceived by our senses.

The text most representative of Sophistry is a fragment by Isocrates titled *Against the Sophists*. Despite its title, Isocrates' work nevertheless demonstrates an overall position largely attributed to sophists. Isocrates rejects Plato's notion of absolute truth as well as what would become Aristotle's idea of a universal technical method. He explains: "For what has been said by one speaker is not equally useful for the speaker who comes after him . . . oratory is good only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality of treatment" (73). Unlike the fixed knowledge of Plato or even the master technique of Aristotle, Isocrates

allows for the binding of language use and knowledge to context. While not quite the social epistemic that will develop in contemporary rhetoric, its origins are sprouted here. Isocrates's rhetoric is relentlessly practical and intended to be used as the written basis for education in support of public service and participation. Rhetoric, for Isocrates as for the sophists, can be taught, is about public participation, and finds meaning in the context from which it emerges. This is the position now most closely aligned with the social epistemic of new rhetoric and the rhetorics of social justice advocates and prison abolitionists. Ironically, the philosophy of rhetoric that Plato critiqued is that which now allows us to critique Platonic notions of truth.

James Berlin identifies these divisions in classical rhetorical theory, correlates them with "objective, subjective, and transactional rhetorics," and explains each by its treatment of truth (Berlin 6). Transactional rhetoric is most directly aligned with the sophistic perspective and the contemporary social epistemic. Berlin says that it "is based on an epistemology that sees truth as arising out of the interaction . . . of subject and object or of subject and audience or even of all the elements – subject, object, audience, and language – operating simultaneously" (15). Like a metaphorical triangle, the speaker or writer, the audience, and the text itself interact to create a rhetorical situation that is embedded in a specific context. Truth, as a result, is likely rather than assured, as any adjustment of the triangles geometry resultantly changes the remaining angles as well as the overall shape in space. Truths, for transactional rhetorics, are "uncertain, open to debate, contingent, probable" (15). This focuses the writer-speaker's attention on the conditions, ideas, the participants, and the language that create a given situation rather than on the situation as a representation of known truths. For the activist, then, transactional rhetoric and epistemology provide a means of finding solutions that are negotiations of history, economics, and materiality rather than a gauging of predetermined, inflexible morality. In other words, a

social epistemic allows us to see the ways that institutions are discursively validated by their alignment with a majority's morality despite material and political injustices that would otherwise be abhorrent.

This understanding of the relationship between knowledge and meaning making is particularly important given the historical influence of Platonic rhetoric. As Berlin explains, transactional rhetoric and its social epistemic were historically subordinated to more positivist ways of thinking about language and are thus in conflict with objective and subjective notions of truth. Subjective theories are neo-platonic in origin and "locate truth either within the individual or within a realm that is accessible only through the individual's internal apprehension" (11). The truth, in the subjective theory, exists and is knowable through imagination or reflection, but it is subjected to problematic representation through language. Communication of the known truth, then, is the role of rhetoric. Berlin says, "while ordinary language refers to the material world and thus cannot express the realm of ultimate truth, it is possible through the use of original metaphor to suggest the supersensory" (12). Subjective rhetoric differentiates the everyday language of materiality from uses of metaphor used to represent an idealized, fixed truth. Against this certainty, there is little room for interruption of an idea, process, or policy that seems supported by conventional (or popular) morality. Further, this rhetoric can be described as extending an epistemology of *faith* further complicating any appeal that would challenge it.

Objective rhetoric, in apparent contrast, asserts that "only that which is empirically verifiable or which can be grounded in empirically verifiable phenomenon is real" (7). An objective epistemology would seem to allow for observation as a means of disproving or at least problematizing the known but inarguable truths of faith, morality, and tradition, yet the application of this rhetoric stops short of considering the full scope of the rhetorical triangle.

Based largely upon the technical rhetoric of Aristotle, Berlin says, in this approach, "the responsibility of the observer, then, is to engage in an innocent reaction to sense impression, examining it without allowing any distortion to occur. Once the truth is determined through observation, the next task is to find the language to describe one's discoveries" (8). While somewhat moving away from Plato's idealized truth, the objectivist rhetoric's truth is still fixed and knowable. As a result, the job of language is merely transmission. As explained later in this chapter, an absolute surety of truths undermines testimony of poverty and exclusion.

When buttressed by the science of the Enlightenment, the rhetorics inherited from Plato and from Aristotle effectively suppressed that of the Sophists and validated the epistemologies of positivism and idealism. Rhetoric became largely an afterthought concerned only with style. As Hugh Blair explains, "knowledge and science must furnish the materials that form the body and substance of any valuable composition. Rhetoric serves to add the polish" (951). The enlightenment's celebration of science divorced rhetoric from the philosophical search for truth, and rhetoric became purely a matter of style and eloquence aligned with the study of poetics and *Belle Lettres*. But within this seemingly benign advancement of style, also resides a belief that fuels class animosity and exclusivity and ultimately supports a belief in the naturalness of social normativity.

The positivist rhetorics of the Enlightenment are ultimately concerned with social measure and social control. Blair proposes "the cultivation of taste" as a means of filling time not invested in production, and suggests that he who embraces this "has always at hand an innocent and irreproachable amusement for his leisure hours, to save him from the danger of many a pernicious passion . . . he is not obliged to fly in low company, or to court the riot of loose pleasures" (Bizzell 953). Rhetoric, for Blair, is not only useful for the enhancement of a

particular style or eloquence, but it also serves as a measure of soliciting adherence to a specific way of life.

For Blair as for Plato, the epistemic is revealed in a set of prescriptive social norms; language is (ostensibly) a neutral tool, yet language use is employed as a means by which to judge others. Perceived social norms rhetorically suggest agency despite economic and material contradictions. The American Dream relies upon a belief in individual achievement and possibility, and over time, the corresponding positivist epistemology was infused into social and state institutions as a means of laying the "blame" for suffering, disenfranchisement, and class based inequality at the feet of the individual rather than the state. Judgment of others, legislated and codified, portrays the prison as a means of protecting people and safeguarding democracy from usurpation, yet the prison is simultaneously a rhetorical agent of state power.

The Production of State Power

Challenging the popular notion that the prison rose to prominence because of humanitarian pressure from those opposed to corporeal punishment, Michel Foucault demonstrates how the current system enacts *discursive* social control through a "whole new morality" and a new "politics of the power to punish" (Discipline 12, 80). Foucault explains that a social contract replaced the monarch as property ownership and capitalism extended investments in the community, and crimes were no longer affronts against the crown but were now perceived as offensive to communal life (48-49). Rather than the will of a ruler being directly enforced upon subjects, the social body's discourses construct an ideological framework through which criminality emerges:

…criminal anthropology and the repetitive discourse of criminology find one of

their precise functions here: by solemnly inscribing offences in the field of objects

susceptible of scientific knowledge, they provide the mechanisms of legal

punishment with a justifiable hold not only on offences, but on individuals; not

only on what they do, but also on what they are, will be, may be. (18)

Foucault recognizes the mechanisms at work around the use of language and the construction of

knowledge. These discursive events and actions produce the transition from public, corporal

punishment to incarceration. Foucault explains that it is important that we "rid ourselves of the

illusion that penality is . . . a means of reducing crime" and instead recognize the "social

phenomenon that cannot be accounted for by the juridical structure of society alone" (24).

Punishment, for Foucault, is a social, political act that is all about the discursive maintenance of

power.

Truth, according to Foucault, is produced by a social body alongside specific mechanisms

designed to control and regulate access to it (Archaeology 216). With the transition from the

scaffold and spectacle to a system of incarceration, new corresponding discourses created a new

knowledge. The economy of power found as its most sustainable profit source the placement of

people under surveillance instead of subjecting them to public torture (Prison 38). Amending his

earlier work, Foucault explains that "we should abandon the belief that . . . power is one of the

conditions of language" but should instead recognize that "power and knowledge directly imply

one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative field of knowledge"

(Discipline 27). Power, in this sense, is productive as well as limiting and is inseparable from the

words that evoke our awareness of it. The new surveillance technologies in and around the prison

necessitate a new kind of knowledge of prisoners' bodies and new terms to describe them, which reproduced a new kind of power (28).

The modern discourse of criminology, then, emerges from within the social body in order to justify specific relations of power, yet it simultaneously exerts power on the social body as new knowledge of control. Power comes from "within the social body, rather than from above it" and validates incarceration and the sorting of the body as extensions of public will, hegemony, and state power (Prison 39). The technical "panopticism" that works inside the prison extends outward as well. As members of society are classified and criminalized on the inside, these new identifications reverberate throughout society as we look to each other to "spot" the criminals waiting to be identified. Foucault says incarceration, "had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception" (Discipline 214). The classification system of criminality drew upon the gaze of a perceived normalcy to sort those gazed upon according to "criminalizing concepts – double lives, deceit, deviance, promiscuity, hypersexuality, immorality, and indifference to the spread of disease to unwitting and innocent others" (Mogul 35). The language of political policy institutionalizes definitions based on Platonic notions of truth and "naturalizes the legal power to punish as it 'legalizes' the technical power to discipline" (Discipline 303). Institutions take on the sorting of othered individuals on behalf of a dominant group to which membership is screened by demonstration of resource accumulation. The language and structures of incarceration become tightly tied to the distribution of material and political but also economic resources.

Much of Foucault's analysis and theorizing of the prison and incarceration is built upon Karl Marx's observations of tensions that resulted from an unequal and inequitable distribution of resources. Marx explained these pressures as the result of ideological and discursive

processes, and he noted that while intellectuals detect a stalemate between ideal and material, the working classes suffer the effect of what is merely an exercise for the educated and privileged. Marx felt that philosophy had done little to improve the lives of the working class, and, as a result, sought to make materialism more scientific. By working through Hegel's study of dialectics, Marx observed that resource distribution is driven by those in control of the modes of production despite its appearance as a matter of individual success and failure. Marx, with Frederick Engels, wrote, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas . . . the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control . . . over the means of mental production . . . The ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (39). While labor produces the necessary material goods for a society, the bourgeoisie maintains control over the means of production and blames those without for their deficit. Further, the philosophy of those in power sets the Platonic "truths" that underlie morality. The ideas of the ruling class were "separated from the ruling individuals" and naturalized "to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society put in an ideal form" (41). Over time, this process masks the history of resource distribution with a system of ideas that *seems* natural. The privatization of resources is determined according to a set of ideas that emanate from the ruling class but appear as though natural and universal to all. The classification system that maintains the power of the prison industrial complex appears to reflect communal morality, yet, as noted in this and other chapters, legislation is more about politics and economics than it is about a public ethos.

The operation of ideology through concerted political rhetoric and popular culture emanates a sense of universal agency and free will while maintaining the modes of production and economically reinforcing the collective interests of the ruling class. The state "is the form in

which individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests" and it functions to enforce their interests through institutions (laws, schools, welfare systems) which are positioned as intermediaries that present the appearance of common good (59-60). In other words, what we perceive as normative values are in actuality an extension of those values held by a bourgeoisie intent on keeping the distribution of resources working in their favor. In what Raymond Williams calls "the force of permanent education," public perception is influenced by "our whole social and cultural experience" (15). Or, as Villanueva explains, political economy is "concerned with the relationships of the economic system and its institutions to the rest of society . . . political economy is concerned with the rhetorical and the economic" (Political 58). Values are discursively codified into economic and political policy forming institutions that ensure a steady supply of labor by suppressing potential resistance and suggesting any individual's situation is the result of that individual's personal actions; your economic failure is your responsibility alone.

For Marx, the materiality evident in social injustice bears necessary influence upon the construction of meaning. Injustice and suffering necessarily influence the truth of a situation. Knowledge is the idealization of materiality as viewed through the history of the production and distribution of material resources, or, it is historical materialism. Truth, for Marx, is a misleading endeavor designed to distract those who would otherwise interrupt the power of the ruling class and challenge hegemony; meaning and knowledge are the results of the means of production. Louis Althusser disagrees, or at least extends Marx, over the role of language in propagating the underlying ideology. Althusser writes, "Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage (bricolage), a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the day's residues from the only full and positive reality, that of concrete history," but for Althusser, "it is possible to hold that ideologies have a history of their own" (108). Althusser recognizes ideologies' historical

presence or influence across time (a positive sense of influence) and also that they are often used

ahistorically as universalized ways of thinking that thus influence invisibly (a negative sense).

These ideologies can be mapped relative to political-economic moments in history by tracing the

appearance of repressive (military, police) and ideological (education, legal) state apparatuses

(99). Mass incarceration is, arguably, the most obvious example of an institution that occupies

both of these states. The language of incarceration is inseparable from the ideology that makes

physical confinement and uses of force seem to be appropriate and just responses to social

problems.

V. N. Volosinov (or Mikhail Bakhtin), like Marx and Althusser, insists upon meanings'

origin emanating from the material world. He explains that "every ideological sign is not only a

reflection, a shadow, of reality, but is also itself a material segment of that very reality," and that

"signs emerge, after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness

and another" (11). Volosinov reminds us that institutions, like Althusser's repressive and

ideological apparatuses, are made up of people using language. But Volosinov recognizes a

conflict in epistemology: language can never be free from ideology since any theories or

philosophies of language require language use that is necessarily imbued with ideology. For

Volosinov, it is language rather than an institution or mode of production that is the origin of

consciousness and that exerts the influence of the means of production and the material world

upon thought. Volosinov sees historical materialism as the only means by which to account for

the ideological, because language, as Saussure suggested, cannot be studied ahistorically or

synchronically.

However, according to Kenneth Burke, the economic is not the only determinant of

ideology. Burke says, "Ideology cannot be deduced from economic considerations alone. It also

derives from man's nature as 'symbol using animal'" (Rhetoric 146). All language use, for Burke, has a persuasive, rhetorical function, but persuasion's success is dependent upon a process of consubstantiation, or, "identifying your ways with his" [*sic*] or, in other words, refining identification of similar, overlapping ideas until they effectively become the same thought (55). The process produces a resultant -clusion by which identities can be assumed. Specifically talking about the split between materialism and idealism, Burke says, "we are not merely trying to strike a compromise between irreconcilable opponents, or treating the two positions as ideal opposites, with the truth somewhere in between. Rather we are saying that, insofar as each performs its function, they are no more at odds than the stomach and liver of a healthy organism" (137). As two separate(d) organs work together to sustain an organic whole, Burke says it is the *process* of identification that creates meaning that can unify or divide, not than the apparent divide itself. Meaning, for Burke, is in the dialectic created through identification.

Meaning found through identification is simultaneously (and previously) sorted or filtered according to existing frames of reference, or, as Burke calls them, "terministic screens." Burke says, "since we can't say anything without the use of terms, whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" (Language 52). In much the same way as Volosinov, Burke understands that discourse sorts experience; however, Burke expands this idea with a recursive chain reaction of previous experience and previous discourse and recognizes that different discourses carry different amounts of value or weight and can be used to exert rhetorical power to suppress. The process of identification and the drive towards consubstantiation create a dialectic that is central to the full realization of meaning, but the

process itself is influenced by the institutions and experiences that have always already shaped and valued meaning for the individual. As institutions, then, prisons construct the meanings codified into law.

Foucault explains that the discourse of social control constructed the prison (in parallel with the hospital, school, barracks) from the beginning as an "instrument . . . acting with precision upon its individual subjects" but that the "failure of the project was immediate, and was realised virtually from the start" (Prison 40). Because of the ideological strength of specific identifications of criminal, there has been an underlying doubt in the possibility of rehabilitation or transformation. As Althusser predicted, these doubts manifest as variations of the incarceration ideology. In other words, legal policies and facilities vary in their theories of punishment. While some feel that prisons should exist to *incapacitate* offenders and simply take them off the street, others feel that this is not enough and their removal from public life should be publicized for *deterrence* value. Still others believe the prison's overall purpose should be to *rehabilitate* so that prisoners can be transformed into non-prisoners, yet opponents argue that the system should enact *retribution* for the injured party (Prisons xii). Conflicts between these goals and the relationships to their attendant ideologies, social institutions, and material realities focus attention on specific material manifestations of the legal system. Differences in the application of ideas distracts from the ideas themselves further naturalizing the state's discursive control over the production and distribution of resources.

Marx draws attention to the ways in which bourgeois values usurp the agency of individuals in a rhetorical situation; Althusser builds upon Marx to show that this agency replicates the bourgeois ideology: "the ultimate condition of production is . . . the reproduction of the *conditions* of production" (emphasis added, 85). Before producing surplus and profit,

management must first ensure labor produces, and protects, the conditions and materials for additional labor, surplus, and profit. Ruth Wilson Gilmore demonstrates how the state's use of "legislated criminality" recapitulates ideology in response to climate changes in the mode of production:

> California's political economy changed significantly in the 1970s due both to changes in the location of industrial investment – capital movement – and to "natural" disasters . . . These shifts produced surpluses of financial capital, land, labor, and state capacity, not all of which were politically, economically, socially, or regionally absorbed. The new California prison system of the 1980s and 1990s was constructed deliberately – but not conspiratorially – of surpluses that were not put back to work in other ways. Make no mistake: prison building was and is not the inevitable outcome of these surpluses. It did, however, put certain state capacities into motion, make use of a lot of idle land, get capital invested via public debt, and take more than 160,000 low-wage workers off the streets (88).

The information era that began in 1970s central California changed the nature of labor and threatened to redistribute resources away from those previously in power. The prison building boom in California was, according to Gilmore, an ideologically informed reaction to the appearance of surplus labor and surplus capital following this boom. It was a reaction that served to propagate ideologies and discourses essential to market expansion and define criminality according to the political-economic needs of neoliberal capitalism.

Legislated criminality plays on the notion that crime is an effacement of our social contract and that punishing crime is natural, but "what counts as crime in fact changes, and what happens to people convicted of crimes does not, in all times and places, result in prison

sentences" (Gilmore 12). Instead, as John Irwin explains, criminality is used as a mechanism by which to sort according to cultural capital: "The difference between crimes is not seriousness or prevalence; it is offensiveness, which is determined by social status and context" (17). Essentially, Irwin says, the system employs discursive technologies to punish people for being offensively out of place. These "instruments," as Foucault calls them, "render visible, record, differentiate and compare" both before and after intake into the criminal legal system (Discipline 208). Prisoners are classified into a sub-labor "criminal" class in ways that "serve only to manufacture new criminals and to drive existing criminals even deeper into criminality" (Prison 40). Former laborers are removed from the workforce and (permanently) re-classed as unemployable criminals. Criminality, then, is both the means by which people are sorted (primarily by race and gender) for incarceration and the result of incarceration.

The criminal classification acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy by branding individuals into a racialized criminal caste (Alexander 12). The results of this policy are evidenced by its apparently conflicted mission and goals. Gilmore says, "State by state, those jurisdictions that have not built a lot of prisons and thrown more people into them have enjoyed greater decreases in crime than states where incapacitation became a central governmental activity" (15). The prison boom took place at a time when crime rates were actually decreasing, and the presence of increased incarceration actually increases crime. In a study of similar Los Angeles neighborhoods, the removal of adults by the criminal legal system caused noticeable damage to the community, which in turn, led to additional crime and additional arrests (Visions). If prisons and legislation were about controlling criminal behavior and reducing crime, prison construction would cease and resources would be redirected to social services. The policies, definitions, and legislation of the prison industrial complex and the criminal legal system are deeply implicated

as both products and producers of the crime and are rhetorically and ideologically infused at the deepest level into capitalism both in the U.S. and abroad.

Neoliberalism positions political leaders as agents for private interest and uses the prison as a means of turning rhetorical, ideological power into physical, material control. In response to threats of decreasing profits and increased calls for social equality, the state needs a system that reinforces class stratification, puts public funds into private hands, and relocates surplus labor out of sight and circulation. In California, "more than half the prisoners had steady employment before arrest," but, nevertheless, "capital must be able to get rid of workers whose labor power is no longer desirable . . . The progressive nature of capitalism requires the essential commodity – working people's labor power – in various quantities and qualities over space, sector, and time" (Gilmore 7, 71). The legislation of criminality in California, then, is not about controlling the deviant behavior of a destructive fringe, but rather it is about redistributing labor in accordance with changing demands for increased capital.

Building on Marxian theories, Gilmore explains that the "political-economic superstructure is grounded in the radical failures and counterrevolutionary successes of an earlier era . . . prisons are partial geographical solutions to political economic crises, organized by the state, which is itself in crisis" (26). As resources are reallocated to private prison construction projects (as well as to private companies running some of them), urban landscapes are depopulated and entire communities of less valuable labor are moved to rural prison-towns (prisoners and guards). Gilmore is critical of this "geographical solution" as simple "incapacitation doesn't pretend to change anything about people except where they are" (14). The idea that crime is a behavioral or psychological problem capable of rehabilitation is discredited by the state's solution, and this economy of punishment allows the state to abdicate

social responsibility and ensure the maintenance of class boundaries (Gilmore 8). The state uses a rhetoric of blame and an ideology of retributive justice to privatize state resources and relocate surplus labor.

