

Democracy and Education Behind Bars



Joshua A. Miller

In this Praxis Reflection, I reflect on the relationship between teaching and imprisonment. I describe a college program at a prison in Jessup, Maryland, and argue that liberal arts-style college classes should be widely available in prisons even as we work to dismantle the current system of mass incarceration.

We Teach Scholars, Not Prisoners

We are debating the death penalty, again. “Some people just deserve it! If you do something that heinous, you should die. If I do something like that, kill me!” That’s one of my students, Shakkir. John responds quickly: “I hear you. But that’s because we’ve given up on rehabilitation!” It’s an old debate.

Abdullah piles on: “Still, I’ll tell you what: you make it fair and I’ll sign on.” Shakkir responds, glowering: “There I agree with you! You’ve got to have a fair trial and you’ve got to do the same to whites and Blacks. But this is an industry: too many jobs riding on us in here. But even if you fix that, you’ve still got to have the death penalty! It’s about protecting society from the predators. They got to die”

John is ready for this: “Yeah, there’s a lot of money riding on us in here. But I also think we can all be better than our worst moment, it don’t matter your color. I was rehabilitated my second day in here; the thirty-four years since I’ve just been doing time.”

An old debate. Most of my readers have heard it repeatedly and have probably taken a stand. The only difference is that the interlocutors are three of the 2.3 million men imprisoned in the United States, and like 40 percent of those incarcerated (but only 13 percent of the general population), they’re Black. More than any other American citizens, their opinions on these questions are unlikely to find purchase on the politicians who make these decisions because of Maryland’s felony

disenfranchisement rules.¹ By society’s lights, most of my students have committed heinous crimes.

We are sitting in the clerks’ office at the Jessup Correctional Institution. Above us, there is a printed sign: “We are not Inmates. We are not Convicts. We are not Prisoners. We are Incarcerated Americans.”

Labels matter, so it is important to start with the rectification of names: the men we work with at the JCI are American citizens. They are also fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. They are students, and the titular scholars in our title: when students from universities outside the prison visit, we carefully distinguish the “inside” students from the “outside” students. Yet of course, we have to talk about “prisoners” whenever we write to prison officials or the press, because these locutions disguise—deliberately—the fact that the men we serve are incarcerated in favor of their other statuses as learners and knowers.

Teachers from Disparate Institutions Discovered a Common Cause

I started teaching at Jessup Correctional Institution (JCI) in 2012, a summer course on Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*. My students loved it, and so we kept up through the Fall, reading her essays and other works, and then in 2013 I offered a year-long course on philosophical classics. I was impressed by these bright, passionate students who read difficult political theory, write thoughtful papers, and never demand a better grade. It was chance that brought me there. I’d been impressed by Bard College’s Prison Initiative, but I knew we couldn’t replicate it without funding. A few months later, Goucher College got a grant to offer a similar program to Bard’s in the prison down the road, and it began to seem that we were on to something.

If we have a founder, then Drew Leder of Loyola University Maryland is it. But though he first started

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teaching in Maryland's prisons 1992, it would take until 2009 for the seeds of a greater effort to take root.² That's when he began teaching exclusively at JCI and working with the prison librarian, Grace Schroeder, to bring other faculty to work with his students and then, as the supply of teachers grew, with other students.

Gradually, the occasional course has been turning into a "program" without our even realizing it. Jim Schelberg, an undergraduate at Washington College, newly back from a military tour in Afghanistan, felt inspired to organize an ethics course taught by Washington College faculty. It became the subject of a *Washington Post* article.³ Tim Brown, S.J., priest, professor, and special assistant to the president of Loyola, started teaching classes on business law.

And so it has gone—volunteer professors such as Mikita Brottman, Daniel Levine, Daniel Brunson, Giuseppina Iacono Lobo, Andrea Cantora, Rachel Donaldson, myself, and many others—added courses on philosophy, literature, writing, political science, history, and criminal justice. For some time we didn't even know of each others' efforts, but gradually we realized that it was time to collaborate. Many of the difficulties we faced negotiating with the prison's administration individually could be dealt with collectively.

