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US prison reformers

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Abstract

Part 2 (US prison reformers) in a general tribute to some of the people who improved the lot of prisoners in Australia and comparable jurisdictions.

US prison reformers

What follows is a tribute to some of the dedicated people who improved the lot of prisoners in the United States. Many names are missing, but these brief profiles will hopefully provide an indication of the persistence, sacrifice and courage it took to advocate for the rehabilitation and humane treatment of people generally despised and rejected by society, often from birth without ever being habilitated in the first place.

William Penn (1644-1718)

The founder and first governor of Pennsylvania, William Penn, received the land in 1681 as a grant from King Charles II in repayment of a debt owed to Penn's father. Penn was a member of the Society of Friends (or Quakers), a protestant group that, like the Puritans, was being persecuted by the Church of England. Penn and other wealthy Quakers sent fifty ships from England to Pennsylvania filled with people taking religious refuge. As governor, Penn established the port city of Philadelphia (Greek for 'brotherly love') and a government structure and charter of liberties to promote freedom and equality. This included freedom of religion (with no established church), freedom of the press, free enterprise and the equal treatment of Native Americans with a proper peace treaty (land purchased rather than trading land for alcohol). Penn's sense of equality and fairness carried over to the criminal justice system with guaranteed trial by jury; bail for minor offences; all prisons without fees for food and lodgings; and reduction of the list of capital offences from the 200 crimes in

English law to the two crimes of murder and treason in Pennsylvania. Another Quaker, John Bellers (1654-1725) was the first to call for the abolition of the death penalty.

Further reading: Encyclopedia.com 2019a, 2019b.

Thomas Eddy (1758-1827)

Like Penn and the early British prison reformers, John Howard (before him), George Paul (his contemporary) and Elizabeth Fry (after him), Thomas Eddy was inspired by his Christian beliefs (he was a Quaker) to pursue prison reform. He had also been imprisoned in 1781 during the American War of Independence on suspicion of spying for the British, during which he came to understand the suffering of convicts. Also like Penn and the three British reformers, Eddy believed that criminals could be rehabilitated through work, education, religious observance and strict discipline. Eddy agreed with Howard and Paul (Fry differed on this) that single cells and silence during prison industry would reduce the need for corporal punishment and give inmates time to reflect on the errors of their ways and repent. Indeed, Pennsylvania Quakers and other reformers who started the early prison reform organisation, the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, developed the concept of penitentiaries – prisons that encouraged inmates to be penitent for their wrongdoings as central to their reform. In 1796, after reading Quaker William Bradford's report on the reformed legal system in Pennsylvania, Eddy successfully lobbied the New York State Legislature to abolish the death penalty for all but three crimes (he opposed capital punishment because it eliminated the possibility of reform), and to establish a penitentiary system. The first three state prisons in the world had just opened (Massachusetts in 1785, Connecticut in 1790 and Pennsylvania in 1794) when Eddy became the key proponent of the first State prison to open in New York City, Newgate Prison. The prison opened in 1797 and Eddy was appointed the agent (warden), assisted by other Quaker philanthropists. The prison improved on the model prison in Pennsylvania by reducing the use of solitary confinement and restricting the 450 inmates to felons rather than including vagrants, debtors and suspects. Prisoners also engaged in various industries. However, Newgate quickly deteriorated. It became dilapidated and overcrowded (with 800 inmates by 1820), and it had to cater for males, females, juvenile delinquents and criminally insane inmates (New York State Archives). Eddy resigned as prison agent in 1804 after the

last of his Quaker inspectors had been forced out and replaced by bureaucrats. Flogging was brought in, although Eddy had opposed corporal punishment because it hardened criminals' hearts.

Further reading: Encyclopedia.com 2019b.

Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802-1887)

From the age of fourteen, Dorothea Dix taught at a girls' school, before establishing her own private school around 1821. Dix also taught poor students from the barn of her grandmother (who had brought Dix up from the age of twelve). She wrote Christian devotional books for children from 1824 to 1830. Dix opened another private school for girls which she ran from 1831 to 1836, when she suffered a mental breakdown. To recover, Dix travelled to England to stay with the Rathbone family (refer to their entry in the article on UK Prison Reformers). There she was introduced to a number of prominent prison reformers, including Elizabeth Fry and Samuel Tuke (refer to their entries in the article on UK Prison Reformers), and she became interested in reform in the care of mentally ill people. When teaching female prisoners in East Cambridge she was shocked by the inhumane treatment of four mentally ill prisoners who were locked up in putrid, dark, bare cells in the basement. Upon her return to America, Dix toured mental hospitals, prisons and almshouses across the country, reporting to state governments and calling for much greater funding and respect for those confined. She worked with committees to draft legislation and appropriations bills and toured mental asylums throughout Europe. Dix was instrumental in establishing 32 'moral' mental hospitals and hospitals throughout America. When the American Civil War broke out, Dix was made Superintendent of Army Nurses by the Union Army, although her nurses cared for both Union and Confederate injured soldiers.

Further reading: Norwood 2017.

Enoch Cobb Wines (1806-1879)

Dr Enoch Cobb Wines was the first teacher of Ethics in a US high school, a Congregational minister, a Professor of Ancient Languages and President of City University of St Louis before becoming Secretary of the New York Prison Association in 1862 and of the National Prison Association which he founded in 1870. Wines wrote or co-wrote a number of prison reform publications, including *The prisons and reformatories of the United States and Canada* (1867); *The actual state of prison reform throughout the civilized world* (1878); and State of prisons and child-saving institutions (1880), which drew attentions to problems and

proposed solutions. In 1871–72, Wines organized in London the first international congress on prison discipline and was elected its second president in 1878. Wines was known as the 'American John Howard' because for 18 years he observed prison conditions in most of the important prisons in America and Europe, and formulated groundbreaking theories on prison reform and crime prevention that proved highly influential.
Further reading: New York Times 1879.

Zebulon Brockway (1827-1920)
Zebulon Brockway was a prison guard who worked his way up to prison superintendent. He is sometimes called the 'Father of American parole' for the methods he employed at Elmira Reformatory.
The publication, *The prisons and reformatories of the United States and Canada* (1867) mentioned above was co-written by Enoch Wines and law professor, Theodore Dwight (1822-1892). They found that not one of the American state prisons was seeking the reformation of its inmates as a primary goal. Wines and Dwight set out an agenda for reform which was endorsed by a National Congress in 1870, and their ideas were applied in the Elmira Reformatory, New York in 1876 run by Superintendent Brockway. The reformatory was run with the central aim of reformation, using military discipline (inmates wore military-style uniforms). Adult and juvenile offenders were separated. Prisoners undertook useful trades and courses in ethics and religion. They engaged in manual labour and activities such as a prison band, a prison newspaper and athletics. Inmates were classified into one of three grades according to their conduct and in the first grade could earn 'marks' or privileges, including early release. Intelligent long-term prisoners and ex-prisoners were even engaged for custodial and educational duties that were normally performed by civil administrators. Achieving this required Brockway to break a strike by the civil administrators. This reform was never publicized by Brockway until his memoirs because it would have attracted more opposition from politicians, media and public. As it was, attacks by the local mayor put a stop to his elevation of prisoners to posts of responsibility far above the normal use of "trusties" in local jails (Helfman 1950, pp. 597-598). The Elmira Reformatory principles were applied in 25 new reformatories in twelve states, but difficulties such as overcrowding; unqualified teachers; overly complex grading;