In order to accomplish this, the state takes advantage of the underlying, existing system of othering Americans, and continuously relegislates it into a massive classification system. At a time when civil rights movements were gaining momentum in their move to restructure power and redistribute resources, the state found a solution to changing capital movement that interrupted the interruption. The "War on Drugs" rhetoric of the 1980s and 1990s stripped historical accuracy in order to employ fear as a means of segregating the public. In fact, according to Michelle Alexander, these measures largely were employed as a replacement for the previous system of segregation. Alexander says that "mass incarceration in the United States . . . emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow" (Alexander 4). The classification system needed took advantage of racism, fear, and xenophobia already fused into the discourse and poetic of the twentieth century American imagination. As Stephen Cox explains, by building humiliation into the processing and housing of inmates, the prison furthers the othering of prisoners and becomes part of popular film and fiction itself. In movies and books, people can rebel against prison authority, try to escape from prison, or try to change prison, but in each case, "prison becomes the antagonist" making both the prison and prisoner dangerous and mysterious (156). Simultaneously, "three strikes" laws and determinate sentencing legislation "use people's fears and anxieties of being victimized in some way" to justify the relocation of laborers and the reallocation of capital resources (Corrupting). Current "war on terror" legislation like the U.S.

Patriot Act is the most recent manifestation of these political-economic and ideological processes.

Definitions, perceptions, and value judgments are opinions informed, when processed uncritically, by tradition, repetition, and routine (ritual) rather than with observation and evaluation. Secular rituals, according to Henry Bial, seem natural and value-neutral as they "invoke the authority of some concept larger than the individual: the state, the community, tradition (77). Rather than forcing an interruption of comfortable ways of living, ritual grants familiar ideas a sense of authenticity validating the pre-existing and forestalling the new. The influence of the institution of incarceration works discursively through Plato's notions of fixed, ideal truths to power a rhetoric that allows dismissal of inventive thought. Considerations of "why" and "how" are overlooked or dismissed in favor of given, pre-determined, state-sponsored values for "justice" and "crime." These values become what Burke would call "god terms" or an image that "contains in germ its own logic" (Philosophy 148). Over time, accepted ideas or truths coalesce to form ideologies that leverage influence over competing ideas suppressing those that would challenge their dominance; in short, they combine to form hegemony.

Andrea Mayr explains that in Gramsci's theorization of hegemony, power is not physical force but rather that "one ruling class has persuaded subordinate classes to accept its own moral, political, and cultural values through concessions or ideological means. Power is therefore not exercised coercively but subtly and routinely" (Mayr 16). In other words, it functions rhetorically. Central to Gramsci's theories of hegemony is this notion that consent is given because of a perception of mutual benefit. Or, as Gramsci says, the state or institution "educates this consent, by means of the political and syndical association" (Notebooks 259). Through the language of policy and media, institutions are recursively powered discursively. The state

42

manufactures and remanufactures consent by establishing definitions and the *appearance* of common, shared experiences and interests. Thus, as Marx and Althusser explained, winning control of the means of production secures the future arrangement of the means of production. The state controls what we believe to be history.

The extent of incarceration's influence on American political-economic history validates Althusser's assertion that the power of ideology precedes the observer despite an apparent cause-effect relationship. He explains that "ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects" (119). We are always already seeing the world through ideology and this ideology is always already influenced by the institutions around us. For Althusser, knowledge and meaning are contingent not only upon our identities but on the institutions against which we define ourselves. For the prisoner, identity as person is overwritten by the sorting, labeling action of the prison. For the voter, incarceration's influence is masked as separate from the factors that most overtly determine livelihood. What we consider to be safety, justice, criminality, to name just a few, are shaped in large part by the existence of the prison and its presence in a collective imagination.

A Norming Apparatus

In its early stage, the prison reflects the evolution outlined by Foucault, but, as Caleb Smith explains, Foucault's explanation of the historical shift from public punishment to the political-economic construct of the penitentiary "seems to have overlooked the ongoing bodily violence that characterized power relations on colonial peripheries and plantations. The difference between the spectacle . . . and the cell was . . . not so much of chronology as of race and geography" (11). In other words, Foucault's model falls short of explanting the full scope of

racism as an ideology and historical legacy that informs America's adherence to incarceration. As the writings of abolitionists and anti-prison activists and the presence of the prison and the prisoner in American Literature began to circulate images through the American public, specifically, ritually defined terms took hold in the American imagination and reinforced white supremacy by aligning people of color with criminality.

Smith employs a "poetics of the penitentiary" to trace changes in cultural hegemony using tropes of "prisoner" and "prison." As these circulate through the American public, they interact with other concepts that define the American identity and its political and economic systems. The "free" American citizen and the "liberated American 'self' emerged in opposition to a conspicuously bound and embodied 'other,' the black slave" (12). As Smith explains, Foucault misses the crucial interaction between this embodiment and the ideologies that shape hegemony; American notions of "freedom" and "liberty" cannot be understood apart from enslavement and genocide. Freedom in America is, ultimately, a component of whiteness, and criminality is a component of other. Smith tells us that not only does discourse (re)construct the material conditions of the PIC but also that it does so by producing a hegemony based upon racist oppression. The power of the prison is much more than physical control of space; it is a political economy of privilege that sorts and -cludes every American according to identifying traits, most frequently race. The "problem of the prison," according to Smith, "does not end with a defense of the prisoner's human rights . . . It begins there" (22).

The discourse of the prison system distributes sponsorship of detention from the exclusive domain of the political and academic elite into the hands and minds of the (white male) citizenry. The prison and the ideas upon which it is based naturalize in the American imagination, and, over time, the prison became "a central institution for the remaking of

humanity in America" and "took shape in relation to other forms of captivity, especially the Indian [sic] reservation and the slave plantation" (Smith 18). Juxtaposed to the overt, state-sponsored violence at these sites, the prison, regardless of the actual violence taking place, *appeared* to be an act of charitable, benevolent compassion and tolerance towards former slaves. The prison appears to be a popular, natural alternative to the corporal punishment and enslavement of people of color. Accordingly, Angela Y. Davis describes the PIC as "an institution deeply connected to the *maintenance* of racism" (Abolition 35). Identifications and classifications are influenced by racist stereotypes and economic history that then reproduce and rhetorically amplify both the power of the prison and of racism itself as the classifications self-validate and recursively perpetuate.

Davis, like Michelle Alexander, traces the history of criminal legal policy (and the underlying ideology) to reconstruction and the end of the civil war. Davis points out that slavery was not abolished with the passage of the 13th amendment, as is popularly reported, but rather was renamed and institutionalized, legitimizing it as a means of racialized social control. Davis says:

> The abolition of slavery thus corresponded to the authorization of slavery as a punishment. In actual practice, both emancipation and the authorization of penal servitude combined to create an immense black presence within southern prisons and to transform the character of punishment into a means of managing former slaves as opposed to addressing problems of serious crime. (Reader 99)

Davis explains that the abolition of slavery and the force of civil rights movements shifted social opinion in the U.S. against overt and open forms of racism. In response, Justice was re-imagined as "masked" and color blind. Davis says that a person of color is sentenced, "he/she comes under

the authority of law as the abstract juridical subject, as a rights-bearing individual, not as a member of a racialized community that has been subjected to conditions that make him/her a prime candidate for legal repression" (Abolition 37). When classified, the individual becomes dehistoricized and individualized thus linking criminality to apparently objective "facts" rather than to historical processes. The "blindness of justice enables underlying racism and class bias to resolve the question of who get to go to prison and who does not" (94). Crimes like under paying and over working employees, defrauding customers with inferior products, and other things that might be recognized as "white" crime, were left as legitimate practice while criminality was leveraged as a means of racial control. Through the passage of "black codes," things like vagrancy, loitering, possession of a firearm, absence from work, and insulting gestures or acts were criminalized (100). In this way, Black people in the U.S. did cease to be slaves, but they were almost immediately reclassified as criminals, and then sentenced to unpaid, forced labor.

Importantly, Davis emphasizes that the PIC's influence reshapes the public discourse that created it in order to expand its reach. The system of classification is "predicated on the idea that there must be a hierarchy of cultures," and within these, Islamic and feminized cultures are "always already inferior" (Abolition 59). For Davis, concentric sets of institutionalized practices enable one another and propagate epistemic violence and exclusion. When resistance mounts, such as the movement to repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell" legislation, small steps are made to partially include a previously excluded group. Gay men and women are "allowed" into the military so that attention is redirected away from the ways global militarization uses people of color as cannon fodder and cannon targets on the quest for new markets and commodities. Further, the inclusion is seen as national reparation for the blatant sexual violence at Abu Ghraib. As though the offer to serve in the military somehow erases the institutionalized homophobic

ideology that allowed the use of homosexual acts as torture techniques. Davis explains that because of these connections, the prison "cannot be fully understood as an isolated development within the United States alone" or solely as a producer of racism (113). The rhetoric of the "War on Terror" is the global extension of the racist "tough on crime" ideology, but it also extends versions of masculinity and gender; it is the criminalization of othered people outside the U.S. Incarceration, as Davis explains, plays "a critical role in the ideological production of the communist, the queer, the criminal, and the terrorist" (120). The prison, as demonstrated by military prisons and sexualized torture practices, has become a global phenomenon and an apparatus of raced-gendered normativity.

Dean Spade has called the prison, one of the "primary ordering principles" of "modernity's gender binary" (Stanley 121). Similarly, Lisa Duggan explains, "Welfare reform and the law and order politics of the past two decades clearly illustrate the dense interrelations among neoliberalism's economic vision and its cultural projects. The goal of raising corporate profits has never been pursued separately from the rearticulation of hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality in the United States and around the globe" (14). The segregation of those who do not meet neoliberal gender norms is at the heart of the prison's success. Surveillance, screening, sorting, and detention technologies and policies partition people into groups marked by perceived deviations. Prisons have become, as Dean Spade explains:

> mythmaking institutions, which serve as a breeding ground for raced, gendered, and classed archetypal amalgam of criminality, disease, predation, and out-of-control sexuality. The archetypal queer criminalizing narratives incubated and fostered within their walls are then deployed to police and regulate all of us on the outside within the larger project of the carceral state. (Stanley 119)

Crime dramas on TV routinely extend these narratives to popular media as arrested criminals and wayward community members are threatened with the sexual violence of prison. The prison has become a weapon in the media-driven public imagination, and prisons are sold as the safeguard and cure distracting public attention from underfunded social support, the privatization of education, and the removal of voter agency from democratic participation.

Prison, ultimately, provides a solution for the social unacceptability of how the country treats people of color, those who live differently, and those without access to resources. "Rights" are seen as the only resource necessary for economic and social success while the distribution of resources and commodities is made invisible by the laws, policies, and traditions that house them. The structures of oppression become so "deeply embedded in institutional structures and so complexly mediated that they now appear to be detached from the persons they harm with their violence" (Abolition 57). Racist classification and the marginalization of queer people appear to be the result of individual failings and deviations rather than systemic processes or for-profit exploitation, and progressive activism is painted as the self-interested scrambling of unsuccessful communities. Meanwhile, the institutions that are most implicated in oppressive ideology are shielded and rewarded. According to Davis, "imprisonment is the punitive solution to a whole range of social problems that are not being addressed by those social institutions that might help people . . . the prison becomes a way of disappearing people in the false hope of disappearing the underlying social problems they represent (41). Rather than repairing the systems that marginalize people, we instead put a system in place to repair the problem by removing the people. The prison reshapes the community and the labor market in favor of its capitalist economy. Rather than reallocate resources, the discourse of incarceration recapitulates

racism and normativity into neoliberal rationales that literally relocate and restructure communities towards an idealized, monocultural capitalist vision.

The prison, now, serves as an insidious if circular justification for racist and normative ideologies. The argument goes like this: prisons are full of queer people of color because they commit the most crimes; we can tell they commit the most crimes because they are the people who make up the prison population, and the prison is characterized by violent, predatory queer "sex." This argument has been legislated as immigration law in Arizona, as sodomy laws across many states, as court profiling, and as "broken windows" policing. As increased patrols, profiling, and sting operations in low income neighborhoods lead to more queer people of color arrested, legislators point to these "facts" as evidence of criminality *independent of the prisoners' identity or history*; justice becomes "colorblind." As Andrea Mayr explains, "discourse practices that appear to be common sense are in fact ideologically invested in that they produce and reproduce unequal power relations . . . They divert attention away from a possible need for social change and onto the individual offender and his or her perceived cognitive defects" (179). Hegemony linguistically systematizes racism into "common sense" thus alleviating the consciences of the white middle class and legitimizing the stratification of society. Once again, Plato's truths suppress attempts at real equality by ritualizing an enfeebled status-quo version of justice. Classical rhetoric's truths provide the ideological basis for American Dream exclusion and blame. Contemporary rhetorical analysis, on the other hand, offers a means by which to critique classical rhetoric unpacking the prison's complicated political economy. Rhetorical analysis, then, offers a means by which to understand, interpret, and interrupt hegemony.

Resisting Hegemony

In "Hegemony: From an Organically Grown Intellectual," Victor Villanueva explains hegemony as a form of ideologically vested political-economic domination in which the dominated rhetorically consent to the mechanisms of their own oppression. He says, "every culture contains particular world views, ideologies . . . we accept commonly held world views as truths. The dominant does more than accept; it capitalizes on the generally accepted truths. We accept the dominant's actions based on truths; we approve of acts based on truths; we consent" (20). As activists, community organizers, even teachers work to counter specific material and economic inequities through social movements and reform measures, the inertia of hegemony limits change to local circumstances, and because decisions made are affirmed ideologically, the larger framework of domination remains.

The work of what Gramsci calls "traditional intellectuals" may be well-intentioned and oriented towards countering inequalities, but they are actually a necessary component of the "organisms" that propagate dominant ideologies – religion, education, family, law and so on. Villanueva says, "the ideological elements which are necessary to hegemony must be maintained and passed on, reproduced" (21). While some truths may change with time, others are carried over. Traditional intellectuals maintain an overall hegemony by making seemingly revolutionary changes that nevertheless maintain the basic ideologically vested systems of distribution. Thus, while people of color have won victories, the overall "truth" of white supremacy has remained in White cultural memory through institutions and "common sense." Reformers change the conditions of a small group or individual satisfying their determination for change, but they do not divert the judgments, stigmatizations, and "truths" that reinforce hegemony, only the targets

and degrees of application. The cycle of oppression continues even in spite of one or another marginalized populations' temporary relief from specific inequities.

Stuart Hall explains the process by which hegemony sorts political and economic thought:

> From the normative point of view, all political action which is not expressed via the electoral process, which does not contribute to the maintenance of party apparatuses, and is not governed by procedural norms is, by definition, deviant . . . [yet] These acts of labeling in the political domain, far from being self-evident, or a law of the natural world, constitute a form of continuing political "work" on the part of the elites of power: they are, indeed, often the opening salvo in the whole process of political control. (63)

By labeling "norms," normativity is invested with a sense of inevitability. In the tradition of Plato, there appear to be "true" or "right" ways of thinking and being. Hall explains the drive towards consensus (or the appearance of it) practically guarantees the suppression of opposition to the state. Since consensus, rather than inclusion, is seen as the hallmark of a functioning democracy, exclusion is written off as natural. The designation of some oppositional groups and ideas as more legitimate than others creates a perceived majority in opposition to othered minorities. It is this "minority/majority explanatory model" that Hall says systematically "map[s] emergent political phenomenon in terms of already known and legitimate values" (80). Within the field of alternatives, there appear to be those that are more palatable (and less threatening) to the hegemonic values, and these are given status as legitimate minorities; those remaining are cast as fringe, extremist, and dangerous.

And even the most radical identities can be coopted and normed with the right narrative. According to David Eng, LGBT identities that were revolutionary in the 80's and 90's have been mobilized as a brand of liberalism to support the capitalist agenda, which, as a result, supports the Prison Industrial Complex. He explains, "Queer liberalism functions as a supplement to capital, but in a desexualized, repackaged, and contained form. In other words, we might say that neoliberalism enunciates (homo)sexual difference in the register of culture—a culture that is freely exchanged (purchased) and celebrated (consumed)" (30). Queerness is being repackaged as patriotism and freedom for a previously oppressed community. "Victories" like the dismantling of DADT and the passage of ENDA and marriage equality laws are cited as the end of the LGBT civil rights movement. Difference as a state of being is actually mobilized as a means of suppressing queerness as political resistance.

Dominated by gay white middle class men, a perceived LGBT minority group is given legitimacy over queer people of color or those living in ways deemed too ab-normative for inclusion. Jasbir Puar explains that "national recognition and inclusion . . . is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary" by way of a "regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects" (2). Previously oppositional subjects are sorted discursively as deviant/legitimate, as indicated by Hall, to shape what Puar calls an aspect of "homonationalism" or the folding of acceptable (white) versions of opposition into the national fabric and the resultant exclusion of non-normative queer (22). This folding-back-in of non-normative and anti-normative groups advances the projects of the white "majority" class:

The project of whiteness is assisted and benefited by homosexual populations that

participate in the same identitarian and economic hegemonies as those hetero

subjects complicit with its ascendancy. The homonormative aids the project of

heteronormativity through the fracturing away of queer alliances in favor of

adherence to the reproduction of class, gender, and racial norms. The ascendancy

of heteronormativity, therefore, is not tethered to heterosexuals; neither is it

discretely delimited to white people, though it is bound to whiteness. (31-32).

The process of sorting and norming abject political groups reinforces the marginalization of

other-identified individuals and blurs the interconnectivity of racism with homophobia and class

based inequality. Political strategies like the U.S. Patriot Act, DOMA, and DADT, mobilize

sexual difference in support of normative ideology and an epistemic marked by a barely

concealed belief in the "truth" and the "naturalness" of the superiority of whiteness, maleness,

and heterosexuality. Even difference is put into service of the state and would-be revolution is, as

Villanueva explains, pacified.

However, Villanueva reinterprets Gramsci to show that hegemony can be resisted

through "rhetorical practices that can help to bring about substantive social change" (18). Social

justice advocates and prison abolitionists can resist and alter hegemony by demonstrating breaks

in the seemingly stable, supposedly collective cultural memory. Villanueva explains that

resistance to hegemony "occurs when there is widespread socio-historical criticism. Voices of

discontent look back to the roots of oppression and articulate the socio-historical precedents . . .

The voices seek to persuade all groups that everyone's needs could be better met if substantive

changes were to take place" (23). By historicizing "common sense," Gramsci's "organic

intellectuals" point to the rhetorical construction and constructedness of truths held as natural

and immutable. In other words, what seems to be a seamless progression of common sense ideas can be revealed as the function of politicized discourse in service of dominant culture. To effect a real redistribution of resources, whether economic, material, or ideological, those who would spark social change must demonstrate that seeming truths are not true for all communities; they must demonstrate the untruthiness of truths.

Normative assumptions conflate gender with sex in order to naturalize a biologically determined, stable dichotomy of male/female that reinforces the primacy of hetero-cisgenders, particularly in the violently enforced, masculine space of the prison. However, the refusal of queer scholars and activists to stay silent demonstrates contradictions. Queerness, both as a gender identification trait and an analytical method, points to contradictions. Transgender prisoners, like gender-queer, intersexed and transgendered individuals outside, challenge biologically determined, essentialized understandings of gender and invalidate notions of fixity as they exist in contradiction to the male/female paradigm. Judith Butler theorizes these contradictions:

> Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts are produced; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (original emphasis, 154)

Butler builds upon Foucault's notion of discursivity to understand gender as an epistemic; that is, the series of acts and utterances rhetorically constructs what we recognize as gender, and this in turns influences how we think of gender. Or, as W.B. Worthen says, the performance of gender

"operate[s] discursively, and . . . meanings arise from the slippage and interplay between signifying formalities" (12). Gender is performance, but gender is also performative. Normative notions of gender place maleness and femaleness as subcategories of gender with deviations from each noted as "queerness" or sexual abnormality. Butler, instead, explains queerness as the politically resistant quality of the performance itself and maps male/female, masculine/feminine as different degrees of different acts at different times; gender "is a historical situation . . . and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation" (156).

