



the  
"King County  
Correctional  
Facility"



King County  
Department of Adult Detention  
500 Fifth Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98104

"Eleven Months" is a zine about my experience teaching in the jail in downtown Seattle. It is a mix of experiences, dreams, analysis, rumors, reflections and internal emails. I wrote it as an attempt to condense a magnificent, traumatic, grueling experience into a something I could share with others.

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(eleven months)



written by



anti-copyright but credit given is appreciated

Email me! I'd love to hear from you - [kozemchuk@gmail.com](mailto:kozemchuk@gmail.com)

I also have another zine called "Don't Be A Dick" about men and rape.

I also want to emphasize that my analysis is that prisons (& police) need to be abolished, not reformed. The criminal injustice system supposedly exists to: 1) deter crime through the threat of violence/incarceration and 2) mete out "justice" in the form of violence/incarceration. Instead, I see the police and prisons as a form of social control that mitigates the threat of political unrest and revolutionary violence from poor folks, people of color, queers, undocumented people, etc. Our communities do need ways to both prevent harm and find justice/accountability when harm has been done. Instead of a centralized state apparatus that relies on violent force, I suggest that we need: 1) a radical restructuring of society so that everyone's needs are met; 2) community building and education to prevent harm; and 3) widespread use of self-defense and community accountability structures based on transformative justice. (For more info on transformative justice, see <http://www.generationfive.org>; the INCITE! Critical Resistance Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex is awesome too.)

If you want to learn more about the prison system and how it works, I recommend reading the works of political prisoners, and prisoners in general. Prisoners in general because I think resistance should be led and analysis built by those most affected - the incarcerated, in this case - and political prisoners especially because they situate the criminal punishment system within a larger political analysis of repression and social control. I'm talking about authors like Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu Jamal, Angela Davis, David Gilbert, George Jackson, Assata Shakur, and so on. A great place to start is Davis' excellent & very readable *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (The answer is YES!)

Many thanks to my students at the jail.

Thanks also to my amazing editors: Nat, Dianne, Jeff, Oscar, Jenny, Ashley, Isabel, the Seans, Felix

This zine is dedicated to everyone who is currently locked up.

## Introduction:

I wrote periodically throughout my time teaching at the jail (September 2009 through July 2010) as a way of processing and also for posterity. This zine is mostly made up of those writings, which I started compiling, revising, and editing in early 2011. I decided to organize them chronologically – hopefully you can see my ideas and feelings change over the year, as well as the contradictions that I still struggle to reconcile. I have left out the names of my students and coworkers, for privacy and also because I write mostly about myself and my own reactions & process. During the year, I tutored individual inmates a few times a week, taught my own class, helped in my coworker's class, coordinated volunteer tutors, and sorted paperwork.

## What is the jail?

The jail is the point of entry for folks entering criminal injustice system who are older than eighteen. First, people are arrested or turn themselves in. Then they are either released or go to trial. If they are convicted of a misdemeanor, a class of "lesser" crimes that generally carry a sentence under a year, they stay at the jail. Felony convictions mean you go to a prison. All inmates have their citizenship documentation checked. Those who do not have documentation are typically deported by I.C.E. – Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

much I feel disrespected by the guards, I know the inmates have it much worse. I am in a position of tremendous relative privilege.

Today I saw a sign on the fourth floor. It said "NO WHINING ZONE. CRY IN PRIVATE."

Today was also my last class. We played math bingo and it was pretty fun. I was sad after it was over. I'm going to miss teaching.



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## Epilogue:

A week after I was done at the jail, I went on a bicycle tour of the Oregon Coast with my sister. As of spring 2011 I'm teaching at a preschool, living in a cooperative house, and still doing anti-racist organizing. I have regained some of the spark I had before teaching at the jail. In the future, I want to travel, become a stay-at-home parent, and get more involved in prison abolition & transformative justice organizing here in Seattle.



## A note on language:

At the jail, as everywhere else, power relations are obscured by the official language:

- Prisoners are “inmates.” Inmate is the official term because it has less of a connotation of force. In the education office we referred to students in our classes as students, not inmates.
- This isn’t a jail but a “Correctional Facility” that exists as part of a criminal “justice” system. The official terms cover up the origins/function of police and prisons as systems of social control.
- Guards who keep people caged are “corrections officers” – abbreviated as C.O.s. This title makes it sound like their job description involves rehabilitation – it doesn’t. The guards’ ultimate interest is “safety and security” (a mantra at the jail) for everyone except the prisoners. Officer is also a preferred term because of its status and the military hierarchy of the jail (C.O., sergeant, captain, major, commander). It’s also worth noting that guards make a starting salary of over \$50,000 a year.

The euphemisms give a feel-good veneer, supporting the lie that the inmates made bad choices and now they are “making right.” Of course, this is bullshit: nothing separates inmates from those outside except that inmates are generally more likely to be brown, poor, have chemical dependency and mental health issues, and are wearing red jumpsuits. What I’m saying is that folks in jail haven’t necessarily been more harmful to their communities than people who are still free. For example, very few rapists actually see jail time, while many folks in jail are there for minor drug crimes, such as possession or low-level dealing. In this zine I generally used this language unconsciously, in order to better capture the culture of the place.

Also : There is a map of the jail in the middle of the zine.

One of my students got sent to prison and I almost cried.

How the system works:

Essentialism: criminals are not part of a constructed category but an essential one, so they belong behind bars, rather in their families and communities. That is, criminality is inherent in the inmates, rather than imposed by the state.

Materialism: reducing jail to the material conditions, rather than understanding how it impacts relationships and communities.

Also:

Authoritarianism: the idea that some people shouldn’t be able to make their own decisions. Guards think they know what is better for inmates than inmates do for themselves.

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Today I was waiting to get onto the elevator. In the part of the jail I was in, I needed to wait for a guard to unlock the door. I was at the door and the guard saw me but didn’t open the door, so I pushed the button to get his attention. Nothing happened for a minute and then I pushed it again. He still didn’t let me in, so the next time we made eye contact, I pointed at myself, then the door. He waved me over so I walked over to him. He said something like “When we make eye contact, I’m going to let you in, okay? Don’t push the button because then I’ll just make you wait, because I don’t give a shit.” I said okay and went over to the door, which he opened. In situations like this, I always try to keep in mind that no matter how

cis-men). I think a similar dynamic is at work when priests sexually abuse and rape children, or when cops rape sex workers – cis-men in power know that, for the most part, they can get away with it. On the other hand, I think that inmates sexually harass because they are NOT in a position of power - they are caged, humiliated, dehumanized. Catcalling or making comments about a woman's body is, I think, a problematic way for them to try to take back some power and control in their lives, to feel like they are somebodies, not nobodies.