the stress for inmates of indeterminate sentences; uncontrolled sexual violence; corruption; coercion; and the reversion to severe corporal punishment (originally Elmira favoured psychological over physical methods) led to the dilution of the reformatory goals. Brockway himself was investigated for reports of brutality and found guilty and he retired in some disgrace (although his popularity amongst townsfolk saw him elected as Elmira mayor). Brockway's elevation of prisoners and ex-prisoners to positions of custodial and educational responsibility was denigrated as coercion, but Warden Hiram F. Hatch of the Michigan State Prison carried on Brockway's reforms during his tenure from 1885 to 1891, and allowed an unsupervised committee of prisoners to draw up a constitution for 'The Mutual Aid League' with the following aims: 'The objects of this league shall be: by social intercourse to improve ourselves, and to aid in the moral, intellectual, physical and financial advancement of our fellowmen. To inculcate a higher appreciation of the value and sacred obligations of American citizenship, and the necessity of unconditional loyalty to the Federal and State government, as exemplified by a strict maintenance of the laws by them promulgated. To resist and oppose corruption and dishonesty in all forms and places and to promote honesty and efficiency in the discharge of all labor, tasks and duties assigned. To respect and aid by personal discipline, in the maintenance of all rules and regulations necessary to the discipline and good order of the prison.' Again, Hatch faced severe opposition even though he had an unblemished record of prison discipline, and he resigned in 1891. The new prison administration erased memory of Hatch's reforms and swung back to punishment without rehabilitation. Thomas Mott Osborne later formulated the similar 'Mutual Welfare League' but was more successful in openly promoting them to the general public (refer below).
Further reading: Brockway 1870, 1912.

Susan Hammond Barney (1834-1922)
Susan Barney was a social activist and national evangelist. Poor health prevented her from following her dream of being a foreign Christian missionary, but she co-founded the Prisoners' Aid Society of Rhode Island and was the first president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) at Rhode Island. Barney became the WCTU's National Superintendent of Prison, Jail, Police, and Almshouse Visitation. At the time, it was common to post missionaries in police stations, lock-ups and courts so that incarcerated people could

be cared for and non-violent first offenders could sometimes be released into their supervision (an early form of parole). Barney was largely responsible for posting matrons in the station-houses and courts of large cities, and, like Elizabeth Fry, securing female warders and dedicated prison and police cells for women.

In 1897, Barney set off on a heavily-booked speaking tour as World WCTU's Superintendent for Prison, Police, Charitable and Reformatory Work. She visited Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia, giving lectures on prison reform and visiting prisons and asylums.

Further reading: Barney 1891, pp.366-379.

The ‘Tombs Angels’:

Ernestine Schaffner (1828-1902) and **Rebecca Salome Foster** (1848-1902) were both known as ‘Tombs Angels’, working as missionaries and prison relief workers at the damp and putrid Halls of Justice and House of Detention in New York, nicknamed ‘the Tombs’ (the same prison visited and described by Charles Dickens above). The women provided advice, small financial aid and post-release support to the untried suspects held there.

Foster had become involved in prison visitation after the 12-year-old son of the family’s washer woman was arrested for petty crimes. Foster’s husband, a general, was going to intercede on the boy’s behalf in court, but his wife replaced him when he fell ill. She made a powerful plea and the boy was discharged by the Magistrate. While at the court, Foster was asked by the Magistrate to investigate the case of a young homeless girl charged with soliciting. Foster talked with the girl and had her paroled in her own custody. Foster’s strong personality combined with her husband’s position as a general generated respect amongst officials and she acted as an unofficial court investigator, examining the facts of each prisoner’s case and providing her view on whether she thought the person guilty or innocent. Schaffner had become involved in her prison work after visiting a young German in prison after he had attempted suicide. She, a wealthy woman, saw the deplorable conditions in the Tombs and paid USD300 for the boy’s bail. The charges were later dismissed and Schaffner wondered how many other innocent untried people there might be at the Tombs. Like Foster, she had an ability to discern innocent people from the facts and their facial expressions. In her life, she provided over USD50,000 in bail money and had all of

the people she thought innocent acquitted (numbering in the hundreds). The work of the Tombs Angels foreshadowed modern parole, throughcare and aftercare services.