Butler agrees with Foucault that gender is discursively constructed but is emphatic that we consider this to not all happen in verbal or written code. Like Volosinov, Butler sees the performative action of natural world phenomena like hunger and poverty as discourse in conversation with more overt social-political rhetoric. Unlike Foucault, however, Butler does not see the body as the neutral site onto which discourse maps gender; Butler locates gender's epistemic neither in Marxist notions of productivity nor in the postmodern response. She says:

> Gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual, as some post-structuralist displacements of the subject would contend. The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-given cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies. Actors are always already on stage. (Butler 160)

Rejecting the idea of an essential, ideal gender represented by performance as well as an agent-less mapping of notions of masculinity onto dead flesh, Butler rebuts the "popular theory of acts and gestures as expressive of gender" (162). Gender is not representative of material or idealistic

knowledge, but instead, it *is* the epistemic; the performance creates meaning that is always already there.

Like a play on stage, the situation of gender in time is particularly central to the epistemic functions of normativity and gender. Butler says that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (157). Butler situates the performance of gender diachronically, and sees that gender performances, as Foucault explained, are naturalized by accepted/acceptable knowledge within specific moments in history. David Harvey, as a component to his discussion of the split between postmodernism and modernism, explains how spatial and temporal associations participate in epistemology. He says, "symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience . . . [and] replicate the social order by assigning social meaning to spaces and times" (Condition 214). Meaning, then, is linked to timelines popularized by normative, hegemonic society. Experiences that shape identity (childbirth, graduation, employment, etc.) are mapped according to an individual's perceived relative position on these normative timelines.

The removal of prisoners from contact with their families and their encapsulation in a supposedly asexual environment separates them from the normative narratives of family and heterosexual succession. Success as a heteronormative man or woman is impossible on the inside but it is the assumed path to successful participation in American social life. Homonormativity, as earlier described by Jasbir Puar, is offered as a means of reentering society. As Duggan demonstrates, normativity pretends to erase subordination while folding previously abjected LGBT inmates into the embrace of neoliberal progress narratives through a "rhetorical remapping of public/private spheres . . ." (50). Hetero and homonormativity then are the carrots dangled in front of the starving inmate. Prisoners wait and hope for a life at the end of time, but

this hope acts upon the inmate in insidious ways. As Judith Halberstam has written, "the constantly diminishing future creates a new emphasis on the here, the present, the now, and while the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud, the urgency of being also expands the potential of the moment and . . . squeezes new possibilities out of the time at hand" (2). As each person is branded as a prisoner and given a number that will follow them even outside the walls, a narrative of recidivism and threats of extended sentences for things ranging from self-defense to possession of pornography becomes a new normative presence.

According to Stuart Hall, diversions from normative timelines are assigned deviant, marginalized status and used to devalue and discredit potentially challenging experiences and identities. As Harvey explains, "hegemony . . . depends on an ability to control the material context of personal and social experience. For this reason, the materializations and meanings given to money, time, and space have more than a little significance for the maintenance of political power" (227). The apparent strength and stability of capitalism and its accompanying political ideology (neoliberalism in the US) are protected by the social stigmatization and shame leveraged against time/space violations and the validation of a normative progression of events (graduation, employment, marriage, childbirth, etc.). Or, as Butler tells us, a fictive notion of stability enacts a compulsory heterosexuality along timelines that carry "clearly punitive consequences" (157). In short, for Harvey as for Butler and Foucault, time and space are neither neutral nor insignificant. Despite their definition as mere organizing frames, they are, in actuality, performative ideologies that rhetorically (de)stabilize power relations, knowledge, and existence (239). The very nature of time itself seems to support neoliberalism's domination.

Nevertheless, Harvey, like Villanueva, is hopeful. He tells us that resistance is possible when "individual resistances can coalesce into social movements with the aim of liberating space

57

and time from their current materializations and constructing an alternative kind of society in which value, time, and money are understood in new and quite different ways" (Condition 238). While localized resistance often has little effect beyond the immediate situation, Harvey is suggesting that this is not because of an innate inability to affect change but rather because sustained historical critique is missing. In other words, resistance movements need to demonstrate the instability of popular notions by revealing the way they develop over time. As an example, Harvey explains how new modes of production revised and revealed ideological timelines as new technologies of information and post-Fordist production replaced previous industrial modes (139-142). Judith Halberstam agrees with Harvey that resistance is possible, but disagrees with his understanding of how.

"Queer" and "queerness" are somewhat flexible terms even among those most prolifically theorizing them, yet Halberstam's definition is quite accessible and highly useful in the context of critical literacy. According to Halberstam, "'queer' refers to nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time" (6). Queerness is a performance that problematizes normative expectations. In this model, masculinity, maleness, and heterosexuality are particular conditional locations. Or, queerness is the play whereas maleness is a specific spot on the stage within a specific section of the script. Normative identities, then, are zones wherein the alternative politics are effaced by privatized notions of essentialized gender and normative space-time. Queer resistance allows for retheorizations of normative space-time through which we can find, according to Halberstam, otherwise invisible gaps and contradictions in capitalist, neoliberal narratives of privatized publics. Halberstam writes that by using queerness to destabilize hegemonic notions of gender and sexuality, "we can begin to see the multiplicity of noncapitalist forms that constitute,

supplement, and abridge global capitalism, [and] we can also begin to imagine, by beginning to see, the alternatives to capitalism that already exist and are presently under construction" (12). In other words, queer resistance mobilizes a counter-public that can disentangle the private from the public.

For Halberstam, queerness transforms notions of gender, knowledge, and stability even (or especially) within our own thinking. Ultimately, tracing the ways that racism and homophobia manifest in the discourse and material conditions of the prison complex reveals a complex apparatus and a political-economy of legislated crime that reaches far beyond prison walls. Undoing the damage of mass incarceration will involve much more than a consideration of prisoners' living conditions or reconsiderations of a policy or law. The problem is complex and rhetorically threaded into institutions like education, the military, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and state run social services. Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock tell us that the solution, however, is to be found exactly in this complexity. Rather than shy away from it and seek to unwind individual threads like anti-queer violence, punishment rather than drug treatment, revolving door rehabilitation, and so on, we instead need to "call into question and challenge multiple and interlocking systems of inequality that remain even as formal forms of discrimination begin to fall" (158). Rather than thinking analogously about the individual threats and conditions of incarceration, we need to understand the intersectional exigencies of these threats as a complicated political-economy securing power through classification and stratification.

Foucault explains that state power is appropriated, distributed, and reinforced through language: "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized,

and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to . . . evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (Archaeology 216). These procedures, according to Foucault, include internal and external controls, rules, and the regulation of access to knowledge. For Foucault, discourse does not refer so much to specific linear bits of text or moments of communication, but rather to "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (49). For Foucault, an utterance or idea is something produced by discourse rather than something that can be seen in isolation. Truth, therefore, is something that is produced and controlled by the dominant in a society through the control of discourse, primarily through education. Or, as Foucault explains, societies have a "will to truth" that accompanies popular media, disciplinary practices, and legal-political uses of language (219). Through this exercise of power and control over language, the state is able to influence the traditions and practices of creating, acquiring, and demonstrating knowledge and social worth.

Discourse, then, can serve to validate the legalized economic and physical segregations enacted by state institutions, and it masks their oppressive acts by positing token reforms as paradigm-changing. Hate crime legislation, for example, ostensibly came into existence as ground-breaking, unprecedented protection for stigmatized, marginalized members of the community. Indeed, even among some civil rights activist organizations, hate crime legislation is seen as the preferred means of using the legal system to protect those most vulnerable to discrimination. The appeal of this approach, according to Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock, "rests in its implied promise that, by framing communities historically targeted for ongoing harassment and violence as 'crime victims,' law enforcement will be on our side" (124). Positing a belief that crime not only hurts the individual but the community as well, hate crime laws generally extend prison sentences, increase bail, and include restitution measures that impose fines payable

to (private) community service organizations. While this may be locally productive, it maps criminality as an act of an individual harming the community; these laws discursively obscure the ways in which the community and its institutions are complicit in harming the individual. Further, the "blindness" of these laws – no marginalized groups are named in the legislation – suggests citizen-subjects with equal power and access to justice (127). This discourse, as Williams would say, acts as a sort of permanent, public education or pedagogy that masks systemic oppression. As is typical of prison and legal reform, the laws help a handful of marginalized individuals at the expense of marginalized communities yet convince would be advocates that progress is made.

Contemporary rhetorical theory and careful, critical analyses of language can offer a means to critique and demystify our ideological investment in the prison system. When conceptualized as a social epistemic, literacy instruction can focus the sort of critical attention Villanueva, Halberstam, and others say is needed to effect sustainable change. However, prisoner literacy programs are most often put in place simply to quell prisoner resistance and satisfy progressive reformers' need for feelings of progress and equal opportunity. Most do little to spark actual change, and, in the context of the prison and with incarcerated (and formerly incarcerated) writers, the risk of epistemological violence is magnified. In the next chapter, I will explore and explain the use of literacy programs as a response to criminality and map theories of literacy that underwrite neoliberal exoneration of state responsibility. As I mentioned in chapter one, education is thought of as the gateway to democratic and capitalist participation, and it can provide validation for the economic and social stigmatization that accompany contemporary American versions of those processes. When not enacted as a means to critically engage and challenge hegemony, literacy programs, for prisoners or for those not-yet incarcerated, become

yet another means of producing traditional intellectuals and yet another venue foreclosing

neoliberalism's erasure of the public sphere.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY OF PRISON(ER) LITERACY

PROGRAMS

Literacy programs that serve incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated populations have a history that poorly reflects the shifting, changing ways literacy has been conceptualized. Despite an evolving definition that is critiqued both for its place in formal, school-based education and its connectedness to economics, politics, and identity, literacy continues to be the topic of divisive conversations and significant scholarship and research. Even fairly homogenized fields of study have difficulty settling on a stable definition. Early assumptions about literacy limited its scope to a linguistic coding process; literacy acquisition involved symbol memorization, production, and translation. Researchers tracking educational methods, however, found this definition deficient in explaining links between literacy and social class, and so expanded their conversations to include economics and, eventually, politics. Contemporary scholars also wrestle to account for changes in literate behavior based upon the explosion of communication and information technologies. Literacy, now, is considered by many to be inseparable from relations of power and systems of social exclusion, and many study literacy acquisition at sites other than schools. However, programs that service incarcerated writers have not kept pace.

Literacy programs that operate in and around prisons and jails rely, primarily, upon outdated models of literacy. While most programs are administrated by non-profit organizations, their facilitators are most commonly volunteers or temporary hires from post-secondary institutions. Trained in the literacies of formal education, program facilitators may recognize social exigencies of literate behavior but largely miss or even deny social, systemic effects of the programs themselves. Community literacy programs that attempt a critical literacy approach

most often stop short of real change. In order to demonstrate prison programs' missed opportunity, this chapter maps the evolving definition of literacy from functional to community and rhetorically analyzes prison literacy programs in order to point to the ways their attempts at critical literacy fail. Program facilitators that serve incarcerated writers do amazingly difficult work under near-impossible conditions, and most of the time, they do make their participants' lives better. Simultaneously, however, the programs themselves largely validate popular myths about prisoners and about literacy, which means the next generation of prisoners is just steps away from the slamming prison door.

(Il)literacy and Criminality

Illiteracy has long been associated with criminality. Inherited Platonic and enlightenment notions of writing and meaning grew alongside the changing economic and political climate in Colonial America. Robert Johnson explains that in the colonial United States, the first jails appeared as populations increased and property within settled areas became more of a commodity. A shift in crimes away from person and morality and towards property and property owners (stakeholders tied intimately to the maintenance of government) resulted in an ideological shift as criminals were "seen more as pariahs who should be banished from society and less as wayward fellow citizens who were candidates for reform" (56). As the economic impact of crime become more politically significant, criminality was blamed on a deficient morality and world-view in need of correction, and criminals were marked for segregation. As incarceration became a formal response to social problems, clergy were charged with "last-hope" prisoner education through the facilitation of bible study and rigorously enforced quiet meditation. Literacy served as the evidence of salvation or successful reformation.

State and federal incarceration in the U.S. began two competing models of prison construction. In Pennsylvania, a prison was built housing each prisoner in a private cell complete with connected, segregated yard space, while in New York, the structure employed smaller cells for use at night and a common work area for use during the day. Proponents of the Pennsylvania system believed that "only full-time solitary confinement could lead the fallen convict through . . . reflection and repentance to redemption," while those backing the New York "Auburn" system employed convicts as day laborers and held them in solitary confinement only at night in order to reduce mental stress (Smith 10). The lower construction and overhead costs and the surplus labor value of the Auburn system's "congregate plan" won out over the "segregate" system in Pennsylvania. Both locations, however, improved upon the "jail" model by moving away from what was essentially a secured house; Inmates were moved into new facilities with small, individual cells and segregated populations that were assigned to work by day and practice penitence and prayer by night. Both systems were based upon a "deeply held belief in the redeemable private soul" (10).

Until the 1830's, American penal institutions operated by isolating those charged with crimes, and little attention was paid to reform outside of religious education. The presidency of Andrew Jackson, however, marks a shifting attention towards crime and an institutionalized response. As the populace came to believe that crime was "posing a fundamental threat to the stability and order of republican society," a series of programs and studies redirected prison administrators towards improving not just temporarily removing those charged with crimes. (Chlup). As more people began to write, think, and talk about crime and our collective response, the mission of penal institutions began to shift towards rehabilitation, and reformers began to seek out those likely to commit crimes or those who had committed infractions but were likely to

commit more serious offenses in the future. As a result, a criminal class began to be identified more by dialects and perceived deficiencies than by their behavior. Prisoners, under this changed view, were seen as reformable if supplied with the necessary social and economic skills, and literacy skills in particular.

Seeking to explain those whose lifestyles fall outside normalized modes of production, the state has looked to educators to explain and then to reinforce links between criminality with illiteracy. According to Messemer's history of correctional education, literacy levels among prisoners are difficult to evaluate, but 40% of state prisoners and more than 45% of jail detainees do not have a high-school diploma or GED (91). Similarly, two national studies of prison literacy conducted in the mid nineties offer a portrait of the educational backgrounds of people incarcerated in the United States. *Literacy Behind Prison Walls*, a publication of the U.S. Department of Education, found "prisoners' basic literacy rates are significantly lower than their free peers and that thirty-six percent of inmates reported having at least one learning disability" (31). Similarly, *Prison Literacy: Implications for Program and Assessment Policy* defines literacy as the ability to complete high-school equivalency courses, although the study recommendations are a bit more progressive listing learner-driven designs and access to technology among its recommendations (47). Prison officials routinely use academic measures as indicators of "progress" along an imagined linear path from criminality to social inclusivity, and parole boards often cite educational achievement as a sign of rehabilitation. Masking questions that might disturb status quo means of economic production, questions about our collective, communal complicity, the state, instead, directs research towards questions about *how* to enact educational counter-measures to criminality. The way we conceptualize literacy, as a result, is both informed by and informs the ways we respond to crime.

In 1994, politics in the United States were characterized by partisan finger pointing over who was "soft" on crime and who was "tough." As a result, congress passed the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act (VCLEA) denying prisoners' eligibility for Pell Grants and other Federal funding while simultaneously mandating federal prisons to provide basic literacy education (Branch 57). Federal law now both requires support for prisoners seeking a GED and prohibits state funding of post-secondary or supplementary instruction. This law closed programs run by state colleges, which had proliferated in the 80's and 90's. Further, the law validates high-school equivalency as the threshold for functionality and places blame for criminal behavior onto prisoners' lack of specific literacies. Kirk Branch explains that the VCLEA created an assumption that "illiteracy, or low literacy, causes crime. This assumption makes the provision of certain kinds of literacy education appear as a matter of some urgency, for to allow prisoners to leave prison without a basic education, often represented as necessary for post-release employment, fails to address an easily identifiable impetus toward a continuing criminal career" (59). Program administrators are positioned to see a specific, functional literacy as the "cure" for criminality. This view, or extension of the American "bootstraps" ideology, distracts attention from significant, systemic inequities that are directly related to criminality – advocates, teachers, and program administrators are encouraged to blame individual inmates when statistics show that entire populations are victim to the same "crimes" and overlook racism, poverty, drug addiction, and disenfranchisement as potential factors in inmate lives. These are seen as by-products of criminality rather than causes, and reform measures are authored accordingly.

On April 9, 2008, the "Second Chance Act" became law. Intended to reduce recidivism by addressing the limited options available to under-educated prisoners, the law set aside federal money to be distributed by the Department of Justice in the form of research grants. The first of

these was issued, in 2010, to the RAND Corporation tasking it to comprehensively evaluate the "effectiveness of correctional education programs in helping to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes for incarcerated adults within U.S. state prisons" (Davis et al 1). Drawing upon studies done over the preceding 30 years, RAND evaluated adult basic, adult secondary, vocational, and adult post-secondary education programs and specifically omitted life-skills programs and community based programs that serve prisoners upon release. Calculating the average cost of prison based programming, RAND juxtaposed the result against the cost (economic) of incarceration and projected average cost of recidivating. RAND reported:

> For a correctional education program to be cost-effective, we estimated that a
> program would need to reduce the three year reincarceration rate by between 1.9
> and 2.6 percentage points . . . our meta-analytic findings show that participation in
> a correctional education program is associated with a 13 percentage point
> reduction in the risk of reincarceration three years after release from prison (18)

Statistical information and calculations were based upon the reported costs incurred following rearrest. The report does not attempt to include the economic impact of education on policing or the court system nor does it attempt to evaluate the emotional costs borne by those involved; the RAND report does specifically mention victims of crime but makes no mention of costs incurred on victims of incarceration or their families and communities. In short, correctional education programs are, according to RAND, cost-effective.

While the report champions an economic motive and is oriented towards policy-makers and prison administrators, RAND nevertheless, calls for further analysis of program curricula and classroom pedagogy. Summing up their findings, the report writers state that "the debate should no longer be about whether correctional education is effective or cost-effective; rather,

the debate should focus on where the gaps in our knowledge are and opportunities to move the field forward" (81). The report serves as an economic, pedagogical rationale for what would seem to be a near-panacea solution to crime. RAND makes a clear association between criminality and illiteracy, uses economic data to validate the financial efficacy of literacy acquisition, and calls for research into the most efficient means of delivering literacy.

The RAND report rhetorically reinforces the criminalization of illiteracy and the illiterate by linguistically associating literacy acquisition with a medical procedure stating future researchers will be tasked with "measuring program *dosage*, identifying program characteristics, and examining more *proximal* indicators of program efficacy" (emphasis added, 82). Broken, illiterate prisoners will be taught how to think, learn, and problem solve; they will be saved through education. Or, in other words, prison education programs are positioned to teach poor prisoners, mostly people of color, how to be more middle class and more white. Consequently, in this model, literacy is employed as a cure all for hegemonic social ills. Those that do not reinforce capitalist stratification by accepting a labor class role are seen in terms of threat and maneuvered out of influential positions in society. Their credibility is destroyed by a near-permanent identification as a convict. And yet writing programs inside prison walls tend largely to focus on the individual and the individual's post-release lifestyle as the ultimate indicator of program success.

Evolving Definitions of Literacy

Literacy programs that serve incarcerated students have drawn from literacy research on secondary and post-secondary education to shape theoretical conversations about the work, yet most scholarship on prisoner literacy reduces a complicated, contentious history to a simple

bifurcation. The association of social status with an individual's ability to process symbols (read, write, and speak in a particular standardized dialect) is indicative of what Webster, Caddick, Reed, and Ford refer to as a linguistic-functional definition of literacy; literacy is understood to be "a set of mechanical skills for encoding and decoding print, or 'cracking a linguistic code'" (Webster 50). Through this lens, literacy is seen as a measure of one's ability to transmit a pre-existing message by means of an autonomous coding system (an alphabet) that is independent from the rhetorical situation in which it is used. Written competencies like handwriting, vocabulary, and grammar as well as spoken competency in transforming coded symbols into phonetic sounds are thought to be teachable through rote practice and skill-and-drill instruction. Literacy, in this view, is limited to the transmission of pre-existing meaning and messages, and programs exist to "equip adults with just sufficient competence to operate at the lowest levels of mechanical performance" (50). Learners are taught to memorize and repeat. Significantly, little attention is paid to where the "correct" versions come from.

