

Bronzefield and Downview, largely due to assaults and violence against both officers and the other women. On some occasions, Sophie would purposely act out in order to be moved, either to give herself a break from the wing or because 'the showers were exceptionally clean' (p. 245)!

The final part of the book deals with Sophie's release from prison, although the latter chapters of part two start to look at this as well. In particular it deals with the first seven months from June to December 2018. The account is critical, not just of the agencies involved, including resettlement (which did not find her housing) and probation (who were unable to offer her anything of practical use) but also of the lack of support her family (particularly her father) gave her. In fact, the six days that she had to live with her father are described as the time when she was most at risk of returning to prison. The success that Sophie finds is therefore down to her own efforts, although she does admit that she didn't tell the recruitment agency about her conviction, later lied to her probation officer about what one of her first jobs actually entailed and managed to get bumped up the housing list due to her supervision requirements. Once more financially secure, Sophie applied for and was accepted to do a degree at University and states in one of the later chapters that her plan is to follow this up with a Masters. While this 'story' has a happy ending, it is acknowledged that for most women prisoners their paths are very different, often due to a lack of educational qualifications, secure housing and the ability or confidence to move away from destructive relationships and/or family members.

As a lived experience narrative, this book is interesting and valuable. One thing that sets it apart from some other lived

narratives is the fact that the text is littered with prison statistics and references to research. This extra information provides added value to the book and makes it useful to students and those trying to learn about prison life.

Dr Karen Harrison is a Professor of Law and Penal Justice at Lincoln Law School.

Solitary. Alone We Are Nothing

By Gladys Ambort

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In a change from the books that I normally review for the *Prison Service Journal*, *Solitary. Alone We Are Nothing*, is an account of prison conditions for political prisoners in Argentina during the late 1970's. The period in question 1975 — 1978 saw great political turmoil in Argentina with the President Isabel Martinez de Peron (third wife of President Juan Peron) deposed by a military right-wing coup (coup d'état) on 24 March 1976. A military committee was put in place to replace the government, led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla, who in 1985 was prosecuted for large-scale human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, including kidnappings, forced disappearances, widespread torture and extrajudicial murder of activists and political opponents. Gladys Ambort was one of these political prisoners. In 1975, at the age of 17, she was imprisoned for being a left-wing political activist. The book is therefore an account of the three years that she spent in prisons in Argentina, before being exiled to France.

The book is divided into four parts, with a prologue (arrival in Paris) and an introduction preceding these. The introduction largely explains Gladys' life before arrest

and the political activism which she was involved in as a college student. While she was part of a left-wing political party called Vanguardia Comunista and did endeavour to spread its communist views, she was denounced by one of her college Professors and subsequently arrested and preventatively detained, without trial, for possessing communist literature. The main claim against her, as with other political activists at the time, was that she was a threat to the military right-wing rule.

Part One, which is by far the largest section of the book, then details the four prisons which Gladys spent the next three years of her life. This time of imprisonment began on 2 May 1975 when she was initially arrested and detained in a cell at the Police Headquarters at Rio Cuarto. The book describes the conditions of the cell and how she had to curl up and sleep on cold cement floors, although positively notes that, unlike others, she was not physically tortured. Despite the evidence against her being flimsy and her husband (who was also arrested with her) being released, Gladys' detention was continued and she was moved to the Convent of the Congregation of Bon Pasteur, in June 1975. The Convent, run by nuns was used as a women's prison and being the only political prisoner Gladys' time here was comparably stable. She got on with many of the nuns and while confined in the Convent was in contact with her family and had weekly visits to the prison in which her husband was incarcerated. While at the convent Gladys wanted to be among other political prisoners, although when this 'wish' was granted it was potentially the start of her mental destruction.

The move to her third prison in Cordoba took place on 13 December 1975. The wing in which she was placed was exclusively for

political prisoners and Gladys quickly discovered that she was the only person there from her own political party. This meant that she had to join 'The Fringe' a small group of prisoners who did not fit with the two main parties and thus she was housed on the first floor of the wing and deemed to be inferior. While this presented challenges this was nothing to the change of regime in the prison after March 1976 when the military took over the government and a reign of torture, killings and humiliations began. At this point, the prison is described as a 'theatre of atrocities' (p. 96). There was also a long period of isolation when all communication between prisoners and the outside world was ceased. A time which Gladys found incredibly difficult, because it was her family's love and support which she felt were keeping her sane while in prison. In December 1976, Gladys was moved to her fourth and final prison — Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires. At the time Devoto prison was heralded as a 'showpiece for foreign observers' (p. 91) and it does appear that physically the conditions were better than Cordoba prison, including being able to share cells rather than being locked up for considerable periods on her own. However, we are also told how there was a ban on watches, the women had arrived with bandaged eyes, there was no outside noise and very few windows, so it was very hard for them to obtain any reference to time and place. Despite all these challenges Gladys was still managing to survive.

This changed however on 21 February 1977 when she was accused of scratching a table in the visiting room and as a punishment spent 15 ½ days in solitary confinement. It is this experience (retold in part two of the book) which the title of the book refers

to and it is this period of her incarceration which took Gladys the longest to recover from. Her suffering can be seen in the quote below:

Apart from the four walls, the small window above, the door, and the metal plate nailed to the wall, which served as a bed, there was nothing in this cell. I never heard the sound of voices. I was forbidden to speak to the guard, or to look at her. When she opened the door for me to take the mattress in or out, to go to the toilet, or to pick up a meal, she forced me to do everything head bowed and very quickly. My senses were deprived of any stimulation. I had been left alone: alone, faced with myself, this person I could not even see. No face in front of me, not even an object to reflect mine. Nothing, nothing, nothing. There was nothing to do, nothing to listen to, nothing to look at. And since I did not know how long I would stay there, I could not even project myself forward in time towards the end of my torture (pp. 124-5).

Part three of the book then explains the consequent desolation felt by Gladys and explains how while in solitary confinement she was visited by delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross. In 1978 Argentina hosted the football World Cup and as part of these preparations they had to demonstrate respect for human rights and the upholding of democracy. As part of this several political prisoners were either being released or allowed their freedom on the condition that they left the country. On 2 December 1977, Gladys found out through seeing her name in a newspaper that her (third) application to leave the country had been successful and that she would be exiled to France. This took place on 8 January 1978, and while part four details this release it also documents how the experience of

solitary confinement had broken her.

The book as I have tried to show is a very sobering account of one women's experience as a political prisoner in Argentina at a time of political turmoil. Under that though, it is yet another reminder to us how damaging solitary confinement can be and I believe another example of why such punishment tactics should not be used in modern society. The book should therefore be of interest to academics, students of law, criminology and political science, those working in prisons and perhaps more importantly those who decide what punishments should be given within our current prison estate.

Karen Harrison is a Professor of Law and Penal Justice at the University of Lincoln.

Your Honour, Can I Tell You My Story?

By Andi Brierley

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This book has been published at a time where Offender Management within the Prison Service has undergone the most modern transformation in the last decade. The national implementation of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model across England and Wales has placed rehabilitative culture at the heart of offender management which has reshaped the paradigm of reducing re-offending. Best practice has been rolled into one framework, particularly drawing on advocating and operationalising a more trauma informed approach. With that, as a Prison Offender Manager (POM) (a role constructed within OMiC), working for Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution (HMYOI) Aylesbury, I