

# The Forum

Dedicated to the advancement of carceral interpretation for public benefit.

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## Featured Site

In May 1858, fifty-three prisoners began constructing the Joliet Prison. Just two decades later, in 1878, the prison had become overcrowded, with a population of almost 2,000. In 1926, Illinois opened the Stateville Penitentiary with the intention of closing Joliet Prison. However, it remained operational until 2002.

Since 2017, the City of Joliet and the Old Joliet Prison Preservation Coalition have worked to rehabilitate and reopen the site for tourism, which today welcomes thousands of visitors from around the world. Learn more at [www.jolietprison.org!](http://www.jolietprison.org!)

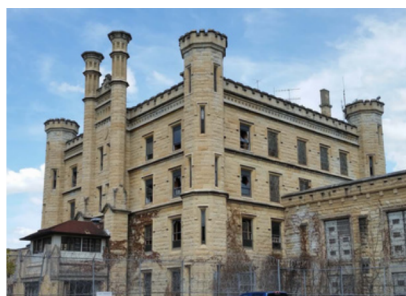


Photo courtesy of Roosevelt University

## Monthly Meet-Up

The ACSM hosts monthly meetings for practitioners, scholars, and others involved with or interested in historic prison museums, and/or carceral sites. Meetings take place via Zoom on the second Monday of each month at 3:00 PM EST and cover a wide range of topics, including interpretation, community engagement strategies, and collaborative practices. Contact us at [thecarceral@gmail.com](mailto:thecarceral@gmail.com) to sign-up in order to attend. We hope to see you there!

## From The Archive

Introducing American Prison Newspapers,  
1800–2020: Voices from the Inside

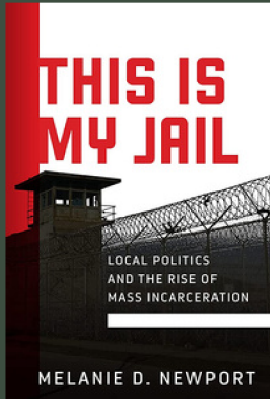
BY KATE McQUEEN, JSTOR DAILY

Since 1800, people incarcerated in America have penned articles and organized layouts for hundreds of in-house publications of all sizes, shapes, and lifespans. The American Prison Newspapers archive reflects this diversity. The more than 900 items (and counting) available for open access use include five issues of J-A-B-S, the oldest publication in the archive to date. It also features a near-complete print run of the more recent Long Line Writer—297 issues produced by Arkansas Department of Corrections from 1987 to 2006. Next to the faded, home-spun pages of The Hour Glass, published at the Farm for Women in Connecticut in the 1930s, readers will find polished staples of the 1970s like newspaper The Kentucky Inter-Prison Press and Arizona State Prison's magazine La Roca. New publications will be added to the collection as they are located and digitized.

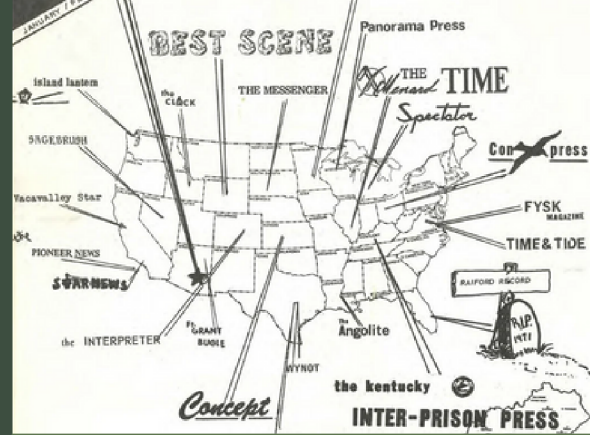
Read the entire article [here!](#)

# New Read!

This is My Jail:  
Local Politics and the Rise of Mass Incarceration  
By Melanie Newport  
(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023)



In her new book, historian Melanie Newport examines the history of jails, as well as how they function, and the purpose that they serve in society. The work responds to an acute lack of research about jails, and common misunderstandings about their origins, operations, and identity as “fundamentally political institutions.” Newport’s analysis “situates the late twentieth-century escalation of mass incarceration in a longer history of racialized, politically repressive jailing.” Check out this thoughtful examination of urban incarceration and urban inequality.



## Prison-Run Newspapers Are on the Rise!

EXCERPT FROM A STORY REPORTED BY  
JUANA SUMMERS, NPR (MARCH 2023)

Since the 1800s, people inside of U.S. prisons have printed their own newspapers and run their own newsrooms. These efforts are collectively known as the prison press.

Despite the huge decline of newspapers nationwide in recent decades, the number of publications run by incarcerated people is actually on the rise. That’s according to a new study by the Prison Journalism Project.

Prison newspapers have been around since the early 1800s. The first true prisoner-run newspaper came out of Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater, Minn. It was called The Prison Mirror, and that was in 1887. Ever since, newspapers have flourished, sometimes with outside support, sometimes without it.