Literacy, when thought of this way, is understood by most to be a non-gradable adjective; one either is or is not literate with clear separation between, although there is some gradation allowed among the illiterate population. In other words, it is possible for one learner to be more literate than another, but educators and successful community members are simply literate. Once someone learns to read and write, they are no longer in need of literacy education. As a result, education (and authority) is understood to emanate from the educated while those deemed illiterate are seen as deficient community members in need of remediation. As Walter J. Ong explains, literacy, when thought of this way, is normative and suggests illiterates "are deviants, defined by something they lack" (Literacy 19). Buttressed by Western notions of self-sufficiency and "bootstraps" meritocracy, blame for illiteracy falls on the illiterate with laziness,

disinterest, or social non-belonging effacing poverty, privilege, and limited access to education as exigency. Those whose discourse is dominant are positioned as the authority on uses of language, and everyone's goal is intended to replicate their use.

When articulated in education, civic, professional, religious, and other contexts, this belief in language use as an indicator of social standing is what Harvey J. Graff has termed the "literacy myth." Subscribers believe:

> The acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility . . . [and is] invested with immeasurable and indeed almost ineffable qualities, purportedly conferring on practitioners a predilection toward social order, an elevated moral sense, and a metaphorical 'state of grace.'
> (Literacy 635)

The literacy myth connects a puritan sense of predestined morality with a demonstrable skill. If literate behavior is a demonstration of democratic participation and economic possibility, the goal of all "good" Americans, then it can be a means of identifying those possessed of the ability. Conversely, it also provides a rubric for sorting out those who do not. As Graff says, "literacy was also used for order, cultural hegemony, assimilation, and adaptation" (Nineteenth 211). Literacy, functional literacy, is an educational, moral imperative, particularly in the high-stakes context of criminality and sorting out those deemed criminal. The literacy myth has, as a result, has greatly influenced the history of prison literacy programs.

Concurrently, some scholars sought to explain literacy as a psychological process. David R. Olson amends functional understandings of literacy by providing some agency within the rhetorical situation, although without departing from the autonomy of the code. Olson points to a

reversal of the cognitive cause and effect usually attributed to the reading-writing process. He says, "while writing provides a reasonable model for what the speaker said, it does not provide much of a model for what the speaker meant by it or, more precisely, how the speaker or writer intended the utterance to be taken" (122). The reader, according to Olson, is a necessary part of the meaning making process, but Olson stops short of involving context or a social scene in the literacy equation, although this absence creates an opening for the work of others who do so. A cognitive understanding of literacy, then, marks a degree of fluency in evaluating character and experience; language is a neutral coding system. The allowance for reader-audience agency does suggest a break in Plato's monolithic writer-as-agent and a shift in the onus for literacy acquisition to include recipients; however, the cognitive approach to literacy naturalizes the literacy myth suggesting a biological component for economic and moral affluence.

Consequently, in order for prison literacy programs to interrupt hegemonic processes, they need to be reframed by understandings of literacy that account for social agency. In contrast to the literacy myth, what Webster et al term the socio-cultural definition of literacy "challenges the assumption that literacy. . . is easily measured, packaged, and delivered. Instead, all forms of language use are seen as embedded in a social context which affects both linguistic form and function" (51). Social theories of literacy refocus attention away from accuracy in coding and onto the political and economic exigencies of particular, contrasting types of text. Beginning with the move toward liberatory education by Paulo Freire, Webster et al explain that social theorists collectively investigate the cognitive processes involved in coding, sharing, storing, and representing texts and analyze the production of meaning within and across cultures. Their conflation of cognitive and social theories notwithstanding, Webster et al mark a transition away from Platonic notions of knowledge and language wherein reading and writing are seen only as a

process of representation. Instead, literacy is involved in the creation of meaning. It not only informs the practices of daily existence like writing job applications, reading advertisements and warning labels, registering for support services, and so on, but also is implicated in sorting groups of people according to cultural capital. Literacy is seen as political, determined by social standing, and to be a determinant of future mobility.

The social turn of the 1960's is difficult to attribute to any single scholar or activist, although Paulo Freire is often thought of as the origin of Western notions of critical pedagogy and literacy as a political concept. While *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been criticized for possessing an almost mystical feel and for the unrelatability of educational models designed for Brazilian peasants, it remains a useful model understanding the social-political dynamics of literacy. Freire's now famous metaphor of traditional-positivist educational models as "banking" and the opposed question driven "problem posing" model, remain the exigency for most critical praxis (Pedagogy 75). Accordingly, functional literacy imagines students as "empty vessels" waiting to be filled by a commodified knowledge transferred but unaltered by literate processes. As a result, the decisions over what knowledge is worthy of replication and reproduction remain in the hands of the dominant. Students learn, but they learn to replicate the dominant social-economic order.

In *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, Ira Shor and Paulo Freire build upon the earlier paradigm to describe the way that a decontextualized, dehistoricized understanding of language leads to a mechanized model of education and an educationally driven "great chain of being:"

> . . . business interests predominate in society and control the election of public officials . . . Business-oriented officials then construct and administrate a nominally 'public' education system. This 'public' schooling mandates a

curriculum which socializes each new generation into the values of private

enterprise. Education is thus a complicated and in-direct agency through which

corporate interests are promoted in the public sector. (76).

Versions of English deemed "proper" are chosen over variant forms by administrators and

pedagogues, yet the mechanisms by which these determinations were made are masked. Those in

dominant positions can employ state power and resources to support private interest through

public educational institutions. The official curriculum of state sponsored schools rarely asks

students to question (let alone challenge) issues of inclusion and access, but rather, "the official

curriculum asks them to submit to texts, lectures, and tests, to habituate them to submitting to

authority" (11). Education, in a positivist curriculum, is tasked with creating "good" workers

and, as a result, propagates systemic exclusion and the resultant economic inequalities. A social

understanding of literacy, therefore, is necessary in developing a critical approach to literacy

education.

Freire expressed a sense of "duality" among oppressed and colonized people through

which they experience a constructed sense of self: "they are at one and the same time themselves

and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (48). Echoing Antonio Gramsi's

theorizations of hegemony and consent, Freire demonstrates not only the ways in which

oppression elicits complicity from those it dominates -- the oppressed do not see the mechanisms

as those by which they are dominated but instead see them as mechanisms that would enable

their success – but also the ways in which its actions are invisible even (or especially) to those

most affected. Freire explains, "the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the

contradictions of the concrete existential situation by which they were shaped . . . their

perception of oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression" (45).

Despite the problematic of dichotomizing oppressor/oppressed, this model, nevertheless, maps hegemony as control by consent or even by enthusiasm. Those without access to resources and power do not see themselves as oppressed but rather as just not quite yet fulfilled.

Following Freire's call for liberation through pedagogical change, literacy scholarship moved to explain aspects of literacy left untouched by earlier models. Building on the theories of Noam Chomsky and Lev Vygotsky, literacy scholars employed ethnographic research models to analyze and explain differences in literacy traditions across cultures. Scholars, such as Oscar Lewis, found that patterns of behavior, language use, and social values are shaped by "limited and limiting economic opportunities" (Cushman et al 10). Economics, a subject frequently thought of as disconnected from language and literacy, is implicated in literacy acquisition and use. Unfortunately, this became fuel for policymakers substantiating an isolationist political philosophy that "poor people, particularly minorities, perpetuate their socioeconomic conditions through their own cultural values and behaviors" (10). Seen as valuing downtime, socializing, and even laziness over hard work and success, economic affluence was attached to literacy and language in rather insidious ways. Brian Street explains that literacy had "come to be associated with crude and often ethnocentric stereotypes of 'other cultures' and represents a way of perpetuating the notion of a 'great divide' between 'modern' and 'traditional' societies that is less acceptable when expressed in other terms" (433). Despite some good intentions, a view of hierarchized cultures pathologized particular lifestyles and dialects and hierarchized them beneath hegemonic versions attaching economics to race. People were (and are) seen as less economically valuable due to their cultural inheritance and are thus denigrated as less socially valuable as well. Prisoners are presumed to be inherently deficient; while what is said is a deficiency in literacy skills, what is meant is a deficiency in white middle-class-ness.

Despite popular acceptance of the literacy myth, literacy scholarship reveals language use as more than an isolated skill or a representation of culture; literacy is a socio-cultural phenomenon that carries agency. John F. Szwed tells us that "it is not enough to know what a language looks like and to be able to describe and measure it, but one must also know what it means to its users and how it is used by them" (422). Importantly, Szwed attaches literacy use to the context in which it is used and changes the questions asked by literacy scholarship. Instead of studying language for its effect on people and cultures, Szwed asks us to reverse our inquiry and view our analyses through the lens of pedagogy: "the focus should be on the school and its relation to community's needs and wishes, on the school's knowledge of these needs and wishes, and on the community's resources" (429). Literacy, for Szwed, is situational and adaptable despite divergence from outside, more dominant values. It is tied tightly to materiality, and it should not be considered separately from the communities in which it is used. Szwed counters policymakers' use of "cultures of poverty" with calls for ethnographic research and an analysis of links between education and economic mobility. Graff echoes this concern remarking that the "rise of mass schooling" linked literacy to democratic ideals of reversed or leveled inequity. Graff says, "literacy did not overturn those relationships" (Nineteenth 218).

The contest between literacy as a mark of exclusivity and affluence or as a formative component of culture does, however, mark a paradigmatic shift in literacy studies. Brian Street terms this the "New Literacy Studies" and explains that scholars seeking to reveal the relationship between language use and systemic privileging of one group over another "have come to view literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society…[and] paid greater attention to the role of literacy practices in reproducing or challenging structures of power and domination" (434). Literacy, according to Street, is

intricately woven into the attribution of values, and the connection between language, thought (often in the form of judgment), and social access makes language acquisition and use inseparable from the ways we think of ourselves and each other. This ideological nature of literacy reveals tensions around authority, power, and resistance that are products of language use but also produce uses of language that mark social standing. Language, as a result, "can no longer be addressed as a neutral technology" (435).

Street, however, cautions that an ideological understanding of literacy should not be seen as a binary choice to autonomous, functional definitions. While some critics of Street suggest "unnecessary polarization," Street explains that the ideological model views technical skills and ideological processes as "encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power" (435). The processes by which we code meaning foreground particular value systems as natural and given while denigrating others as acquired or chosen deviations. This thought process is itself ideological, and it is implicated in ideological reproduction and the reinforcement of existing power distribution. Further, when adopted by institutional decision-makers, these ideologies are repackaged as "common sense," particularly when legitimized by induction into pedagogy. According to Street, "the naturalization of ideologies, as though they were universal necessities rather than institutions for reproduction of the cultural and power bases of particular interests and groups, has been reinforced by the academic community as much as by those whose interests it serves" (437). The adoption of functional definitions of literacy as well as concepts like "cultures of poverty" positions schools against those hoping for improved social-economic mobility through education. Education, as an institution, thus becomes an ideological apparatus mobilizing the economic resources of the state in service of capitalism and the culture of the dominant. Despite the intent of teachers and administrators, education is not politically or

ideologically neutral, yet literacy programs for incarcerated students often adopt school pedagogies with little critical consideration of their political consequence or implication.

Street suggests it is not enough to point to a specific linguistic structure or speech act, but instead, a challenge to hegemony must historicize and interrupt an idea:

> Social change involves challenging a given form of (dominant) discourse and the production and assertion of other discourses within new material conditions…not at the level of abstract philosophical inquiry but in terms of the real social relations between historical forces and relations on the one hand and forms of discourse sustained or undermined by them on the other. (441)

By adapting our understanding of literacy to include the ideological, we can visualize relations of power and material resources. Social change, then, must use an analysis of discourse and context, what Shirley Brice Heath calls the "Literacy Event," as a lens through which to analyze the history of relations of power and the distribution of material and economic resources. By understanding the formation of valorized forms of communication in context, we can, according to Street, understand the ways that valuation is ideologically informed. Street's understanding of literacy as ideological, then, gives us a way to understand power and access as distributed through systems rather than motives. Ideology carried by discourse (re)produces distributions of power independent of a speaker-writer's intent. In the context of prison literacy programs, facilitators often intend to do "good" yet ultimately validate the neoliberal exclusivity that drives incarceration.

In order to more fully understand the ideological mechanisms that distribute power and material resources, Deborah Brandt urges us to consider the ways that literacy definitions, needs, and uses change and fluctuate with intellectual disciplinary migrations, changes to physical

layouts and logistics, technology advances, and (especially) commercial and/or academic

economic sponsorship. Brandt adopts the term "sponsors of literacy" to refer to "any agents,

local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit,

regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy" (19). Sponsors may provide material resources (books,

writing materials, space, a teacher) as well as intellectual resources (definitions of literacy,

valuation of different literacies). Sponsors' interests may or may not coincide with the interests

of learners but nevertheless exert tremendous leverage on what are thought to be literate acts or

practices. In particular, the economic interests of the sponsor are a particularly powerful agent:

> Literacy learning is conditioned by economic changes and the implications they
>
> bring to regions and communities in which students live. Economic changes
>
> devalue once-accepted standards of literacy achievement but, more seriously,
>
> destabilize the social and cultural trade routes over which families and
>
> communities once learned to preserve and pass on literate know-how. (42)

Sponsoring influences change alongside economic and social changes, and access to resources

may be different across generations even in the same region. As economic means of production

change, technologies and needs for particular types of knowledge and discourse shift; those

thought of as literate prior to the internet and the information age may no longer be so. With the

rise of mass incarceration in the late 20th century, the power of the prison as a sponsor of literacy

(and as a literacy-driven sorting mechanism) grew exponentially.

By tracing the literacy acquisition practices of individuals through case-study analysis,

Brandt is able to analyze literacy in the context of each learner's life; one such study traced the

literacy acquisition of a state prisoner in the 1970's "within a penitentiary system that had grown

dense with the products – material and conceptual – of competing philosophies of prison

management, rehabilitation, and law" (64). By providing venues for GED education, the institution met calls for reform and civil rights with a demonstrable interest in prisoner literacy. However, the prison as a national institution was simultaneously changing to keep pace with political will and pressure to incarcerate with impunity. As overt forms of segregation like Jim Crow laws became socially and politically unpopular, the institution adapted brining "a flood of documents, forms, schedules, and regulations into the lives of prisoners" (65). Exiting the system became possible only by careful navigation of an elaborate written bureaucracy monitored by a host of specialists – guards, parole board members, court officers, judges, attorneys, parole officers, psychologists, doctors – each with a slightly different version of successful literate behavior. Literacy, in the neoliberal prison, becomes a political economy that recapitulates hegemony into more palatable terms. Instead of overtly sorting by race or sex-gender normativity, the prison wields literacy as a measure of social fluency or social unacceptability while simultaneously making it *seem* like prisoners' inability to meet demands is evidence of a lack of motive or interest. In other words, literacy, in the prison, translates the culture of whiteness into a mechanism and measure of blame; prisoners are blamed for the limitations they face. The prison's system of daily operations was mobilized as a political, economic sorting apparatus.

Outside the prison, definitions of criminality and policing policies of the tough-on-crime movement extend the sorting mechanism to schools and public services. Vagrancy and truancy laws have created a school-to-prison pipeline that brands youths as young as 13 as offenders worthy of spending their lives in prison. As J. Elspeth Stuckey cautioned, literacy in the neoliberal world is not the idyllic demonstration of culture but rather can be a weapon and a "system of oppression" (64). Brandt concurs, "Where once literate skill would merely have

confirmed social advantage, it is, under current economic conditions, a growing resource in social advantage itself . . . the advantage of literate skill is helping to aggravate social inequality" (169). Education, as an institution, attempts to account for literacy failures across sites through scholarship, yet schools remain economically tied to state sponsorship. Funding is granted to schools and scholars who demonstrate advantage leaving schools with lower performance, according to measures usually determined by the advantaged schools and scholars, to contend for fewer resources resulting in a repeating cycle with an ever widening gap between advantaged and other. Literacy is thus inseparable from the political-economic interests of sponsors, and literacy politically, socially, and economically stratifies according to those interests.

Because of the influence of sponsorship, literacy in the new millennium must be thought of in different ways. Literacy has never been neutral, yet sponsorship has historically been a confluence of religious and public educational interests. The proliferation of media venues and access points has proliferated and diffused literacy sponsors while at the same time commandeering literacy in the interests of neoliberal capitalism (197). Schools are being "privatized and individualized" and posited as personal workplace gain rather than as an investment in an educated public citizenry (202). Brandt cautions that "schools are no longer the major disseminators of literacy. Literacy instruction needs to develop from a sense of a new role for schools, as a place where the ideological complexities (including the inequities) of literacy sponsorship are sorted through and negotiated" (198). Brandt situates literacy as a dynamic, necessarily flexible link between communities and the systems that distribute economic and political power, and she calls for an approach to literacy that demystifies the multiple layers of influence and the varied (and often far removed) interests of invested sponsors, including (or especially) the state and the university. Democracy is at risk, according to Brandt, and while

literacy can be a means by which to understand hegemony and state power, the academy, as it exists now, serves to replicate and reinforce. Individual success means assimilation, and prisoner literacy, when prisoners are conceived of only as learners, can only ever be reparative.

Prison(er) Literacy Programs

Despite the ongoing conversations about literacy as an agent of critical social change, the vast majority of programs that serve incarcerated populations adhere to a functional definition of literacy that has changed little since the 1970s. In *Dead Man Walking: Teaching in a Maximum Security Prison*, W. Reason Campbell chronicles his experiences as a teacher and administrator working in a literature-focused literacy program in a California prison. Campbell describes teaching despite administrative security constraints and the culture of fear among staff in the prison. On his first day, he was told "the majority of your students are capable of killing you" and "no inmate's word is valid against the word of a free person" (19). Much of the text is a chronological narration of Campbell's negotiation of his environment given this outlook. He offers little consideration of how this ideology of moral superiority was an operant part of the experience.

Campbell does, however, attempt to validate a belief in literacy as a means of reforming a legal system with problems. He says, "Show me how we determine who the bad people are, and who the good people are. Then show me how we punish the one and reward the other. These are the problems our civilization faces. And it takes education to figure out answers to these questions" (60). Campbell uses the platform afforded by the literacy program and his academic position (i.e. his monograph) to reflect upon the ways that the political and material conditions of the prison impact his teaching and the emotions of the student writers in his course. He stops

short of recognizing either the economic and social contexts from which the writers constructed their identities or the agency of the program to influence people outside the prison walls. Campbell states simply that literacy is a necessary component of inmates' inclusion in society. Unfortunately, most descriptions of literacy programs in prisons and jails subscribe to a similar mythical version of literacy as the agent of salvation and personal improvement.

Tobi Jacobi categorizes prisoner literacy programs according to the "wide range of literacy opportunities and community service learning collaborations that educators are currently working to institutionalize . . . the categories progress from traditional courses that define literacy as reading and writing toward programs that blend basic skills with critical literacies," or attempt to (Reflections 5). Jacobi's map includes GRE and ABE courses; college courses taught by volunteer instructors; tutoring programs like Shannon Carter's HOPE program in Texas in which prisoners are taught to tutor one another; dialogic exchange programs, which have in other contexts been called writing partnerships; and writing and drama workshops, into which Jacobi also folds creative arts workshop programs (5-8). While Jacobi recognizes the intrinsic value of programs that "develop trust and self-awareness," create "hopeful places for incarcerated writers to reimagine their lives," and "shift the authoritarian gaze of the prison," she simultaneously notes that these programs approach literacy as an ideological construct only in rare instances (7-8). Noting the agency of resistance that writing can afford but that is usually missed, Jacobi calls for a "troubling" of current approaches to literacy programs for prisoners (10).

Despite Jacobi's call for a critical approach to literacy, facilitators and teachers writing about their programs usually focus their work on descriptions of the complicated relationships between their university writing programs, their academic training, and the administrative constraints placed on programs in prisons and jails. They most often describe the value of writing

and literacy as a means of processing difficult, or impossible, living conditions. For example, Rebecca Sanford and Johanna E. Foster describe their experiences teaching in a prison program and map five components of literacy programs for incarcerated students that center their work according to a "commitment to social justice and a vision of transformation of the educational expectations and opportunities available for incarcerated people in the USA" (599). They attempt to provide a voice for those they see as being most often denied one and critique vocational education for racialized and gendered biases, yet they end the scaffolding of their program with the instructor's collection of student work. Literacy acquisition, for Sanford and Foster, is a mode of rehabilitation for an essentially illiterate population, yet they neglect to question the academic standards by which they measure literacy. They champion GED reading and writing skills as alternatives to criminal conduct for post-release problem solving. While their attempt at critical literacy may indeed help those enrolled in their courses, it does not address how literacy can help prevent future course enrollment.

