


# International Conference "jailbreak - musical inclusion in penal institutions"

**Departement of Music Education and Music Didactics**  
(Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

in cooperation with the  
**International Centre for Community Music**  
(York St John University/England)





# LOVE LIVES ON: A CASE STUDY OF THE OAKDALE PRISON COMMUNITY CHOIR

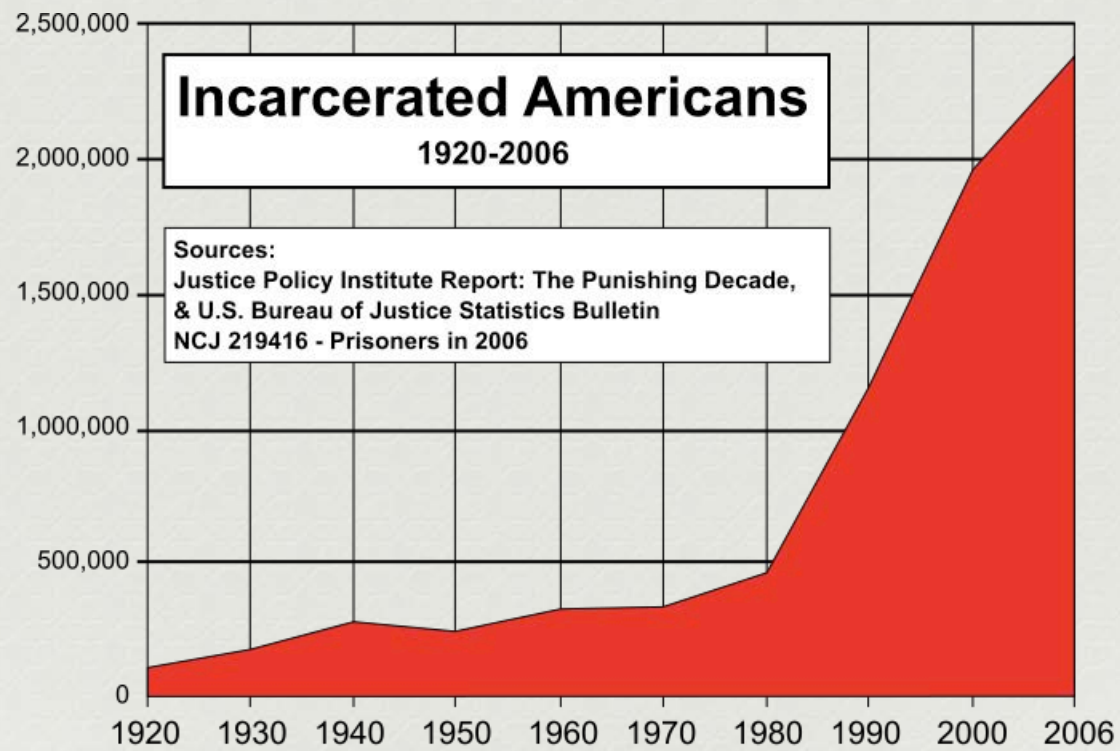
Mary L. Cohen, University of Iowa





Where in the United States is Iowa? Location map of Iowa in the US.

