



# PRISON, PUNISHMENT AND DETENTION

EG Working Group



Newsletter March 2021

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## 1. Research

### ***'Caring, not carceral expansion! We need to transcend carcerality and embrace a politics of care***

*Felicity Adams\* and Fabienne Emmerich\*\**

The UK government's initial response to the pandemic has included an increase in police powers as part of the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) and a commitment to building up to [10,000 more prison places](#) as part of a £2.5 billion programme. This year the Ministry of Justice renewed its [original commitment](#) to expand the women's prison estate by creating 500 new prison places in existing prisons for women. Reneging on their earlier promises in the ["Female Offenders Strategy"](#), they justify this as a necessary shift in order to ["improve conditions"](#). This is in response to the anticipated ["increase in the female prison population"](#) following their recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers. These plans are followed by the [Police, Sentencing and Court's Bill](#) that proposes to expand police powers that curb our abilities to engage in nonviolent protest and dissent and to target marginalized groups through criminalization.

The government's catalogue of attempts to expand the carceral state comes at a time when many communities are experiencing loss, pain, and trauma in many forms, as well as increasing financial hardship and limited access to resources. Their continued investments in carceral tactics that inflict multilayered violence, above centralizing the material needs of those in need of care and nurture via community-based strategies marks an unsurprising, but particularly brutal move in the current con-

jecture of crises.



**"Our capacities to care are interdependent and cannot be realised in an uncaring world"**

During the first lockdown it became apparent very quickly that COVID-19 magnified systemic inequalities central to the functioning of capitalism. As the crisis grew the value of an economy based on the exchange of goods and services faded away to expose the importance of care and caregiving across the public and private spheres. Undervalued and underpaid labour suddenly became critical to the survival of many. Arguably, there had been a noticeable shift towards a public and collective revaluation of care, caregiving, and nurture.

In their book, *The Care Collective Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*, The Care Collective prompts us to consider, “[What, we now ask, would happen if we were to begin instead to put care at the very centre of life?](#)”. Yet, as we know this challenges the roots of capitalism and neoliberalism, which centre atomization, exploitation, and colonialization. The Care Collective show us that:

[“\[Capitalism\] normalises endemic care deficits and abject failures to care at every level by posting them as necessary collateral damage on the road to market oriented reforms and policies”](#) (11, 2020)



Neoliberal capitalism has conditioned us into sequestering people into spaces of violence and isolation in response to its devaluation of caregiving and nurturing. The government's responses to the pandemic reflect neoliberal capitalist logics and deepen our attachments to carcerality. They centre othering, exclusion, criminalization and punishment: the increase of police powers, the [criminalizing of marginalized groups](#), and the plans for moving [asylum seekers to third countries](#) to process their applications and the plans for a recovery that includes prison expansion, mean sacrificing women, men and all people in prison and [immigration detention centres](#), to the capitalist project. The government's proposals reflect a particularly painful move in the current “[reign of carelessness](#)” (2020: 18) that follows a revitalization of our understandings of nurturing and caregiving as critical and transformative forces at the mainstream public level during the initial period of restrictions.

Inspired by Hannah Arendt, The Care Collective reinforce the urgency of pushing back against the “[systemic level of banality \[that\] permeates our everyday carelessness](#)” under capitalism and re-orienting ourselves around a politics of care that actively places “[the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life](#)” at the horizon (The Care Collective, 2020, 16-18). In adopting these politics, we must also understand the prison, and the broader carceral state as cogs in the harmful neoliberal capitalist machine that devalues nurturing and prevents us from caring with one another (The Care Collective, 2020, 49).

We, and others recognise that decentering the carceral state is crucial to working towards our collective vision of care, caregiving and nurture. Understanding each of these government proposals as contributing to the existing carceral web helps us to resist playing into individualized capitalist logics that reinforce systemic harms. Until we transcend all violent systems of oppression, we impair our abilities to mobilize a politics based on caregiving and nurturing in real-time because as the Care Collective shows us “[our capacities to care are interdependent and cannot be realised in an uncaring world](#)” (2020, 19). We must recognise the carceral state as one of the epicentres of the current crisis in caring and nurturing. We need to transcend carceral culture and embrace a politics of care.

**Shaping the Public Imaginary: “To connect, to deliberate and to debate, to find joy and to flourish, and to support each other’s needs amidst the complexities of our mutual dependencies”**

A politics of care is not new. Many activists and grass roots organizations like [Sisters Uncut](#), [The Bent Bars Project](#) and many more have been engaged in anti-carceral care work for many years. We have seen with [Black Lives Matter](#) and more recently with [Sisters Uncut](#) how meaningful actions in multiple places that are amplified via social media can as Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) puts it, “shake the ground. In other words, *movement* happens” (248).