Today, the JCI Prison Scholars Program (JCIPSP) is a non-profit organization that supports faculty from throughout the District of Columbia and Maryland region to teach college-level courses at JCI, a Maryland state prison in Jessup, MD. We serve between 120 and 160 incarcerated scholars each semester.

Beyond Just Deserts

"In a world of finite resources, where we are struggling to find funding for education for our kids, the last thing New York State should be funding is college tuition for convicts."⁴ So argued New York state senator Greg Ball in opposition to Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal to fund college tuition for New York's prisoners. Cuomo's plan was scrapped under the onslaught of attacks based on the unfairness of offering for free something that most outside of prison must go into debt to fund: a college education.

This is the attitude we face every day at the JCI Prison Scholars Program: many people believe that those who have been convicted of a crime deserve fewer of the costly and rare things that make a life go well than those who have not.

Twenty years ago, the federal government cut Pell Grants for prisoners, effectively defunding the broad network of community colleges and universities that were offering education to prisoners beyond a GED. This was the end of a long wave of changes in the U.S. penal system that transformed prisons from houses of correction and rehabilitation into warehouses and

dumping grounds for the poor, mentally ill, and disenfranchised.

In our view, this was a profoundly short-sighted and expensive decision. Senator Ball's distinction between "our kids" and convicts ignores the fact that these groups are not so distinct: children grow up to be convicts, and Mr. Ball's children share a world and state budgets with the men and women who he does not believe ought to receive the same education as his children. The best evidence suggests that college education reduces recidivism: that is, getting a college degree in prison makes offenders less likely to commit more crimes upon release. So cutting Pell Grants caused more people to be assaulted and killed. What's more, felons without college degrees have fewer employment options and are sometimes forced to return to the black market economy through illegal drug sales, robbery, and participation in violent street organizations. Therefore, more people are imprisoned than there would have been if prisoners had been able to pursue a college education. It seems obvious to us that the loss of Pell Grants for prisoners thus also hurts ordinary citizens and state budgets.

The hope that a college education can offer is an immeasurable benefit, a path to success where most others are foreclosed. Women and men returning from prison face significant discrimination at every turn, despite having paid their debt and served their time. In Maryland, in 2012, 40 percent of prisoners had returned to prison for committing a new crime after their release less than three years ago. Yet a 2001 study by the Department of Education of participants in college courses showed that college education before the end of Pell Grants for prisoners in Maryland, Ohio, and Massachusetts reduced recidivism by 29 percent. Experiments in New York have been even more effective: just 4 percent of the Bard Prison Initiatives graduates have recidivated, a 90 percent decrease. This is a public safety windfall waiting to be reaped, the proverbial hundred dollar bill on the sidewalk waiting for someone to pick it up!

In that study of Maryland prison education just before the end of Pell Grants, the highest rate of (fiscal) return was for prisoners who got their Bachelor's degrees, and it translated into \$3.53 savings for every \$1 spent on education. On average, the Department of Education found that there was a 2-to-1 return on investment: for every dollar we spent in Maryland on college courses, they saved more than two dollars in reincarceration costs. How can that be? For one thing, teachers are cheaper than prison guards. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, it costs \$38,383 per year to incarcerate someone in Maryland. In contrast, tuition at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County came to just under \$10,000. If you will, professors are cheaper than prison guards.⁵

Reducing future incarceration is not our primary reason for working with this population. We believe that the expansion of our students' capacities and knowledge is an intrinsic good, and we act on that belief by working with many who have long-term and life sentences. Our goal is to model and enable life-long learning. As we put it in our mission statement, the liberal arts are the techniques of freedom. And they are techniques that can be learned and applied both within prisons and outside. Our students are leaders in their gangs, in their churches, and in their antiviolence and conflict resolution groups. They don't wait until they are released to apply the skills of close reading, careful analysis, and thoughtful reflection that they practice with us, but instead apply it to mediating potentially violent conflicts within the prison and negotiating ceasefires with unincarcerated members of their street organizations like the one negotiated with the Black Guerilla Family in August of 2013. Our students tell us that exposure to history, philosophy, and literature help them adopt differing perspectives and see conflicts from the other side, and that these techniques make them better mediators and citizens.