In "You Probably Don't Even Know I Exist," Jane Maher uses sample student narratives from a prison-based literacy program to reflect on psycho-emotional changes brought about by the literacy acquisition process. As a biographer of Mina Shaughnessy, Maher builds on the work of the Basic Writing pioneer to consider how her students on the inside both mirror and complicate the paradigm that our field uses to categorize student writers outside. Maher explains that she "began to realize that although they were similar in some ways to those students on the "outside" (a term the inmates use) who are required to take non-credit courses, they were different in ways that would affect and impact my teaching – and their learning (88). Maher considers the political-economic resources (or absence of them) awaiting these students, but in subscribing to a sense of a turning point or transformation, she does so without criticism of the

systems that distribute resources unequally. Shaughnessy, while heroic for inspiring many teachers to depart from current-traditionalism and champion the needs of students over the academy, is nevertheless criticized for similar oversight of the ideological and systemic. Inclusion, according to Maher and to Shaughnessy, is a more a matter of time, choice, and effort than of politics. Maher says that the overarching goal of the program must be to "overcome a pervading sense of not belonging, of not being worth attention, or not having a voice, a place, a future" (89). Maher, too, emphasizes the importance of a writing program as a means of transformation and even salvation.

John H. Esperian similarly defends functional literacy instruction revealing a belief that not only will literacy help prisoners reform but also that low literacy is itself almost solely to blame for crime (Effect 316). Numerous other examples exist of similar programs and approaches to literacy. Articles by Steve Kerr, Laura Rogers, Shannon Carter, and Lori Pompa interlace their descriptions with poetry and narratives written by prisoners to explain how the material conditions of the prison affect learning and teaching. Much of their writing describes a paradoxical relationship with prison authorities. Rogers explains that her experience was one of working in a liminal space that was both approved of and forsaken as dangerously provocative by those that had granted her permission to teach (Lifelines 18). Many others echo this sentiment and explain the existence of their programs is reliant upon a tenuous balance with those in power, and their narratives and articles alternate between a focus on a writer's psyche and the institutional dynamics of the programs, and none offer a provision for outreach or any discussion of the incarcerated writers as experts whose voices are needed outside prison walls.

Further complicating the landscape, literacy programs have undergone dramatic changes to administrative organization since the loss of Pell Grant funding. The academic intellectual

sponsorship and training of prison literacy program facilitators has become less direct and faith and community service organizations have stepped in. As a result, literacy programs have largely eschewed the philosophical shift towards political agency that marks community literacy programs in other contexts. For the most part, prison literacy programs still approach prisoners as broken, deficient learners waiting to be filled, or banked, with data and method. For example, Shannon Carter's profile of the faith-based Texas HOPE Literacy program and its frequent use of "broken" and "repair" metaphors reveals this negotiation:

> In other words, the function of literacy education in the Texas prison system may be to actively repair illiteracy with the assumption that doing so will better enable currently illiterate offenders to avoid future criminal behavior. Such a perspective is rather optimistic and avoids the possible causes of criminal behavior among highly literate offenders, but this progressivist myth is very attractive and persuasive when it comes to supporting community activism like the HOPE Literacy Project. (89)

While Carter's analysis does indeed reveal a problematic use of the literacy myth, she importantly notes its appeal to sponsoring agents. Despite the inadequacy of functional literacy in breaking long-term cycles of incarceration, literacy programs, in order to secure the space, time, and funding necessary for survival, must often employ popular, functional understandings of literacy that "prove" the validity of the program to lay-persons ideologically invested in incarceration. Consequently, Carter adopts her own repair metaphor in order to describe the conflicts between her secular academic intellectual training and the program's staff and access that are provided through a spiritual base. As a result, Carter directs her attention more towards

the university's missed opportunity than towards the literacy program as a possible agent for change.

The legacy of functional literacy sells literacy programs as a "cure" for criminality to voters and policy makers, but it also mobilizes the "convict narrative" genre as evidence. Instead of simply arguing for a program's efficacy, Maher speaks alongside those that seem to be the most directly affected. As one student explained, this program "is the place that cured me of the diseases that brought me here" (JBW 83). Maher's inclusion of incarcerated students' attestations makes her argument for the transformative power of literacy seem particularly credible. However, the depth added by infusing prisoners' writing into academic texts is not without risk. Doran Larson points out that most readers "have rather fixed tastes in and expectations of prison writing" (30). Larson explains that her experience demonstrates that most readers hold such work not as the informed, possibly oppositional perspectives of revolutionaries or teachers but more as students writing and validating their classroom activities. The possibility for critical reflection, then, is defused by a feeling of missionary-like approval. The messages are set aside in favor of noting how "well" the students are progressing. Complicating writing *with* (as opposed to about) as an appropriation and a misuse of potential, Larson warns against adding a " prison literacy complex" to the prison industrial complex by leaving students in service of the state (and its academy) rather than in service of liberation (31). Descriptions of prison programs, with or without prisoner-students' validation, are at risk of replicating the very systems they often seek to challenge. As Tobi Jacobi explains, "impulses to communicate the material challenges . . . [of] teaching incarcerated students permeate . . . [the] scholarship on prison literacy and education. Yet stories and physical descriptions like these rarely reveal the complexities of negotiating student and teacher agency in prisons, spaces shaped by many

stakeholders with disparate interests and goals" (Reflections 2). Sponsorship is a powerful means of usurping and repurposing agency, particularly when the sponsoring agent has the resources of the state.

This system survives despite reform efforts because it works *with* the overarching ideological system. Advocates function as state agents as they address specific inequities (illiteracy) as the root cause rather than as signs of a more systemic problem. The system of blaming individuals and then sequestering them away into institutions marked by violence, militant authoritarian regimes, and disease "is considered so 'natural' that it is extremely hard to imagine life without it" (Obsolete 10). To borrow the medical metaphor, we see the symptom as the problem and treat only the surface features. Change and reform might happen locally but without instigating any system wide social reform. The American dream lives on in denial of the horrible lives that it lays out in front of those not born into the privileged class. Further, it works in support of American political and economic systems; it supports the incarceration apparatus. As Kirk Branch explains, vocational systems of education will always work to benefit the ruling class. He explains that "pedagogic discourse of vocational education cannot be understood apart from the economic interests it serves, apart, that is, from its various sponsors" (95). The economic realities of the working class will constantly be at stake and the goal of these programs is ultimately to make workers more comfortable with being where they are. Programs that don't critically examine *systems* of domination rather than *symptoms* of domination will never produce system wide change.

Kirk Branch, ultimately, exposes a paradox faced by teachers working ideologically aligned with hegemony. He explains that in order to critically examine the power held by an institution, a teacher must call into question her own authority and credibility, but if her

credibility is impeached, there is no basis for the critique. Using the tension created with inconsistent and paradoxical differentials of power, Branch cautions that teacher training should cross multiple sites and definitions of literacy so that they can visualize the ideological and understand the goals that drive literacy in particular contexts. Branch explains that "teachers become better teachers not simply by learning theories and methods of teaching (as much as these can help) but by the act of teaching in particular and *always changing* local contexts" (my emphasis, 208). Branch calls on teachers to see literacy as contingent upon a subject location (both in the material and ideological sense) and calls on them to build from this point. He cautions teachers against using only the conversations of an academic discipline that decontextualize critiques from history and specific materialities; he asks, instead, that educators use theory to inform and understand experiences but that these experiences be *educating* not educated.

Rather than the processes by which student prisoners acquire or demonstrate literacy, it is the definition and understanding of literacy itself that must be revised to begin a process of change. The ways a program identifies and defines literacy, its ideological position, inform its relationship with state sponsorship and with its use of students' voices. When program administrators believe they are liberating but refuse to recognize their incarcerated students' expertise, they validate the systems that placed their students in the first place. As Gramsci explains, translated by David Forgacs, "one could say that ideologies for the governed are mere illusions, a deception to which they are subject, while for the governing they constitute a willed and a knowing deception" (Reader 196). Regardless of intent, the instructors become the oppressors. According to Marx and Engels, the only possible means for liberation from this mechanism, once set in motion, exists in the possibility that personal "history becomes world

history" (Marx 27). Liberation can only happen when the voting public can "see" the systems by which inequity is historically and discursively produced.

Programs built with this in mind, would understand that literacy "requires a rhetorical focus, because literacy in these settings takes its meaning, not from local uses, but from its connection to the world as it ought to be, the world in which we need to live" (Branch 27). In other words, literacy must be explicitly mobilized as an agent of socio-economic change, yet this change can only result if minds change *outside* the space of acquisition (whether classroom or prison cell) as well as in. The experts on criminality (as well as the social problems that lead to it) are not the instructors but rather are the instructed, yet students and prisoners, even if organized to act in unison, cannot legislate. Indeed, many cannot vote. Consequently, we all need to add to our existing literacies with the literacy of incarceration, but we can only do this by learning from those who best understand the costs of incarceration. We need programs that position prisoners and former prisoners as teacher-experts. In the next chapter, I outline two interacting literacy programs arranged to do just that.

CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL LITERACY AND PRISON ABOLITION

Educational programs for prisoners began as bible study sessions in the first American prisons. This coupling of religion with literacy education was founded on the notion that committing a crime was an independent, individual choice made as the result of a personal skills defect and a moral insufficiency. Despite a legacy of scholarship that demonstrates otherwise, most literacy programs that serve incarcerated students have inherited their charge from this belief and approach literacy instruction as reparative and transformative. Prisoners are supposed to learn new ways of solving problems by learning from successful, informed outsiders or former-insiders who have succeeded. I have termed this alignment of literacy programs as a "voices in" orientation. Literacy programs are designed to bring instructor expertise, source texts, and problem solving methods *in* to prisoners. While these types of programs exist to help prisoners, they do so by validating normative values and systems of distribution and criminalization that lead to increased rates of incarceration. While prisoners may get some relief from the monotony of prison life, may learn some valuable workplace skills, and even learn to communicate in ways that suspend judgment and stigmatization, the next generation of prisoners is still being targeted by widespread public support for prison building and the expansion of the criminal-legal apparatus.

However, as explained in subsequent chapters, a growing body of scholarship and increasing group of teachers, researchers, and community activists are moving away from deficiency approaches to literacy and advancing models in which crime is a political-economic symptom and literacy is much more complicated than coding data. While not disputing the agency of those committing criminal acts, Jane Maher and others argue that crimes are not

evidence of immorality but rather are attempts to solve problems based in "conditions that were rarely of their own making, over which they had no control, and which had contributed to the behavior that brought them to prison – [such as] poverty, neglect, racism, violence, abuse." (My Way 102). Recognizing that understanding crime means understanding complicated, biased systems of economic and material distribution, these scholars seek to reverse previous approaches to prisoner literacy. Their consideration of prisoner expertise and experience challenges functional notions of literacy. They point, instead, to the public as largely illiterate of criminality and the social trends and inequities that subtend it. They contend that the voting public is mostly ignorant of systems of discrimination and unequal resource distribution, and a rare few attempt to reorient prisoner literacy programs as a response.

While the majority of literacy programs available to prisoners remain entrenched in functional literacy, a few do now exist that recognize the validity of prisoners' existing literacies and expertise and complicate the academic linear model of expert-to-learner educating. Tobi Jacobi explains that for a literacy program to successfully move beyond the discursive replication of dominant criminalizing ideology, it must promote "engaged dialogue on writing, justice, and life experiences by valuing incarcerated writers' voices" (Slipping 70). In these programs, facilitators set aside notions of affluence as evidence of expertise and authorize authentic dialogue. Prisoners' voices are brought out from behind prison walls in what I call a "voices out" orientation. These kinds of literacy programs can challenge the norming, silencing effect of the prison by orienting their activities towards bringing prisoners' experiences and expertise *out* from the prison to teach community members, voters, and policy makers about social problems from what is usually a very unfamiliar perspective. Literacy, then, becomes a process of validating expertise as evidence of political and economic problems and collectively

unraveling layers of obscuring privilege and compartmentalization. To authentically perform

critical literacy, literacy programs must value prisoners' experiences rather than trying to repress

and reform according to an imposed set of status quo values.

While there have been many attempts at performing critical literacy by refocusing

scholarship on community rather than classroom spaces, these efforts have failed to spark serious

and sustained critiques of hegemony and social normativity. In this chapter, I attempt to explain

why and point to practices that could do otherwise. Specifically, I outline the conditions in which

the rhetorical operation of hegemony can be visualized paying particular attention to the ways

discourse is mobilized to counter otherwise potentially revolutionary movements. Using these

conditions as the basis for critical literacy, I explain the evolution of literacy studies as

scholarship moved from educational to community contexts. In order to demonstrate how critical

literacy can authentically critique and interrupt the inertia of social normativity, I describe two

programs that model a "voices out" approach. These programs take a unique attitude to their

participants' perspectives authorizing their expertise and offsetting the power dynamic usually

established in prison-based literacy programs. Juxtaposing the activities of these programs with

university sponsored community literacy projects allows me to shape a definition of critical

literacy for the particular contexts of programs for incarcerated students, and I identify, in the

last chapter, a queer(ed), critical approach and a new public pedagogy.

Leaving the Academy for a Critical, Community Literacy

As explained in chapter three, the identification of significant issues of social-economic

control being propagated by public education's adoption of an increasingly positivistic ideology

has driven some literacy scholars to reconsider how well schools perform as progenitors of

democracy. Critics of the "educational industrial complex" caution against the ways in which educational institutions might reinforce oppression veiled as dehistoricized "truths" devoid of diachronic and subjective meaning. Henry Giroux explains that knowledge "appears to be independent of human beings . . . it becomes universalized, ahistorical knowledge. Moreover it is expressed in a language that is basically technical and allegedly value-free" (Critical 36). This epistemological insistence on a positivist understanding of language strips history to sell knowledge that privatizes or devalues difference and validates the converging interests of corporate and state educational sponsors. The experiences and perspectives of a white, middle class, heteronormative majority are naturalized as universal and objectively factual, and the replication of modern-bourgeois values is relabeled as literacy and as education. In response to these processes and in search of alternate models, some scholars have turned to other sites for literacy education.

Writing about the lessons university-based service learning can acquire from grass-roots writing groups like the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop or the Iowa Rural Renovation Proposal, Anne Ruggles Gere explains the need for literacy program organizers, traditionally university faculty, to "listen to the signals that come through the walls of our classrooms from the world outside" (275-6). Ruggles Gere asks them to question their academic inheritance and sponsorship and instead to consider modeling pedagogies for university students on the efforts of community organizers and community groups. Often, motive becomes difficult in the classroom as outcomes, real world outcomes, can seem distant and vague, especially to classrooms of privileged, middle class students. This is not often true of purpose-driven community writing groups. She explains:

> Positive feelings about oneself and one's writing, motivation to revise and
> improve composition skills, opportunities for publication of various sorts, the
> belief that writing can make a difference in individual and community life – these
> accomplishments of workshops outside classroom walls mirror the goals most of
> us composition teachers espouse for our students. Workshops outside classroom
> walls frequently, however, succeed with those individuals deemed unsuccessful
> by their composition instructors. (277)

While participants rarely identify themselves as "writers" and remain largely invisible to academic researchers and pedagogues, Ruggles Gere notes that groups like these are quite successful and usually sustainable. She critiques the academic disciplines, particularly English Composition, that lay claim to literacy for neglecting to account for literacy acquisition and literate practices in contexts other than schools. She argues that while affirming a place (and funding) for literacy education as a discipline within the academic hierarchy, theories of literacy have lost sight of the purpose-driven nature of public writing and the degrees of difference across participants and groups (285). Instead, formalized literacy instruction has inscribed whiteness into officially sanctioned literacy standards and practices. Community groups, conversely, have long recognized the expertise of all their participants.

Now generally referred to as community literacy, Ruggles Gere surveys extracurricular spaces of literacy acquisition and challenges educator-organizers to "avoid an uncritical narrative of professionalization and acknowledge the extracurriculum as a legitimate and autonomous cultural formation" (284). Rather than contrasting spaces outside schools against academic standards, she asks that scholars recognize the ways that literacy needs and practices change with context and purpose. Ruggles Gere's model also calls for a departure from workplace and

95

workshop literacy so that a group can be constructed according to the "aspirations and imaginations of its participants. It posits writing as an action undertaken by motivated individuals who frequently see it as having social and economic consequences" (279). Building, specifically, upon the work of Shirley Bryce Heath and Patricia Bizzell, Ruggles Gere tasks community literacy endeavors with stepping away from academic intellectual sponsorship and standards of literacy and instead validating difference and a wide range of expertise. The extracurriculum, according to Ruggles Gere, or community literacy, shows us "the importance of learning from amateurs" (286). This emphasis on community sites of literacy offers an important framework for investigating prison literacy programs and understanding how literacy does or does not function as a conduit of democracy in those sites.

As Villanueva points out, difference is an essential component of social change and authentic democracy; a democracy marked by homogenous traits is in danger of failing or has already failed to be inclusive. With such stakes in mind, Giroux advocates that only a critical understanding of literacy "that embraces the civic purpose of education and provides a vocabulary and set of practices that enlarge our humanity will contribute to increasing the possibility for public life and expanding shared spaces, values, and responsibilities" (Critical 9). A view of literacy that links materiality, discourse, and social, economic, and political ideals problematizes positivist narratives for an inability to account for everyone's memories. Giroux says:

Literacy becomes an enabling condition for forms of citizenship in which members of dominant and subordinate social groups are offered subject positions that address what it means to live in a society in which they have the opportunity to shape history in

emancipatory terms rather than be the subject or object of its oppressive and colonizing

practices. (Literacy 2)

By situating literacy in public conversations, Giroux, like Villanueva, sees a means by which

writing, whether in classrooms or community spaces, can democratize and pluralize public life.

For Giroux, critical literacy begins with an analysis of political connections and differentials of

power between our contingent senses of self; it begins with discourse situated in materiality and

in identity.

Throughout his work, Giroux echoes Gramsci by citing the importance of public

intellectuals who engage with the relationships among language, ideology, and the distribution of

resources. Ellen Cushman similarly cautions that identity is an incomplete notion of public life

when under the gaze of state-sponsorship through education. Writing specifically of university

sponsored service learning efforts, she says: "Because university representatives tend to esteem

their own brand of knowledge more than popular forms of knowledge, they deepen the schism

between universities and communities" (334). While dialogue and disensus can enact a sort of

public pedagogy by exposing the unstable nature of commonly accepted ideas, to do so with

functional definitions of literacy and teachers banking information risks artificially stripping

materiality from these analyses and replacing it with institutionally sponsored values and

assumptions.

Echoing Ruggles Gere's caution against professionalization but with reinforced

conviction, Cushman emphasizes not only that education needs to recognize the agency of

community writing and literacy but that it must also explicitly level the balance of power. The

sponsorship of the university is extended even to literacy spaces outside of classrooms as

teachers draw upon intellectual training and experiences validated and authorized by the

academy. Framing her analysis with Shaughnessy's now-famous "Diving In" essay, Cushman says, "When public intellectuals not only reach outside the university, but actually *interact* with the public beyond its walls, they overcome the ivory tower isolation that marks so much current intellectual work. They create knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves" (emphasis original, 330). Cushman distinguishes between simply moving expert-centered models out into community spaces and authentically creating dialogue to facilitate learning *between* discourse communities. But to do this, educators must set aside a subject position that they've invested years to develop; they must ideologically "dive in."

University sponsored service learning arrangements can bring state resources to bear on contexts ignored by legislative funding, but these programs do not always produce results that benefit everyone involved. By participating in community literacy programs, academic personnel can, at times, see poverty and criminality not as matters of causality and behavior but as complex rhetorical interactions of ideology and material reality. At the same time, however, academic participants often cling to truths and values that stall efforts to critically engage. As Cushman explains, there is a danger of a missionary-zeal where they feel as though they are "imparting to the poor and undereducated their greater knowledge and skills" (334). Often, participants wind up doing "service" but without any real consideration of the served community's needs, and yet participants feel their approach was vindicated by its congruency with popular conceptions of civic behavior. Echoing Stuckey, Jeffrey T. Grabill explains that "literacy can hurt as well as help" (53). While intentions may be laudable, entrenched hegemonic values can effaces critical thought with "good for good's sake" simplicity. Academic participants often simply lose sight of the very real consequences of their (in)actions; they are, after all, academics more than they are

community organizers and activists, particularly when limited to a semester or quarter commitment.

