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Behind Bars: Latino/as and Prison in the United States. Suzanne Oboler. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. h/bk 308 pp. ISBN 978-0230619494. Price £77.00.

The Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution, passed in 1791, reads: "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." Yet, what can be lawfully considered as excessive or a cruel punishment has been a matter that still nowadays causes much debate. That the United States of America has the largest incarceration rate in the world, with most convicts being either African-Americans or Latinos, is another issue of debate. Traditional representations of justice depict it as a woman blindfolded, meaning justice's equality to all persons and its blindness to prejudices. Reality, however, proves the judicial system to be not so egalitarian. The likelihood of being imprisoned in the US dramatically increases if one is Latin-American or African-American, with the result that Latinos today are "the fastest growing group in the U.S. prison system" (2). Latino prisoners in the US is the subject of *Behind Bars,* an edited collection which includes an introduction and eighteen chapters structured around four sections - the issues, the lived experience, the art of resistance and the way forward.

In the introduction, Oboler points out that prejudices against Latinos, reinforced by stereotypical and negative representations in the media, plus the "crimmigration" legislation that made illegal immigration a crime are responsible for this increase in the number of Latinos in prison. The different aspects of life in prison for this community are explored in the following chapters. The first part, "The Issues," surveys the current situation at the same time that it traces its roots.José Luis Morin, in analyzing the present trends and challenges, finds that patterns of ghettoization, racial profiling by the police and the erroneous idea that Latinos are aliens (actually, 60% of them are American-born), and that the war on drugs has almost exclusively focused on minorities, have all contributed to the existing situation. Morin dates the perceived inferiority of Latinos back to the Mexican-American War (1848), further reinforced by the annexation of Puerto Rico. David Manuel Hernández exposes that Latino immigrant detention is far from being a new phenomenon, but rather a long-standing state of affairs, with examples to be found between the two World Wars.

Alan Eladio Gómez's chapter connects the Prison Rebellions (1969-1972) to inmates' rights movements as well as international social movements, showing that, instead of being an isolated occurrence, they were part of a larger global panorama.

Just as the war on crime has hit Latinos the hardest, the strictness of juvenile justice policies has imprisoned hordes of African-American and Latino young people who committed crimes which were not violent or serious, contends Victor M. Rios. The effects of these policies on Latinas are the focus of Laurie Schaffner, who sees this population segment as manifold marginalized because of their young age, their gender and their belonging to a minority group. Beyond the individual cases, the effects of incarceration are far-reaching and transcend the inmate and his family, as felon disfranchisement negatively impacts the neighborhoods with high ex-inmate rates, Juan Cartagena explains. Because inmates lose the right to temporarily vote in 48 states (permanently, in 11 of them), their areas of residence's voting census is negatively affected.

The second section explores their authors' first-hand experiences in several capacities. Mercedes Victoria Castillo recounts how her writing signs warning of driver's license checkpoints (used as a method to identify illegal aliens), while legal, almost led to her being arrested for inciting riots. Laura E. Garcia's role as an interpreter for the public defender's office in Chicago makes her call for professional interpreters to replace the police staffers who often do the interpreting. Otherwise, the arrested might inadvertently give out information prejudicial to their case, relieved as they are of finally finding a Spanish speaker, forgetting that this speaker is actually a police officer or staffer. The necessity for the interpreter's unbiased and impartial labor is particularly evident while reading Erik Camayd-Freixas's testimony, where he shares his hard experiences interpreting during the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid of Agriprocessors, Inc., in May 2008, the largest ICE raid ever. Other aspects of the Latino prison experience are covered by Dicxon Valderruten, whose chapter deals with the close relationship between HIV/AIDS and incarceration, while Marcia Esparza explains how she came to found Latinas United for Justice in 2004.

Art can emanate in the unlikeliest places, such as a prison, as the third section, "The Art of Resistance," shows. Not only can artistic inspiration be found in prison, also redemption, as Victor Alejandro Sorell

claims. This section analyzes the work of artists/inmates Leonardo Peña, Óscar Lopez Rivera, Elizam Escobar, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Leonard Peltier. It includes poems by raúlrsalinas, as well as interview with him by Alan Eladio Gómez and another with Rafael Cancel Miranda (by Gabriel Torres-Rivera), a poem of his also being included.

Part 4, "The Way Forward," looks into how to convey and improve the prisoners' conditions. Juanita Díaz-Cotto tackles the ethical and methodological issues in collaborative research methods and B. V. Olguín calls attention to the devastating effects of the war on terror on Chicano prisoners, especially on those who convert to Islam.

All in all, the broad scope of this work allows the reader to gain a broad perspective on Latino incarceration in the US. From the first-hand experience of interpreters to the artistic outlet of inmates' suffering, unearthing the roots of the problem while offering suggestions for the future, *Behind Bars* is a well-researched and thoroughly documented book, and indispensable for all of those interested in this topic. Prisoners, in the words of Carlos, imprisoned in New York, are afraid of *vivir en el olvido* (living but being forgotten); this book is testimony that they are not forgotten.

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