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I just spoke to a student from my class. He wasn't there yesterday, and I was up on the floors to talk to him about tutoring. He told me that he's going to prison next week. I told him it was good to have him in class, and he thanked me. I got on the elevator, feeling totally helpless. Having people I know taken to prison is almost more sad than people I know dying, because prisons don't have to exist.

I try to remember everyone I've known who has gone to prison. I try to remember them but it's hard - I wrote down their names on a card that I keep in my wallet. I try to remember the faces and think of them. I don't want to forget them, at least not until they're all out. But it will be decades before they are all out. Some of them might even be back in at that point, although I hope not.

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Today I received a kite that said: "I'll be free again soon and I just wanted to say THANK YOU for all your help and time."

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capitalism, the state, patriarchy, rape culture, prisons, ableism, imperialism, etc. In short, total liberation. So in order to support myself, I have to compromise my ideals in the search for paid employment. The question is, "how much am I willing to compromise?"

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There is a classroom on the tenth floor that is very cold. Students have only issued garb, which is not enough to keep them warm. They tuck their arms inside their shirts and pull their collars up over their heads in an attempt to keep warm. Attendance is suffering as a result. I was in the room for two minutes the other day with a tutor, and it was quite cold, even with the additional clothing I was wearing. My supervisor emailed an administrator several times, asking for the room to be made warmer, so students could concentrate. He responded with a whole lot of bullshit, like "maybe the room will warm up once the weather gets warmer" and "inmates aren't issued long sleeve shirts because it's a 'security risk.'" The students in the class aren't stupid - they can tell that the administration doesn't care about them and they say so.

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Female volunteers and my coworker (who is a woman) regularly tell me stories of sexual harassment they experience, both by guards and inmates. The harassment includes catcalls, "flirtation," lewd comments, and sometimes even unwanted touching. There is a different dynamic that operates between harassment by guards and inmates. I believe that guards harass because they are men in positions of power within a rape culture (about 90% of guards are

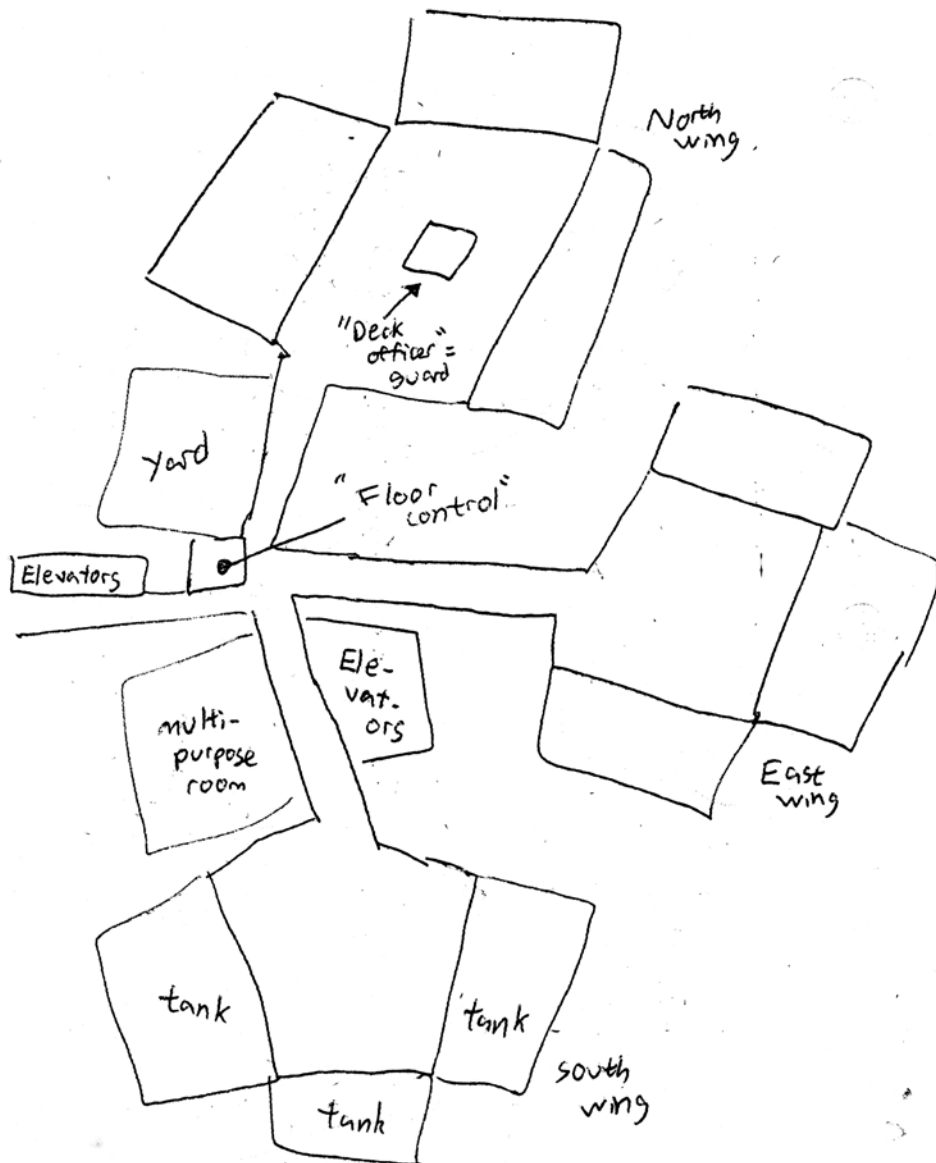
Working at the jail has been one hell of an experience. It's made me think a lot about justice, the nature of authority, what sort of work I want to do for social change, and how systems of oppression work, along with basic questions about the human condition.

Making connections with inmates has been one of the most rewarding parts of my work so far: things like an inmate showing another tutor and me pictures of her family in Alaska, hearing childhood and family stories during a creative writing class, getting the nickname "Pauly Shore" (probably because I'm white and kind of dweeby) from a student, and just laughing with people. One time I was around the tanks\* [see footnote], recruiting for a GED class, and one of my students came up to the door with his shirt over his head, in an attempt to hide his identity. It didn't work and we had a good laugh about it. Other interactions are more sad, like a female inmate saying that this is the first time she's missed her kid's birthday and that she feels like a bad mom.