In her ground-breaking book, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, Gilmore (2007) writes about the Californian prison expansion and its effects on the spaces that are linked to incarceration either through labour or the absence of sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. She highlights the power of community activism, through the work of Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (ROC), that rejects incarceration and reclaims their loved ones and their community spaces centred on care and nurture. She highlights the importance of supporting agency at the community level, which can create the foundation for transformative justice activism more widely.

Abolitionism, care work and caregiving has been and continues to be a struggle to redirect public discourse and to counter neoliberal narratives of empowerment, individualization and exclusion under the guise of feminist and liberal rights movements. It is crucial to amplify this grassroots activism and labour, in order to encourage others to envisage a society without carceral institutions and punitivity.



This can follow Ruth Wilson Gilmore's call to see abolition as [“presence”](#), to highlight and showcase the community building that is being undertaken predominantly by women of colour and other marginalized groups. This is crucial to shift the public imaginary towards the conception of a future centred on caring, nurturing and environmental sustainability without carceral institutions.

The Care Collective reinforce the importance of collectively dreaming and reimagining alternative modes of caring, caregiving and nurturing that challenge individualized capitalist regimes that exacerbate people's suffering and deny us the ability to be in relation with one another:

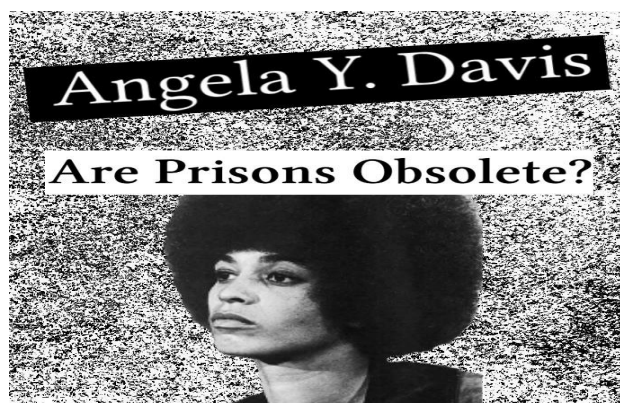
[“To connect, to deliberate and to debate, to find joy and to flourish, and to support each other's needs amidst the complexities of our mutual dependencies”](#) (2020, 92).

As part of this, we must all consistently ask ourselves as, Angela Davis suggests:

[“How easy it is to reach for existing strategies and tools assuming that they alone can bring about change... recognise that racism and repression are not discreet problems can be removed by dissection but rather are integrally woven into the very fabric of carcerality”](#) (Incite! 2020).

In her pioneering book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Angela Davis (2003) also suggests we conceptualize the prison as part of a network of interconnected coercive systems. This can help us think about alternatives to prison as a process of decarceration across a spectrum of different spaces:

“demilitarization of schools, revitalization of education at all levels, a health system that provides free physical and mental care to all, and a justice system based on reparation and reconciliation rather than retribution and vengeance” (Davis 2003, 107).



**“We must begin by recognising the myriad ways that our survival and our thriving are everywhere and always contingent on others”**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us our true collective potential when we centre caring and nurturing in our recovery. By peripheralizing the multi-layered harms perpetuated under carceral systems in the current crisis, we limit our abilities to centre care and be in relation with each other. We also detract from the complex social and political conditions that enable intersecting forms of violence and harm to manifest. Subsequently, we enable conditions of individualized carelessness to continue undisturbed, when history and the present shows us [“the myriad ways that our survival and our thriving are everywhere and always contingent on others”](#) (2020, 53). And we render all ensnared by the trap of carcerality as expendable.



Rather than surrendering to the force of carcerality, we must reflect on the kernels of hope offered by [Sisters Uncut](#), [The Bent Bars Project](#) and [BLM](#) and understand the intensely fulfilling nature of caregiving and nurturing when released from the micro to the macro-level.

In the current socio-political context, envisioning and enacting this is not an easy, quick, or simple process, but it is a necessary step if we are ever to transcend the snare of carcerality and build the nurturing communities that we deserve. As Audre Lorde reminds us, we seize on the promise of the kernel and we must resist the entrapment of mediocrity in order to envision more fulfilling, equitable worlds:

[“It is never easy to demand the most from ourselves, from our lives, from our work. To encourage excellence is to go beyond the encouraged mediocrity of our society is to encourage excellence”](#) (Lorde, 1984).