Further reading: Munro 1909, Chapter 31

Thomas Mott Osborne (1859-1926)

Born into a wealthy family of industrialists, Thomas Mott Osborne knew and followed in the footsteps of the businessman, philanthropist and activist, William Earl Dodge (1832-1903). He 'greatly esteemed' Dodge for promoting 'an understanding of the duties of Christian citizenship' (Osborne 1916, p. 1), and Osborne regarded that citizenship as having 'no responsibility greater or more pressing than the state prisons' (Osborne 1916, p. 2). Osborne was also inspired by Brockway (above), whom he visited at Elmira Reformatory; and by the 1912 book, 'My life in prison' by Donald Lowrie (1875-1925), which detailed the injustices at San Quentin State Prison and was among the first books by a prisoner in modern times. After serving on the Auburn Board of Education and as Auburn Mayor, Osborne became chairman of the New York State Commission on Prison Reform in 1913. This posting inspired him to spend a total of three weeks as a prisoner in Auburn Prison and other prisons. He wore the prison uniform and lived as inmates did, including doing heavy labour on roadworks and having himself thrown into solitary confinement. Osborne became friends with the inmates and realised that they were no different to people on the outside, apart from the poor environment and lack of opportunity that they were born into. Osborne drew attention to the desperate living conditions in American prisons (describing Auburn Prison as 'barbaric' and Sing Sing as 'medieval'), as well as the 90% eventual recidivism rate and the potential for rehabilitation within prison (Roosevelt 1933, p. 44). Agreeing with British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) that "it is liberty alone that fits men for liberty," Osborne founded the 'Mutual Welfare League' as part of his 'new penology,' initially at Auburn Prison. These leagues were similar to the initiatives of Brockway and Hatch that were implemented then erased in the 1890s (refer above). Although not as radical as Brockway's and Hatch's reforms, the committee of prisoners was given the power to judge violators of prison rules and arrange entertainment events. The League's motto was 'Do good. Make good' and the main purposes were to train prisoners in self-

government and to prepare them for their return to society. Osborne campaigned for prison to be 'a repair shop, not a scrap heap.'

Osborne was the warden of Sing Sing State Prison in New York from 1914 to 1915 and again in 1916, and commander of the Portsmouth Naval Prison from 1917-1920, instituting a Mutual Welfare League in both prisons. When Osborne became warden of Sing Sing in 1914, he clamped down on corruption (wealthy prisoners had been bribing guards for privileges) and he trusted inmates to self-govern, even allowing some prisoners to attend outside events and trusting them to return (which they did). Although very effective for rehabilitation, his methods were heavily criticized and the wealthy prisoners who could no longer bribe guards used their outside connections to cause trouble for Osborne. He was indicted for perjury, neglect of duty and unlawful sexual acts with inmates, leaving Sing Sing in 1915. Osborne responded by speaking at mass meetings attended by his supporters (he even used Carnegie Hall for two of the meetings). He was supported by the prison guards at his trial and was acquitted of all charges. Osborne returned to Sing Sing in 1916 to great celebration at the prison, but resigned later that year after being frustrated by the continuing opposition from outside.

At Portsmouth, the abolition of flogging in 1850 had led to the establishment of an alternative means of punishment - a naval prison opened in 1908. Osborne became commander of Portsmouth Naval Prison in 1917, the same year America entered World War I. Osborne's radical focus on rehabilitation was supported by Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt. Cell doors were allowed to remain unlocked and inmates governed themselves, dealing with any minor infractions. The result was that of 6,600 prisoners handled during Osborne's thirty months as commander, 4,000 were returned to the fleet. Vice Admiral William Sims and others, however, opposed Osborne's reforms and falsely accused him of gross mismanagement and allowing rampant homosexual activity. Osborne was again exonerated, but he resigned in 1920 and the Navy quickly returned to its harsh and ineffective system, terminating the Mutual Welfare League at Portsmouth Prison (Watterson 2014). Osborne continued with his prison reform writing, public speaking tours and other efforts, including co-writing and sponsoring the 1921 silent film, *The Right Way* about the positive effects of prison reform on a pair of inmates.

