

powerful new tool for those who advocate for women in conflict with the law. The legislation also helps to alleviate some of the most serious burdens that women face in the correctional system: inability to serve their sentences close to their communities, loss of their children, and potential access to a greater variety of programs and counselling.

The book contains some obvious gaps that could be filled in future editions. *In Conflict with the Law* purports to be a work about women and the Canadian justice system, but in truth it focuses almost exclusively on federally sentenced women (i.e. women serving sentences of two years or longer). This focus is unusual when one considers that 99 per cent of the women who serve time do so in provincial institutions and that only one in ten women who comes into conflict with the law receives a jail sentence. This is not to say that the consequences that women experience are fleeting: for many, they include increased disadvantage in the workplace, the entrenchment of poverty, increased dependence on sometimes abusive partners, and the possible loss of their children. Given that the experience of the vast majority of women is limited to treatment by police, the court, and probation services, a chapter on the experience of women who do not receive custodial dispositions would be a welcome addition to this varied and interesting work.

### **BREAKING THE RULES: WOMEN IN PRISON AND FEMINIST THERAPY**

Judy Harden and Marcia Hill, eds.  
New York: Haworth Press, 1998.

### **BY SANDRA E. THRONESS**

The purpose of this collection of essays is to identify and discuss

gender-related issues arising from a patriarchal prison system. In what the editors approvingly describe as "feminist, unruly behaviour," it questions the assumptions associated with the existence of prisons and the very definitions of what a prisoner is. Harden and Hill conclude that a feminist view of the treatment of women prisoners is required.

The prison system is yet another societal institution where one size does not fit all. Punishment and rehabilitation programs developed for men who are the majority of the prison population continue to miss the mark by ignoring the increasing level of diversity in the prison population.

Although women comprise only 5.7 per cent of the total prison population in the United States, their rate of imprisonment has exploded. From 1980 to 1994 the number of women inmates increased by 386 per cent compared to an increase in male inmates of 214 per cent. This increase coincided with the escalation of the war on drugs. Most women inmates are mothers with dependent children on the outside while few male inmates are primary caregivers. In addition male inmates tend to have been incarcerated for mostly violent crimes while female inmates tend to have been arrested for drug-related and status crimes (those activities that are illegal due to age). Clearly the programs developed for male prisoners will have little relevance when applied to women prisoners.

A number of essays examine the impact of a patriarchal prison system on women inmates. First, incarcerated women are more likely than the general population to have been abused in childhood. Prison recreates that experience through a culture that often involves traumatic sexualization and powerlessness.

Second, retraining programs tend to focus on gender-stereotyped skills. Such programs give the impression that successful rehabilitation for women means knowing your place and

not making waves. In addition, drug treatment programs that focus on submission as a requirement for fighting addiction contradict feminist ideals of empowerment.

Third, the boot camp approach to rehabilitation is based on certain assumptions about criminal motivations garnered from research on male inmates. This research determined a direct correlation between criminal activity and the lack of discipline and responsibility. Boot camps are intended to teach this missing discipline and responsibility by breaking down and building up male inmates. However, the relevance of this research to women inmates has not been proven—partly because women tend to commit crimes for reasons unrelated to gender stereotypes or control theories. In addition, boot camps are less likely to successfully rehabilitate women prisoners due to their greater need for connection and relationship.

Although this book does not fully address those issues specific to women from equity-seeking groups, it is generally effective in identifying a range of important concerns relating to gender and prisons.

### **INVENTING THE SAVAGE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CRIMINALITY**

Luana Ross. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1998.

### **BY KIM ANDERSON**

Many of us are aware that the prosperity of the Americas has been achieved through the colonization of Native peoples. In her book, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality*, Luana Ross now shows us how this prosperity has involved the criminalization of Native peoples.