## Mr. & Mrs. Free-people

It's tough, because any relationship I have with an inmate is inevitably shadowed by the power relations inherent in jail. One student referred to a fellow tutor and me as "Mrs. and Mr. Free-people." As much as I like to think that I am forming genuine relationships, I must acknowledge that the power dynamic inevitably comes between authentic human connection. There is a difference between an interaction making me feel "good," and it actually *being* a good interaction. That is, I might get a good feeling from being a paternalistic asshole, but that's disempowering to the inmate and something I try to avoid at all costs. I would call an interaction good if it was empowering for the inmate and made them feel respected as a person.

\*Floors 7-11 at the jail are set up like a panopticon. There are three wings. Each wing has a guard and two floors, with three tanks – rooms – on each floor, for a total of six tanks per wing, eighteen tanks per floor. A guard in each wing is able to see what happens in each tank without moving. Some tanks are open or “dormitory” style, while others contain single or double cells and a day room.



the work we did together was helpful. At the time of this writing, he is in closed security, on one million dollars bail and facing a charge of Robbery 1 (robbery with violence or a deadly weapon). It's hard to imagine the man who sat across from me might have done something like that. It's also hard to imagine that he is facing more than a decade in prison.

I just got a kite from an inmate, directed to me. This is what it says: "Would you please consider letting individuals in our pod go outside. It would be great therapy now that the weather is warming up and everyone (with the exception of a couple) really want to go out and walk and get fresh air. I've been here in this unit for over 60 days and never get to go. PLEASE! :)" It's from the seventh floor - the psych floor. They do not get any programs, class, or tutoring, and rarely go to "yard" – a cement room with grates instead of windows – there is not a place that is actually outside for inmates to go. I have no control over their ability to go outside, although I wish I did.

It may be obvious, but I have a lot of conflicted feelings about the jail. For example, I think that I'm doing good things, but I also know that my work supports the functioning of the jail. The inmates appreciate what I do for them, but the work I do is out of a problematic, paternalistic "charity" framework. I learned a lot during my time at the jail, but it was also a desolate, draining place to work. I am able to reconcile these experiences by accepting that no one will pay me to do what I truly want most: the end of

to get tutored. It was really frustrating because I could see the student on the other side of the door, with his folder in hand, ready to learn. The only thing standing between the student and tutor was the CO, who decided to deny the student his opportunity for education because he happened to be called at the same time he was getting commissary. I know it goes without saying, but what a dick! This kind of thing happens all the time: a CO isn't happy with what is going on and decides to exercise their authority and deny something to an inmate, asserting their dominance over another human being.

It's important to note here that the problem is not that some guards are "assholes." Maintaining control of the inmates is their job description, and that necessitates the kind of behavior you see in the last paragraph. I'm not sure about the ways in which this behavior and culture are taught & reinforced through training and the chain of command, since I mostly interacted with the rank-and-file, but I'm sure they are.

\*Commissary is a way for inmates to get food, snacks, dictionaries, reading glasses, and other supplies from the jail. Inmates have money "on their books" (a jail bank account, basically) from work in the jail or friends outside and can order from the jail-run store.

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Tonight I had a positive experience with a student. I went up and met him for the first time. I laid out my expectations, saying that we could stop whenever he wanted to, and that I was open to suggestions about how I could help him learn better. We worked together for a while and he thanked me for coming up, saying that

Recently, someone asked me if I was going to spend two years at the jail. (The AmeriCorps program is an eleven-month commitment; my co-worker came back for a second term.) I said that I wasn't planning on it. I didn't say that I knew within a few weeks of working there that I didn't want to come back. I'm going to do my year there, and I know it's going to get hard, but I still want to do the whole thing.

In my first month, I've gotten used to the environment of the jail, which is both a positive and negative thing. Negative because adapting to a dehumanizing environment inevitably requires that I am dehumanized, that I become used to seeing people warehoused in cages, that I become used to the weight of authority carried by every blue clad guard. I don't want to get used to that shit, but I have to, in order to do the work that I'm doing.

It's positive because my time in the jail has shown me so much about our society and how it works. The system is just as racist, classist, and cis/hetero-sexist\* as I thought it would be. The vast majority of people in jail are either poor or of color. Are they the only ones breaking the law? Of course not. Rich people can get out on bail, afford a private lawyer (instead of a public defender), and are less likely to be targeted for arrest in the first place. It's absolute total bullshit and has nothing, *nothing*, to do with justice. Inmates are thrown away by this culture, this society, and it's so wrong. A word I used above is "warehoused" and it is accurate. The goal of the jail isn't reform or rehabilitation or correction. It's marginalization – human storage. To be there, talking to the inmates, hearing about their lives, experiences, passions, dreams, and to see them locked away... it's obscene. Absurd. Working at the jail has forced me to see what so many of the more advantaged people in this society turn away from.

My experience at the jail has also really influenced my understanding and vision of justice - locking people up in cages is not just and it never will be. Yes, there are people in jail who have done harm: murder, rape, etc., but warehousing people who have caused harm is not the answer. If one person hurts another, throwing away their life by locking them up isn't going to make a more just, free society. The majority of people in jail are there for what are, in my opinion, total bullshit charges: drugs, immigration (I believe no one is illegal), probation/parole violation (basically just disobeying petty rules of the state), or crimes of poverty/survival/desperation. I think that one of the biggest problems with the criminal injustice system is that it is so individualistic - It treats individuals as deviant or "wrong" without considering their life history or larger social context. Therefore, most people who end up in jail are on drugs, poor, have mental health issues, of color, without documentation, etc. For example, the jail in downtown Seattle is effectively the second-largest mental institution in Washington state, after the actual state mental institution, the Western State Hospital, since so many of the inmates struggle with their mental health. These are systemic issues, not individual ones. Systematic, community based responses, such as an end to racism, economic justice, health care for all, free drug treatment, and a redistribution of power are what's needed.

\*Cis-sexism is another way of saying "transphobic." (Cis-gender describes one whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. It is the opposite of transgender, where one identifies as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth.) Heterosexism is more than just another way of saying "homophobia," since it encompasses the privileging of heterosexual relationships over all others, such as homosexuality, bisexuality, pan-/omni-sexuality, polyamory, etc. Both cis-sexism and heterosexism reframe those forms of oppression to emphasize who perpetuates and benefits from them: Straight, cis-gendered folks.

impose their idea of justice on another community. This idea is the foundation that supports the criminal punishment system that calls itself justice.

