THE GARDEN COLLECTIVE

A Short Documentary Film

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Abstract

This paper is written in support of *The Garden Collective*, a short documentary film exploring the memorialization of the former Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario. The film documents the P4W Memorial Collective, a group of formerly incarcerated women, activists and academics, working to establish a memorial garden to honour the many women who lost their lives inside P4W. *The Garden Collective* features interviews with the Collective and other former prisoners of P4W to provide insight into prisoners' experiences and past injustices, as well as call into question the ways in which the prison is currently being remembered and historicized by the surrounding community. This paper begins with a chapter analyzing the historical and political context of P4W, followed by a chapter exploring the content within the film from an abolitionist approach. The final chapter of this paper is dedicated to the film's methodology, visual techniques and ethical challenges.

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Introduction

The Garden Collective is a short documentary film about the P4W Memorial Collective, a group of formerly incarcerated women and activists working to build a memorial on the grounds of the former Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario. Though the prison has been closed for nearly twenty years, the town of Kingston and the neighbouring Queen's University have refused to recognize the institutional abuses that took place there and the subsequent suicides of prisoners, as I will discuss in this paper.

This film is not intended to be a comprehensive historical document of the prison from its inception until its closing; yet through interviews with the Collective, it explores their memories of the institution and of significant events of state violence that are at risk of being forgotten in Canadian carceral history. Further, the film contrasts the formal archives of Kingston's Prison Museum with informal archives of the formerly incarcerated women to offer a complex and alternative history of the prison. My visual approach was based on an abolitionist theoretical foundation in order to create counter-images or a countervisuality of incarceration.

The Garden Collective explores who or what is commemorated and memorialized in Canadian physical and social geographies, and asks, if the memorial is established, how it might offer some healing or closure to the women who survived P4W. This is an increasingly important issue as the number of incarcerated women, particularly Indigenous women, is dramatically on the rise in Canada.

Chapter I: Historical and Political Context

A Prison Built by Prisoners

Built in 1934, Prison for Women was Canada's first federal women's prison, where any woman sentenced to prison for over two years was sent for most of the 20th century. Prior to this, incarcerated women served their sentences within the nearby Kingston Penitentiary, the nation's first ever prison, opened in 1835. In fact, it was the male prisoners of this penitentiary that built the women's institution.¹ Since its inception, P4W has faced calls for its closure; in 1938, in a report released only four years after its opening, Justice Joseph Archambault described the penitentiary's "disgraceful condition."² Noting how women were being removed from their homes and families, he concluded "its further continuation is unjustified."³ Since this initial condemnation, at least 15 government reports have been released criticizing the federal incarceration of women, including the institution of P4W.⁴ The MacGuigan Report in 1977 found that the prison was "unfit for bears, much less women"—a quote I often heard repeated by P4W Collective members in my research.⁵ By 1981, the Canadian Human Rights Commission Report found that Corrections Services Canada (CSC) had consistently "discriminated against women prisoners because it did not provide equal services and facilities" at the institution.⁶ This

¹ Correctional Services Canada, "The Closing of the Prison for Women in Kingston," July 6, 2000, <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/brochurep4w/3-eng.shtml>.

² Royal Commission on the Penal System and Joseph Archambault, "Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada," (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b47206;view=1up;seq=326](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b47206;view=1up;seq=326), 316.

³ Ibid, 316.

⁴ Correctional Services Canada, "The Closing of the Prison for Women in Kingston."

⁵ Mark MacGuigan, "Report to Parliament," *Sub-Committee on the Penitentiary System in Canada*, 1977, <http://johnhoward.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/1977-HV-9507-C33-1977-MacGuigan.pdf>, 135.

⁶ Correctional Services Canada.

decade was further marked by growing incidences of prisoners' suicides and self-harming, hunger strikes and violent incidents that underscored the growing crisis at P4W.⁷

[Figure 1: The Prison for Women built by the Kingston Penitentiary prisoners]

Between 1988 and 1991, a cluster of seven women committed suicide inside P4W, six of whom were Indigenous.⁸ Both Collective members Ann Hansen and Fran Chaisson were at P4W during this time and discussed these women's deaths as the impetus for wanting a memorial to be built. This loss was followed by a much-publicized violent incident in 1994 that gained national exposure as a "prisoner riot" in an investigation by the CBC program *The Fifth Estate*. On the night of April 22, 1994, an Institutional Emergency Response Team entered P4W

⁷ Correctional Services Canada.