Finally, we cannot ignore the issue of race and racism. Mass incarceration has been called "The New Jim Crow" because it disproportionately hurts African-Americans and their communities.⁶ It also disproportionately targets the poor. One study found that over the past thirty years, between 40 and 60 percent of prison inmates were below the federal poverty line at the time of their most recent arrest.⁷ Those poorly-served by our state's schools are most likely to be incarcerated. Each has talents that are lost to their communities. Yet we know that they can be leaders. Prisoners who succeed in college courses develop the leadership skills that are useful both inside and outside the prison system. Imprisoned college students and graduates frequently become positive role models for younger prisoners, and have created service programs that focus on conflict resolution, youth development, and other issues that are critical to personal transformation. We have seen this firsthand with the Extra Legalese Group, the Friend of a Friend Program, and the Alternatives to Violence Project, where our students are effective leaders and teachers, themselves in the project to end mass incarceration. We can all be richer if we devote more resources to unlocking those capacities.

It seems obvious that we ought to restore the most effective crime prevention program we have, which is also the most effective economic stimulus and the most effective tool for racial equality: the college degree. However, whenever we have discussed accreditation with local universities and community colleges, we have discovered that the costs and restraints would be prohibitive. While the nearby community college can offer Microsoft Office certification for a few thousand dollars per student (paid for by the students' families), and the

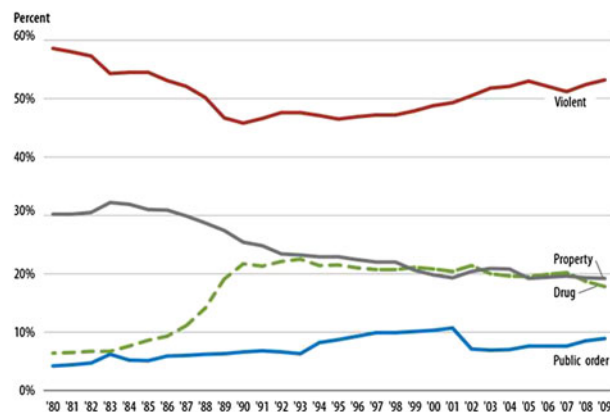
private program in a nearby prison can admit fifty students to a Bachelor's degree program on an annual budget of \$250,000, we can serve three times that many students on the strength of donated time and materials. This suggests that volunteer faculty and non-degree courses ought to play an important role in the prison education ecosystem, even though we see our role as setting the stage for the eventual restoration of publicly funded college degrees in Maryland prisons.

Status Egalitarianism

At the JCI Prison Scholars Program (JCI PSP) we are committed to the claim that our students are our moral equals. This is perhaps the most difficult claim to maintain in light of efforts to justify punishment from philosophers, politicians, and sometimes even the students themselves. Our students are robbers, murderers, and rapists. Some of them are famous for their crimes: they have played a role in national politics, or been depicted on HBO's *The Wire*. It is popular to assume that the majority of the increase in incarceration has been driven by the drug war, and that alternatives to incarceration will foreground drug treatment and decriminalization of drugs. In fact, though the largest group of *arrests* is tied to drug use, the largest group of *prisoners* is incarcerated for violence; this reflects sentencing differences and treatment diversion programs which are sometimes touted as a solution. There's good evidence that the drug war, poverty, and racist policing produce some of that violence, but not all of it.⁸

So how can we make sense of this claim? Does it really make sense to love the sinner and hate the sin, when the "sins" at stake are so atrocious that I cannot bear to record