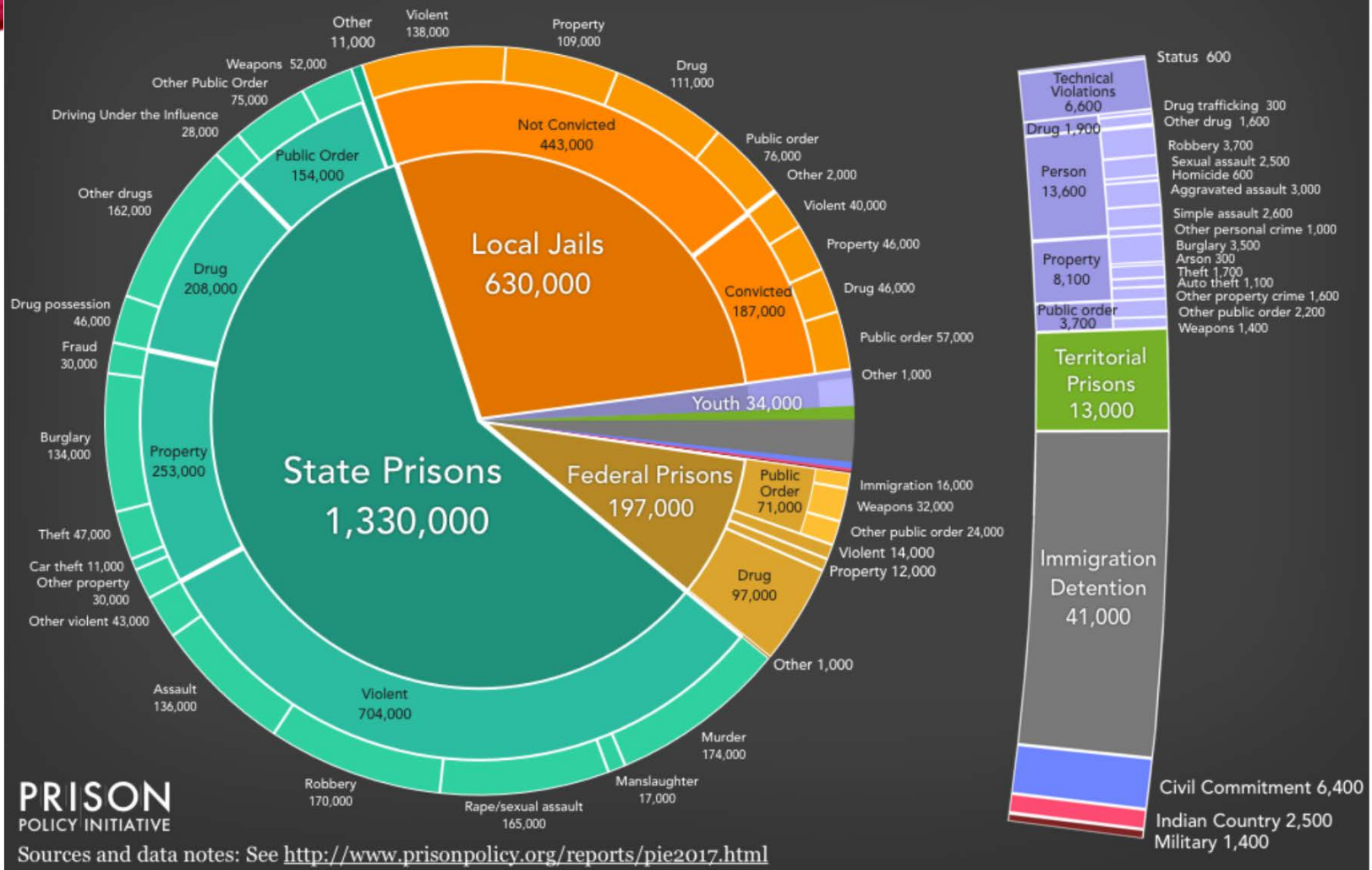





**“Targeted Criminalization”** (Erika Meiners, 2016)

# How many people are locked up in the United States?

The United States locks up more people, per capita, than any other nation. But grappling with why requires us to first consider the many types of correctional facilities and the reasons that 2.3 million people are confined there.