⁸ Lisa Guenther, "What is Lost When We Pave Over a Prison?" *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-what-is-lost-when-we-pave-over-a-prison/>.

and stripped several women, holding them in handcuffs for hours by the all-male riot squad.⁹ The entire event was videotaped and a subsequent federal inquiry into the incident by Justice Louise Arbour condemned the “cruel, inhumane and degrading” treatment of prisoners.¹⁰ Her report also found that the women of P4W suffered from being isolated from their families, children, and especially in the case of Indigenous women, their culture and spiritual community.¹¹ Further, only after a lawsuit was filed by former prisoners in 1998 did the public learn that nonconsensual LSD, sensory deprivation and electro-shock experiments had been performed on prisoners by Queen’s University professors and students in the late 1950s until 1975.¹² One woman, Dorothy Proctor, a mixed-race woman of African and Mi’kmaq descent and a survivor of sexual abuse, was just seventeen when she was sent to P4W. She went public with her case against the CSC that detailed at least ten involuntary LSD experiments and numerous electroshock therapy sessions with Queen’s University’s Dr. Eveson, which was eventually settled out of court.¹³

Upon investigation, the CSC found no records of these experiments but stated “the corporate memory, like any collective memory, is short”.¹⁴ Investigators found that “many inmate files were either missing or had been destroyed”, in keeping with my own and the Collective’s research findings that the archives of the P4W experiments seem to be missing or

⁹ Tom Fennell, “Women's Prison Riot,” *Canadian Encyclopedia*, March 4, 2015, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/womens-prison-riot>.

¹⁰ Louise Arbour, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*, (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1996), accessed November 1, 2017, http://www.justicebehindthewalls.net/resources/arbour_report/arbour_rpt.htm.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Geraint B. Osborne, "Scientific Experimentation on Canadian Inmates, 1955 to 1975," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 45, no. 3 (2006): 287.

¹³ Lisa Guenther, “Memory and Forgetting at Kingston’s Prison for Women,” *BBC Hidden Persuaders*, July 11, 2018, <http://www.bbc.ac.uk/hiddenpersuaders/blog/kingstons-prison-for-women/>.

¹⁴ Geraint B., Osborne. "Scientific Experimentation on Canadian Inmates, 1955 to 1975," 284.

non-existent.¹⁵ Further, during this period, incarcerated women's unclaimed bodies were either donated to Queen's medical school or buried in unmarked graves around the prison site—though again there seems to be no public documentation of this.¹⁶ As professor and Collective member Lisa Guenther wrote in an editorial for *The Globe and Mail*, “careers have been launched on the backs of incarcerated women, even as these women remained confined in a cold, decrepit institution.”¹⁷

After the prison's closure in 2008, Queen's University purchased the real estate for \$2.8 million with the intention of turning the building into an archive.¹⁸ That never came to be, however, possibly due to mold damage.¹⁹ At one point, there were even public calls for the University to turn the building into a women's museum by some Queen's students.²⁰ Despite its inextricable history with P4W, Queen's continues to be dismissive of calls from the Memorial Collective to firstly recognize the school's past experiments on women and their bodies, and further to establish any memorial to remember the women that died there. In my conversations with the Collective, I've learned that the University and the city of Kingston have refused to take on any responsibility (and therefore liability) they have to the prison or its former prisoners and their families.

The eight-acre property is now set to be redeveloped by new owners ABNA Investments into a “possible student residence and hotel”, though the prison will be at least

¹⁵ “LSD tested on female prisoners,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 1, 1998, http://www.rave.ca/en/news_info/192355/canada/.

¹⁶ Lisa Guenther, “What is Lost When We Pave Over a Prison?”

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jill Buchner, “Queen's Buys Former Prison,” *The Queen's Journal*, September 14, 2007, <https://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2007-09-14/news/queens-buys-former-prison>.

¹⁹ Lisa Guenther, “Memory and Forgetting at Kingston's Prison for Women.”

²⁰ Lisa Guenther. “What is Lost When We Pave Over a Prison?”

partially maintained due to its heritage status.²¹ ABNA owner Hank Doornekamp has expressed admiration of the site itself: "It's a beautiful building. We're going to take off the appendages that have been added that don't belong to it, and we're going to restore it back to its original [state]," while also admitting he repurposed the prison's gates for the entrance to his own home.²² My film captures the Collective after their initial meetings with Doornekamp, who has looked over their plans for a garden (see *Figure 2*) and left them cautiously optimistic that it could be planted over the next few years with ABNA's support.

[*Figure 2: The Collective's renderings of a possible garden memorial*]

²¹ Kristy Nease, "Developer Eyes Kingston's Shuttered Women's Prison," *CBC News*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/kingston-women-prison-future-plan-1.4720690>.

²² *Ibid.*

Rising Rates of Incarceration

After the prison's closure in 2000 many of the women were sent to similar facilities like the nearby Grand Valley Institution; however, as Ann discusses towards the end of the film, these new penitentiaries are reported to have even worse conditions for incarcerated women than P4W. Many women I interviewed throughout the filming echoed Ann's sentiments, describing an institutional culture that discourages women from forming relationships and further isolates them. One only need to recall the Ashley Smith case, in which a nineteen-year-old woman committed suicide after being held in segregation for nearly a year, to conclude that Canadian carceral institutions are in a state of crisis.²³

Despite decreasing crime rates, Stephen Harper's Conservative government (2006-2015) oversaw general policies that increased criminalization, including the expansion of minor offences, the limitation of parole regulations and expanded grounds for sentencing young offenders.²⁴ Consequently, women are being imprisoned more than ever before, making up the fastest growing prison population in Canada, up 29.7% between 2007 and 2017.²⁵ Indigenous women compose an increasingly disproportionate amount: currently they are 37% of prison population, an increase in rates of over 109% between 2001 and 2012.²⁶ Recent reports have found women with mental health issues are not getting adequate care, being left in segregation for extended periods to their great detriment, and that a "significant number of women have reported that they do not feel safe" in Canadian prisons.²⁷ As Senator and prisoner-advocate Kim

²³ "Segregation Takes a Grim Toll on Prisoners," *Senate of Canada*, February 26, 2018, <https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/news/segregation-takes-a-grim-toll-on-prisoners/>.