Figure 1
Percent of state prisoners, by offense, 1980–2010



Source: "Corrections in the United States," by Bureau of Justice Statistics dated May 4, 2012. Available from: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus12.pdf>

them in detail here?⁹ First, a primer: many philosophers reject the idea that we need a metaphysical account of free will to justify blame, punishment, and other “reactive attitudes.”¹⁰ Philosophers of punishment and philosophers of the emotions have taken up this non-metaphysical justification to articulate the wisdom of resentment towards those who harm us, both blaming the wrong-doer’s acts and disdaining the wrong-doer for that act.¹¹ We hold a different view: these “person-oriented” reactive attitudes are in error. Thus while it is appropriate to blame and even punish someone for what they have done, we make a mistake if we think that the normal attitudes of contempt and disdain—of “better than” or “worse than”—track the moral status of those we punish. We are not, then, in the business of reforming the minds or redeeming the souls of men who have gone astray; education should have nothing to do with the reform of an errant subject by his moral or intellectual superior.¹²

Education for Equals

Our goal is to model education in a way that is sometimes even uncommon in our universities: students are moral equals with the faculty, and the only authority is the text or argument under consideration. The classroom becomes a space of shared inquiry, where students and faculty are mutually accountable for engaging a text or a set of questions.¹³

We aim for educative practices that are “non-reformist reforms,”¹⁴ focusing on what John Dewey called “ends-in-view” rather than “end-states.”¹⁵ That is, while prison teaching does seek to mitigate bad effects of a system, under the assumption that the system will continue for the time being, it can simultaneously try to create conditions that undermine the long-term persistence of the problematic system. In particular, education holds the possibility to undermine the “criteria of rationality” of the current system.

Prison teaching can thus perform a useful role in the context of a society that cannot give up on reprobation even as the society threatens to render it meaningless.¹⁶

There can be no doubt that the liberal arts are under pressure from governments who want more—not just more scientists and engineers, but a more clearly identifiable link between resources expended on education and economic outcomes. This pressure is felt in prisons with an emphasis on job skills and remedial education. A philosophy or history course is a luxury for a system overburdened by the “mass” of mass incarceration, and under the constant budget pressures of neoliberalism. But this is a mistake.

The liberal arts were initially envisioned literally as the techniques for free men and thus at least potentially they can become techniques for freedom. There are roughly three ways of understanding this: the “moral imagination” thesis articulated by Hannah Arendt, Robert Goodin,

Peter Levine, and Martha Nussbaum¹⁷ by which study of the humanities prepares us for democratic deliberation by enabling us, as Nussbaum’s excellent title puts it, to be “Finely Aware and Richly Responsible” to the particularities of moral decisions and perspectives; the “instrumentalist” thesis advanced most recently by Arum and Roska¹⁸ that argues that the study of the humanities teaches important employment skills like critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication that cannot be gained in other coursework; and the “traditionalist” thesis that the study of the past is an important corrective to contemporary cultural pathologies (including instrumentalism!) advanced by Arendt¹⁹ as well as by a panoply of conservative and communitarian theorists like Michael Oakeshott, Allan Bloom, and Michael Sandel.²⁰

We agree with the traditionalists that it is important to devote a certain hermeneutic intensity to some set of texts and problems together, though we disagree that this must involve something like the Western Canon or Great Books. This is particularly valuable in an educational context because too often the teacher-student relationship inculcates the same hierarchical authority that pervades the rest of a prisoner’s life; Michel Foucault’s observations on the institutional inheritances between penitentiaries and schools are just one example.²¹

What then does an education in the liberal arts offer our students in prison? For one, it offers an escape from dullness and the lack of progress and growth that characterizes prison life.²² This escape is not simply escapism, and in many ways it is precisely the alien character of the cultures, questions, and texts of the humanities and liberal arts that makes it so effective. Shorris²³ argues that one major factor in poverty is the stultifying character of one’s problems and environment; Shorris offers the analogy of Native American hunting practices, where hunters would encircle their prey and then move in, creating anxiety and fear that aids the hunter. Poverty and prison both offer similar “surrounds” whereby individuals are beset by so many forces (“hunger, isolation, illness, landlords, police, abuse, neighbors, drugs, criminals, and racism”) that they do not know where to turn. On Shorris’s view, the humanities give them (and us) the crucial pause they need to avoid confusion and find an escape route: his Clemente course in the humanities inspired Bard College’s Prison Initiative, which inspired us.