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## 2. Conference and Call for Papers

- **Call For Papers: Special Issue of Crime, Law and Social Change. Traditions and Innovations on Qualitative Methods in Criminology**— deadline: 3 May 2021. EG member Rita Farina and Olga Petintseva will edit a special issue of CLSC focus on qualitative research methods. The special issue will receive abstract proposals on (but not limited to): peripheral criminological topics studied using qualitative methods; peripheral qualitative methodologies and epistemologies used in Criminology; peripheral geographic traditions and uses of qualitative research in Criminology; original approaches to producing and analyzing qualitative data in crime and crime control; specific methodological concerns for qualitative researchers in Criminology. All submissions should have a strong methodological focus/sensitivity and explicitly address the ‘periphery’ question (i.e. findings of separate studies merely ‘applying’ qualitative research methods will not be considered). For further information and for submission, please click on this [link](#).

## 3. Workshops/Public Events (webinars)

- **Prisons and Penalty: The Current Issues Symposium** — 24th of March 2021 @ University of Plymouth—This symposium brings together academic criminologists and researchers, penal reformers, prison directors and practitioners, third sector agencies in the penal field and undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Plymouth to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic within prisons, on prisoners, their families and those who work in and provide vital support into the prison community. EG member **Joe Sim and David Scott** will be among the speakers. Please click [here](#) for further information and to register.
- **Eyes on Abolition: Amplify Your Voice with Feminista Jones** — 31st of March 2021 @ University of Houston— For [Social Work month](#), we will explore social work’s history of collaboration and cooperation with carceral systems including policing and foster care with Feminista Jones, retired social worker, feminist writer, public speaker, and community activist. We will discuss how social work’s history aligns with our values and professional mandate to fight against systems that perpetuate injustice and oppression. How do social workers reconcile our history? How do we move forward? Click [here](#) for further information and to register.
- **Introduction to Restorative Justice (EN) Spring 2021**— 15-23 April 2021— The European Forum For Restorative Justice organises an online course that invites participants to discover the basics of restorative justice, its purpose, key principles, models, applicability, and supporting legal instruments. The learning is organised through active participation, discussions, group exercises and common reflections, and it features specific and practical examples such as scenarios of (anonymised) cases. Please click [here](#) for further information and to register.

## 4. Resources/ Publications

- **Resisting Incarceration: Prison, Activism and Abolitionism**— EG Member **Phil Scraton** provides a incredible detailed discussion of incarceration, suicide, self harm and torture. “Derived in three decades of activist work and academic research Phil Scraton will address the harms of imprisonment for those locked away, their families and their communities. He will critique the reformist ‘rehabilitation’ agenda and explore the potential for prison abolition. What would decarceration look like? What are alternatives and how would harms caused to individuals and communities by ‘criminal’ and ‘anti-social’ acts be addressed without the ‘punishment’ of incarceration?”. The podcast of the presentation is available at this [link](#).
- **Antigone Association XVII Report on the Italian Prison**— “Oltre il virus—Beyond the Virus” is the title of the last report of Antigone Association on the current condition of the Italian prison system. The report (in Italian) provides a unique insight on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Italian prison and detention system. The report is available [here](#), and at this [link](#) you can find the launch of the report.



- **Global Detention Project**— GDP uses data and analysis to promote the human rights of migrant detainees. Every day, tens of thousands of men, women, and children are detained across the globe for reasons related to their immigration status: asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, refugees, trafficking victims, torture survivors, stateless persons, and others. The GDP relentlessly pursues information about where they are locked up and how they are treated to ensure that their human rights are respected. Click [here](#) for further information.
- **Six Norwegian Prisons 1850-2020**— Sophie Angelis, Hedda Giertsen, Elisabeth Tostrup, Zahra Memarianpour has arranged a digital exhibition describes six generations of Norwegian prisons according to: official ideas about the purposes of prisons from 1850 through today; architectural drawings, photos of sites, buildings and interiors. Timelines show frequencies and length of time that prisoners spend in sites for rehabilitation, isolation and control; social consequences of imprisonment described by prisoners' experiences. The exhibition is available [here](#).