²⁴ Nancy MacDonald, "Canada's prisons are the 'new residential schools'," *Macleans*, February 18, 2016, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/canadas-prisons-are-the-new-residential-schools/>.

²⁵ "Annual Report: 2016-2017," *Office of the Correctional Investigator of Canada*, accessed March 30, 2019, <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/pdf/annrpt/annrpt20162017-eng.pdf>, 59.

²⁶ "Annual Report: 2016-2017," *Office of the Correctional Investigator of Canada*, 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

Pate argues, these policies have put pressures on prison infrastructure and are “increasingly relying on prisons to do a job they were never meant to do”.²⁸ Arguably however, this is exactly what a carceral system intends to do: criminalize and incarcerate marginalized peoples for the state’s benefit.²⁹

Incarceration on Indigenous Land

Kingston, first called Ka’tarohkwi by the Huron and Mohawk, sits on traditionally shared territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Nations. The Huron-Wendat, Mississauga, Algonquin, Mohawk and Oneida peoples also traveled through and lived off of the land long before settlers arrived.³⁰ Indigenous scholar Glen Coulthard importantly connects Canadian colonization with systemic violence against Indigenous women:

“in the sense that it has been structured, indeed institutionalized, into a relatively secure and resistant set of oppressive material relations that render Indigenous women more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to suffer severe economic and social privation, including disproportionately high rates of poverty and unemployment, incarceration, addiction, homelessness, chronic and/or life-threatening health problems, overcrowded and substandard housing, and lack of access to clean water, as well as face discrimination and sexual violence in their homes, communities, and workplaces.”³¹

²⁸ Vicky Mochama, “Treatment of Women in Canadian Prisons is a Human Rights Travesty,” *The Toronto Star*, January 4, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2018/01/04/treatment-of-women-in-canadian-prisons-a-human-rights-travesty.html>.

²⁹ Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues this benefit is not often profitable but always ideologically-driven. She terms it the “prison fix”: the state’s investment in prisons as a solution for its political-economic crises in the neoliberal era. See: Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 130.

³⁰ Laura Murray and Paul Carl, “Beyond Sir John: Unsettling Public Memory in Kingston, Ontario,” *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* Volume 3, Number 1 (2016): 61.

³¹ Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 177.

Just as important, says Coulthard, is its concurrent symbolic violence, the “subjectifying form of violence that renders the crushing materiality of systemic violence invisible, appear natural, acceptable”.³² It is crucial to contextualize the prison as an institution of state violence predated by the mechanisms of settler-colonialism that intentionally stole land and erased culture from Indigenous people, the implications of which Canada has yet to fully come to terms with.

As many of the subjects in the film are Indigenous, and some are Residential School survivors or intergenerational survivors, I would be remiss to fail to acknowledge how this legacy of institutionalized violence is connected to P4W. Both Fran Chaisson and Molly Goddard discussed with me how being deprived of their Indigenous culture and language negatively impacted their lives before and within P4W.³³ Through interviews with the formerly incarcerated women of P4W, this film attempts to implicitly link settler-colonial histories with the prison to ask what, if any, form of healing for these women is possible.

It is notable that many of the monuments celebrated in Kingston—including no less than eleven plaques—are dedicated to Sir John A. Macdonald, the “Father of Confederation.” Macdonald was raised in Kingston and was responsible for the implementation of the Indian Act that “produced a wide range of social fracture and poverty among Indigenous people” and other policies including intentionally starving Indigenous people to death.³⁴ In a critical analysis of Kingston’s enthusiastic memorialization of Macdonald, the Symposium on Indigenous Research

³² Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, 177.

³³ Notably, though the analysis here is centred on the incarceration of Indigenous women, racialized populations in general make up an increasing part of the prison population, for example, Black male incarceration is rising in Canada and now at a higher capita than in the United States. See: Rankin & Winsa (2013) as quoted in Laura Murray and Paul Carl, “Beyond Sir John: Unsettling Public Memory in Kingston, Ontario,” *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* Volume 3, Number 1 (2016): 75.

³⁴ Laura Murray and Paul Carl, “Beyond Sir John: Unsettling Public Memory in Kingston, Ontario,” 74.

at Queen's University echoed the Collective's recommendations in 2016, calling for a "Remembering Indigenous Women's Prisoners" plaque to be established outside of P4W.³⁵ Beyond the mock-up plaque included in the Symposium's publication, there has been no movement since on this proposal.