After Osborne died in 1927, his funeral was held in the prison chapel at Auburn Prison and he was buried in a Portsmouth Naval Prison uniform. His legacy includes the Osborne Association (www.osborneny.org) which is an amalgamation of all the organizations that had been founded by Osborne. The association has 25 pre-entry, throughcare and reentry programs that help people navigate the criminal justice system and rebuild their lives, with additional support for the families of prisoners.

In some of the clearest and most beautiful language written by a prison reformer, Osborne applied disciplined critical thinking to question the logic of the prevailing penology in many important volumes on prison reform, including:

Within prison walls: Being a narrative of Thomas Mott Osborne (1914), which was Osborne's prison diary written when he 'went underground' at Auburn prison for one week, under the pseudonym of Tom Brown (although he was up-front with the prisoners that he was there to learn about the prison conditions). The book made Osborne the most renowned and respected prison reformer of his day.

***Society and prisons: Some suggestions for a new penology* (1916)**, in which he questioned the accuracy of classifying prisoners according to the number of terms in prison, or by the generalization of 'the criminal', 'the criminal type/class', 'the marks of the criminal' or 'the disease of criminality' (pp. 3-45):

> '…I have found no more reason for belief in a mental or moral criminal type than Dr. Goring has found for belief in a physical one…
>
> I have yet to meet one prisoner whom I regard as anything but a perfectly natural human being, - a natural human being often rendered abnormal through inherited weaknesses, more often through the evil influences of unhealthy environment, most often through the stupidity of older people to whose care a precious human life was early entrusted. I believe that the institutions, devised by man for the training of youth, to be most responsible for the inmates in our state prisons. And when we talk about "confirmed criminals" and a "criminal type" and a "criminal class," we are trying to lay upon God the blame which belongs upon ourselves.
>
> For while there is no such thing as a criminal type, there is a "prison type"; **-** the more shame to us who are responsible for it. Forth from our penal institutions year after year, have come large numbers of men, broken in health and spirit, white-faced with the "prison pallor," husky in voice - hoarse from

> disuse, with restless, shifty eyes and the timidity of beaten dogs. But these are creatures whom we ourselves have fashioned; the finished product of our prison system. These are what we have to show for the millions of dollars wasted and the thousands of lives worse than wasted because of our denial of common-sense and humanity' (pp. 26-28).

Further reading: Osborne 1914, 1916.

Frank Tannenbaum (1893-1969)

Frank Tannenbaum was a unionist, historian, sociologist and criminologist who was imprisoned as a labour activist and later wrote a number of prison reform books, including:

- **Wall Shadows: A study in American prisons (1922)**, with a forthright introduction by Thomas Mott Osborne (refer above). Tannenbaum discusses life in prison, reasons behind prison cruelty and recidivism, and the pros (and some minor cons) of recent prison reforms that he describes as 'prison democracy' or 'democratic self-government').
- **Osborne of Sing Sing (1933)**, with an introduction by Osborne supporter Franklin D. Roosevelt, on Tannenbaum's close friend, Thomas Mott Osborne (refer above), starting with the deplorable prison conditions then discussing Osborne's reforms and his strength of character that allowed him to do the 'impossible': 'to take men in prison as men. To trust them. To work with them as human beings. His results were as astounding as was his daring' (p. xiii).
- **Crime and the community (1938)**, in which Tannenbaum discusses causes of crime including environment, social forces and habituation leading to crime; politics, courts, policing, parole and probation; the many ways in which the penal system fails; and the way forward.

Further reading: Whitfield 2013.