The liberal arts are not just a set of texts to be read and summarized, of course; at base, they are techniques. The “pause” Shorris describes, which offers us a moment to think before acting, is one of these techniques. Another of these techniques is the art of reading both texts and situations closely, developing a sensitivity to the nuances of literary texts and the silent voices in historical texts. A third technique that comprises the liberal arts is the art of

classroom dialogue. The directed dialogue of the humanities classroom can play a *part* in solving the problems inherent in prisons by allowing dialogue to play its intended role, to form a community of mutual support and recognition, where participants engage in a shared inquiry into weighty intellectual and humanistic matters.

To the extent that the skills and models of interaction developed in the liberal arts classroom are valuable, students can then transmit these to other marginalized and oppressed individuals. Dysfunctional and destructive intra-group relationships are unfortunately common within prisons and among marginalized groups more generally. At least to some extent, the humanities classroom in the prison serves as a space where prisoners experiment with less-destructive relational techniques. For instance, we are told by inmates that our volunteer classes are considered a kind of neutral territory by violent organizations in the prison—individuals who would expose themselves to danger by being seen together at, say, meals, are able to interact with each other in classes without conflict.²⁴ Thus, practical models of productive interaction between rivals may be one valuable “export” from the classroom.

Prisons Are Political Spaces

Too often, we look at the disenfranchisement of prisoners and separation of prisons as evidence that they are radically depoliticized. Prisoners—we imagine—are on a temporary or permanent exile from the *polis* and all that that entails. Many aspects of the modern prison are designed with that de-politicization in mind. Because the custodial relationship between guard and prisoner requires that no prisoner ever exercise authority or control over any resource or outcome. Collective action ought not, in theory, ever be allowed to achieve its ends, whether it be a hunger strike or an anti-violence workshop.

In practice, though, prisoners find and create collaborative spaces of appearance: art projects, new religions, and activist affiliations. Even the plethora of gangs to which they adhere (and Maryland tolerates to varying degrees) signals this effort to act in concert, to create something worthy of contestation. And in the obvious sense, they participate in the politics of their own institutions; when a new guard is confused by one of the archaic systems, it is the prisoners who educate him.²⁵ We have to understand our disenfranchised students as citizens even though they cannot vote, and thereby expand our own sense of what citizenship enables and requires: they are collaborators in the constitution of their shared world, and ultimately of ours. They are activists and deliberators, participants and protesters, subjects and legislators in any meaningful Kingdom of Ends. Their incarceration does not depoliticize them, it just constrains their action; only solitary confinement can achieve depoliticize by destroying the community and deranging

that meaningful world that human beings require for political action.²⁶

Still, prisoners hunger for these political opportunities. Because of their incarceration, much of these efforts are encouraged in a religious direction, for it is only in leadership and service to a faith that they can make a lasting constitutional claim to self-governance that prison officials must respect. (This leads to a proliferation of faiths—often along transparently political lines—as when white nationalists adopt Odinism and black nationalists adopt Moorish Science).

Prison classrooms become political spaces at the heart of an institution where politics is disallowed. What we mean by political is specifically a space where norms are contested and where values that ought to be shared *become* shared through collective production.

Central to the particular habits of mind and character that a liberal arts education seeks to impart are issues about the nature of value, and the proper ways to relate to other human beings in society. Students who have successfully engaged with philosophical texts should come away with a better understanding of how the authors have grappled critically with issues of value and norms (keeping in mind that aesthetic beauty and epistemological truth are values as much as moral good is). Ideally, this will also help them build their skills at engaging critically with the values and norms to which others adhere themselves. The point of, e.g., reading C.L.R. James’ discussion of the relative roles of racism and economic exploitation in the San Domingo revolution is to be able to reflect on and discuss the relative importance of race and class to current struggles for liberation.