Chapter II: Content and Conceptual Approach

Representing the Prison on Film

Documentary film has an extended and complicated history regarding the representation of prisons. Figuring most prominently in the canon is Frederick Wiseman's seminal direct cinema work *Titicut Follies* (1967). In the film, Wiseman asks the viewer to witness to the horrors of Bridgewater State Hospital, which resulted in decades-long censorship imposed on his film.³⁶ *Titicut Follies* became the forerunner of a genre of prison films built on the conceit that the audience needs to see the violence of carceral institutions, because "if only the public actually *knew* what was going on" things would change.³⁷ The importance of bearing witness has been a core humanistic tenant of documentary film since its inception, and has been highly debated by scholars and critics alike. Allan Sekula particularly criticized the "pornography" of direct representation when not directly connected to organized action for systemic change, a charge that many prison documentaries could be accused of.³⁸ Other significant and often-referenced films in the American prison documentary genre include: *The*

³⁵ Murray and Carl, 76.

³⁶ Jonathan Kahana, "Documentary Counterpublics: Filming Prison," in *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): 205-266.

³⁷ Brett Story, "Against a Humanizing Prison Cinema: the Prison in 12 Landscapes and the Politics of Abolition Imagery," in *Routledge International Handbook of Visual Criminology*. Routledge, eds. Michelle Brown and Eamonn Carrabine, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017): 455.

³⁸ Allan Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 19, no. 4, Winter (1978): 862.

House I Live In (2012, Eugene Jarecki), *13th* (2016, Ava DuVernay), *The Central Park Five* (Ken Burns, 2012), *Into the Abyss* (2011, Werner Herzog) and *Louis Theroux: Behind Bars* (2008, Stuart Cabb). All of these projects discuss the American prison-industrial complex and in some way include traditional representations of prisons: bodies (often men, often people of colour) in matching jumpsuits in a cell behind bars.

Holly Dale and Janis Cole's film about P4W entitled *P4W: Prison for Women* (1981) is also part of this genre, though they emphasize a more nuanced and empathetic perspective that was formative for my own approach to the institution some 37 years later (see *Figure 3*). Their documentary is notable as "one of the earliest on-screen representations of incarcerated Canadian women and feature[s] a groundbreaking positive representation of a queer relationship".³⁹ There is a comfortable ease "between the subjects of the film and its directors, who met several times with all 100 women incarcerated in P4W before narrowing their focus down to the six core stories of Bev, Janise, Debbie, Maggie, Susie and Shaggie"—many of whom the Collective members I spoke to were close to.⁴⁰ The film shows the women's surroundings, suggesting a much more benign space than a prison: "a range that at first glance looks like a dormitory" in which "music blares, a TV screen flashes in the corner, clothes and furniture crowd the floor," while the women address the camera alongside stuffed animals in their single-cell rooms.⁴¹ A majority of the women Dale and Cole speak to are there for "crimes relating to abusive boyfriends and husbands; sex work and drug use are also discussed".⁴² Through interviews, they

³⁹ Sara Wylie, "P4W: Prison for Women and Hookers on Davie: The Documentaries of Holly Dale and Janis Cole," *cléo Film Journal* 6 no. 2 (2018): <http://cleojournal.com/2018/12/14/p4w-prison-for-women-and-hookers-on-davie-the-documentaries-of-holly-dale-and-janis-cole/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

“explore the women’s multi-dimensional relationships—as friends, as mothers and most notably, as lovers.”⁴³

Alongside these personal stories, the directors offer a “clear-eyed indictment of the prison’s conditions” in 1981.⁴⁴ Facing the camera, women detail self-harming behaviour, and point out the negligence from the prison officers which resulted in at least three suicides.

“Rehabilitation—they don’t understand what that word means,” states one woman, while another notes that if the prison’s conditions do not improve, a riot is likely to happen—anticipating the 1994 riot. The film closes as “Bev tells the camera to close P4W’s doors and “sandblast this motherfucker inside and out,” a heartbreaking statement from within an institution that would remain open for another 20 years”.⁴⁵

[Figure 3: “P4W” 1981 Documentary]

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

P4W is a radical film for the time because of its “biting critique of the Canadian prison system, while also sharing a rare intimacy with incarcerated women, the product of trusting relationships that Cole and Dale built with their subjects and maintained years after the film’s release”⁴⁶. Nevertheless, *P4W* unfortunately “foregrounds white perspectives and experiences, while Black and Indigenous women appear only briefly in the background of the prison’s range and cafeteria”.⁴⁷ This leaves the viewer to question in what ways, if any, did the two filmmakers attempt to meaningfully include racialized women. The film has much to offer in its respectful empathy and political message of resistance and sisterhood, yet the whiteness of the film served as an important lesson for my filmmaking in terms of which voices I chose to foreground in *The Garden Collective*.

In addition to the work of Dale and Cole, Brett Story’s feature documentary *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes* was a reference point for *The Garden Collective*. Writing about her own film, Story discusses the dangers of works like *The House I Live In*, mentioned above, naturalizing such violent images which in turn reify and reproduce the order and logic of the prison (ie. these people are dangerous and we need prisons to keep us safe). She argues that instead our cultural work should aim to “make strange” normalized imagery of the prison in order to question its legitimacy.⁴⁸ Drawing from the research within the field of visual criminology, Story also argues for a construction of imagery working towards prison abolition. By denying easy stereotypes and instead focusing on twelve instances of carceral power quietly at work in American society, she exposes the extent of the prison system’s violence. The film’s associative vignettes, in which we (almost) never see a prison, speak for themselves by sharing

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Brett Story, “Against a Humanizing Prison Cinema,” 456.

glimpses into the lives of individuals in each landscape, from a woman recounting her jail time served for an improperly secured garbage lid, to an overly-eager PR person working at the hyper-securitized Quicken Loans headquarters in gentrified Detroit. In one unsuspecting scene, we watch an outdoor chess game in Washington Square Park and learn from one skilled chess player that he and many players have honed their chess game in prison. The cognitive space created between Story's familiar themes of American incarceration and unfamiliar images effectively prompts the audience to question the scope of the prison industrial complex and their relationship to it. This contrast of familiar themes/unfamiliar images is reflected in my own visual strategy with *The Garden Collective*, as discussed below.