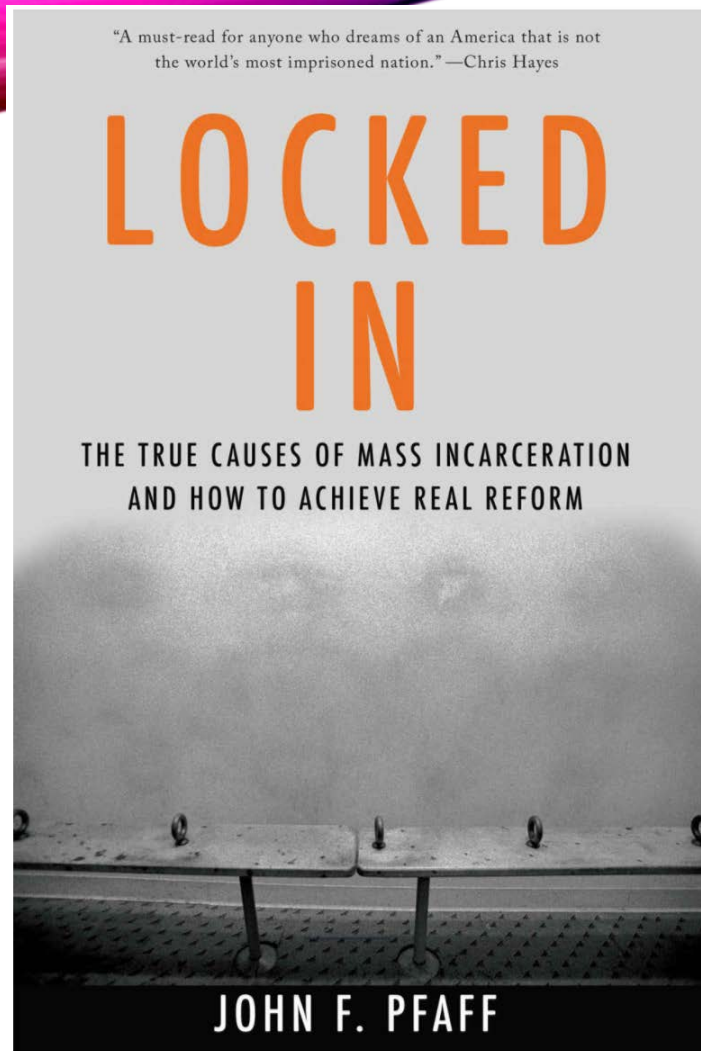




State or Country	Incarceration per 100,000 population
Oklahoma	1,079
Louisiana	1,052
United States of America	698
Michigan	641
Massachusetts	324
Canada	114
Germany	78

According to Prison Policy Initiative,  
2018

*In US: "Targeted Criminalization"*

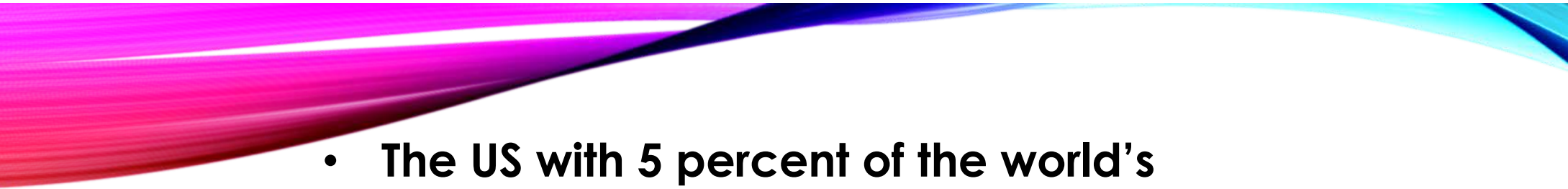


“3,144 DISTINCT  
CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE  
SYSTEMS”  
(PFAFF, 2017, P. 16)

*One for every  
one of the  
3,144 counties  
in the United  
States*





- 
- **The US with 5 percent of the world's population has 25 percent of the world's prisoners.**
  - **Nearly one in three African American males aged 20–29 is under some form of criminal justice supervision.**
  - **The number of American women in prison has increased by 646 percent between 1980 and 2010, rising from 15,118 to 112,797.**



# ISSUES ARE REALLY COMPLEX

- Prison damages people
- Inequities in legal representation, prosecuting attorneys
- Sentencing
- Solitary Confinement
- Youth tried and/or sentenced as adults
- Capital punishment
- Private Prisons
- Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Domestic Abuse
- Racial profiling
- Survivors' needs
- Families of people who are behind bars: spouses, parents, children
- Need to support returning citizens, more formal education programs in prisons, BIG PICTURE change
- **Need to USE PEOPLE-centered & POSITIVELY-charged language**

# “LOVE LIVES ON” BY ARNOLD GRICE

*Chorus:*

In a world gone wrong, we pray  
that you'll stay strong. And when  
the hurt hits home, we know that  
Love Lives On.