Critical, community literacy is, then, more than interaction outside the classroom. Explaining community literacy as a process of challenging truths, Grabill "sees literacy as part of an unequal system of power and privilege" (53). Or, as Linda Flower explains, "critical literacy sees literacy as a way to resist power, challenge injustice, and insist on alternative images of social and self-development" (Community 17). To spark this sort of critical insight, however, those most authorized by validated forms of knowledge must recognize the oppressive, rhetorical agency of that authorization. They must set aside their academic ethos and instead seek to understand the construction of ethos from the materiality and the community social systems around them. As Cushman says, they must "make knowledge that speaks directly to political issues outside of academe's safety zones" (329). While combinations between university writing courses and literacy programs for prisoners, like those run by Shannon Carter and Laura Rogers described earlier, may serve the immediate interests of both academics and prisoners, there are few instances where the collaboration has actually resulted in substantive, appreciable change in non-incarcerated participants' conceptions of self, particularly when direct contact with prisoners was restricted or prohibited (by either participating institution); in most cases, academics remain "traditional intellectuals."

However, in describing the Carnegie-Mellon Community Literacy Center, Flower defines a "prophetic, pragmatic, and intercultural rhetoric of public engagement" as "an intercultural dialogue *with others* on issues that *they* identify as sites of struggle" (19). In emphasizing a discursive process originating around community-identified issues, Flower is suggesting the need for an ideological change in the ways we imagine the communities with which we work. Linda

99

Adler-Kassner describes this rhetorical "reframing" as moving from an "activist" to an "organizer" identity that works towards specific change through community-centered strategic planning that is *designed and enacted locally* (my emphasis, 181). The thread of continuity throughout these scholars' conceptions of critical, community engagement and critical literacy is that they discard the top-down or outside-in model. They do not teach but rather change starts with the authentic expertise of those most affected and works inward-out rather than top-down or from outside in. Learners, and their values, are reconceptualized as educators. This re-orientation is a significant part of the "voices out" approach that I discuss in this and other chapters.

Paulo Freire was interested in a "Janus-like" constructed subjectivity of oppressed peoples that could reveal contradictions in institutional values, and while Freire's concept is crucial, it inherits new problems when applied to community literacy in the neoliberal United States. Thomas Deans, writing about transitioning service learning pedagogy to community literacy programs, cautions that while Freirean critical pedagogy does help to unpack ideological meaning through textual analysis, the "neo-Marxist approach of liberatory pedagogy also assumes a certain kind of faith – a faith that critical intellectual habits will translate into effective social action, that an attitude displayed in class will lead to action in the wider community" (43). Setting aside an educational pedigree or a "teacher hat" is a very different task than questioning our own ways of thinking and valuing. Indeed, the situation of a Brazilian peasant or an American prisoner facing state oppression is much more overtly political than that of middle class, white, cisgender students trying to detect their own encoded privileges.

Attempting to unpack the complicated relationship between literacy, power, educational ethos, and sponsorship, Deans maps community literacy and service learning programs according to their orientation to their partner communities outside of the academy. He

distinguishes between programs that position students "as agents in the world beyond campus who pair outreach work with critical reflection (writing *about* the community), who use writing to aid social service organizations (writing *for* the community), and/or who help craft collaborative documents that instigate social change (writing *with* the community)" (44-45). The separation of the three relationships between the university and the community offers a model by which to consider who is serving whom and why.

When used in conjunction with rhetorical analysis, this model can expose rifts between public and private interests and reveal whose values are being taught to whom, which can lead to discussions of why. Is the wisdom of the academy being taken as the penultimate expression of knowledge? Or are participants seen as experts on their own lives and tasked with teaching those who have not experienced their situations? By asking questions of their programs and practices, facilitators and participants can consider broader systemic change alongside the development of specific texts without obscuring the political nature of their work. As Deans explains, analysis of a program's role in the community does risk the exposure of contradictions in our assumptions and values, but in doing so, it also "affords us a means not only to imagine a better world, but also to help bring it along" (172). By analyzing who is speaking for whom and who has spoken for whom, a process of critical literacy acquisition can reveal and negotiate what I earlier called the "reform trap" or what Villanueva, citing Gramsci, calls "revolution restoration" (22).

Working to refine a definition of critical, community literacy, Grabill, like Paula Mathieu, similarly charts aspects of community literacy and university-based pedagogy that engage with communities outside the academy in order to problematize the social turn in literacy scholarship. These scholars remind us that the university, despite its self-assured sense of authority, does not control the production of knowledge and meaning outside its walls yet

nevertheless attempts to dictate which knowledge is accepted as canon and truth. Grabill says that "nearly all literate activity takes place within or with reference to specific social institutions, and any attempt to understand literate practices without understanding the institutions . . . fails to account for how and why literate practices look the way they do" (7). For Grabill like Brandt, literacy must focus on the distribution of power and access through an explicit consideration of literacy sponsorship. Mathieu, on the other hand, charts the implications of community engagement programs' degree of attachment to the sponsor.

Employing a scale that spans from strategic (large scale) to tactical (local), Mathieu provides a rubric for differentiating between *programs* that favor (self) sustainability over service, *problems* that seek to remediate "broken" communities, and *projects* whose orientation most authentically engages with communal need (Tactics 99). Mathieu explains that "while much of the recent scholarship in service learning has gained in complexity and sophistication, . . . it still tends to prioritize student and institutional needs over community needs," and she instead proposes "an alternative model for creating community-university projects that are tactical, localized, and begin from developed relationships within communities" (90). While Grabill privileges an analysis of institutional discourse and seems to embrace larger-longer service learning arrangements, Mathieu cautions against strategically organized programs and would have their analytical attention directed to specific material conditions, the needs of communities outside the academy, and the potential interfering role of state and academic influence. However, awareness and passing mention is not enough.

As Keith Gilyard reminds us, with regard to racism, any action that seeks to upset the norming power of systemic oppression must explicitly take that oppression as its object and the performance of resistance as its mode (83). In order to interrupt the homophobic and racist

notions upon which incarceration and its neoliberal hegemony are built, programs attempting to enact real change – a redistribution of material and economic resources across marginalized communities – must interrupt the epistemologies that privatize and norm gender and race in the language of public life. In a statement that is considered axiomatic to queer theory and scholarship, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick locates the project of theorizing queerness as central to understanding contemporary culture, ideology, and epistemology:

> An understanding of virtually every aspect of modern Western culture must be . . . damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition; and it [must] assume that the appropriate place for that analysis to begin is from the relatively decentered perspective of modern gay and antihomophobic inquiry. (1)

Unpacking the processes by which some communities are marginalized while others benefit is reliant upon untangling the function of gender and sex normativity as means of reproducing systemic oppression through institutional spaces, such as prisons in particular. And, as Villanueva shows us, systemic change is sustainable only when voters and community leaders join in widespread critique of systems rather than symptoms of domination despite the advantages they gain from the maintenance of those very systems. Or, as Bruce Herzberg explains, real ideological critique is dependent on their ability to "transcend their own deeply ingrained belief in individualism and meritocracy" (312). Participation and engagement are not enough; we must be able to see the cuts where narratives patch values together to make constructed truths. A queer-rhetorical analysis and a specific instability in collective memory or identity are invaluable, essential tools for a critical literacy project.

Community Literacy Programs that Counter the Gendering Apparatus

As I explained in chapter two, legislated criminality and the discourse of incarceration legitimize and legalize the sorting of othered individuals along many lines of difference. Normative sexual practices and expressions of gender identity, alone or in combination with traits identifying race and class, expand the ideology of incarceration. As Joey L Mogul, Andrea J Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock explain, "markers of race, class, gender, and relationship to the nation state have long served to identify who is and who is not a presumptive 'criminal'" (Queer xvii). The legal system sorts offensive others (re)classifying and marking them for removal from capitalist competition. Stigmatization and criminalization include not only raced, exoticized bodies but also those seeming to live in opposition to perceived norms of gender identity and sexual orientation; incarceration replicates norms of sexuality and gender as well as race. Stereotypes recursively link deviant lifestyles to criminal identity through crime stories and news reports. Criminals are social deviants and, as a result, social deviants are (supposedly) criminal.

Community literacy programs that use direct-service in order to counter the judgment and ideological inertia around criminality as it intersects with a specific means of sorting and segregating (race, gender, sexuality, etc.), are not new, but they are rare. One such program exists in Vancouver Washington. In 1973, the WORTH program (then Women Offenders Rehabilitation, Training, and Help) was created by a group of women volunteering with the YWCA in response to a request for support for women made by the Clark County Sheriff in Southwest Washington; women incarcerated at the jail were not issued clothing or personal hygiene products and the sheriff asked the group to provide them. In addition, the group decided to offset the jail's meager supply of literature, which was almost exclusively faith-based, by providing books and tutoring for those who needed help to read. While the Clark County jail

holds more than 550 people on any single day, WORTH is the only support program accessible to women at the jail (Main). For various reasons, other programs have limited their service to incarcerated men.

WORTH's reading-tutoring sessions evolved, over time, from an individual, infrequent mentor-tutoring relationship into a weekly, classroom-style, interactive workshop. During that process, discussion topics began to span not just functional, code-oriented literacy but also economic and social problem solving using community services – the kinds of practices noted in the previous section. In the mid 1980s, WORTH began recruiting volunteer representatives from community service agencies to speak to participants about women's health issues, negotiating and exiting abusive relationships, and workplace (re)entry (Volunteer). While not conceived exclusively as a literacy program, the work done by early volunteers was congruent with literacy practices of the time and was informed by their experiences as parents and, in a few cases, as primary school teachers. As the program grew, it drew upon volunteers' experiences as students and teachers to expand their sessions to include lessons on workplace reading and writing and, occasionally, creative writing. However, in the 1990s, the growing tough-on-crime ideology reinforced conceptualization of inmate-participants and led the program away from its early participatory model and towards a more top-down, banking approach.

Organized under a national non-profit agency, individual city-centered YWCA agencies operate with relative autonomy and have varying degrees of allegiance to the groups' Christian heritage. Originally named the Young Women's Christian Association, the Clark County YWCA that runs the WORTH program was among the first to redact their name to remove references that local leaders felt were exclusionary, and they ceased using the spelled-out acronym in the early 1970s although exact recollections of dates vary (Volunteer). The YWCA-World

organization officially adopted the name YWCA (without an acronym extension) in 2002, although by this time, most of the satellite agencies had already done so (Volunteer). In order to reinforce their inclusive philosophy, the Clark County YWCA adopted a revised mission statement in 2011 saying that the agency and all its programs are "committed to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. We are guided by six core values: empowerment, diversity, service, teamwork, respect, and commitment" (YWCA).

Until this time, most (if not all) of the WORTH program volunteers were retired women who had discovered their volunteer opportunity through previous volunteers and faith-based organizations. Because of this, an ideology of missionary charity and salvation underscored the program's work. However, with a realignment of the agency under its new mission, WORTH underwent changes. A new Director of Volunteer Development was hired which led to the recruitment of program volunteers from other sources. In particular, college students began to outnumber those recruited from churches. The program also grew during this time and expanded to serve not only the Clark County Main Jail but also a minimum-security work release facility. The bifurcation of the program provided space to separate volunteers with conflicting visions of the program. And during this time, WORTH also recruited a new coordinator for the program at the main jail: me.

While there may be some concern about professional distance and the "objectivity" of my research on a program with which I have been involved, I think, instead, the work can be a valuable critique of an objective view. As Jane Ward tells us, "feminist, queer, and critical race scholars have challenged this reliance on objectivity by demonstrating that the research process is often infused with intimacy, sexuality, power disparities, dangerous possibilities, and various

106

political and personal tensions that underlie relationships between researchers and participants" (23). Rather than suppress a program that validates the authority or credibility of an often silenced community of incarcerated women, I feel the inclusion of this section counters the patriarchal traditions that direct academic scholarship, and, as Villanueva says, suppress would-be revolution. Further, Ward explains that it is often impossible to gain access to the stories of oppressed populations without engaging in the communities yourself (24). I do not feel that my closeness to the material of my research invalidates it; I feel that it gives me an access that is otherwise impossible. Due to the obvious need for confidentiality, especially around sexual orientation and gender identity, I do not directly quote program participants and focus instead on a rhetorical analysis of the program itself.

When I joined WORTH in 2011, I was in the midst of writing early drafts of what would become this dissertation's prospectus. I was steeped in the literature of prison abolition, critical literacy and social justice, and in the rhetorical power of discourse. As a result, my assessment of the program revealed some problems. While WORTH was providing valuable support to women at the jail in the form of clothing, some tutoring and writing support, and referrals to community services, it was doing little to reveal the larger structures of economic and social marginalization that kept the jail filled to capacity. Furthermore, the program had no provisions for outreach or public education. The program's use of literacy was entirely a functional, deficiency model. Volunteers were recruited for skills they already had and their interactions with program participants were limited to brief, logistical questions following each session or to short mini-lectures on workplace and legal writing tasks. Volunteer turnover was extremely high.

WORTH was similarly missing an opportunity to train volunteers as advocates and instead simply validated popular attitudes about criminals and service as charity. Unlike other

YWCA programs, WORTH did not offer any sort of specific training for volunteers but instead relied upon volunteers to teach one another how to work within the constraints of the jail, and volunteers were assumed to have adequate knowledge of the problems that participants were contending with. These volunteers were, after all, not in jail, so the assumption was that they must know how to be successful and understand how to live a crime-free life, or so conventional thinking goes. WORTH volunteers, like all YWCA volunteers, were required to attend a series of CORE training workshops on topics like "Dynamics of Oppression, Empowerment Based Service, and Working with Survivors of Trauma" as well as program-specific training mechanisms (YWCA). The titles of these workshops reveal a critical, rhetorical awareness of economic and social inequity operating through systems and privilege, yet the insistence of an early WORTH Director was that "our work is different from the other programs so we just go and listen" (Volunteer).

WORTH, as I saw it, was not aligned with the YWCA mission and was not doing any sort of outreach but rather was teaching-in, and I wanted to make changes. Instead of empowering women by facilitating the transmission of their stories and expertise to learners (both the volunteers in the room and the community outside the jail), WORTH was focused upon bringing expertise in to teach the women better ways of coping with problems. No attention was paid to what those problems mean or what they say about our community's systems of privilege and advantage. To give WORTH a more critical approach, I wanted to create a space for what Linda Flower calls "negotiated meaning," or, "a tentative and probably problematic negotiated response to the social and cognitive, historical, and material conflicts within the human activity (and activity system) or community outreach" (Intercultural 182). By introducing unfamiliar perspectives, volunteers would be faced with discordant versions of popular cultural narratives.

As Villanueva points out, they would be invited to see that what we think of as collective memory does not adequately explain the different memories held by some communities (Hegemony 22). Discussions and dissensus can highlight these differences and call into question the norming action of "common sense" or "common knowledge."

To better align WORTH with my "voices out" paradigm, I designed and implemented a series of changes to the program oriented around a critical interpretation of WORTH's failures to adopt the mission of the YWCA. My intent was to reposition volunteers as learner-facilitators and to reposition our participants as teachers so that both could help to change minds in Southwest Washington by bringing prisoner-participants' expertise out from the jail. Following conversations with several members of YWCA leadership, I changed the acronym for WORTH; it now stands for Women's Options for Recovery, Transitions, and Health. I removed the word "offender" from the title in the hope of not-validating already existing judgments about the offensiveness of the women involved; I changed "help" to "health" as a subtle shift away from a missionary approach; and I added "recovery" to expand on the older rehabilitative approach that promoted drug and alcohol abstinence to recognize that addiction, abuse, and incarceration are all traumas from which participants deserve recovery.

Concurrently, I wrote a training manual to coordinate classroom and volunteer activities. While much of the manual deals with logistical requirements of volunteering at the jail and assuaging concerns of new volunteers, introductory and concluding sections give volunteers context for the program by providing an overview of incarceration in the United States. This section posits a view of criminality intended to problematize hegemonic attitudes and also establishes a set of terms. An extended glossary directs volunteers to use "participant" rather than "inmate, convict, or criminal" and explains how these terms can power and validate

109

different pictures or perspectives of criminality. This manual also revises the classroom approach of WORTH, which had become increasingly top-down with presenters lecturing and often discouraging questions (often with misguided fear of losing control of the group). By scaffolding sample lesson plans with significant moments of discussion, I oriented group facilitation practices towards a more inclusive seminar or support group arrangement. While these changes made significant adjustments to the program inside, volunteer attitudes and statements made to other program volunteers did not reflect any changed awareness of hegemonic assumptions about criminality. Changing the texts and practices inside was not quite enough.

In collaboration with several volunteers and student interns, I designed a training program for WORTH around monthly meetings and screenings of documentary films. By pairing the insights of direct-service volunteers from the jail with films like *Visions of Abolition* and *Cruel And Unusual: Transgender Women in Prison* that unpack the ways gender and race complicate the supposed purpose of incarceration, we are all better positioned to unpack entrenched, hegemonic narratives and thus are able to reveal the workings of ideology. Further, we opened these meetings and screenings to community members, students, and volunteers and staff from other programs in order to create bridges to other community groups with our volunteers acting as the public intellectuals called for by Cushman, Villanueva, Mathieu and others or together creating what Giroux calls a "critical public sphere" of dialogue based *in* not *on* the community (Globalizing 141). As indicated in a Sentencing Project policy brief, "Ending Mass Incarceration: Social Interventions That Work," "a community level approach . . . acknowledges that federal, state, and local government policies not directly concerned with crime may nonetheless bear indirectly on crime rates through their impact on neighborhood structures" (2). My intent for these sessions was to demonstrate to as many community members

as possible that the picture most non-incarcerated people have is inaccurate, and they seemed to work.

Feedback on the sessions was extremely supportive and positive. Attendees reported to YWCA leaders that they experienced startling revelations about incarceration. One volunteer stated, "I have discovered that [prisoners] are simply community members – not evil villains out to commit heinous acts. They are our friends, coworkers, neighbors, and family members: sisters, aunts, grandmothers. Some hold Master's degrees, many have children. They could be you or I" [*sic*] (Volunteer). Other respondents expressed similar changes in perspective, and subsequent conversations have been driven more by questions than by presumed "truths," and more volunteers have expressed an interest in engaging in direct service as a means to learn rather than as a means to help or to fix. More importantly, each volunteer is now, to some degree, an advocate for a changed response to social problems, and while some may still support incarceration, they do so with hesitation and consideration that they may not have the entire picture. As a result of this effort, other YWCA program coordinators have asked to model similar training-outreach programs on WORTH, one volunteer expanded the screenings to a nearby university, and the WORTH program was awarded a sustainability grant from a local credit union.

As a program employing critical literacy practices, the specific material and ideological injuries that program participants face underlie all of the work that WORTH does; the situation for men behind bars is quite different than for women and especially for those with non-normative gender identities. As explained in chapter one, women represent the fastest growing demographic among incarcerated populations, yet detention facilities are still largely based upon the needs of male prisoners. A 2003 Department of Justice report estimates that 6% of women

entering county jails and 5% of women entering prison are pregnant (Harrison). While county jails can sometimes mitigate pregnancies and delivery with sentencing alternatives, women sent to prison will be incarcerated at the time they deliver. It is important to also note that the pre/peri-natal needs of incarcerated women often differ from other women. According to Barbara A. Hotelling, "pregnant prisoners have health-care needs that are minimally met by prison systems. Many of these mothers have high-risk pregnancies due to the economic and social problems that led them to be incarcerated: poverty, lack of education, inadequate health care, and substance abuse" (37). Prison medical services provide legally adequate wound care and anti-infection medication but do little if any preventative care.

In 1976, the United States Supreme Court ruled, in *Estelle v. Gamble*, that deliberate indifference to a prisoner's serious medical needs is a violation of the Eighth Amendment; however, Victoria Law explains that "despite this ruling, prison health care continues to neglect the health of its prisoners. Incarcerated women face the additional challenge of trying to obtain adequate care for specifically female health concerns within a system still designed with the violent male prisoner in mind" (29). Prisons do now provide support for pregnant female prisoners, but only a few provide prenatal care, postnatal counseling, or nutrition-dietary support. Women in prison also face mental-emotional complications to health care more frequently than men. Victoria Law states that "57% of women entering state prison and 40% entering federal prison had been physically or sexually abused prior to incarceration. In contrast, only 6% of men . . . suffered prior abuse" (6). Mental and women's health services for incarcerated women tend to be provided only on a reaction-basis. Once a woman or a baby has died or suffered severe, debilitating illness or injury, an institution may change its practices to prevent the specific condition or situation but very rarely consider altering its overall approach to the health and

wellness of those in their care (Law 31). Feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness are pervasive among female-identified prisoners.