Austin H. MacCormick (1893-1979)

After completing his Masters of Arts degree, Austin MacCormick served in the US Naval Reserve where his senior officer was Thomas Mott Osborne (refer above), who later employed him. At one time, MacCormick joined Osborne as voluntary prisoners in the Portsmouth Naval Prison to learn about the conditions and system, then they introduced

reforms. Trusted unarmed prisoners were given responsibilities and outdoor recreation was permitted with deadlines set for returning to their cell. From 1929 until WWII, MacCormick held several high-level positions in Federal Corrections. He allowed lighter discipline, but insisted on a high level of good order. In 1934, he led a surprise raid on the corrupt Welfare Island prison which was controlled by 68 gangsters who led a lavish lifestyle with their own servants. Guards were without authority, allowing the gangsters to sell drugs and good food to 500 inmates, leaving slops for the other 1200 prisoners. Many weapons and illicit substances were confiscated, the prisoners were moved to the new Rikers Island and the decrepit Welfare Island prison demolished. During the war, MacCormick was the Army's chief adviser in correctional matters and he applied what he had learnt from his mentor, Osborne, developing the rehabilitative system that restored 42,000 of 84,000 court-martialled soldiers to service. After the war, he became professor of criminology at Berkeley. Following retirement from the university, MacCormick was a major prison reformer and the executive director of the Osborne Association (refer Osborne above) until his death in 1979.

MacCormick is most well-known for his 1928 nationwide survey of prison education and his 1931 book, *The education of adult prisoners: A survey and a program prepared for the National Society of Penal Information* (dedicated to Thomas Mott Osborne), which advocated various types of individualized education, including academic, vocational, cultural, social, life skill, personal/community health education.

Further reading: Yoder 1951.

Victor Folke Nelson (1898-1939)

After Victor Folke Nelson's mother died, he was brought up in an orphanage. He escaped often and was moved to a School for Boys. Nelson then became involved in larceny crimes. After serving in the Royal Flying Corps in 1916-1918, he joined the Naval Reserve, but was incarcerated twice in the Portsmouth Naval Prison for being absent without leave. There, he worked as the office clerk for Thomas Mott Osborne, who also strongly encouraged Nelson in his gift for writing. Nelson spent many years in New York and Massachusetts prisons while writing many essays and articles about prison life, reform and politics, as well as the 1933 book, *Prison days and nights,* written with the encouragement of neurologist, Abraham Myerson, about the

psychological experiences of inmates. Nelson struggled with drugs and alcohol for the remainder of his life and died of barbiturate poisoning after telling his wife and friends that he planned to end his life.

Further reading: Nelson 1932-1933, 1933.

W. David Willis (1903-1980)

David Willis was another Quaker reformer who regarded punishment as ineffective and intrinsically evil. He was instrumental in establishing the 'Hawkspur Experiment' (1936-1941), one of the first modern therapeutic camps which intervened in the lives of young men considered at risk of delinquency. He also helped establish and was warden for the 'Barns Experiment', a hostel and school, originally for evacuated children during World War II. Willis' wife, Ruth, led the children in art therapy, allowing them to paint whatever they liked and giving them praise. The children's water colours and oils gradually transformed from harsh images of weapons and violence to less graphic content. This work inspired other therapeutic communities and the modern focus on early intervention.

Further reading: Willis 1967.

Bruce M. Wright (1917–2005)

Bruce McMarion Wright was a black lawyer, decorated WWII veteran, New York State Supreme Court justice, author, poet and outspoken civil rights campaigner. He was dubbed "Cut 'Em Loose Bruce" by police unions because he set low (or no) bail for poor and minority suspects, and he was praised as a 'one man force for bail reform' (Breindel 1974). In his 25 years as a judge, he spoke out against injustice for the poor and minorities, despite heavy criticism, and he minimized or avoided pre-trial incarceration because he saw lengthy pre-trial imprisonment as unconstitutional. Wright's book *Black Robes, White Justice* won the 1991 American Book Award, and he published three books of poetry (and would often include literary quotations in his legal opinions) (Turner and Bryant 2022).