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Earlier today I was up on the floors, talking to a student from my class. He asked me how things were on the outside and I said it was muggy. The reality struck me at that moment, as it sometimes does, that I can walk out of the jail at any moment I wish and he can't. If he tried, doors would not be opened for him as they are for me, at the very least. Depending on how hard he tried to get outside, he could be beaten by the COs, pepper sprayed, put in restraints, sent to the hole (solitary confinement), and so on. The inmates' natural place is not inside jail. They are only there because they are violently forced to be there. I have to remind myself of this. Seeing them in their red jumpsuits, it's hard to not see this as their place. But few of them want it.

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A really frustrating thing happened yesterday. I escorted a tutor up to a floor to do some tutoring. We gave the memo to floor control and they called the student from his wing. However, commissary\* was being delivered at the same time he was called, so the CO presented him with a choice: 1) wait to get his commissary and potentially miss tutoring, or 2) go to tutoring and not get his commissary. He decided to wait for his commissary - no surprise there: jail food is total shit. He waited about five minutes before he got his commissary. At that point he was ready to come to class, but the CO felt the student had taken too long and didn't let him come

# SERVICE REQUEST KITE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ BA#: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one (1) recipient per KITE:

<input type="checkbox"/> Officer ~ Sergeant	<input type="checkbox"/> School / Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Inmate Funds/Accounts
<input type="checkbox"/> Booking ~ Release ~ Commitments	<input type="checkbox"/> Chaplain / Religious Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Inmate Management & Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Property Room	<input type="checkbox"/> Veteran Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Mail Room
<input type="checkbox"/> Department Records	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Computer Workstation	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Commissary	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Corrections Division	<input type="checkbox"/> Programs Office

**PRINT YOUR REQUEST:**

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**Response from Recipient:**

**DO NOT USE THIS KITE FOR MEDICAL ISSUES (Use a PINK kite for Medical Service request)**

KCDAJD F-530 Front (Rev. 12/)

The jail is easily the most repressive, authoritarian environment I've ever been a part of. I think that this entire culture is repressive and authoritarian, it's just that it all comes out very clearly at the jail. The way the jail works is based on a dichotomy of power, with the guards & jail administration having absolute authority while the inmates have none. This dichotomy is reinforced by the blue uniforms that symbolize authority and the poorly fitting red garb and sandals that the inmates are required to wear. In this constructed system, guards are seen as "good" and inmates are seen as "bad." This illusion must be maintained for the system to perpetuate itself.

An example is when a guard told my co-worker and myself about how some inmates found out one of our tutor's (an attractive young woman) last name and that she went to UW and was on the dean's list. My coworker was saying that this doesn't make any sense: the inmates don't have internet access or access to the tutors' last names. I think that the guards, who have both those things, were looking up information on the tutor, and speaking of themselves, not the inmates. Of course, they could not admit this, that they (both cis-gender men, I might add) were using their power to fuel their sexual fantasies.

This example in particular has led me to an understanding of the "pathology of power." That is, being in a position of authority requires that one is at least somewhat delusional, simply because that is what is required to believe that one rightly has authority over another. Lying, as in the above example, is a necessary part of that. It's similar to the way that racism works: white people often have a very inaccurate view of the way the world works, how people of color think & act, and why they themselves have the privilege they do.



I don't think I'll ever forget the first time I saw a "code\* blue" – officer in distress. I was walking to a wing to interview an inmate to see if they could use a tutor, and I saw a guard slamming someone against the ground. I immediately spun around and started walking away from the fight, back to the elevator. I heard the code called out over the intercom and about fifteen guards ran out of three elevators, swarming the wing. Shortly after that, a medical code was called. My co-worker had told me about this before, but it shook me up to see it in person. Code blue means that an inmate attacked an officer or that an officer had to intervene in a fight; the medical code afterward (so rarely for a guard) means that the guards beat the shit out of the inmate(s). I took the elevator down to the office, my interview incomplete, and felt like crying.

The next day I did the interview that had been interrupted and heard that an inmate was smoking. The guards did a search, since anything smokeable is contraband. The inmate I interviewed said the guards were acting like "assholes" (that's a direct quote from the inmate), and the situation escalated into a fight, leading to a code. Just like cops, guards are often very good at escalating situations.

\*There is an intercom system throughout the jail. A code is an announcement over the intercom system that has specific ramifications. Most codes "freeze" the building – that is, only C.O.s can move around, take the elevators, etc. The most common codes are code blue and medical codes (calling either jail nurses or outside paramedics). I also heard a code red once – someone lit their mattress on fire.

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the vast amount of suffering happening above me (the education office is on the first floor of the jail, inmates are "housed" on floors 2-11). I get kites\* from inmates who have no one to turn to, who will be homeless on their release, who are in abusive relationships. I've gotten desensitized to everything. Instead of a sharp feeling that could move me to tears, it's a feeling comparable to a dull ache. Occasionally the tears come through, but not nearly as much as they should. It makes me feel kind of dead.

Today in my class we talked about euphemisms as part of the warm-up activity. Common ones included "dying" versus "passing away" and "dump" versus "waste disposal facility." One of the students then said "Cop... or pig." "Exactly," I replied.

I had a conversation the other day with a sergeant. We were talking about the benefits of education and he said that many inmates have said to him that their time in jail has been the most productive of their lives, primarily because they have a lot of time and are sober. (Obviously both those things are good, but I believe they are possible without caging people.) He seemed to have good intentions and want the best for the inmates. A realization struck me then: you don't need to be intentionally malicious or "evil" to participate in a system of oppression - all you need is to believe is that you know what is better for others than they do, that one group of people can

\*Kites are slips of paper that inmates use to communicate with various departments throughout the jail. They send requests for programs, class, A.A., Bibles, etc. A big part of my job was sorting the kites for programs and education. See the following page for an example of a kite.



This made me think about how my social identities - as white, citizen, male-socialized - may function in the same way as a blue uniform. Abuse and control is in their job description - could it also be in my socialization? This is a scary thought because I am always growing more aware of my tendencies towards control and domination and realizing how I have acted them out in past and present relationships. It's easy for me to see the COs as abusive, because they wear a uniform, a clear social marker. My identities may be as of a clear a marker to others, even though they are not formally designated as such.