The book is divided into two parts: "Colonization and the Social Construction of Deviance"; and "Creating Dangerous Women: Narratives of Imprisoned Native American and White Women." In Part I, Ross shows how the United States criminalized Native people because they wanted Native land and resources. The strategy was to either destroy or assimilate the people who were living on that land. Out of this strategy, and from the poverty that ensued, Native people were repeatedly arrested for crimes such as stealing cattle, venturing off reserve, fishing out of territory, or practising their own culture and ceremonies. When they engaged in acts of resistance such as burning jails or refusing to send their children to school they were also arrested.

Ross walks the reader through the various jurisdictional issues related to Native criminality. Traditional Native justice systems have historically been ignored, and Native peoples have been subject to increased convictions through the application of multiple laws (i.e. federal and state) and criminality that is based on the race of the offender and the victim. Although the focus is on the United States, the information Ross presents applies equally to the development of Canada. All of this information is vital in that it demonstrates the racist application of the justice system, and the role it has played in the colonization of the Americas. I had hoped, however, to find more information related to "the social construction of Native American Criminality," as promised in the subtitle. A lot of Part I is spent wandering through the basics of colonization and racism as it happened in the U. S. Whereas this is important, I would have preferred if Ross had spent more time on a detailed unpacking of "the savage" as it relates to criminality.

Part II may prove more useful to the Native scholar, as it contains original research that Ross did with 14 Native and 13 white women prisoners

in Montana. Through the voices of these women, Ross traces the poor social conditions, oppression, violence and abuse that lead to criminal conviction. She documents the dismal prison conditions these women are faced with, such as medication as a form of control, sexual abuse and intimidation, inappropriate therapy, and abuse of power. She gives attention to areas that are often overlooked, such as the particular plight of off-reserve Native women versus reservation women, or the difficulties experienced by lesbian prisoners. Ross also takes a thorough look at the difficulties of prison motherhood through the eyes of the prisoners, demonstrating how the justice system offers little support to female prisoners who are mothers.

At times, the book ventures into dangerous generalizations about Native women versus white women, and some of the conclusions about the differences between these populations seem premature. For example, one Native woman prisoner comments on how the mothers from reservations do not need parenting classes because they have learned parenting skills from the extended family system on reserve. Ross could have qualified this remark as in fact there is a great need for parenting skills among Native people because of the losses we have experienced through residential schooling and the child welfare system. Instead, she simply comments that many of the white mothers were raised in dysfunctional, nuclear families, and then concludes "It is possible that this background does affect their parenting skills and produces relatively weak mothers." With this statement, she thus applies the "bad mother" tarnish to the white female prisoners, something that she is quick to criticize in other places.

In the end, Ross presents some concrete suggestions about how the justice system and prison life could be improved for all women. Although somewhat disjointed, her book offers many insights into the criminality of

Native people, as well as that of women or anyone else who is poor and oppressed. Her original research will be well received by those concerned with the injustice of the justice system.

## **LOOKING WHITE PEOPLE IN THE EYE: GENDER, RACE AND CULTURE IN THE COURTROOM AND CLASSROOMS**

Sherene H. Razack. Toronto:  
University of Toronto Press, 1998.

### **BY DARLENE OKEMAYSIM**

Sherene H. Razack's book on gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms is a wonderful educational tool for contemporary sociologists, feminists, and advocates. Razack, a researcher and associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at OISE/University of Toronto, explores, from the subject position of the academic, the interactions of "non-whites and whites." Upon "gazing" the cover, readers almost immediately learn that they are about to open a book on the concerns of race and women. We see a young, beautiful, dreadlocked, non-white woman in her 20s with a shadow on the right side of her face exposing a nose ring. Instantly, through interpretation, we find that what knowledge lies ahead is going to be challenging and intriguing.

Being a non-white reader, I hesitated to open the book. Hesitated in terms of inclusiveness. Many times throughout my own life experience, whether in front of law enforcement or academia, I worried about being invisible to the predominantly white heterosexual middle-class males who generally hold those positions. Will the First Nation person and authors be included in the discussion or will we be silenced once again? Sur-