We aim to use the prison classroom itself as a space where the values of students and instructors are brought into contact and contestation that can allow new relationships to emerge, and simultaneously to use the prison classroom to equip students to contest social values in the wider world. But we should be realistic about the potential impact of prison education. The benefits of any one class, or one program, are going to be small. But the utopian vision of a society in which the whole encounter between currently-dominant and currently-subordinated social groups is transformed is likely to be made up of a multitude of small, piecemeal encounters like this.

Freedom and Constraint in Prison Education

In a recent interview, Axel Honneth asserted that the “whole idea of a university” is to “represent a space where free thinking is possible.”²⁷ This idea is critical to the value of prison education, even while it transplants values that now seem quaint even in the university into much more hostile soil: what a university ideally provides is a space where thinkers can interact without the pressures of

conforming to accepted ideas or the direct subordination of the interplay of conversation to instrumental goals.

Free thinking—because it allows for new patterns of intellectual interaction to occur—creates new forms of such interaction in which prisoners and other members of marginalized populations are no longer marginalized. And like novel skills and practices, the new ideas generated from this encounter can be “exported.” When prisoners and other members of marginalized groups face the challenge of “no alternative” and status quo bias, they can now respond with concrete ideas of how things might be done differently.²⁸

This free intellectual play is central to the goal of creating new practices that instantiate new values. As members of the relatively privileged social group, prison educators can create spaces in which dominant ways of thinking about and living social values can encounter the social and value practices of marginalized groups, can be put at risk, and can change.

A key element in our implementation is that the people in a classroom must take seriously the ideal that the class will be a relatively egalitarian space of encounter between instructors and student that will allow for relatively free intellectual “play.” But there are two important barriers that we have encountered in our teaching that are specific to prisons and that need to be seriously considered.

First, the hierarchical nature of prisons and the subordinated status of prisoners can make some experiments in egalitarian organization of education programs problematic. We have benefited from a much more permissive environment at JCI than colleagues at some other penal institutions. But ideas such as empowering a prisoner “student government” or allowing prisoners to teach their own classes are met with resistance. Overly-idealistic instructors who fantasize about bending and breaking institutional rules sometimes need to be reminded both that it would be a bad trade-off to insist on democratizing the program at the expense of getting it shut down, and that it is morally problematic to suggest too much boat-rocking when harms are likely to fall more heavily on the already-vulnerable students, imprisoned with staff who our ideals may offend. Though we aim to provide a maximally free space for intellectual exchange in a prison, where prisoners are not overly restrained by the greater authority of instructors within the program, we must espouse that ideal carefully.

Second, it can be difficult for instructors—perhaps *especially* those of us invested in a progressive identity, as “good guys” in broader social conflicts—to genuinely put our own values at risk in discussion. If the prison classroom is genuinely a space of encounter between social value systems, and not just debate practice, instructors need to be genuinely open to the idea that their values, often acquired from the dominant social system, may need to change.

This can be especially difficult since, in our experience, many (though certainly not all) prisoners hold values at odds with those likely to be held by affluent, progressive-minded academics. For example, many of our students are vociferously opposed to gay marriage, and have loudly proclaimed that strong discipline of children who may be gay is warranted. This is at odds with convictions we hold deeply, and we are not always sure how to deal with it in the classroom without invoking our authority as bearers of a superior set of values—but while genuinely believing that, on this point at least, our students are deeply wrong. Of course, they’re also frequently more radical in other directions, too: many are more convinced of anti-capitalism than our instructors; others are deeply steeped in Christianity or Islam and frequently challenge my atheism.

We should be realistic about the potential impact of prison education. The benefits of any one class, or one program, are going to be small. And they are not *uniquely* served by prison education. Other ways of creating free, constructive space for encounters between members of different social groups, and for building skills and models that make those encounters productive, are possible and actually exist. Prison education is a complementary project to other initiatives, such as anti-violence programs, mentorship initiatives, programs that bring children of prisoners into more and higher-quality contact with incarcerated parents, theater and art programs, and the like.

