

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.

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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

have learnt first-hand that in order to understand and reduce offender behaviour it is crucial to explore the criminal narrative. It is therefore welcomed that Andi Brierley, has created an introspective autobiographical account of his experience of care and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), including him becoming a Specialist Professional for the Youth Offending Service (YOS). A key question posed by the author is, how can an individual understand their problematic offending behaviour if they are unaware of the link between that and their childhood?

I had to work out how I was going to go from being a prisoner to an achiever. I aspired to be something in life. Walking out of prison aged 23 the big question was could I turn things around. Was I, Andi Brierly, capable of such a thing? (p.197).

Today Andi Brierly is a Youth Justice Specialist, published author, father figure and husband. Andi has offered his own exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to professionally help others address Toxic Stress, Addiction and Child Criminal Exploitation, combined with 14 years expert knowledge working for Youth Justice.

This book is written in chronological order from what the author can remember as a child until the present day. The authenticity of the authors narrative carries through twenty-three chapters and allows trust to be developed in his readers. Respectively chapters explore early exposure to violence, abandonment, heroin addiction, group offending, prison survival, barriers between professionals and lastly, individual difference as an ex-prisoner working for the YOS. This developmental and reflective

approach seeks to directly engage the public and practitioners with life experience of care authorities and the criminal justice system, offering a sense of what it is like to become entangled in the wider issues of the environment and barriers to support and rehabilitation.

'One night before I dropped asleep I was so off my face I sat and talked to myself. 'What's your future going to look like you loser?'" (p 175). The most capturing and admiring feature of this book is the authors openness and readiness to show vulnerability. This is exhibited throughout this book although particularly in chapters A Life of Crime and The Drugs Chain. The author appears to advise that no matter how moral and decent your own values are, this will not always be enough to break away from the persuasion of negative peers and behaviour. This despite the fact of being consciously aware of it as a problem. An all too familiar scenario for prison and probation staff readers, argued by the author through life experience is that childhood and personal circumstances play a key role in the development of criminal behaviour. Without early recognition, this inevitably sets forth what appears to be a snowball effect of barriers to trust and support. The chapter *A Taste of Custody*, for example, demonstrates how Andi hid from his true self as a common method of survival, until time found him confused and stuck. Given the commonality of custody as a result of breaking the law, is it provoking to pause and wonder how many others use this as a coping mechanism.

Notable references are given throughout chapters to social services when it was felt additional intervention could have changed the circumstances that followed. This initially set out the context of

what seemed to be feelings of disillusionment; however it becomes clear in the closing chapters that the author is enlightened, strong and keen for the opportunity to coach others. The latter as a basis for moving onto the final chapter. The author argues that the criminal justice system is reactive rather than preventive, creating a 'justice hammer' that puts young offenders at a risk of re-traumatization rather than healing. Certainly, OMiC is a post-sentencing model. However, this book readily describes what may not be the answer, rather than what might be, prompting follow up research on what preventative strategies can be offered by the YOS.

In conclusion, this book has supported much research on the impact of early trauma on adult experience and tapped into the well-known nurture vs nature debate in psychological philosophy. Therefore, not only does this book provide instant practitioner usefulness but further consolidates empirical research in a field where such offerings of real-life experience are rare. It comes at a time where practitioner interest is formed on how OMiC arrangements in prison and the community will work and supports new incentives for reflective practice within Offender Management. Not only is this book familiar and comfortable for prison staff readers, it is also introductory and captivating for the public on a topic that is often discussed privately within establishments and offers due recognition to the achievements accomplished by a member of our civil service.

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