And so we'll sing our song  
With hopes that seeds are sown  
Trusting in God our cornerstone  
Knowing that Love Lives On  
Remember Love Lives On



# INNOCENT BLOOD

*By Arnold Grice*

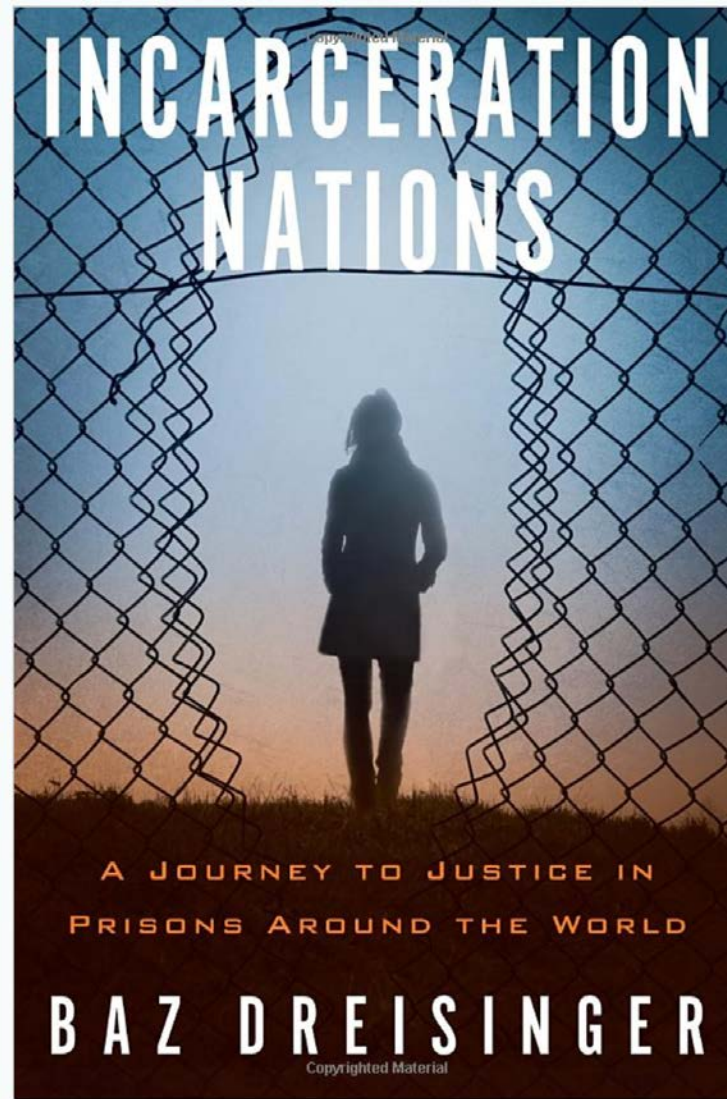
*Chorus:*

Innocent Blood, O—Innocent Blood—This  
is our song in the memory of

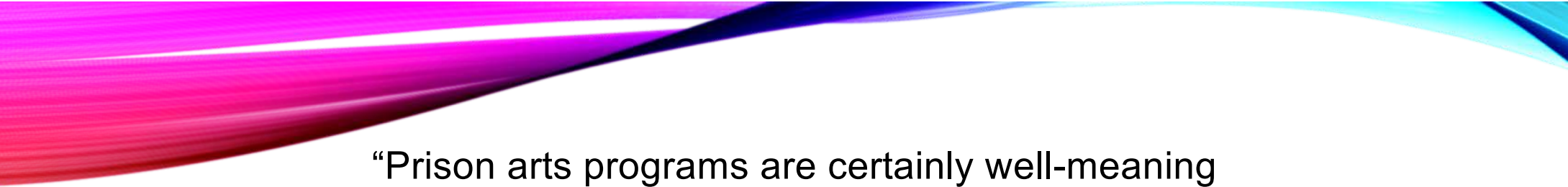
Innocent Blood, O—Innocent Blood—  
You were robbed of a life and cheated  
of love

Innocent Blood, O—Innocent Blood—  
Please give us Your peace from heaven  
above