As Angela Davis puts it:

In thinking specifically about the abolition of prisons using the approach of abolition democracy, we would propose the creation of an array of social institutions that would begin to solve the social problems that set people on the track to prison, thereby helping to render the prison obsolete. There is a direct connection with slavery: when slavery was abolished black people were set free, but they lacked access to the material resources that would enable them to fashion new, free lives. Prisons have thrived over the last century precisely because of the absence of those resources and the persistence of some of the deep structures of slavery. They cannot, therefore, be eliminated unless new institutions and resources are made available to those communities that provide, in large part, the human beings that make up the prison population.²⁹

It’s an older debate than the death penalty: what are the material and spiritual requirements for achieving liberation? Can one exercise “techniques of freedom” regardless of one’s situation, even in the most radically unfree environments? Our students continually express a wish that they had had the kinds of classroom experiences before their incarceration that they are having now; they recommend that we set up parallel schools outside the prison with a similarly non-instrumental relationship to knowledge. They even speak of leading these courses themselves, and the few who have been released since we began our work inside are doing just that.

We like to imagine the impact of a significant number of professors, professionals, and former prisoners treating

their knowledge and skills as a public trust, which they feel professionally obligated to share in prisons and other public spaces. Incarceration can only retreat if non-punitive practices proliferate—and this has to include education—even as we must avoid the instrumental approach to education that articulates a demand for practical skills and vocational training. We must put the lie to the pervasive belief that the world is better off without these men in it.

Notes

- 1 On the issue of felon disenfranchisement laws, see Katzenstein, Ibrahim, and Rubin 2010; Dilts 2014.
- 2 Leder 2001.
- 3 “College student’s philosophy program brings Plato and Buddha to a Md. Prison.” *Washington Post*, September 1, 2011.
- 4 Posted to the Senator’s official Facebook page as a status update on March 9, 2014.
- 5 For more on this approach, see the RAND analysis from Davis et al. 2013.
- 6 Alexander 2012.
- 7 Wheelock and Uggen 2008.
- 8 Felbab-Brown 2009.
- 9 Watson 1996.
- 10 Strawson 1974.
- 11 Mason 2003; Bell 2000; Mason 2013.
- 12 Perhaps, too, it is time to say that “prisons should have nothing to do with reform” any longer; “If the words ‘prison reform’ so easily slip from our lips, it is because ‘prison’ and ‘reform’ have been inextricably linked since the beginning of the use of imprisonment as the main means of punishing those who violate social norms”; Davis 2003.
- 13 I originally wrote this section with Daniel Levine, a co-founder of the JCI PSP, for a paper to be published in the *Radial Philosophy Review*.
- 14 Gorz 1967, 7.
- 15 McKenna 2001, 148.
- 16 Crucially, we would like to distinguish our view from that of Jean Hampton: we do not hold, as she does, that education and punishment are linked because the pains of punishment are educative: “Wrong occasions punishment not because pain deserves pain, but because evil deserves correction”; Hampton 1984, 238. We hold that punishment without education (understood as shared inquiry) fails to count as punishment: it is merely pain. And since our current prisons lack the right kinds of education . . .
- 17 Arendt 1992; Goodin 2000; Nussbaum 1985, 2010; Levine 2009.
- 18 Arum and Roska 2011.
- 19 Arendt 1961.
- 20 Oakeshott 2001; Bloom 1987; Sandel 1998.
- 21 Foucault 1995.

- 22 Leder et al. 2011.
- 23 Shorris 2000, 48.
- 24 Of course, the classes are not unique in this. We are told that participants in the “Alternatives to Violence” program active at the prison enjoy a similar suspension of hostility norms.
- 25 And this can have troubling implications, as it did in the Baltimore City Jail where members of the Black Guerilla Family effectively suborned corrections officers and continued violence against other prisoners with that authority.
- 26 Guenther 2013.
- 27 Suther 2013.
- 28 Suther 2013.
- 29 Davis 2003.

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