Abolitionist Approach

From the outset of my production process, I decided to orient myself similarly with a prison abolitionist approach. Critical theory on the prison industrial complex by scholars such as Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore formed the foundation of this approach. Davis, one of the most prominent academics in the prison abolitionist movement, explores abolition as a struggle to not simply to improve prison conditions, but to interrogate the very notion that prisons are necessary.⁴⁹ Her radical analysis on the gendered and racialized dimensions of incarceration, looking primarily at African-American populations, is applicable to Canada's own racialized populations which are drastically over-incarcerated. In her book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* she significantly connects media representations of the prison and how they shape the institution's image in our cultural imaginary: "the prison is one of the most important features of our image environment. This has caused us to take the existence of prisons for granted."⁵⁰ Davis

⁴⁹ Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 18.

argues it will take “a great feat of the imagination to envision life beyond the prison” which has thus far been limited by representations on television and film.⁵¹

Another leading theorist of abolition, geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore, importantly points out that the majority of people in prison are not the “terrible few” of the collective imagination (after Ruth Morris).⁵² The “terrible few” are the sensationalized cases the media fixates on: those people whose “psychopathic actions are the stuff of folktales” and who make up a “statistically insignificant” portion of the incarcerated.⁵³ Both Davis and Gilmore are careful to distinguish between abolition and prison reform—reform meaning incremental changes that serve to uphold the current system and not end it. Prison abolitionists are interested, according to Gilmore, in going to the root causes to “resolve inequalities and get people the resources they need long before the hypothetical moment” of a crime, in order to work toward a future where the prison is no longer necessary.⁵⁴ Further, she argues that a wholesale cultural reinvention is necessary; her prison abolition is not simply the “absence of” a jail cell—instead, abolition must be “fleshly and material presence of social life lived differently”.⁵⁵ Abolition offers a space of possibility to imagine a *presence* of radically different social institutions and social contracts to redefine how we relate to one another. Extending her and Davis’ ideas into the realm of visual representation, abolition is then about creating new images of the prison to begin to imagine this future.

⁵¹ Ibid, 19.

⁵² Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 15.

⁵³ Gilmore, 15.

⁵⁴ Rachel Kushner, “Is Prison Necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind,” *The New York Times*, April 17 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/prison-abolition-ruth-wilson-gilmore.html>.

⁵⁵ Clément Petitjean, “Prisons and Class Warfare: An Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore”, in *Verso Blog*, accessed January 27, 2018, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3954-prisons-and-class-warfare-an-interview-with-ruth-wilson-gilmore>.

On Countervisuality

My initial research question asked, what could these new images look like in the context of the Prison for Women? I was informed by a specific field of research called visual criminology, as referenced above in Brett Story's essay on her own film, *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*.⁵⁶ From this introduction, I discovered scholars like Michelle Brown, Eamonn Carrabine and Judah Schept within this emerging discipline. Visual criminology "privileges the emotive and affective life of the crimino-visual, including the assemblage of imagistic sensory elements that give meanings to crime and control and their relations to spectacle, power, transgression and resistance".⁵⁷ For Schept in particular, "a counter-visual criminology aims also to stimulate the project of un-imagining the prison from the landscape" which he refers to also as *countervisuality* or *counter-visual ethnography*.⁵⁸ He argues for a whole new way of seeing; "countervisuality, then, is about the deployment of a politics of visibility for change and transformation."⁵⁹ A twinned reading of abolitionist theory and counter-visual ethnography poses questions for a type of filmic representation that challenges the naturalization of the prison in Canadian socio-political consciousness.

The Garden Collective visual strategies attempt to actualize Schept's call for a countervisuality in order to "make strange" the common visual language of Canadian imprisonment.⁶⁰ This meant avoiding imagery of jumpsuits, prison bars, gratuitous suffering, violence or any sensationalizing aspects of life within the prison. Part of this approach meant

⁵⁶ Brett Story, "Against a Humanizing Prison Cinema."

⁵⁷ Michelle Brown and Eamonn Carrabine, eds., *Routledge International Handbook of Visual Criminology*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 2.

⁵⁸ Judah Schept, "(Un)seeing like a prison: Counter-visual ethnography of the carceral state," *Theoretical Criminology* 18, no. 2 (2014): 198-223, accessed February 21, 2018: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480613517256>.