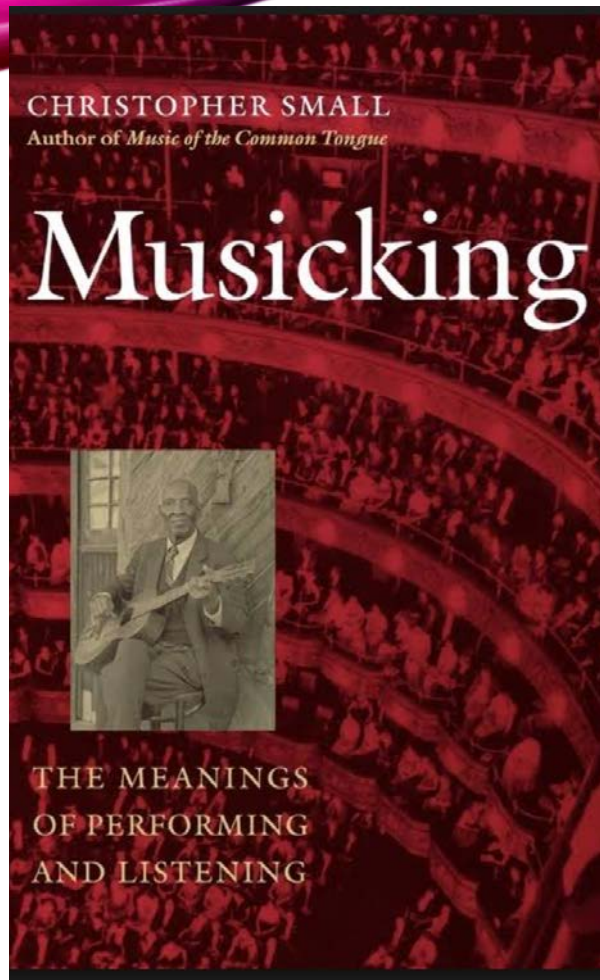
2016



“Prison arts programs are certainly well-meaning efforts but they’re also crumbs tossed at a system starved for radical overhaul. They’re smoke screens, obstructing our view of the big picture, which is that when it comes to justice and safety and humane treatment, prisons simply don’t make sense.

Big-picture change is not about tinkering with or enhancing what is, but conjuring up bold imaginings of what could be.

For all that I love and believe in it, art can be an obstacle to such imaginings because of the very thing it does so well: dazzle us, and then distract us, with beauty”  
(Dreisinger, 2016, p. 138).



# “CHRISTOPHER SMALL’S CONCEPT OF MUSICKING: TOWARD A THEORY OF CHORAL SINGING PEDAGOGY IN PRISON CONTEXTS”

Mary L. Cohen, 2007

Ph.D. Dissertation, the University of  
Kansas

## Theory of Interactional Choral Singing Pedagogy:

*If facilitated effectively, choral singing  
has the potential to be a conduit for  
measurable personal and social growth*

# QUESTIONS TO PONDER



To what extent does a community choir create problems?

- Audience unaware of complexity of issues in prison contexts
  - Voting
  - Sentencing
  - Racial & socioeconomic inequalities
  - Need for Youth Care
  - Capitalism/profit
  - Lack of healing-victim offender
  - Separation from families

To what extent does a community choir do nothing?

- People who don't want to sing in choir
- Lack of connection with stakeholders
  - Employers
  - Political leaders
  - Prison administrators
  - General population



To what extent does it promote positive personal and social changes?



# FLASHBACK TO 2009



<http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/uk11c>

<http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/yqeu>

o



# TODAY: WEBSITE



<http://oakdalechoir.lib.uiowa.edu/>

# Oakdale Community Choir

## Research:

- Published Studies that test Theory of Interactional Choral Singing Pedagogy (Cohen, 2007)
  - Attitudes toward prisoners
  - Self-esteem (worthiness + competence)
  - Self-expression
  - Songwriting





# FURTHER TESTING OF THEORY

- Social Growth
  - *Getting along with others*
  - *Making friends*
  - *Improved attitudes toward people who are incarcerated*
  - *Improved family relationships*
- Personal Growth
  - *Increased self-esteem*
  - *Motivation to participate in other programs*
  - *Means for self-expression*
  - *Increased focus*
  - *Sense of group responsibility*

## **Publically engaged scholarship**

- Rehearsals with inside (162 men) and outside (132 women & men) singers, guests from Brazil, Scotland, across the U.S. and globe
- Concerts for incarcerated audience & for outside guests including family
- Videos/New stories of choir
- Presentations
- Original Songs: choir members & outside contributors
- Fidelio performance with Heartbeat Opera in NY
- Case studies and consulting with others interested in this research/practice



PERFORMANCE IN IOWA STATE CAPITAL  
(OUTSIDE SINGERS + 2 FORMER INSIDE  
SINGERS)