Excerpt from Breindel 1974:

'[Wright] does not believe that incidents of bail jumping or even of crimes committed while a defendant was free on bail, prove his bail policies invalid. He views the issue purely as a

question of constitutionality, of equal justice, and holds that only by maintaining his present bail policy will he be correctly performing his duties as a judge. He describes his actions as part of a general effort to meet a need for what he terms "sociological jurisprudence"-- which he says means that in order for a judge to dispense real justice, he must take into account the sociological backgrounds of those who appear before him... He is also a proponent of requiring psycho-analysis of potential judges before they are appointed. "We judges are just ordinary people. We are not transformed by becoming judges and we take with us to the bench the same prejudices we held before." ‘

Further reading: Breindel 1974; Graham 2022.

Edwin “Eddie” Ellis (1941–2014)

Eddie Ellis was a former Black Panther who served 23 years in prison for murder, but he maintained his innocence and considered the sentence to be part of the FBI's counterintelligence program against Black Panthers. While in prison, Ellis completed several degrees and was part of the Think Tank in Green Haven Prison, which found that at that time 85% of New York State’s prison population was Black or Latino, and 75% of the state’s incarcerated population came from just seven poor neighbourhoods in New York City (NuLeadership 2013; Prisoner’s Alliance with Community 1997). Upon release, he ran classes in those neighborhoods to help break the prison cycle; drew attention to the 47 percent recidivism rate; served as a research fellow at Medgar Evers College; lectured at John Jay College of Criminal Justice; advised the Governor and other officials; founded the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions (later the Center for NuLeadership on Human Justice and Healing - CNHJH), the Resurrection Study Group, and the Community Justice Center in Harlem; and campaigned to improve employment and education opportunities for those with convictions. Ellis urged for people-first language: ‘Calling me inmate, convict, prisoner, felon, or offender indicates a lack of understanding of who I am, but more importantly what I can be… If we cannot persuade you to refer to us, and think of us, as people, then all our other efforts at reform and change are seriously compromised’ (Ellis n.d.).

Further reading: Burton 2014; Wagner 2014; Turner and Bryant 2022

CURE (Co-founders: Pauline and Charles Sullivan)

CURE was co-founded in Texas by Charlie and Pauline Sullivan in 1972, both of whom resigned from the Catholic priesthood/sisterhood as a matter of conscience because the church was not making a stand on important social issues. After Charlie spent seven days in a San Antonio jail on a nonviolent civil disobedience charge, he and Pauline founded CURE and began visiting jails and congressional office buildings. CURE, standing for 'Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants', became a national organization in 1985 (with 30 chapters) and is now an international organization, International CURE, still led by the Sullivan couple. CURE is a strong advocate for prisoners, prison reform and decarceration everywhere. CURE's mission statement includes: "We believe that prisons should be used only for those who absolutely must be incarcerated and that those who are incarcerated should have all of the resources they need to turn their lives around. We also believe that human rights documents provide a sound basis for ensuring that criminal justice systems meet these goals." CURE's first International Conference was held in New York in 2001 and the 9th International CURE Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2023. Reports on the 2023 conference demonstrate the wide international support from leading prison reformers, experts and advocates from around the world: News Release by International CURE; Report by Justice Action; Report by Interfaith Prison Partnership/Presbyterian Mission.

Further reading: Sullivan and Sullivan 2004; Ridgeway and Casella 2011; McCarthy 2017

Recidiviz (Co-founders: Clementine Jacoby, Andrew Warren and Joshua Essex)

Recidiviz was co-founded by Clementine Jacoby (CEO), Andrew Warren (Head of Product), and Joshua Essex (Chief Technology Officer) as a voluntary project at Google to explore how technology could standardize criminal justice data and improve the system nationwide. In 2018, Recidiviz became a non-profit organisation.

The aim of Recidiviz is to reduce incarceration, supervision and recidivism rates by generating complex real-time criminal justice data and making it usable by decisionmakers in governments, agencies including corrections, support organisations and communities. By integrating various databases and learning from those with lived experience, they provide the evidence needed to improve the criminal justice system; support prisoners in rehabilitation; help ex-prisoners reintegrate into society; and make communities safer.

Further reading: Recidiviz 2024

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