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I also came to identify as working-class (lower-middle class, specifically), during my year at the jail. I started reading more about class the summer before, and came to see its manifestation in nearly all facets of my life, especially my family background. I identified in many ways with the inmates, most of whom are working-class, low-income, or no- (legal) income.

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The jail has affected me tremendously. I feel less hope for the world, for humanity. I laugh less now than I did a year ago. I can't remember what I used to be like. Now, when I feel hope, I treasure it, because I know it will be crushed on my bus ride to work the next day. Now I know that the world is a horribly fucked-up place, where people suffer and die and no one cares. Now I know that people kill at work. (I'm talking about cops, who kill directly, and also bureaucrats and politicians, who make decisions that deny people health care, housing, etc.) Work kills people and their relationships. People are seen as fuck-ups and no one gives them a chance. The system swallows people whole, spits them out more fucked-up than they came in. The effect that I am able to have is infinitesimal. I hope that once this year is over I get some of my hope back. Despair is a sensible reaction in this world, in this place. But it isn't pleasant.

A couple of days later, there was another code blue when my coworker and I were on the floor. We were temporarily trapped in a small conference room with an inmate, who said he would read us some of his poetry while we waited. He found his poetry in his folder but kept shuffling papers to put off reading it. After the code blue and subsequent medical code cleared, my coworker and I, sans inmate, went to the elevator to leave the floor. We spoke briefly to a guard about the code, and my coworker said something about being glad that no one had gotten hurt. The guard replied that "yeah, 95% of the time we come out on top." Of course, both my coworker and I were hoping that no *inmates* had been hurt either. I interpret the guard's comment as meaning that of course no one got hurt, because the people who are actually counted in the statement are the ones doing the hurting. This is similar to the way that nations at war rarely keep track of enemy casualties, except as a measure of "success." Both war and prisons require others to be dehumanized, for their suffering to somehow not count.

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Tutoring at the jail also has made me think a lot about the social change that I envision and how to work toward it most effectively. My position is the epitome of liberal, it is not directed towards changing the system at all - not even weak reform. My supervisor's boss once said to me that she supports me in what I do, unless it's "political." Of course, that means challenging the status quo. The message is: don't rock the boat, even though close to two thousand people are suffering in this system right now, right above our heads (The education office is on the first floor of the jail).

My work at the jail has also refined my understanding of myself as a political radical. One way I've been thinking about this is the difference between real responsibilities and constructed responsibilities. I define real responsibilities as responsibilities to the well-being, freedom, and growth of oneself, others, communities, and ecosystems (plants, animals & fungi are also included in my definition). Constructed responsibilities are everything else: following the law, having a job, paying for things at the store, following social norms, etc. The two are often confused, intentionally or unintentionally. For example, the criminal injustice system is constructed to be seen as protecting the public and keeping communities safe. However, in most cases, it has the opposite effect: it destroys communities, perpetuates oppression, and is an incredibly violent force. Often it is those with authority (the ruling class) who create illusions to serve their own interests: putting more people in prison is making certain corporations and individuals very wealthy (through the ever-increasing number of privately run, for-profit prisons, as well as laughably cheap prison labor), as is government policy that pursues an ever-higher GDP instead of allowing people to pursue their own desires. For me, part of being a radical means understanding that my true responsibilities are those that directly benefit myself, others, and communities. My work at the jail does very little to support or empower the inmates (let alone free them), but it does a lot to support the functioning of the system – through paperwork, mostly.

The extent to which education and programs within the jail are helpful is debatable. On one hand, some inmates are able to earn their GED, and even the basic education courses provide some knowledge, or at least time to get out of their cells. But on the other hand, the programs at the jail are totally inadequate and not even close to meeting the vast need that exists. In some ways, I think that programs & education make the jail seem like a more humane place, a place where inmates can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." Maybe the (extremely limited) availability of programs in the jail gives it a veneer of rehabilitation & mitigates anger at the cruelty of the institution.

pleasant. Of course, I'm experiencing all this just working there - I don't spend much time up on the floors with the guards, maybe fifteen or twenty hours a week. I simply cannot imagine how horrible it is for the inmates - the prisoners.

The most important and profound implication of this dream is what it has to say about my own identity. My relationship with the COs is abusive because they are always there to control me - I've never been abused, but I think I have a better idea of what it's like now. The COs will do "nice" things, like hold the door open for me, do me small favors, tell jokes, make small talk, help me move tables or whatever. However, I know that if I step out of line at all, they will do what they have to in order to keep me under control, including physical force. There doesn't have to be explicit threats or any acknowledgement of this reality at all - they know it and I know it, and that's what matters. Just like in abusive relationships, the power dynamic between the COs and anyone else at the jail, if acknowledged at all, is seen as "natural" or necessary.

**Control = Abuse**

It's also worth mentioning that in 2006, the federal Department of Justice launched an investigation into the conditions at the King County jail in Seattle. The primary concerns were inadequate suicide prevention and contagious disease control. In spring 2005, a pattern of sexual abuse & rape of women inmates by male guards became public. Several guards were fired as a result. In 2009, the Department of Justice released an agreement with the jail, detailing reforms to take place and future monitoring. However, I don't think that reforms or increased "safeguards" are the answer – abuse is always possible (probable) when there is a strong power difference between people, and the jail fits that description to the letter.

The jail is all about control. Control = abuse.

something. It was really nice to have things work out this week though, especially when I was feeling nervous. A lot of my students are going to be released this month, which is sad because I won't get to see them anymore, but it's great because then they won't be in jail anymore! Which is what I really want.

A friend made the excellent point at house dinner that my privileged position in the jail is a good reflection of my privilege in society: people open doors for me (literally, all doors in the jail require approval to pass through), do me favors, etc.

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Last night I had a dream. I was in a place that was a combination between my high school and the jail. I took something, jokingly, from a friend and then ran off with it. There was a code called over the intercom, just like in jail. When I ran by a group of COs, one of them grabbed me and applied pressure to a pressure point in my hip, near my groin, which stopped me dead in my tracks. I was really pissed after I was assaulted, but the COs just laughed it off. I walked away, furious, and one of them followed me, and kept calling my name. Finally, he said that if I didn't stop walking, he would make the rest of my time at the jail very unpleasant. I turned around and that's when I woke up.