# CLAUDIO CERCUEIRA MENDES SANTOS, GRADUATE STUDENT FROM BRAZIL



Peacebuilding class

Spring 2019



With translator

University of Iowa graduate student  
Murilo Rezende assisted with  
translation



Joining Choir

# SELECT CONCERT THEMES (22 SEASONS, ALL LISTED ON CHOIR WEBSITE)

- “Building Bridges to Peace” Spring 2019
- “Forgiveness, Kindness, Peace, & Gratitude” Spring 2018
- “May I See Beauty Too” December 2017
- “Lead with Love” May 2017
- “The Me Some People See” May 2016
- “Community of Caring” December 2015
- “Finding Hope” December 2014
- “We Are the Ones” May 2014
- “Mourning Is Broken” May 2013
- “Light in the Darkness” December 2009





# SELECT ORIGINAL SONGS

**“We Got Each Other”**: *Ubuntu: Grounding framework of OCC*

By Arnold Grice

Growing up with you has been a blessing  
So many memories I'm thinking of  
Although in life there are some times of testing  
You've always kept me safe and secure with love  
Should you ever feel yourself overwhelmed and stressing  
I sing these words to you, my verbal hug



You're my sister  
You're my brothers  
I dedicate this song because I love ya

You're my sister  
You're my brothers  
It sure is good to know we've got each other

# SELECT ORIGINAL SONGS

## **“Inside a Mother’s Heart”**

*Lyrics by Elma Ingamells, music by Mary L. Cohen*



Inside a mother’s heart search deep and you will find, the  
treasures of tomorrow and the tears she leaves behind

She loves and cares so much for her sweet child  
Their love grows strong and blesses all our lives.

Trade tears for understanding, let patience bring you growth  
Find hope to encourage your spirit, to discover your God given  
worth. To Discover your God given worth.



# **SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN MUSICAL EXPERIENCES**

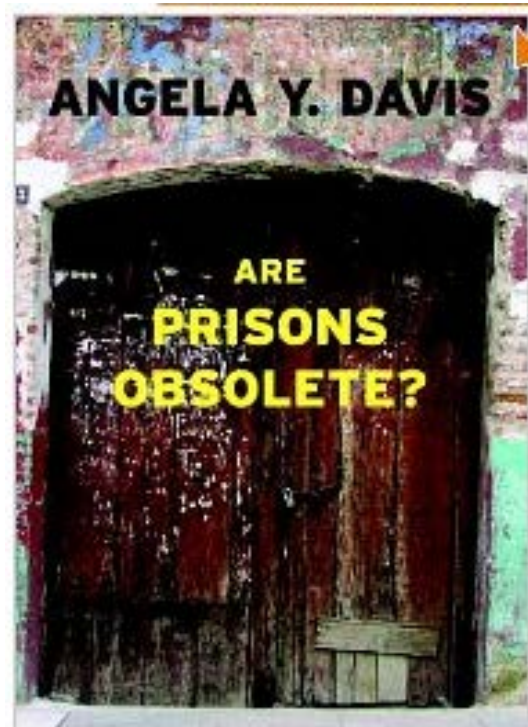
- What do you notice about these social relationships?
- What connections might be happening that we are not aware of?
- What connections are missing? Why? Who is not in the room?
- What musical styles are not included and why?
- What new connections are possible through singing and through music-making?



