

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

JEFFREY IAN ROSS and STEPHEN C. RICHARDS, *Behind Bars: Surviving Prison*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Alpha Books, 2002, xv + 179 + appendices.

Based on both authors' personal experiences, one an ex-convict, the other a former correctional officer, as well as conversations with other ex-convicts, *Behind Bars* is a no-nonsense quick tour of what one can expect if you go to jail or prison in the United States. This book, divided into four sections, is easily accessible and easily readable and is meant for a generalist audience, particularly those novitiates wanting initial "insider" information on the American prison system.

The first section, "You're Arrested," is about what can get a person into trouble and how to avoid getting into further trouble if you are arrested. Things to avoid include, among other things, resisting arrest, giving up your right to remain silent and retaining an attorney. The authors also offer cursory explanations about why these things should be minded. The authors stress two important points at this juncture, that one should be wary of the criminal justice system and how it works. Ross and Richards point to, among other things, entrapment or burn laws, take downs, and sting operations (explaining each along the way) to make their case. Second, as an important qualifier, the authors point out that neither are all arrested folk innocent, nor are all law enforcement people evil. This latter point is a recurring theme throughout this volume.

The second section, "You've Got Jail!," in two chapters, is about the United States prison system including private prisons, and offender and guard characteristics and classifications. A cursory description is also offered of the differences between State and Federal prisons in terms of general conditions, size, resources and levels of security. Unclear to this reader, however, is whether offender needs are ever considered when handing down security classifications and/or prison placements. Despite this ambiguity, we learn that offenders primarily male, half of whom are white, are further categorised in terms of management issues—protection from others (inmates or otherwise), their publicity profile, level of criminal organisation, or disruptiveness. But, as the authors point out, a more meaningful categorisation might be to examine offenders' levels of experience in prison. The authors are unclear, however, as to why, or how, this second categorisation might be more meaningful.

Section Three, “Doing Time,” in seven chapters, takes the reader through what can be expected during their time inside including the formal and informal admissions process, the formal and informal economies, employment and education prospects in prison, and the why’s and how’s of minimising “trouble” in prison. These include how to: (1) cultivate “trouble free” friendships; (2) avoid debt; (3) do time in solitary confinement; (4) avoid unsolicited homosexual advances; (5) eat healthily in prison (6) minimising involvement in prison disturbances and gang violence, and finally, (7) how to make “productive” use of time inside. The final chapter in this section briefly deals with women behind bars, noting that women take different paths to prison than do men and that there are fewer women behind bars than men. The authors point out that the reasons for this result from differences social location, *i.e.*, differences in both economic status (in that women have less earning potential than men) and gender role with regards to familial responsibility (in that women generally are the primary caregivers for young children). Moreover, women do their time differently than men (where women are more likely to form pseudo families with corresponding obligations and responsibilities). While true, this chapter does not even begin to delve into the substantial differences between how women and men do time. For example, women are more likely to self-injure inside, suffer different kinds of emotional trauma, have longer histories of drug and alcohol addictions, have longer histories of sexual and physical abuse than do men, and are the primary caregivers to young children more often than men. These issues have far reaching implications for how women do their time.

The final section, “Beyond the Walls,” briefly offers descriptions of different types of community corrections or aftercare operating, once you leave prison. The authors also provisionally describe some barriers to reintegration including disorientation, institutionalisation, employment prospects, reconnecting with loved ones and the lure of the criminal lifestyle as an easy way to deal with the barriers. In the concluding chapter, the authors not only state that it takes humility and patience to psychically survive prison, more so than physical stamina, but they also make some cursory recommendations as to how to stop the revolving door to prison.

A short compendium of slammer slang and prison reform groups comprise the two appendices. Despite the brief treatment of what is arguably a very complex social institution, this book is well written and useful for those who want a brief introductory tour through American jails and prisons.

Nancy Poon *University of Saskatchewan*