Even if released prior to delivery, women entangled with the criminal legal system are subject to increased suspicion even by the medical professionals sworn to help them. Researchers from the National Advocates for Pregnant Women identified over 750 civil and criminal cases filed against women with complaints related to the mother's perceived choices while pregnant. Many of these were criminal cases brought against mothers who miscarried or delivered stillborn babies and tested positive for controlled substances (McVeigh). Attempts by conservative politicians to "protect" the mother and baby actually undercut the best practices of health care and substance abuse treatment professionals by forcing women to forego prenatal treatment because of the resultant fear of arrest and incarceration. The health of the individuals is endangered while the systems that put pressure on these mothers to avoid professional care go unchallenged. According to Jeanne Flavin and Lunn M. Paltrow, these "arrests, detentions, prosecutions, and other legal actions . . . distract attention from significant social problems, such as our lack of universal health care, the dearth of policies to support pregnant and parenting women, the absence of social supports for children, and the overall failure of the drug war (Flavin). When this criminalization of motherhood is considered alongside the abysmal medical services provided to incarcerated women, it is clear that mass incarceration's culture of punishment actually replicates the dangerous conditions it ostensibly counteracts.

Low levels of literacy among female-identified prisoners exacerbate these problems by limiting the ways they can process past injuries and diminishing their ability to report grievances. While education rates among female prisoners are similar to their male counterparts, the impact of literacy is quite different because of their significantly divergent histories. Writing about

college courses for women being cut from prisons in California under the VCLEA (see chapter three), Law says:

> The opportunity to critically examine issues affecting their lives and to challenge prevailing stereotypes built bridges between prisoners who had previously believed they had nothing in common. And when this opportunity was threatened, these women already had the groundwork to set aside their differences and unite to pressure the prison to reinstate the program. (79)

Literacy education can help female prisoners to understand their personal histories in a space free from male-violence despite the absence of professional and institutional support, yet it also can help them to organize and effect changes in the prison.

Significantly, very little attention has been paid to women's organizing in opposition to prison abuses or incarceration in general. Law points out that men can reference the Attica rebellion, the Folsom hunger-strike, or numerous protest-riots, but no real documentation exists of women's attempts to resist the racism and gender norming violence of the prison. Law says that she does "not believe that is because resistance does not occur, but because those in charge of documenting history have a stake in burying herstory. Such a herstory would challenge the patriarchal ideology that insists women are, by nature, passive and docile" (17). In the rare instances when they are reported, moments of resistance and organizing are painted merely as upset or disquiet.

The limitation of female prisoner's voices from being heard outside also contributes to a reductive public perception and patriarchal ideology that posits women as passive and simple needing only to be redirected or put "back on track." As described in chapter two, assumptions about normative timelines lead many to believe that women can be reformed or "cured" of

criminal behaviors by simply restoring them to gendered roles and timelines. If they return home to support hetero relationships and have babies, they will "give up" their deviant ways. Lauren Berlant explains the prevalence of a metaphorical, mythological "innocent little girl" that is always in need of protection or salvation. Berlant explains the discourse of heterosexuality as "a sacred national fetish beyond the disturbances of history or representation, protected by a zone of privacy" (80). Gender and sexuality, for Berlant, are rhetorical agents used to blame economic and material inequity on *public* deviation from these conditions – if people, women in particular, simply go back to their *private* homes and lives, all will be well. Safety lies in the normalcy of a heterosexual, parental relationship, in sexuality limited to private spaces (in white neighborhoods), and in massive funding of military-like policing to enforce these conditions.

The brutality of the jail and prison reinscribe hegemonic masculinities by "proving" the dangerous, primal state of men, which validates the need to protect relatively innocent women from them (with a well-funded network of police agencies, crime reporting media, and political parties) (Sabo 5-9). Laws are passed protecting the mythological girl from predatory men reinforcing stereotypes for both men and women and polarizing civility as the American Dream. Normativity, then, becomes not only a sorting mechanism but also a privatizing force tied to the ideology of the American Dream. In order to interrupt this ideology, Berlant asks that conversations about gender and sex remain fiercely public through metaphorical (and occasionally literal) "live sex acts" or the manifestations of public discourses that "do not aspire to the privacy protection of national culture, nor to the narrative containment of sex into one of the conventional romantic forms of modern consumer heterosexuality" (62). Resistance, in a program like WORTH, begins with open discourse about the epistemic agency of gender and

sexuality. However, to do resistance in a manner that contributes to widespread criticism, WORTH needed to get voices further "out."

Sarah Schulman tells us that vocal, sustained community intervention at the level of the neighborhood, the family, or the circle of friends is critical to disrupting discursive constructions of normativity. Schulman explains, "Silence is the greatest reward a perpetrator can receive, whether the perpetrator [of homophobia] is a family, a government, a publishing company, or an individual. Saying nothing . . . is to participate in the process" (171). Hegemony's inertia self-replicates unless interrupted. For a literacy program serving incarcerated populations to authentically do critical literacy, it must move beyond writing itself and include a means of sharing writing with an audience outside the walls. As Law says "providing a regular forum for incarcerated women's writings undermines the alienation that prisons seek to foster" (129). Prisoner's voices must get out.

An organization in Portland Oregon is partnering with community service agencies to do this in an interesting way. Since 1999, Write Around Portland has been forming "egalitarian writing communities" by organizing ten-week community writing workshops and publishing the work produced in semi-annual anthologies. Sara Guest, Hanna Neuschwander, and Robyn Steely explain that by partnering with social service agencies, correctional facilities, schools, low income housing facilities, community centers, and health care providers, Write Around Portland's workshop and publishing process give participants "a voice, often for the first time in a long time . . . and in their artistic practice they become active contributors to social dialogue in a way that many have never experienced" (Guest et al 49). Write Around Portland invites participants who do not think of themselves as writers and, often, who have been dehumanized and excluded from most public conversations either by physical barrier or stigmatization, or

116

both. Write Around's mission is not to educate or teach its participants but rather to position them as emissaries that create a sense of respect *across* community boundaries that usually prevent real dialogue. As Guest et al explain, "the primary goal of these published anthologies is to further the mission of respect, writing, and community – to dovetail with the Write Around's larger efforts toward building engaging writing and community spaces" (58). By extending the views and voices of those who have been marginalized by social inequity and circumstance, the "program becomes an avenue for greater understanding and acceptance" (50).

Write Around Portland is not specifically a program for incarcerated writers nor is it a literacy program that would look familiar to most educators. Participants from a wide range of institutions and facilities are considered writers not students; they are not positioned as learners, and no one teaches. Volunteer workshop "facilitators operate as peers to the other writers in the group with a mandate to influence group dynamics in the most noninvasive ways possible – usually by modeling respectful behavior and letting the group make effective and healthy decisions for itself" (51). Participants meet for two hours each week for ten weeks in spaces provided by the partnering agency and work on two pieces of writing, usually auto-biographical, for publication. After the workshops are complete, Write Around's volunteer editorial staff collects the submissions from all its workshop venues and selects pieces for publication. While not every writer is included, Write Around has increased in anthology production from one to three each year to include more writers. After the anthology has been printed, Write Around hosts readings at the partner agency site but culminates the series with a release party at a local book store, which just happens to be the largest book store in the country. Anthologies and commemorative gifts are sold, and writers included in the anthology are invited to read their work.

While writing is the activity that binds the groups together, the purpose of the program looks outward rather than in. A former Executive Director of Write Around Portland said that the book store reading event "is the locus of the project" and that, importantly, substitute or "pinch-readers" are not allowed:

> At the event, you have writers from a dynamic range of agencies reading alongside one another; you might have someone who is recovering in the OHSU Burn Unit read right after someone who has just been released from Coffee Creek [Correctional Facility]. By blending groups together, we build communities around mutual respect. Everything we do is through the lens of respect. Writing is central to the program, but community building doesn't happen without respect" (Director).

Readings are intended to facilitate a cross-cultural community dialogue of the sort that reveals contradictions between assumptions and lived experience. For example, judgments made of people in prisons and jails are juxtaposed to their personal histories and views of social structures that are not explainable with "conventional wisdom." Breaks in the popular narrative are revealed. Or, as Guest et al explain, "the barriers between their personal experiences and that of the 'vastly different' person sitting next to them begin to ebb away . . . The respect they feel around the Write Around table sticks to them and follows them out into the world" (50). With a genuine respect for difference, anyone, whether writer, volunteer, or audience member can be an agent of social change.

Interestingly, Write Around Portland has diffused the influence of literacy sponsorship through a nuanced but functional sharing of responsibilities between Write Around, their agency partners, and their volunteer facilitators. Partner agencies provide economic sponsorship with a

sliding-scale investment that defrays publication costs and provides some workshop materials; however, Write Around Portland's administrative and volunteer training costs are paid for with a combination of foundation and government grants, donations from individuals, and proceeds from its annual book reading and fundraiser, which allows the organization to require only minimal contributions from partners (Director). The arrangement sufficiently funds workshops to make them available to participants who would otherwise be unable to attend. As Guest at al explain, "the workshop experience provides everything a writer needs to write in a community – a journal, pens, bus tickets, childcare, and snacks – as well as the publishing experience of being included in our anthology" (51). Each group maintains control over their specific writing processes, yet Write Around uses their framing documents (mission statement, annual report, website, and in-person community outreach) to influence overall conceptions about literate activity. While not directly teaching participants, Write Around uses the agency of its sponsorship to teach community members and partners that literacy is more than coding but rather that it is a communal negotiation of economic and material histories.

Like WORTH, Write Around Portland orients its activities towards making the voices of its participants heard, and a partnership is being planned for 2016. By bringing together Write Around's ability to build bridges across discourse communities and WORTH participating group of women, the partnership will be able to bring suppressed, local expertise into public conversations. Michelle Alexander argues that although reforms and services for prisoners may produce some meaningful relief, "nothing short of a major social movement can successfully dismantle the new caste system . . . unless the public consensus supporting the current system is completely overturned, the basic structure of the new caste system will remain intact" (18). In order to undo recurring systems of exclusion and marginalization, in order to counter systemic

racism and normativity, Everyone, not just academics and activists, will need to understand that the counter-public, anti-community effects are carried in the ways we see one another and the things we consider normal.

The adjective "queer" is often used to inclusively reference the lesbian-gay-bi-transgender community (LGBT), and its use expropriates power from its pejorative, alienating history. However, queer can also be a verb. When used this way, it points to a politically resistant trait within a signified subject. Or, as Jane Ward explains, queer can be "a metaphor that describes various modes of challenge to the institutional and state forces that normalize and commodify differences" (3). When something is queered, its resistance to normative definition is highlighted indicating political resistance. While there is also a derivational, adjectival version of this "queer," it does not necessarily denote any particular gender identification or sexual orientation.

In her study of diversity culture and non-profit organizing in the Los Angeles LGBT community, Ward explains a queered approach to community building activism as an application of communal ethics and a site of political strategy and resistance. Ward says, "ethics – in addition to, but perhaps more so than strategic identities and shared material interests – become a new foundation for building intersectional political movements" (148). Queering, according to Ward, points to those "modes of challenge to the institutional and state forces that normalize and commodify difference" (3). If hegemony is normative, then counter hegemony is queer. For Giroux and Villanueva, the value of difference is in revealing rhetorical mystification and the marginalization of normativity, and for Ward, it is in foregrounding the resistance possible through the performance of queerness. A queer, critical approach to prison literacy discards the adversarial posturing of "normal" in favor of community building through the intersectional

differences of personal and community histories. Critical prison literacy is a queered, public

pedagogy.

CHAPTER FIVE: A QUEER(ED), PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

After the door is locked, the guard wanders out of sight, and the mood in the drafty room changes perceptibly. Loud ventilation fans make quiet voices nearly unintelligible, and loudish banter picks up, obviously continuing conversations started before the jump-suited participants were lined up for class. You catch snippets of dialogue: "it cost three times more than they said!" "Did you see she is back?" "How do I get…" "It was going to take eight weeks to get me in, so I went…" The conversations blend together, overlapping, intertwining, sometimes tuning together in places like a dialogic harmony and at other times seeming to compete for limited decibels. Participants seem to be in a generally good mood, which is a striking contrast to the sober atmosphere of the halls and guards outside, although the words they speak betray concerns not reflected by their attitudes.

When the volunteer facilitator starts to speak, they quiet down, although not as quickly as a university classroom might, but this venue is purposefully casual, and likely participants are aware that no one is offended nor expects them to immediately stop talking. After some logistical announcements and a brief reminder of what the program is and what is asked of them (in case new people have joined), the facilitator introduces the topic for the day: mental health care resources. Our discussion will be driven by questions: In this geographic area, how can we access mental health care providers if we have no money? What do providers expect from their clients? What do providers promise and what do they require? What sort of outcomes can be expected for what sorts of problems? Slowly at first, then faster and louder, participants tag team their own raised questions. They examine how cultural issues and urban transportation effect available options, and they talk about specific locations of known providers as some

neighborhoods are "safe" for recovering addicts and others are not. The discussion moves to a consideration of social and individual responsibilities, and they discuss personal and community histories with mental illness, emotional abuse, and overall psychic health.

Program volunteers listen, join in when they feel it is appropriate, and support the discussions by handing out relevant flyers or looking up information in phone books as needed. The volunteers have fairly consistent pictures of the mental health needs of prisoners, but these pictures are mostly based on misinformation and misplaced assumptions. They've been told the jail is full of the seriously mentally ill or even, by the most judgmental and ignorant, that the groups will be full of "crazies." Their eyes get wide as participants talk through past problems and pose solutions for current situations or for situations they'll face after release. Invariably, the discussion turns to someone's son or daughter; in this case, it is a participant's transgender teenager that has dropped out of college and appeared back in Portland. The group is supportive and creative in their problem solving, and it is rare for anyone to leave without a handful of practical solutions to problems they bring up.

In the second half of the session, the volunteer facilitating for the day asks participants to write. Writing in front of others is a big step for most of them. It is something they associate with school, and they express a broad range of educational experiences, many of which have not been good. We've had participants who have been physically abused by teachers, many who were emotionally abused by teachers and peers, and most have emotional scars from traumas experienced at home during their school-age years. They often share memories of being deliberately shunned or excluded at school, and they were, at best, underserved by schools and teachers that were unprepared to meet their emotional and intellectual needs. Our groups often have participants who speak several different primary languages, have members who cannot

123

hear or see, and who have little to no formal education. However, it is also not unusual to have participants with master's degrees writing alongside those who dropped out during or before high school.

Participants write in non-spiral notebooks so they can save their work week to week yet avoid the jail's prohibition against metal wire, although in this jail, they're not allowed to keep more than two books in their cell at a time. As a result, some choose to take their notebooks with them to write during the week, but for the others, we bring their notebooks in with us and supply them with loose paper in the interim. Turnover is high, so we bring blank notebooks in too. In previous weeks, we've oriented them to the overall publishing project, so we start with a brief reminder of the "rules" they've decided upon (sharing is voluntary but you read your own work, feedback is positive, etc.), and then move quickly to writing. Newcomers that are slow to pick up the process will partner with a volunteer and quietly talk through what's come before. The group is working on two pieces – one is a short, daily writing piece in response to the discussion of the day, and the other is their "story," although they are free to write it as fiction, poetry, non-fiction prose, and they often mingle pencil drawn illustrations with text.

The session is over before we're ready, but we're used to the tight yet variable timelines in the jail. We're held to a very specific schedule, but it's frequently thrown off by things happening in other parts of the jail. When the writing time is up, and we pack up the notebooks, the participants loosely gather by the door, but sometimes they wait for ten or twenty minutes while guards move other prisoners out of the halls, or finish duties in other pods. The environment around us may fade in the midst of discussions or while writing, but it never totally disappears. It's not unusual for someone talking to be interrupted by a loud speaker announcement or by a guard coming in to take someone out for court. And even if we're

undisturbed, the red lines on the floor remind us all that there are high stakes for something as

simply as standing too close to a window or door. As our group files out, we start to reset for the

next one; we'll see two groups today. Volunteers talk about things heard or seen or, better yet,

about things they've learned.

Participants in our program tell us that they like coming to our sessions and that they like

to write, but that more than anything else, they like being heard, often for the first time in a long

time. They say that it feels as though they're making change by recording their histories and

letting people hear them who otherwise would never know what it's like to live their lives

(Volunteer). In my terms, our participants "speak truth to power" through stories of struggle and

trauma and tragedy that are underscored with authentic hope and chance. And while hope can be

a dangerous anti-revolutionary placation, it also can be the exigency of change. As Paula

Mathieu points out, "to take on hope is to take on risk and responsibility while maintaining a

dogged optimism" (Tactics 17). In the context of prison literacy and a social justice movement,

hope inspires and motivates fueling mobilizing actions, which in turn fuses action with courage

and prospect as what Christopher Wilkey terms "critical hope" or "actions expressing both a

critique of the status quo and a progressive vision of the future" (Wilkey 27).

When a prison literacy program teaches those outside to listen to and learn from those

inside, critical literacy turns hope into potentiality. As Tobi Jacobi explains, when paired with a

community publishing component, prison literacy workshops "claim space for creativity and

critical awareness in a space where such individual and collective thinking is seldom rewarded.

Each also . . . moves beyond the expectation of individual reform and rehabilitation – and toward

a tactical (and revolutionary) approach to literacy-as-activism" (Women 174). Or, as Paula

Mathieu, Steve Parks, and Tiffany Rousculp explain, bringing writing out from behind walls or across imagined community barriers, authorizes a community's voices "to become part of a collective attempt to understand the past and to project a future. Community publishing, then, is based on the informed hope that writing can inform civic dialogue and produce change" (1). Mobilizing literacy as a form of political advocacy means using the writing and voices of those inside to challenge the truths of those outside; it means bringing prisoners' voices out as a form of public instruction or public pedagogy with confidence and faith in a changed future.

As I explained in chapter two, the privatized-public space of the prison and the jail effectively silence dissenting views and memories that are not explained by popular mythology. Public pedagogy, in this context, is not about classroom praxis and academic knowledge or texts speaking for people. It is, instead, about people teaching people to see the political in the personal. As Henry A. Giroux explains, public pedagogy is:

> a crucial sphere for articulating the dialectical and mutually constitutive dynamics between the global political circuits that now frame material relations of power and a cultural politics in which matters of representation and meaning shape and offer concrete examples of how politics is expressed, lived, and experienced through the modalities of daily existence. (Critical 138)

Public pedagogy means countering the privatization of knowledge and interrupting the seeming stability of hegemonic myths with the evidence of lived experience. As experience is shared, read, published, read, and shared again, rifts form where accepted truths fail to account for the written words, and witnesses become advocates and activists. As Tobi Jacobi said, the knowledge "troubles" who we are and what we do, or, as Laura Rogers explained of her interviews of prison literacy teachers, "I discovered, not surprisingly, that these members of the

composition and rhetoric community have been transformed by their experiences; their identities as teachers and citizens have changed and grown as a result of their work with incarcerated writers" (Diving 100). However, "transforming" white, middle class teachers and volunteers may be a transformation in name only.

White working and middle class voters as well as teachers, students, and volunteers usually have the privilege of overlooking conflicting social narratives. They can dismiss troubling accounts of prisoner-writers as being incomplete convict narratives, or, as explained in chapter three, exotic artifacts of the prison literary complex. Echoing Lisa Delpit, Sarah Schulman reminds us that the "dominant group knows only about themselves, while members of the subordinate group know about their own lives as well as the lives of the dominant group members. So those with the most power have the least information about how other people live" (23). Moreover, white, middle class people often feel committed to conservative progress narratives that position communications as independent of values and market centric politics. They are often resistant to interruptions of these myths as "it makes them feel disloyal to their parents and their church and their government" (Schulman 21). Rather than betray the values of those they respect, many simply refuse to acknowledge contradictory narratives or alternative histories as their lives are comfortable and they see no pressing need. Instead, they rely upon social and economic privilege to provide de facto support for systemic forms of oppression that they purportedly reject. After all, as Victor Villanueva tells us, "there is more to racism, ethnocentricity, and language than is apparent . . . there are long-established systemic forces at play that maintain bigotry, systemic forces that can even make bigots of those who are appalled by bigotry" (Bootstraps xiv).). These processes are at work in prisons and have particular implications for prisoners. Textual artifacts are not enough to disrupt the massive ideological

inertia of incarceration. Critical literacy will need a mechanism to turn observers into advocates with motive and intent.