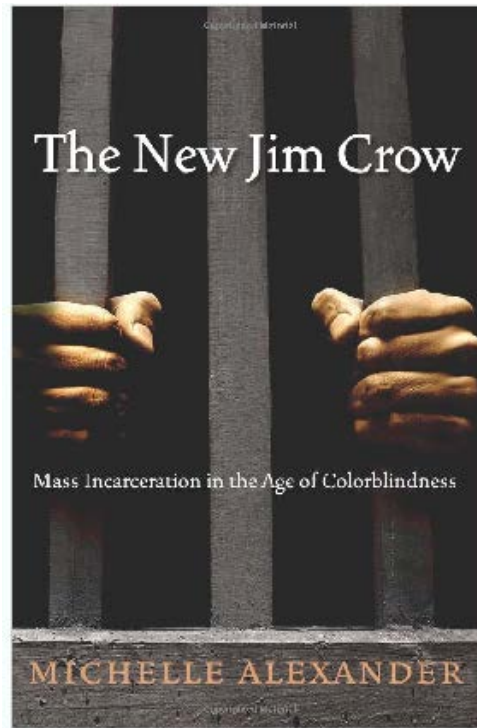
# AMERICAN PRISON

A REPORTER'S UNDERCOVER  
JOURNEY INTO THE  
BUSINESS OF PUNISHMENT

SHANE BAUER



2003



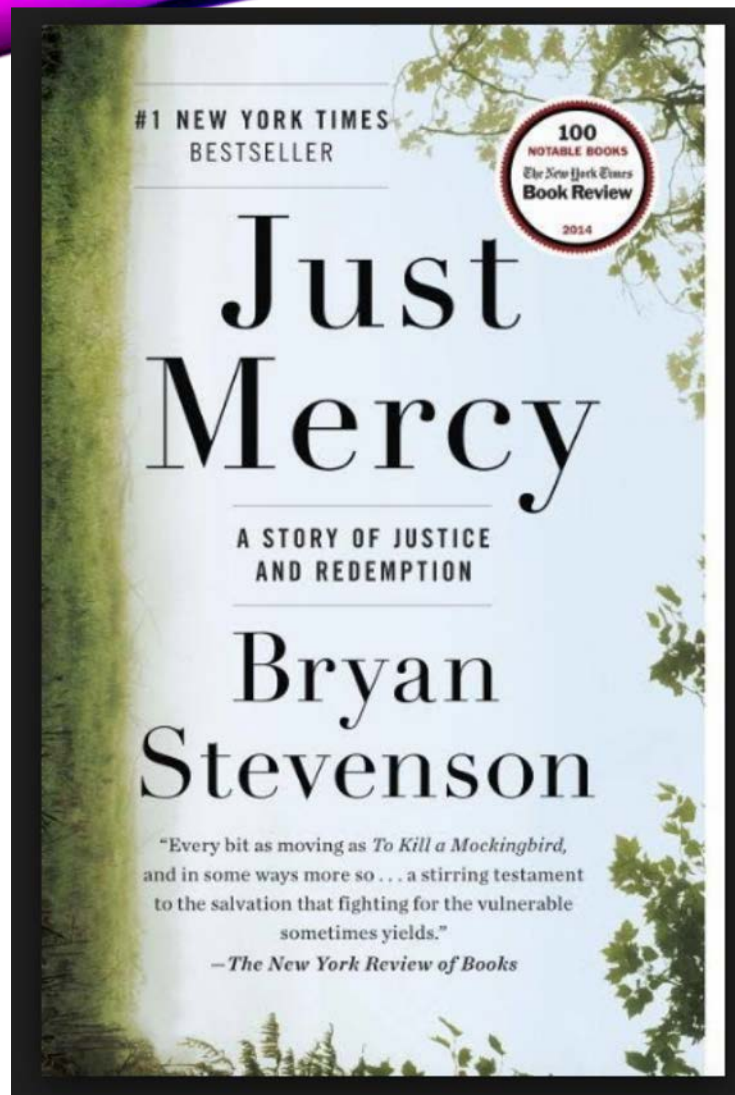
2010

**MUSIC in  
AMERICAN CRIME  
PREVENTION  
and PUNISHMENT**

Lily E. Hirsch



2012



2014

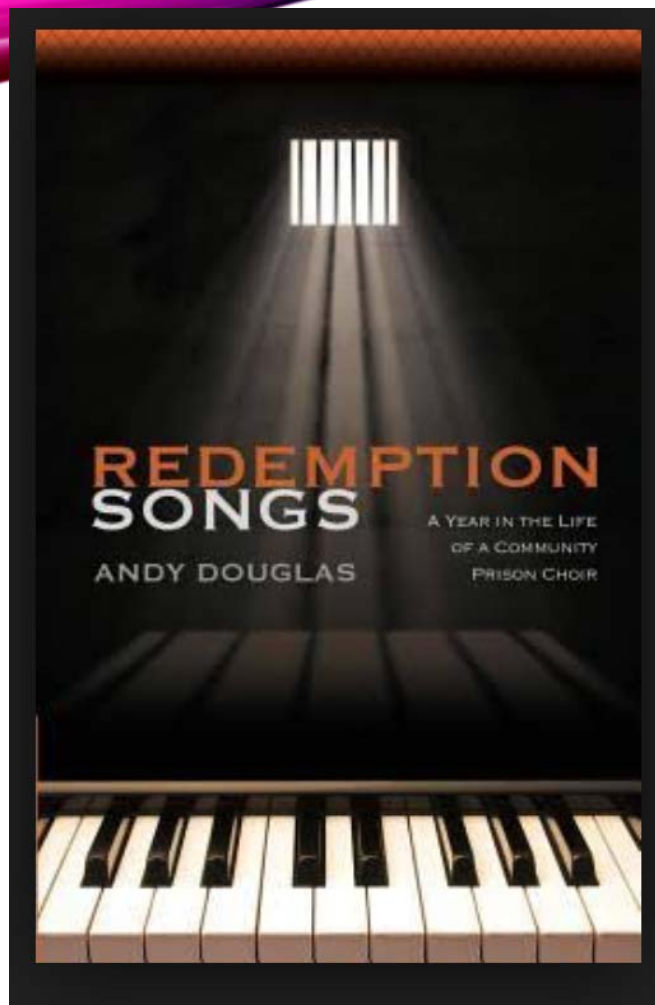




**From the War on Poverty to the  
War on Crime** The Making of  
Mass Incarceration in America

ELIZABETH HINTON

2016



**2019**



**Andy Douglas**, writer, musician, counselor; Outside singer with the Oakdale Community Choir

# CHANGING THE NARRATIVE THROUGH CHORAL SINGING AND SONGWRITING



Oakdale Community Choir &  
8 International Delegates, July 2016



Oakdale Choir & Soweto Gospel  
Choir, November 2018



# DESISTANCE THEORY

- Past Thinking: aging, maturity, individual choice “Primary Desistance”
- New Thinking:
  - Secondary Desistance: Self-identity (Maruna, 2001)
    - (Cohen, 2007; 2012; Gromko & Cohen, 2012)
  - Tertiary Desistance: Social & Political Processes (McNeill & Schinkel, 2016)**
    - **(Cohen, 2012; Messerschmidt, 2017)**

# RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Concert experiences

New topics of conversation

Original songs

*Four Times Bonita*

*That Childhood of Ours*

*To My Daughter*

*My Family*

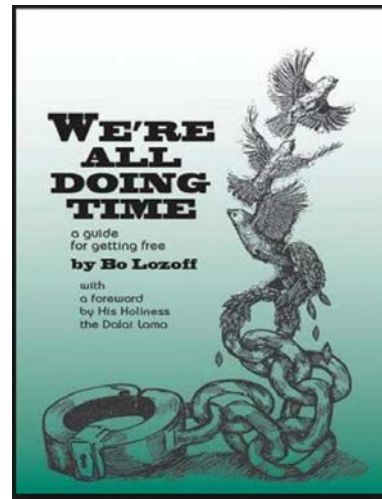