## 5. EG Members' Papers:

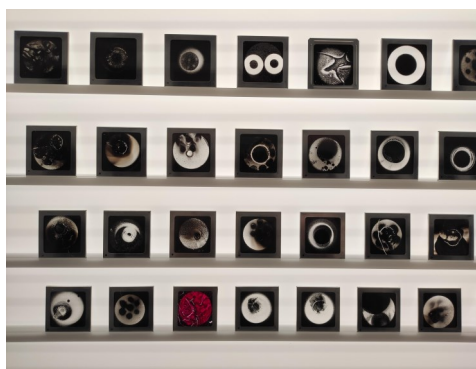
- **Canning V. (2021) Sensing and Unease in Immigration Confinement: An Abolitionist's Perspective.** In K. Herrity, B. E. Schmidt, Warr J. (eds) *Sensory Penalties: Exploring the Senses in Spaces of Punishment and Social Control*. Sage—In this chapter, EG coordinator Vicky Canning explore the visual sensorial experience within immigration site of confinement. In doing so Vicky provide an abolitionist perspective over the immigration detention. The book is available [here](#).
- **Santorso S. (2021) Rehabilitation and dynamic security in the Italian prison: challenges in transforming prison officers' roles. In British Journal of Criminology**—EG member Simone Santorso provide a critical account of the reform process of the Italian prison involving both rehabilitation and security. Drawing on prison officers' accounts, this article addresses the extent to which the implementation of a dynamic security and open-cell regime has been successful in reforming Italian prisons. The article, based on semi-ethnographic research in two prisons, sheds light on how the prison officers' cope with the new rehabilitation-oriented role. The uniformed staff's perceptions and experiences of the new regime are analysed, with a focus on the symbolic order produced over the rehabilitation and the effect of the complexity of the prison's setting. Along with deepening understandings about the humanization of prison security, this article explores how the prison officers' role and attitudes might impact and shape the idea of rehabilitation. The article is available [here](#).
- **Honeywell D. (2021) The Ambiguities of Desistance: Ex-offenders, Higher Education and the Desistance Journey. Emerald**— David Honeywell, "through in-depth interviews and his own lived experiences as a prisoner, the author highlights the importance of Higher Education in the desistance process as a conduit for change and rehabilitation. He explores the complex life process of the ex-offender, investigating the introspective and existential experiences that lead individuals towards an ongoing desistance journey in which they re-evaluate their sense of selves and develop new identities. Arguing that in the current criminal justice system the focus on crime overshadows the more complex and unending process of desistance, the author showcases how the system provides no formal rite of passage for ex-offenders attempting to re-integrate into society". The book is available [here](#).
- **'Ross J, and Vianello F. (2020) Convict Criminology for the future . Routledge**— EG member Francesca Vianello and Jeff Ross co-authored edited this text that bring together a variety of diverse international contributors from the Convict Criminology. "The book is interdisciplinary in the sense that the contributors have training and experience working in different kinds of social science fields. Like the original edited book, many of the contributors who are formerly incarcerated or are justice impacted are presenting their work alongside supportive justice free colleagues who are allied with Convict Criminology. They bring this wealth of knowledge to the pages of this book and to the readers so they can make sense of the complicated world of corrections and to shed light on a viable way forward". The book is available [here](#).

## 6. Campaigns

- **Stop the Full Sutton Mega-Prison** - [Campaign Against Prison Expansion](#) is asking you to object to the building of a ditch course, which is going to be built as part of the development of the site, to turn the land next to HMP Full Sutton into a "megaprison". **To make a public comment you have to register with East Riding of Yorkshire Council [website](#).** Please click [here](#) for further information and instruction about the campaign.
- **Living conditions in Greek hotspots under examination at the European Court of Human Rights**— [Statewatch](#) report how the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is examining living conditions in four of the five "hotspots" in Greece, in which migrants and refugees are 'housed' in appalling conditions. The ECHR recently asked the Greek government a number of questions in relation to the cases, and HIAS Greece and Equal Rights Beyond Borders - representing four of the individuals with cases before the court - say they "demonstrate the structural illegality and impossibility to implement the hotspot approach and border procedures in a way that does not violate human rights," with serious implications for the ongoing attempt to introduce new EU legislation on border procedures for assessing asylum applications. . To read the full report [here](#).
- **Not my crime, still my sentence** — [Children of Prisoners](#) advocacy campaign, supporting efforts to safeguard the rights of children who have a parent in prison, builds on the 2019 publication of '[It's Time to Act](#)', the child-friendly version of Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents. Written by young people in collaboration with COPE members throughout Europe, 'It's Time to Act' was created in order to encourage youth engagement with the notion of rights, and specifically to be aware of and understand their rights in the context of the Recommendation. Click [here](#) to find more about the campaign.
- **INQUEST** - is working to end deaths caused by unsafe systems of detention, a lack of care, the use of force and by institutional failure. For almost four decades, we have been the driving force behind improvements in the investigation and inquest process and the support offered to bereaved people following a state related death. Please click [here](#) for further information.

## 7. Opportunities

- **Research Fellow**— @University of Hull —The Department of Criminology and Sociology is seeking to appoint a research assistant on a fixed-term, part-time basis to work on a project overseen by Dr Simone Santorso. You will join the team working on this innovative research project which seeks to explore and the organised crime groups relations within and behind the prison setting. You will work alongside members of the Wilberforce Institute For Studying Slavery and Emancipation and The University of Sheffield. The appointment is for a part-time research position/ fix term. Please click [here](#) for further information and to apply.



*The greater ignorance towards a country is not ignoring what its politicians have to say, it is ignoring what the inmates in its prisons have to say."*

*Criss Jami (2025) [Killosophy](#), p. 49*