⁵⁹ Brown and Carrabine, 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

also challenging the attraction of the prison museum or prison as tourist destination. As an example of what is commonly called “dark tourism”, the neighbouring men’s Kingston Penitentiary has been converted into the tourist-friendly destination “Alcatraz of the North” since its closure in 2012.⁶¹ The former prison as tourist spectacle becomes dangerous when these sites “perform cultural work that reproduces the notion that incarceration is a necessary part” of our social fabric.⁶² For instance, the adjacent Penitentiary Museum reifies the prison as a vital protective social barrier by displaying historical photos of the heroic-seeming guards—even a framed photo of the riot squad that entered P4W in 1996.⁶³ Further, the gruesome horrors of the prison are celebrated and displayed non-critically in the type of exhibits and artifacts (ie. tools of corporal punishment, handcuffs, barred cells). Despite filming the Museum’s exhibits, I did not include these images that attract dark tourism and instead focused on archival photographs to symbolize a forgotten history.

In my interviews with formerly incarcerated women Molly Goddard and Ann Hansen, both expressed concern about the P4W site being repurposed for the tourist industry with a sanitized or inaccurate depiction of its history. In the film, Molly points out the fact that Kingston has already profited from advertising P4W as a tourist attraction, recalling a tourist trolley car that used to pass by and announce P4W as the prison that “housed 150 of Canada’s most dangerous women”. To emphasize the dehumanizing spectacle of this type of tourism, I inserted a shot of the red tourist bus passing by the prison and a tourist waving in a friendly

⁶¹ Matthew Ferguson, Elizabeth Lay, Justin Piche and Kevin Walby, “The Cultural Work of Decommissioned Carceral Sites: Representations of Confinement and Punishment at Kingston Penitentiary,” *Scapegoat Magazine* 7 Fall/Winter (2014): 83.
http://www.scapegoatjournal.org/docs/07/SG07_83-98_FergusonLayPicheWalby.pdf.

⁶² Matthew Ferguson, Elizabeth Lay, Justin Piche and Kevin Walby, “The Cultural Work of Decommissioned Carceral Sites,” 97.

⁶³ Lisa Guenther, “Healing and Haunting at Kingston’s Prison for Women,” *BBC*, August 8, 2018, <http://www.bbc.ac.uk/hiddenpersuaders/blog/healing-and-haunting-at-kingstons-prison-for-women/>.

manner to the camera (see *Figure 4*). Memorialization then, created by and dedicated to the P4W prisoners, offers a chance at unearthing this history without engaging in dark tourism that could glorify or reinforce state violence and incarceration. A memorial garden with no intention to profit becomes a different kind of historical destination in a city increasingly relying on tourism in the absence of its penitentiaries.

[*Figure 4: The Kingston Tour Trolley Car goes past P4W*]

As part of my abolitionist visual strategy, I decided to forefront the women's long-standing relationships with each other. Many of them expressed to me that the bonds they formed in the prison were some of their strongest memories, and how meaningful it was to reconnect

with each other as part of this healing process. I felt it was important to portray the intimate scenes of their present-day relationships; for example, at Ann's kitchen table sharing stories, comfortable and laughing together over old photographs (see *Figure 5*). Showing their friendships, as opposed to delving into their trauma during their time at P4W or focusing on the prison itself or, defies stereotypical images prison and of incarceration. As Joey Twins mentions in the film, any healing that has taken place has happened in spite of the prison, and this is evidenced in their smiles and laughter while reconnecting at the Healing Circle on Prisoners' Justice Day. Seeing the formerly incarcerated women outside laughing and playfully teasing each other or in a domestic setting sharing a hot meal, instead of in pain and isolated inside a prison, are essentially abolitionist and hopeful images.

[*Figure 5: A gathering of the Collective at Ann's House*]

Finally, as part of a prison abolitionist approach, my film focuses on the women's intimate personal stories and experiences at P4W without asking them why they were incarcerated. They have served their sentences and from what they have expressed directly to me, would like those parts of their lives to remain in the past. The audience, confronted with this refusal of information, must interrogate their expectation of a stereotypical criminal narrative and consider the effect of this deliberate opacity. The film asks, what affective possibilities are offered to the viewers when the film does not present these women first and foremost as "criminals"?

Content of the Film

The Garden Collective is composed of interviews exploring the perspectives of Collective members and other formerly incarcerated women who are in some way shaping how P4W will be remembered. Though there is no one central character, the film's narrative is weighted with the Memorial Collective's core members and their work to organize a memorial garden. Ann Hansen and Fran Chaisson, both former prisoners and Collective members, serve as our anchor points throughout the film. They have been generous in sharing their stories with me and are the two women actively leading the Collective. The film is not traditionally narrative, with a beginning, middle and resolved ending, but chronologically follows my meetings with the women, through which I came to understand what the women are asking for and why it's so important. Firstly, we meet Ann and Fran in their everyday lives in Kingston, immersed in nature at Ann's horse farm and Fran's favourite spot by the water. They introduce us to P4W, its dark past and the lives that have been lost. We then are visually introduced to the present-day landscape of P4W overlaid with Fran's narration of the nonconsensual experiments that took

place there. Inter-titles are used to relay important contextual information about the prison, including when it opened, and when and why it closed. One title alludes to but does not explain the notorious P4W riot, of which further details can be easily researched by any curious viewer (see *Figure 6*).

