

occasionally involving guns, that were facilitated by the way staff were intimidated and undermined by the situation that was allowed to develop. It also describes how the prison was essentially totally destroyed by rioting prisoners attempting to force the government into mass releases due to lack of suitable accommodation. In this respect, Murtagh provides first-hand accounts of how a few brave staff, Spartan-like, prevented a huge number of prisoners escaping from the prison. He also describes how the Army, who patrolled the perimeter and did not understand the culture of imprisonment, used excessive force when resolving that incident. The latter provided a rallying call for prisoners held in the Maze and a propaganda boon for those outside.

Moreover, Murtagh details the intense pressure on staff working in the prisons of Northern Ireland. Not only were they subject to an immensely rising population, unsuitable accommodation, serious assaults, intimidation, understaffing and corrupt colleagues, they were also subject to death threats, assault and murder within the relatively small and close-knit outside community. During the period described in the book 29 members of prison staff were murdered and the police foiled 6 murder attempts on the author, one attempt to kidnap his wife and child, and one attempt to murder his wife with an explosive attached to her car. It was only at this point he relented and returned to the English prison system.

Importantly the book also describes how staff, managers, headquarters and the whole system was effectively conditioned to allow prisoners to separate into discrete units, consolidating their power and influence over staff,

and frustrating the aim of imprisonment in every sense. The conditions ultimately obtained by prisoners in the Maze are also relevant to how the prison system, particularly in England and Wales, manages the present day terrorist threat from within prisons.

Overall, this book provides lessons that are relevant to practitioners, students, academics and even politicians, wishing to draw lessons from history on dealing with high risk terrorists, understaffing and new recruits, corruption and conditioning, and the importance of considering the views of prison service professionals when engaging in significant changes that can impact the lives of those who work and live in prisons.

Paul Crossey, Deputy Governor at HMP Huntercombe

### **Your Honour, Can I Tell you my Story?**

By Andi Brierley

Publisher: Waterside Press (2019)

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The latest in a line of acclaimed turn around stories from Waterside Press, *Your Honour, Can I Tell you my Story?*, provides a unique insight into the author's personal journey through care and incarceration, to youth justice practitioner. The author shares his experiences openly, bringing abstract concepts to life through a reflective lense. This creates a unique exploration of criminal justice narrative alongside lived experienced.

The author, Andi Brierley, gives an emotional account of his experiences of care as a young

child, the prison system as a child and adult, and his later desistance from offending in this candid and authentic text. Andi, now a married father, works as a Children Looked After/Care Leaver Specialist within Leeds Youth Offending Service. With his qualifications, experience, and work ethic he has now dedicated his career to supporting young people involved with the YOS.

The book aims to give readers the opportunity to explore the author's childhood trauma, alongside his socio-contextual situation and the subsequent reactive pathway of addiction, offending, and incarceration. The author provides a personal account and perspective on desistance with an honest and emotional inner dialogue that distinguishes the text from many others. The overarching themes of the book explore current criminal justice policy narratives of risk, choice, and consequence in the trajectory of the author's lived experience. The author paints a highly convincing argument in a heavily researched and debated area; that is to address the criminalisation and incarceration of young people.

The author begins his story with a succinct introduction, this chapter goes beyond its implied introductory title of 'Who am I?' and gives a detailed insight into the family experiences, and structural and ecological factors involved in his early life. The next chapters then develop into the common cyclical narrative of care, crime, addiction and imprisonment in which the author shares his experiences of navigating through, and surviving the prison system. The final chapters of this book discuss the author's road to desistance, including finding work after custody, volunteering and

becoming a youth justice practitioner. Themes of identity, stigma and resilience follow the author throughout his journey into the world of work and education in these final few eye-opening chapters.

There are many strengths within this book, and within those of the same genre. It provides readers with an inside view into the physical and emotional experiences of someone who becomes involved in offending. It is written in a clear way and is accessible to a wide range of audiences. However, this book particularly stands out for the following two reasons. Firstly, the author writes as a qualified youth justice practitioner, giving the book an interesting reflective characteristic. The author applies criminal justice discourse and narrative to his own experiences and uses this theme to pose questions to the reader. This guides the readers interpretation somewhat but highlights important points to consider within criminal justice practice. Secondly, this book provides insights into the thoughts and

experiences of someone with lived experience that then goes on to work for the criminal justice sector. It is interesting to read the author's position on the operation of the sector and to see how this view is utilised within the service. It also provides points of reflection relating to the stigma associated with criminal convictions and challenges us to consider our unconscious bias with interesting accounts of the authors experiences with colleagues.

Whilst finding this book so engaging, there were points I felt I was left wanting more information. Whether this was regarding detail of the events or perspective of the author, I wanted the narrative to develop its evaluation. Admittedly, this was largely to satisfy my own intrigue. It is likely that added analysis would detract from the accessibility of the work.

Overall, this was an excellent read. I got through the book very quickly, which is a testament to the compelling nature of the memoir. I would recommend this book to a range of audiences;

from academics and students, to criminal justice practitioners in prison, probation, and youth justice services, to social and youth workers. It provides insight into the common socio-economic circumstances of offending which become unfortunately familiar. However, this is alongside the emotional and cognitive experiences that people rarely disclose, therefore broadening understanding of the affective domain. Additionally, I would recommend this book to young people or adults with similar experiences. Pathways into offending behaviour are often individual, however this book provides discussion of the very personal experiences of emotional battles around shame, confidence and identity. This gives the book relatability throughout which, as the author points out, is essential when providing positive role models and, essentially hope for the future.

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