I was with my partner, so she comforted me and listened to me talk about the dream, which was amazing. I'm really glad I didn't have the dream alone. I realized then that any relationship I have with a CO at the jail is by definition abusive, since their job is to control the inmates and me. I like the definition of abuse that the Northwest Network, an awesome queer organization, uses: "Abuse is a pattern of behavior where one person tries to control the thoughts, beliefs, choices, or actions of a lover, friend, or any other person close to them. It can include physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, and/or economic abuse & exploitation." (see [www.nwnetwork.org](http://www.nwnetwork.org)) I had never framed it that way, but it makes so much sense and clears up why I fucking hate the jail so much, and why working there is not

At the same time, I need to acknowledge the limits of the position I'm in. I am simply not in a place to be able to effect change; I have no institutional power whatsoever. If I tried to change things, or politicize inmates, I would be terminated and a ton of scrutiny would be brought down on the program I'm in. In fact, that's what happened to both teaching positions a few years ago. They were "political," gave the inmates materials they weren't supposed to have, and were fired.

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One time I went upstairs with my coworker to tutor an inmate. We went onto the wing and the C.O. told us he wasn't there. He had been taken to prison a few days earlier, facing a sentence of 418 months – almost 35 years. This boggled my mind. To my young self, 35 years is an absolutely incomprehensible amount of time to conceive of living, much less behind bars. I feel like five years from now in my life is fuzzy enough. 35? Shit.

Our mood was somber for the rest of the evening. It's almost as if he died. Vanished, suddenly, with no warning. He might have known beforehand but he didn't tell us. I don't want to forget him.

---  
I was excited when my first student passed the GED reading test. He had taken it once before and just barely failed. We had only a few weeks to work together, so we practiced timed sections together and talked strategy. The night before he was to take the test, we did a practice one. He barely passed, so he definitely wasn't sure to pass the real test. I told him he could pass and he took the test the next day. When I got the score emailed to me in the afternoon, I was excited to see that he had passed! I went up and talked to him later, gave him the good news. (Passing the GED can help inmates make a case for "good behavior" while behind bars and also enables

them to take more advanced classes at prisons where education is offered, not to mention improving their chances at employment once released.) We both had smiles on our faces and shook hands, since he was heading to prison the next day. I hope he gets out on his appeal.

---  
One time I was on the ninth floor, where I was recruiting for a new creative writing class for women that integrates parenting skills into the curriculum. When I was talking to different inmates, I heard the deck officer (the C.O. in charge of that wing of the floor) try to calm down a woman (who I will call Kathy) who was screaming, crying, and pacing around in one of the tanks. The officer told her to sit down on the bench and that they were taking care of things. When I went to Kathy's tank later to recruit, she approached the door and stuck her hands out through the slot where mail and commissary items are delivered. She was crying. I don't remember what Kathy was saying, except that something was wrong, and she was scared. I told her that I couldn't help her and that the C.O.s were taking care of things. Another inmate helped her away from the door once she was done talking to me. I walked out of the wing, heading to the elevator. I held back tears that were welling up in my eyes. As I was leaving, the C.O.s were saying that she had PCP (a hallucinogen) or something in her system. They kept on talking to her from their station over the intercom, telling her over and over to go back into her cell. I came back to the office to make a roster and write this to myself in an email.

---  
I started teaching my class in late January. It was called "Writing and Math Skills" and it was a basic education course that happened every Tuesday. It happened in the west wing (see security grid in middle of zine), which is minimum security – most of my students are there for drug crimes or minor property crimes, some for being without citizenship documentation.

I heard from a custodian that the March 28 riot was over a basketball game - March Madness. Apparently the inmates in the tank were getting loud, and the CO kept telling them to quiet down. I think the CO threatened to turn off the TV if they didn't quiet down. The CO turned off the TV with a couple minutes left in the game. From what I heard, it doesn't sound like the inmates were organized or anything; it was simply a collective expression of rage over the total lack of control over their lives that was triggered by a conflict over television. What is it about sports that leads to riots? I would like to know more about that.

---  
My class went really well today! I had planned on making a crossword as a warm-up, then reading a short piece on the placebo effect and doing a free-write on the mind-body connection. However, the crossword took up the entire class period - just under ninety minutes. I was nervous about this class, mostly because I didn't get very good sleep last night (6 hours and I had been drinking) and I had a headache. But I took some ibuprofen and everything went great! My class is mostly composed of people from the second floor, which is set up in an open "dormitory" style, so they know each other and have a good rapport already. A lot of the students were able to work independently, looking up words, creating clues, and putting the words together themselves, but the other teacher and I were able to work with students that needed a little more help. One guy that I was helping mostly was working with a very smart friend of his, which was great. Everyone seemed to have fun and been challenged, which is the ideal combination. It's funny how ephemeral classroom success seems. Last week we made graphs and students seemed skeptical and had a generally unreceptive vibe, maybe because a lot of them were new or

Additional directives were given to the inmates and they surrendered racking back to their individual cells. The inmates were then secured, extracted, searched, and relocated to Administrative Segregation housing.

SIU is still in the process of completing their criminal investigation and the inmate disciplinary reviews will be on hold until their interviews are completed. An administrative review will also be conducted shortly to review current policy, procedures, equipment needs, training and resources.

Staff did a good job Sunday responding and containing the situation, coordinating the response with SPD & KCSO to execute a safe entry and extraction, limiting property damages and injuries. In fact, there was no reported staff or inmate injuries resulting from this event. On behalf of Commander Karlsson and I, we want to personally commend you for a job well done and extend our sincere appreciation for the professional work you perform routinely, in a difficult environment and under stressful conditions. Thank you for your dedication and service!

Major Corinna Hyatt

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Last week, I tutored my current student in math. He did really well, solving problems with ease. Before, he would rush through problems, but then I told him about how important it is to read the problem carefully: how the test-writers will trick you by giving you extra information you don't need, by phrasing things in a confusing way, and by presenting a critical piece of information in a graphic, not the written question. I was encouraging him a lot, as usual, and he was working hard.

He asked me to look up some information on a school for him. He talked about wanting to design things: sweatshirts, signs, and so on. He paints and writes his own music. He spoke of different ways of seeing the world and interacting with objects. He spoke the way one speaks when they speak of their dreams: incorrigibly, quickly, with a smile and eyes flashing. I replied that I would definitely look up the required information for him.