*Heavenly Snowfall*

*Find the Joy*

*Watching Over Me*



# REFLECTIVE WRITING BETWEEN REHEARSALS



<http://oakdalechoir.lib.uiowa.edu/>

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## NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

- [June 2017](#) (2)
- [December 2016](#) (4)
- [November 2016](#) (6)
- [July 2016](#) (1)
- [June 2016](#) (5)
- [May 2016](#) (3)
- [March 2016](#) (15)

Cohen, M. L. (2012). Writing between rehearsals: A tool for assessment and building camaraderie. *Music Educators Journal*, 98(3), 43-48, doi 10.1177/0027432111432524.





# COHEN'S CURRENT WRITING PROJECTS

- Definition of “Circular Practices and Peacebuilding & Music”
- Book chapters (a) with inside singer, Richard Winemiller, and musician, Johnathan Kana, who was formerly incarcerated for *Walking the Boundaries, Bridging the Gaps: How Community Music Engages those on the Margins of Society*, (b) another chapter about music education & displacement
- **Finishing NEW BOOK with coauthor Stuart Paul Duncan:**  
***Silenced Voices: Music-Making in US Prisons***





# QUESTIONS & CONVERSATION

**\*\*Final quote from May 4, 2019\*\***

***Need for cultivating curiosity, compassion, and caring; not judgment and accusation***

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**<http://oakdalechoir.lib.uiowa.edu/>**