[*Figure 6: Inter-title used for context*]

Jackie Davies, former volunteer teacher at P4W and now Queen's professor, is introduced at the Prison Museum and explores the disorganized archives held in their attic. She importantly connects Queen's and P4W as institutions that are "so close together". The failure to accept any accountability by Queen's and the city of Kingston is the main point of conflict within the documentary, alongside the larger tension of the former prisoners coming to terms with a painful and traumatic past.

The film's emotional focal point follows on Prisoners' Justice Day, which took place August 10, 2018. At a Healing Circle held on the grounds in front of the prison, many formerly incarcerated women gathered, sharing both their uneasy feelings of being back at P4W and the joy in seeing their friends again some after thirty years. During and after the event, Cheryl Maxie, Molly Goddard and Joey Twins are all interviewed in the film and share their experiences at P4W, reflecting on the notion of healing from the abuses they witnessed or were victims of (see *Figure 7*). In the scene at Prisoners' Justice Day, we sense the importance of these enduring bonds and relationships in their stories of survival. In Cheryl's words, "It's a good thing, right? Because it's a healing." Both visually and narratively, my abolitionist approach emphasizes the sisterhood among the women, from which they have found strength, resilience and community in spite of the prison system.

[*Figure 7: Cheryl stands beside the prison on Prisoners' Justice Day*]

The film concludes by returning to Ann's kitchen table, where we had an intimate conversation in which she discusses the wider implications of this project. Ann voices the importance of extending the Collective's work into calling for accountability from Corrections Services of Canada and Queen's University. Ultimately, she concludes "Right now we have been focusing on getting the memorial garden, but how we are [sic] going to exactly make people accountable, and/or document as well the atrocities that have happened?" A memorial is necessary, but it is not going to be enough, which prompts the viewer to ask, what could be enough? Ann's final line is: "It's worse now, it really is" leaving a lingering question for the audience: how can our society provide justice, not just for these formerly incarcerated women, but also for all incarcerated women? By ending on this note, *The Garden Collective* brings the viewer to interrogate their notions of who is deserving of justice and the very efficacy of the prison as an institution itself.

Chapter III: Methodology

A Note on Positionality

I'd firstly like to position myself as a white settler filmmaker who has never been incarcerated and as a child of a parent (though not a guardian) that has been incarcerated. My relationship to the prison is indirect and removed, but I would argue it has shaped my life in some way through my father's absence. I was forthcoming about this personal piece of history with the Collective when I approached them about making this film.

At the end of the credits, I use a title card to situate the filming on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee⁶⁴ and state: “This acknowledgment is intended as an initial gesture towards the deeper action necessary for decolonization and justice for Indigenous peoples in the settler-state of Canada.” An institutional land acknowledgement can become a performative gesture and it is important for me to situate myself and this film within a larger context of decolonizing work that must be done and is already underway in order to establish reciprocal relations with Indigenous peoples on this land.⁶⁵

Pre-production Research

In my pre-production process, I first reached out to the Collective members through email and then phone calls to gauge their interest in being part of a documentary project. I had read about their organizing work in an online article, and cold-called them with my proposal. I then began to travel to Kingston in Spring 2018 to meet with them and introduced myself and my hopes to work with them on a documentary project. In these initial meetings, I made it clear I wanted to work alongside the Collective and support their goals to build awareness of P4W’s under-told history through this documentary. I also committed to offering them use of any photos or video I capture for their own purposes, which I offered to edit and provide on a hard-drive for their archives at the end of the project.

As part of this preliminary process, I conducted an in-person interview in Toronto with the Canadian documentarian Janis Cole who, along with Holly Dale, was the director of the 1981

⁶⁴ I recognize this is a simplified acknowledgement, as the Huron-Wendat, Mississauga, Algonquin, Mohawk and Oneida also had a relationship with this territory, as referenced in Murray and Carl, “Beyond Sir John: Unsettling Public Memory in Kingston, Ontario.”

⁶⁵ It is worth noting, scholar Hayden King, who wrote Ryerson’s land acknowledgement has stated that he regrets it. See: Hayden King, “I regret it’: Hayden King on writing Ryerson University’s territorial acknowledgement,” *CBC Radio*, January 20, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>.

documentary film *P4W: Prison for Women* of the same prison. She is still involved in the prison's legacy and has publicly signed a letter of support for the memorial. At one point, I considered incorporating some of their P4W archival footage in the final film, but ultimately decided it was not necessary and would require significant contextualization. The decontextualization of archives comes with a host of challenges and questions, including communicating who these subjects are, who the filmmakers are and how they got access inside a prison, that may distract from my film's narrative.⁶⁶ Because this film grapples with unidentified individuals in archives and certain "non-specific images" already, adding further archival material did not seem necessary.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, meeting with Janis and hearing about her filming process within the prison was an insightful experience before I began my own film. She was able to share her own difficulties with getting access to interview the women, and the emotional experience of witnessing and documenting many of their traumatic pasts.