What I didn't say was how unlikely it is that he will be able to achieve his dreams. Not because of any personal failing, but because of the enormous obstacles he faces as a middle-aged, poor Black man with a felony record. Who (or what organizations or groups) would take a chance on him? Who would be able to support him so that he could make significant progress towards these goals? This thought almost brought me to tears during our tutoring session together, but I held them back.

It is situations like these where the incredible loss and injustice of the criminal punishment system seems most real. And of course, it isn't just jail and prison, but this entire culture, that throws people away, refuses to support or rehabilitate them, and destroys their families, relationships, and communities. It isn't just prisons, it's racism and capitalism and the cops and heterosexism and the war machine and everything else.

---  
One thing that I continually struggled with at the jail was the feeling of fitting in. Not in a social, high-school-clique kind of way, but in a cog-in-the-machine sort of way. I am naturally a neat and orderly person; I keep my room clean and my things in good repair. I am satisfied by fulfilling tasks, making lists and checking things off, doing what I feel needs to be done, staying organized, keeping my email inbox clean, etc.

These personality traits, along with my socialization into this authoritarian, conformist culture, make it frighteningly easy for me to fit into authoritarian systems – the jail is a prime example. It's so easy to obey those in charge, to go with the grain, and to value the validation and encouragement of those in positions of authority. I am disturbed to feel good when I earn the approval of a guard.

I need to function within the system but I hate the system.

---

A little more than halfway through my "year of service" I started to become conscious about the way the jail was affecting me. There were other things going on in my life too that I'm sure contributed, such as my grandfather taking a bad fall, being lonely, and working on my shit, but I feel that the jail cast a shadow of sorts over my entire existence.

One way in which this is clear to me is to compare myself now to myself in college – I graduated two months before starting at the jail. I remember in college being filled with a sort of naïve hope. I definitely had an understanding of this culture as racist, sexist, imperialist, ableist, relentlessly authoritarian, but it was mostly theoretical. As an able-bodied white citizen, I hadn't been the target of much oppression, and most oppression is hidden from me, both by social structures and the privileged lens with which I understand

After I started working at the jail, the connection between prison abolition and animal liberation became clear to me. Now I say that I am against all cages, no matter what species of animal they hold. Cages are one of the clearest ways to take someone's self-determination by denying them freedom of movement. Of course, cages also act as holding cells for animals being sent to death, whether that's the gas chamber, a slaughterhouse, or lethal injection. Cages (as well as border walls) make it so clear who has power and who doesn't.

-----Original Message-----

From: Hyatt, Corinna

Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 8:20 AM

To: ZZGrp, DAJD KCCF ALL

Cc: Tamura, Hikari; Myers, Herb; Hayes, William

Subject: Riot/Major disturbance

On Sunday, March 28th at approximately 1245 hours inmates housed in 10EUC began rioting, including verbal and physical threats to staff, property destruction and flooding. The Facility was frozen and staff were directed to suit up, assemble for briefing, and respond to 10 East in a show of force to persuade the inmates to rack back. Additional directives were issued and when the inmates remained defiant pepper spray was deployed. The effects of pepper spray were diminished by the inmates using wet towels and water. The inmates then displayed a weapon believed to be a form of a shank and were using a steel track from a cell door to shatter the dayroom windows and destroy other fixtures and property. SPD was notified per our MOU and responded shortly thereafter along with members of the KCSO SWAT introducing less than lethal and lethal force options to supplement our force options and assist with executing entry into the immediate area for the extractions.



As I'm writing this I have four or five months left. I wonder how I'll feel after my "term of service" is over, after I've been out for a while. Will I get something back that I've lost? I know I won't ever go back to the way I was, and I don't want to, but I would like to feel a little happier about things.

It's also the nature of the work I'm doing too. It's strictly liberal, no systemic change whatsoever – purely within the system. I've done little things, small, exciting acts of rebellions, like giving information on the Angola 3\* or Assata Shakur\*\* to inmates, or throwing away a list of undocumented inmates that was supposed to go to I.C.E., but these things don't make my students free. I want to feel like I'm changing things, in a concrete, visible way. Building relationships with those who are incarcerated is great, but it is by no means where I want to stop in my work to abolish all prisons and cages.

One thing that became clear to me working in the jail is how awful cages are. Human beings are the only species of animal that cages others. As a vegan, I do not believe that humans should enslave, exploit and oppress animals. Hence, I don't consume animal products, which in this culture, are inevitably the product of a hierarchical relationship. I don't pretend that being vegan is the path to animal liberation, but it's a way of trying to live in line with my values.

\* Black Panthers and political prisoners who are being held in solitary confinement; [www.angola3.org](http://www.angola3.org)

\*\* Escaped convict, Black Panther, and member of the Black Liberation Army who is in exile in Cuba & wanted by the FBI.

the world. Because of this, I saw the world as a generally positive place. Or at least I didn't know the extent of how horrible things are, right now, all around us.

I feel like now I have a glimpse of how fucked up this society, this culture, really is. It wasn't too long after I started working at the jail that I described it as a nightmare: How can this be, how can this exist? The state has the power to take freedom so quickly, sometimes forever. So many people are so deeply brutalized and dehumanized through the working of the jail. It's not justice – it's so wrong. How can things be like this?

It's telling (about my background) in how I describe the jail as a nightmare. That is, it seemed unreal to me. As someone who hasn't been targeted by the criminal punishment system, I was a stranger to this system that is a harsh, everyday reality for millions of people in this country. This year has been a process for me to realize that this nightmare IS reality, which means that things are far worse than I previously realized. This process has been painful for me, but it's so little, relatively: I can go home at the end of the day, make myself dinner, ride my bike, go for a walk, or see my lover. But freedom seems less sweet now, knowing what I know, seeing what I've seen.

Working at the jail has been positive for me in that it has strengthened my anti-authoritarian politics. Seeing the way human needs and relationships are ignored or crushed for the sake of authority & domination has solidified my beliefs that hierarchical structures of power aren't good for anyone, neither those at the top or those at the bottom. Personally, I am easily able to function in an authoritarian environment, since I've grown up in them my whole life, but it's still dehumanizing. Maybe it's because I never worked in an office before, but I feel a little more dead inside now. It's so many things, the compulsion of work, the endless repetition, staring at a screen all day, the television in the cafeteria, the (hetero)sexist/racist/classist/xenophobic banter of the guards, and so on.

Ad seg = "administrative segregation", solitary confinement, "in the hole."

P/C = protective custody for famous/reviled/infamous inmates.