Writing of ways to use classrooms as counter-normative political spaces, Deborah P. Britzman calls for a "pedagogical queering" of the classroom, its occupants, and the ideological constructs that give them identity and subjectivity. Pedagogy, in this use, is an attempt to "implicate everyone involved to consider the grounds of their own possibility, their own intelligibility, and the work of proliferating their own identifications" (Contested 81). Queerness, when used as a lens, shows unseen details of the object viewed but also reflects aspects of viewing subjects back as an opaque overlay. The viewers, necessarily, question their sense of self as well as their assumptions about the other. More importantly, critical pedagogy's Shaughnessy-inspired reversal of teacher-learner roles takes on a new, third dimension. Rather than teachers and learners simply swapping roles, the roles of teacher, learner, and community are blurred. Community members who are used to being outside observers, righteous in their authorized knowledge, are challenged to become learners as the community inside is authorized as experts in their own lives and their stories contradict accepted, comfortable truths. Knowledge and knowing, and as a result, literacy, are queered.

Britzman explains elsewhere that a queered pedagogy "acknowledge[s] that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one's ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others" (Queer Pedagogy 159). Through dialogic practices that demonstrate the boundaries and the determination of ones versus their necessary others, prisoner participants, teachers, and teacher-students are positioned to challenge the supposedly stable relationships of

128

privileged heteronormativity, racialized supremacy, and criminality. Queering pedagogy, in this context, "proposes to examine differential responses to the conditions of identities on terms that place as a problem the production of normalcy and on terms that confound the intelligibility that produces the normal as the proper subject" (157). Queerness points to the constructedness of what is presumed to be natural and normal and the intersectionality of subjectivities. Racism, nearly-permanent poverty, homophobia, and the incarceration caste system complicate and inform one another. Lives that seem foreign become familiar as questions of privilege and potentiality reveal the always-available opportunity of the neoliberal market as a scant set of options: poverty, prison, or death.

The belief that writing is a depoliticized, neutral skill disconnected from politics and lives is at the center of what I intend this dissertation to interrupt, and I have sought to connect functional, limited notions of literacy to what I call the Prison Literacy Complex. Functional literacy is enticing for those working to improve the lives of prisoners; discourse is, after all, often what convinces a police officer or judge to release rather than detain. Stigmatized dialects and language variation create impressions and assumptions used to profile and surveil, and the (in)ability of defendants to articulate a defense is usually what determines the outcome of a legal inquiry, whether on the street or in the courtroom. However, limiting literacy with preconceived notions of proper discourse and hierarchies of class-based authority restricts conversations about the power of discourse in a cruel irony that reinforces the marginalization and criminalization of difference. Tragic lives seem rooted in behavior and choice rather than in ideology and systematic exclusion. The significance of my work, then, is in preventing conversations about

incarceration that are meant to liberate from validating and replicating the injustices of neoliberalism and the criminal legal system.

It has been my intent, instead, to move literacy work towards an authentically critical dialogue and actual social change through a queer(ed), public pedagogy. This shift means exposing the ideological mechanics of hegemony in ways that will make some, primarily those with the greatest degrees of privilege, uncomfortable, yet it also means that in this discomfort, we can see the role discourse plays in directing the course of prisoners' lives long before they are ever behind bars. In the context of structured critical thought, it is difficult to reconcile democracy with the first hand accounts of an economic and political apparatus that is designed to aristocratize, or de-democratize, remove the people (the demos), from democracy. A queer(ed) public pedagogy, then, reveals incarceration not as a response to crime but as a misguided, or in some cases deceptive, substitute for economic investment in a struggling, strangled public and conservative political discourse as a rhetoric of oppression, privatization, and normativity.

In the documentary film *Visions of Abolition*, Angela Y. Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore call for a political ideology of prison abolition that is nuanced and multifaceted. Rather than attempting to abruptly reverse the past four decades of prison expansion with a single vote or monumental act, they suggest public education that results in support for incremental moves towards the deconstruction of mass incarceration (Visions). Prison abolition activists agree that the future of American democracy is dependent upon future voters understanding the damage caused by the prison's exclusion and exclusivity. To move forward, the public must comprehend the anti-democratic nature of incarceration and seek ways to solve problems as a community rather than ways to punish and fragment. Prisoners' voices, in person and in print but unmoderated by academic sponsorship, have a significant role to play, for, as Lois Ahrens

130

explains, "everyone, not just those with fancy educations, can and must understand the complicated politics and economics underlying prison expansion if we are to stop [it]" (19). Or, bringing Tobi Jacobi into conversation with Victor Villanueva and Lois Ahrens, we all need to "trouble" our "truths" so that we can shape a comprehensive, historicized, nuanced understanding of the very "real costs" of incarceration.

Ostensibly, literacy programs for prisoners help prisoners to (re)adapt to society's ways of being, but, as I explained in this and in previous chapters, I believe it is society's ways that need revision and revolution. By definition, prison populations are communities that resist and have resisted norming. By drawing upon their experience and expertise, we can develop organic, critical dialogue, but let me be clear: in order for literacy programs to be of social value, their focus must be on bringing prisoners' voices out not simply on bringing authorized, sponsored voices in or improving the communication skills of those currently in the system. In order to resist hegemony and work towards the abolition of prisons, we need to teach *out from* incarcerated spaces and enact a critical, queer pedagogy in *all* our teaching-learning spaces. We all need to participate and understand the fault-lines and non-compliant memories we share in order for all of us to see past the ideologies that blind, and bind, us.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler-Kassner, Linda. <u>The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers</u>. Logan:

    Utah State University Press, 2008. Print.

Ahmed, Sarah. <u>Promise of Happiness</u>. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Print.

Alexander, Michelle. <u>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</u>. New

    Press: New York, 2010. Print.

Althusser, Louis. <u>Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays</u>. New York: Monthly Review Press,

    2001. Print.

Anand, Prerna. "Winners and Losers: Corrections and Higher Education in California."

    <u>California Common Sense</u>. 5 Sept 2012. Web.

Banks, Adam J. <u>Race, Rhetoric, and Technology</u>. Urbana: NCTE, 2006. Print.

Bawarshi, Anis. <u>Genre & the Invention of the Writer</u>. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2002.

    Print.

Berlant, Lauren. <u>The Queen of America Goes to Washington City</u>. Durham: Duke University

    Press, 1997. Print.

Berlin, James. <u>Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985</u>.

    Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987. Print.

Bial, Henry. "Ritual." <u>The Performance Studies Reader</u>. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bizzell, Patricia, and Bruce Herzberg, eds. <u>The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classic</u>

    <u>Times to the Present</u>. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Print.

Branch, Kirk. <u>Eyes on the Ought to Be: What We Teach When We Teach About Literacy</u>.

    Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2007. Print.

Blair, Hugh. "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres." Bizzell 947-979.

Brandt, Deborah. Literacy in American Lives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
Print.

Britzman, Deborah. "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight." Educational
Theory 45.2 (1995) 151-165. Print.

---. Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning. Albany"
SUNY Press, 1998. Print.

Burke, Kenneth. Language as Symbolic Action. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.
Print.

---. Philosophy of Literary Form. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. Print.

---. Rhetoric of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: an Essay in Phenomenology and
Feminist Theory." The Performance Studies Reader. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Campbell, W. Reason. Dead Man Walking: Teaching in a Maximum Security Prison. New York:
McGraw-Hill, 1978. Print.

Carter, Shannon. "HOPE, 'Repair,' and the Complexities of Reciprocity." Community Literacy
2:2 (2007) 87-112. Print.

Chlup, Dominique T. "Chronology of Corrections Education." Focus on Basics. 7.D (2005) n
pag. Web. 1 March 2015. Print.

"Composite US Demographics." Adherents. 13 March 2001. Web. 31 March 2015. Web.

"Corrupting Justice: Primer for LGBT Communities on Racism, Violence, Human Degradation,
and the Prison Industrial Complex." American Friends Service Committee. Philadelphia:
Justice Visions Publication, 2005. Print.

Cox, Stephen. The Big House: Image and Reality of the American Prison. New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2009. Print.

Cushman, Ellen, Eugene R. Kintgen, Barry M. Kroll, and Mike Rose. Literacy: a Critical
Sourcebook. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2001. Print.

Cushman, Ellen. "The Public Intellectual, Service Learning, and Activist Research." College
English. 61.3 (1999) 328-336. Print.

Davis, Angela Y. Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture. New York:
Seven Stories Press, 2005. Print.

---. The Angela Y. Davis Reader. Ed. Joy James. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. Print.

---. Are Prisons Obsolete? New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. Print.

---. "Prison Industrial Complex." AK Press, 2001. CD.

Davis, Lois M., et al. "How Effective Is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from
Here?" US Department of Justice. Washington: GPO, 2014. Print.

Deans, Thomas. Writing Partnerships: Service Learning in Composition. Urbana: National
Council for Teachers of English, 2000. Print.

Delpit, Lisa D. "The Silenced Dialogue." Cross-Talk in Comp Theory. Urbana: NCTE, 1997.
Print.

Director. Write Around Portland. Personal Interview. 25 Sept 2014.

Duggan, Lisa. Twilight of Equality. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003. Print.

"Ending Mass Incarceration: Social Interventions that Work." The Sentencing Project. 17 April
2013. Web. 5 March 2015.

Emory, Kim. "The New Normal: Queer Theory and the Corporate University." Modern
Language Association Annual Convention. Philadelphia, 27 Dec 2009.

Eng, David. The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Radicalization of Intimacy.

  Durham: Duke U P, 2010. Print.

Esperian, John H. "The Effect of Prison Education Programs on Recidivism." The Journal of

  Correctional Education 61:4 (2010) 316-334. Print.

Faigley, Lester. Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of

  Composition. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1992. Print.

Flavin, Jeanne, and Lynn M. Paltrow. "Punishing Pregnant Drug-Using Women: Defying Law,

  Medicine, and Common Sense." Journal of Addictive Diseases. 29.2 (2010) Web.

Flower, Linda. Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement. Carbondale:

  Southern Illinois U P, 2008. Print.

---. "Intercultural Inquiry and the Transformation of Service." College English. 65.2 (2002): 181-

  201. Print.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison. Vintage: New York, 1995.

  Print.

---. The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language. New York: Pantheon Books,

  1972. Print.

---. History of Sexuality: an Introduction. Vol. 1. Vintage: New York, 1990. Print.

---. "Prison Talk." Power/Knowledge. New York: Pantheon, 1980. Print.

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum, 2003. Print.

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing

  California. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.

Gilyard, Keith, ed. Race, Rhetoric, and Composition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1999. Print.

Giroux, Henry A. "Literacy, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference." <u>College Literature</u>. 19:1

     (1992) 1-11. Print.

---. "Globalizing Dissent and Radicalizing Democracy: Politics, Pedagogy, and the

     Responsibility of Critical Intellectuals." <u>Radical Relevance: Toward a Scholarship of the</u>

     <u>Whole Left</u>. New York: State University of New York, 2005. Print.

---. <u>On Critical Pedagogy</u>. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. Print.

Grabill, Jeffrey T. <u>Community Literacy Programs and the Politics of Change</u>. Albany: State

     University of New York Press, 2001. Print.

Graff, Harvey J. "The Literacy Myth at 30." <u>Journal of Social History</u>. 43.3 (2010): 635-661.

     Print.

---. "The Nineteenth Century Origin of Our Times." Cushman et al 211-233.

Gramsci, Antonio. <u>Selections from the Prison Notebooks</u>. Ed. and Trans. by Quiten Hoare and

     Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International, 1971. Print.

---. <u>The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935</u>. Forgacs, David, ed. New York:

     New York University Press, 2000. Print.

Guest, Sara, Hanna Neuschwander, and Robyn Steely. "Respect, Writing, and Community:

     Write Around Portland." <u>Circulating Communities: The Tactics and Strategies of</u>

     <u>Community Publishing</u>. New York: Lexington Books, 2012. 49-69. Print.

Halberstam, Judith. <u>In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender bodies, Subcultural Lives</u>. New

     York: NYU Press, 2005. Print.

Hall, Stuart. "Deviance, Politics, and the Media." The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader. New

     York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Harrison, P. M, and A. J. Beck. "Prisoners in 2003." Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2004. Web.

Harvey, David. <u>A Brief History of Neoliberalism</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Print.

---. <u>The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change</u>. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1989. Print.

Herivel, Tara, and Paul Wright, eds. <u>Prison Nation</u>: Warehousing of America's Poor. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Herzberg, Bruce. "Community Service and Critical Teaching." <u>College Composition and Communication</u> 45.3 (1994): 307-319. Print.

Herzing, Rachel. "What is the Prison Industrial Complex?" <u>Defending Justice</u>. 2005. Web.

Hing, Julianne. "Supreme Court Demands California Release 30,000 Inmates." <u>Color Lines</u>. 24 May 2011. Web.

Hochschild, Jennifer. "The Double-Edged Sword of Equal Educational Opportunity." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. Washington DC, 22 April 1987.

Hotelling, Barbara A. "Perinatal Needs of Pregnant, Incarcerated Women." <u>Journal of Perinatal Education</u> 17.2 (2008): 37–44. Print.

Irwin, John. <u>Jail: Managing the Underclass in American Society</u>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Print.

Isocrates. "Against the Sophists." Bizzell 67-79.

Jacobi, Tobi. Foreword. "'I'm just gonna let you know how it is:' Situating Writing and Literacy Education in Prison." <u>Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy</u> 4.1 (2004): 1-11. Print.

---. "Slipping Pages Through Razor Wire: Literacy Action Projects in Jail." <u>Community Literacy Journal</u> 2.2 (2008): 67-86. Print.

---. Women, Writing, and Prison: Activists, Scholars, and Writers Speak Out (It's Easy to

W.R.I.T.E. Expressive Writing). Washington DC: Roman & Littlefield, 2014. Print.

---. "Writing for Change: Engaging Juveniles through Alternative Literacy Education." The

Journal of Correctional Education 59:2 (2008) 71-93. Print.

Johnson, Robert. Hard Time: Understanding and Reforming the Prison. Florence: Wadsworth,

1995. Print.

Kerr, Tom. "Between Ivy and Razor Wire." Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and

Community Literacy 4.1 (2004): 62-75. Print.

Larson, Doran. "The Prison Industrial Literary Complex." The Minnesota Review. 70 (2008):

29-32. Print.

Law, Victoria. Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women. Oakland: PM

Press, 2009. Print.

"Literacy Behind Prison Walls." US Department of Education. Washington: GPO, 1994. Print.

Maher, Jane. "My Way Out of This Life Is An Education." Women's Studies Quarterly. 1.2

(2004): 100-111. Print.

---. "You Probably Don't Even Know I Exist: Notes from a College Prison Program." Journal of

Basic Writing 23:1 (2004) 82-100. Print.

"Main Jail Facility." Clark County Sheriff's Office. 2008. Web. 28 Feb 2015.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. The German Ideology. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998.

Print.

Mathieu, Paula. Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition. Portsmouth:

Boynton/Cook Publishers Inc., 2005. Print.

Mathieu, Paula, Steve Parks, and Tiffany Rousculp, eds. <u>Circulating Communities: The Tactics</u>

    <u>and Strategies of Community Publishing</u>. New York: Lexington Books, 2012. Print.

Mayr, Andrea. <u>Prison Discourse: Language as a Means of Control and Resistance</u>. New York:

    Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.

McVeigh, Karen. "Study finds widespread 'criminalisation of pregnancy' in US institutions." <u>The</u>

    <u>Guardian</u>. Guardian News and Media Limited. 14 Jan 2013. Web. 1 Mar 2015.

Messemer, Jonathan E., "The Historical Practice of Correctional Education in the United States:

    A Review of the Literature." <u>International Journal of Humanities and Social Science</u>.

    1:17 (2011) 91-100. Print.

Mogul, Joey L, Ritchie, Andrea J., and Kay Whitlock. <u>Queer Injustice: The Criminalization of</u>

    <u>LGBT People in the United States</u>. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011. Print.

Newman, Anabel, Warren Lewis, and Caroline Beverstock. "Prison Literacy: Implications for

    Program and Assessment Policy." <u>National Center on Adult Literacy</u>. 28 Feb 2004. Web.

O'Connor, Patricia E. Afterword. <u>Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and Community</u>

    <u>Literacy</u> 4.1 (2004): 199-208. Print.

Ong, Walter J. "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought." Cushman et al 19-31.

Perelman, Chaim. <u>The Realm of Rhetoric</u>. Trans. by William Kluback. Notre Dame:

    University of Notre Dame, 1982. Print.

Plato. "Gorgias." Bizzell 87-137.

---. "Phaedrus." Bizzell 138-168.

Pompa, Lori. "Disturbing Where We are Comfortable: Notes from Behind the Prison Walls."

    <u>Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy</u> 4.1 (2004): 24-34.

    Print.

Prisons in America. Rafter, Nicole Hahn, and Debra L. Stanley, eds. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO,

    1999. Print.

"Prisoners in 2010." Bureau of Justice Statistics. US Department of Justice. Washington: GPO,

    2012. Web.

Puar, Jasbir K. Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times. Durham: Duke

    University Press, 2007. Print.

Rogers, Laura. "Diving in to Prison Teaching: Mina Shaughnessy, Teacher Development, and

    the Realities of Prison Teaching." Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and

    Community Literacy 8.3 (2009): 99-121. Print.

---. "Where Lifelines Converge: Voices from the Forest Correctional Creative Writing Group."

    Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy 4.1 (2004): 12-23.

    Print.

Ruggles-Gere, Anne. "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of

    Composition." Cushman et al 275-289.

Sabo, Don, Terry Kupers, and Willie London. "Gender and the Politics of Punishment." Prison

    Masculinities. Philadelphia: Temple U Press, 2001. Print.

Sankin, Aaron. "California Spending More On Prisons Than Colleges, Report Says." The

    Huffington Post. 8 Sept 2012. Web. 1 Feb 2015.

Sanford, Rebecca, and Johanna E. Foster. "Reading, Writing, and Prison Educational Reform."

    Equal Opportunities International 25:7 (2006) 599-610. Print.

Schulman, Sarah. Ties That Bind: Familial Homophobia and Its Consequences. New York: The

    New Press, 2009. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. <u>Epistemology of the Closet</u>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print.

Shaughnessy, Mina. "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." <u>College Composition and Communication</u> 27.3 (1976): 234–39. Print.

Shor, Ira and Paulo Freire. <u>A Pedagogy of Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education</u>. South Hadley: Bergin and Harvey, 1987. Print.

Smith, Caleb. <u>The Prison & the American Imagination</u>. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Print.

Stanley, Eric A., Dean Spade, and Queer (In)Justice. "Queering Prison Abolition, Now?" <u>American Quarterly</u> 64:1 (2012) 115-127. Print.

Strauss, Sheila M., and Gregory P. Falkin. "Women Offenders Who Use and Deal Methamphetamine: Implications for Mandated Drug Treatment." <u>Women & Criminal Justice</u>. 12.4 (2001): 77-97. Print.

Street, Brian. "The New Literacy Studies." Cushman et al 430-442.

Stuckey, J. Elspeth. <u>The Violence of Literacy</u>. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991. Print.

Szwed, John F. "The Ethnography of Literacy." Cushman et al 421-429.

"Understanding prison health care: Women's health." Stanford University School of Medicine. 2002. 14 July 2006. Web. 2 Jan 2015.

Villanueva, Victor. <u>Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color</u>. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993. Print.

---. "Hegemony: From an Organically Grown Intellectual." <u>Pre-Text</u>. 13.1-2 (1992), 17-34. Print.

---. "Toward a Political Economy of Rhetoric (or a Rhetoric of Political Economy)." <u>Radical Relevance: Toward a Scholarship of the Whole Left</u>. Eds. Laura Gray-Rosendale and Steven Rosendale. Albany: State U of New York P, 2005. 57-65. Print.

<u>Visions of Abolition: From Critical Resistance To A New Way of Life</u>. Dir Shetsu Shigematsu. 2011. DVD.

Volosinov, V.N. <u>Marxism and the Philosophy of Language</u>. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973. Print.

Volunteer. <u>WORTH</u>. Personal Interview. 17 Feb 2015.

Ward, Jane. <u>Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations</u>. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008. Print.

Warner, Michael. <u>The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life</u>. Glencoe: Free Press, 1999. Print.

Webster, Alec, Brian Caddick, Malcolm Reed, and Karen Ford. "Functional Versus Critical Literacy in the Rehabilitation of Offenders: a Survey of Probation Services in England and Wales." <u>International Journal of Lifelong Education</u>. 18.1 (1999): 49-60. Print.

Williams, Raymond. "Preface to Second Edition." <u>Communications</u>. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967. Print.

Wilkey, Christopher. "Engaging Community Literacy through the Rhetorical Work of a Social Movement." <u>Reflections: Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy</u> 9.1 (2009): 26-60. Print.

Worthen, W.B. "Disciplines of the Text: Sites of Performance." <u>The Performance Studies Reader</u>. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

YWCA. <u>Clark County YWCA</u>. 2015. Web. 28 Feb 2015.