The Prison Journalism Project helps train people who are incarcerated in the skills of professional journalism while inside, and also works with them to publish in outside publications.

Listen to the whole story, published by Spokane Public Radio, [here!](#)

## Upcoming Exhibit

Between the Lines: Prison Art & Advocacy

Museum of International Folk Art  
September 8, 2024 – September 5, 2025

“Between the Lines: Prison Art & Advocacy seeks to re-humanize the incarcerated.

Through a combination of in-gallery artworks, fresh multimedia pieces (interviews with returned citizens and allies, art-making demonstrations, etc.)

and community-co-developed events, this exhibition will explore prisoners’ rights, recidivism / systemic oppression, and transitional justice.

Between the Lines invites an expansive definition of imprisonment, incorporating perspectives from criminal detention centers alongside ICE detention centers, Native boarding schools, and other systems of internment. Between the Lines will challenge the narrative about who prisoners are, while exploring the ripple effects detention has on family and community. Rooted in prisoners’ resilience, ingenuity and creativity, this exhibition also examines how the arts can be a catalyst for healing, rehabilitation, and change, and an act of resistance in themselves.”



Djan Shun Lin, Eagle, York County Prison, Pennsylvania, USA, ca. 1994.  
MIFA Collection.

## In Case You Missed It...

President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador launched an extensive anti-gang “crackdown” in late 2022, declaring a national State of Emergency. Approximately 65,000 people have been arrested, about 57,000 of which are still awaiting formal charges or a trial (as of mid-March 2023). Human rights groups have expressed concern about the suspension of civil rights, the detention of innocent persons, and instances of prisoner abuse. About 2,000 suspected gang-members are currently housed in the new Terrorism Confinement Center, which opened in February 2023. The facility is expected to eventually hold up to 40,000 individuals.





## From The Desk of The Co-President

DR. C. MORGAN GREFF  
ACSM CO-FOUNDER & CO-PRESIDENT

Lately I've been thinking a lot about freedom and liberty. Last month I attended a wonderful conference in Colonial Williamsburg (CW) put on by the Virginia 250th Commission and CW. It was, in fact, extraordinary, even though I've never been particularly focused on the American Revolution as a scholar, or as an American. But I have, for as long as I can remember, been obsessed with the concepts of freedom, liberty, and in many ways, self-governance.

In my day job as Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, I spend much of my time grappling with Rhode Island's role in the transatlantic slave trade and working to understand enslavement as it was practiced in Rhode Island, as well as seeking to discover more about the enslaved women and men who built this colony and state—our national hypocrisy of slavery and freedom being as intimately entwined in New England as it was in the Southern colonies.

There was, however, another experiment in unfreedom taking place only a short distance away in what's now East Granby, Connecticut. The site, which is more commonly known as the Old New-Gate Prison, is ably and thoughtfully stewarded by ACSM's very own Morgan Bengel, and it is also celebrating its 250th anniversary this year.

A bit of history: In the early 1770s, the General Assembly of Connecticut sought a centralized location for the housing of its incarcerated. But, it wasn't just that they wanted a convenient location, they also wanted a new practice that would better fit with the enlightenment ideals surfacing across systems and behaviors in the colonies, from commerce to education to child rearing. The concept of a prison, rather than a jail for the holding of a person accused of a crime, awaiting punishment, or paying off a debt, was that the deprivation of liberty was the punishment in and of itself. Thus, the idea of penal incarceration was predicated upon the idea that freedom was among the most, if not the most, valuable object in a society.

New-gate Prison opened in the Spring of 1773 and incarcerated its first man in December of the same year. When the prison began accepting individuals, most of those persons incarcerated there were convicted of crimes like burglary, theft, or counterfeiting, but during the Revolution, the dark caverns of this subterranean prison were used to hold Tories who were not deemed prisoners of war, but rather convicted by the Connecticut Superior Court. This likely did not win any of the Tories over to the side of the new United States.

I know this history is well known to many of you, but as I sit in meetings and read briefs about the impending commemorations for 250th of the Revolution, I can't help but think about its inextricable connection to the foundations of incarceration in the United States. And I wonder if there might be a time amidst the myriad remembrances that are coming down the road, for us to examine the questions of the American version of freedom and justice and how this relates to our nation's deeply damaging culture of incarceration – our prisons being sites that show the effects of 250 years of not grappling honestly and forthrightly with unequal access to the freedom and liberty promised in our founding philosophies.

## Member Spotlight

Congratulations to ACSM member Nicole Hamilton, Collections Manager Sing Sing Prison Museum, for her recent joint presentation at the Museum Association of New York: "Prison Prisms: Reflections on Prison



History and Criminal Justice Reform in New York State through the lens of Auburn, Attica, and Sing Sing." The panel addressed the history of three prominent New York prisons and their evolution over time, as well as the exhibitions and narratives currently used to interpret and tell their stories!

**Want your work featured in the next edition of The Forum? Share with us at [thecarceral@gmail.com](mailto:thecarceral@gmail.com)!**