"Ultra" security inmates, with a history of violence against staff, are in ad seg - I couldn't work with them.

I could work with closed security inmates, but volunteers couldn't. Partway through the year, there was a new rule that I couldn't work w/ folks with murder-related charges anymore.

Anyone could tutor minimum & medium-security inmates.

psych floor = mental health issues are usually handled by isolation, often for 23 hours a day. No programs, no class, no tutoring, etc.

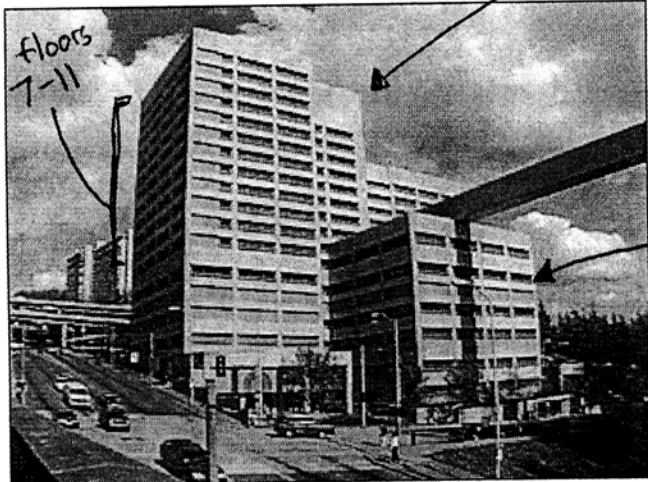
the west wing is entirely minimum security. Here, unlike other places, the doors are not always locked - during free time, inmates can enter/leave dorms w/out a guard unlocking the door.

"the tower"

workers on 4 North

bridge to courthouse

west wing



UNION CHARGE GROUP FACILITY CLASSIFICATION PLAN

NORTH WING				EAST WING			SOUTH WING			
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	D
11 UPPER	AD SEG CAP.5	AD SEG CAP.9	AD SEG CAP.10	AD SEG CAP.5	DIS SEG CAP.9	DISC SEG CAP.10				
11 LOWER	AD SEG CAP.5	AD SEG CAP.9	AD SEG CAP.10	IMU PRE/DIS CAP.5	PRE DISC CAP.9	PRE DISC OVERFLOW CAP.10				
10 UPPER	TBMU CAP.5	PIC PHONE SEG CAP.9	AD SEG PIC CAP.10	CLS MALE CAP.10	CLS MALE CAP.18	CLS MALE CAP.20	MD MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20
10 LOWER	AD SEG CAP.5	AD SEG PC CAP.9	AD SEG PC CAP.10	CLS MALE CAP.10	CLS MALE CAP.18	CLS 45+ MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20	MDM 45+ MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE CAP.20
9 UPPER	CLOSE FEMALE CAP.10	MDM FEMALE CAP.18	FEMALE WORKERS CAP.20	FEMALE MIN CAP.10	OFF LINE	MIN FEMALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20
9 LOWER	ADSEG/DOL FEMALE CAP.5	AD SEG DOL FEMALE CAP.9	MDM FEMALE CAP.20	FEMALE RECEIVING CAP.10	MIN FEMALE CAP.18	MIN FEMALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20	RECEIVING MALE CAP.20
8 UPPER	MDM MALE CAP.10	CLS MALE Under 24 AT RISK CAP.09	MDM MALE CAP.20	CLS 45+ MALE CAP.10	MDM MALE CAP.9	CLS MALE CAP.10	MIN TOWER 20 BEDS	MDM MALE CAP.20	MDM MALE 20 BEDS	MDM MALE 20 BEDS
8 LOWER	MDM MALE CAP.10	CLOSE MALE CAP.18	CLOSE MALE CAP.20	MDM 45+ MALE CAP.10	MDM MALE CAP.9	CLS MALE CAP.10	MIN MALE 20 BEDS	MDM MALE 20 BEDS	MDM MALE 20 BEDS	MDM MALE 20 BEDS
7 UPPER	FEMALE PSYCH RECEIVING CAP.10	FEMALE PSYCH ISOLATION	ACUTE ISOLATION CAP.10	SUBACUTE FEMALE CAP.5	ACUTE ISOLATION MALE CAP.9	SUBACUTE MALE CAP.10	SHELTERED HOUSING CAP.15	SHELTERED HOUSING CAP.15	SHELTERED TRANSITION CAP.15	PSYCH RECEIVING CAP.15
7 LOWER	MALE PSYCH ISOLATION CAP.5	ACUTE ISOLATION CAP.9	ACUTE ISOLATION CAP.10	IMU / AD SEG CAP.5	PSYCH ISOLATION CAP.9	PSYCH ISOLATION CAP.10	MEDICAL NON-AMBLA M/R 1-2 CAP.20	MEDICAL NON-AMBLA M/R 1-2 CAP.20	MEDICAL M/R 1-2 CAP.20	SUICIDE OBS CAP.15

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
7 WEST	MEDICAL FEMALE CAP.4 ADA	MEDICAL FEMALE CAP.2	MEDICAL CAP.2	MED MALE CAP.4	ISOLATION CAP.1	ISOLATION CAP.1	ISOLATION CAP.1 ADA	ISOLATION CAP.1	DETOX MALE CAP.8
	J	K	L	M	→ medical wing				
	MEDICAL CAP.2	MEDICAL CAP.2	MEDICAL CAP.2	MEDICAL CAP.2					

WEST WING		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
4 WEST	MULTI PURPOSE ROOM	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	IM WKR WAITING 18 BEDS		
4 NORTH	KITCHEN PM CREW 20 BEDS	KITCHEN PM CREW 22 BEDS	BARBERS ITR/COMM LAUNDRY 22 BEDS	KITCHEN AM CREW 26 BEDS	KITCHEN 3RD SHIFT 26 BEDS	TOWER CREW 20 BEDS	MULTI PURPOSE ROOM		
3 WEST	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MULTI PURPOSE ROOM	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS			
2 WEST	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 18 BEDS	MIN MALE 16 BEDS	MIN MALE 40+

Note: Cap is the actual number of "beds" available for inmate occupancy. Psych and Ad Seg can house only one inmate per cell. REVISIONS ARE BLOCKED IN SOLID BLACK! REVISED: 05/19/2010

The education office, where I worked, was on the first floor.

FLOORS

TANKS

"the tower"