Because I would be interviewing many Indigenous women who were incarcerated, I researched Indigenous research methods prior to filming, including the work of Shawn Wilson and Margaret Kovach. Wilson provides a fundamentally different look at academic research, where, from an Indigenous perspective, knowledge and language are based off of our relationships with each other and our environment, which he terms "relational accountability".⁶⁸ Both Wilson and Kovach call on researchers to question the idea of "gaining" knowledge, and work towards sharing it in a reciprocal relationship. They pose helpful questions that I kept in mind, such as: what is my role as a researcher, and what are my obligations, and to whom? Does

⁶⁶ Stella Bruzzi, "The Event: Archive and Newsreel," *In New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2006): 38.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 38.

⁶⁸ Shawn Wilson, "What Is an Indigenous Research Methodology?" *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 25, no.2 (2001): 177.

this research method build respectful relationships between my participants and myself? The concept of reciprocity is an integral methodological component of this film and as a researcher I intended to give back as much as I take from the community. This notion is further discussed in the *On Collaboration and Consultation* section below.

Archive as Cultural Memory

The Garden Collective incorporates the primary materials of two archives in the film, including the photographs from the Collective's own personal archives as well as the Kingston Penitentiary Museum archives. The staff at the Museum were enthusiastic about the project and gave me permission to enter their archives and film their materials. The photos and slides of P4W were kept in the attic, unorganized, unlabeled, with little information as to who was in the photos, who took them and why. Museum employee Cameron concludes they were taken by prison staff, who likely had their own intentions to make the prison appear a certain way. I took into consideration the ethics of showing the images in the Museum's collection because the identities of the women in the photos remain unknown and I have not gotten their permission to display their likeness, even if they appear briefly and small on-screen (see *Figure 8*). Having Jackie, a former P4W teacher, and Queen's professor, physically sort through photos in their albums and on the light box provides a small amount of context. Further, the piles of unorganized media, hidden from public display, emphasizes the perceived unimportance of the history of P4W in the government-funded Prison Museum.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Cameron from the Prison Museum at one point asked me if I'd like to capture some of the P4W prisoners' mug shots in the archives (I declined), which recalls Allan Sekula's seminal essay, "The Body and the Archive". In it, he argues the photographic "shadow" archive emerged out of a bureaucratic method to police criminalized bodies: "the

[Figure 8: Slides in the Museum's Archives]

This led to my next research question: how are the women of P4W choosing to remember the institution, if at all? To contrast the Museum's anonymous images, I asked the Collective to share their own personal archives and discuss their contents on camera during a lunch meeting one day in November 2018. I hoped to create a “countervisuality” through this counter-archive of photos taken by and for the people who were incarcerated there. An informal or unauthorized archive calls into question the “selecting, ordering and preserving” of the past which is never neutral and offers possibilities for oppositional histories.⁷⁰

In documenting the women looking at their personal photos, as they held the photographs, pointed out faces and provided an oral history of their experiences, it became

central artifact of this system is not the camera, but the filing cabinet.” See: Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive,," *October* 39 (1986): 16.

⁷⁰ Tirza True Latimer, "Conversations on Queer Affect and Queer Archives," *Art Journal* 72, no. 2 (2013): 34.

apparent that many women chose to remember the prison through the bonds of sisterhood they shared (see *Figure 9*). Fran points out a woman who painted a mural, and several women who have since passed since their time in P4W. The images in both collections are often surprising: women are laughing and smiling, playing tennis or baseball, reading and sunbathing outside. These photos are counterintuitive of what one would expect a prison to look like, so in a sense they achieve a countervisuality, but their almost summer-camp appearance is at first jarring and possibly misleading. Yet placing these images in contrast to the traumatic stories the women share in their interviews about loss and suicides creates a dissonance that commands the viewer to form their own conclusions about the prison. Dale and Cole's film *P4W* can similarly appear like a dormitory or camp, but the details the women share in that work are unforgettably horrific, and in both films, they form an affecting juxtaposition. In doing so, these destabilizing images offer a counter-visual experience of P4W.

[*Figure 9: Personal photo archives of Collective members*]

Gabrielle Moser finds “to counter the state archive means to also disorder it, opening up ways of engaging photographs that necessarily move beyond the sceptic regime of the visual, to attend to the haptic and sonic ways we make meaning from images”.⁷¹ These images and the women’s oral recollections are the intimate fragments that reflect how the prison lives on for them; furthermore, both the photos and this film documenting the interactions with the photos become a counter-archive of P4W. Ultimately, both the counter-archive and the state archive—one intimate and one anonymous—are forms of memorialization that map where the prison is situated in the physical and mental landscape of this community. In employing the archive as a visual strategy, *The Garden Collective* provides counter-images of incarceration and makes space for an alternative history of P4W.

Situated Knowledges

The Garden Collective relies on the previously incarcerated women to share their first-hand experiences of the prison. The film was never intended to be an objective historical narrative of P4W and it was important that the details the women chose to share with me would compose the film’s portrait of the prison. Donna Harraway’s term “situated knowledges” shaped my approach, in which she argues “for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives.”⁷² Following this, I treated the formerly incarcerated women of the Collective as authorities of P4W through their own lived-experience.

⁷¹ Gabrielle Moser, “Porous Sounds: frequencies of refusal in Diaspora family photographs,” in *The Making of an Archive*, eds. Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn, Vanessa Kwan, Dan Pon, and Grunt Gallery, grunt gallery, 2018: 75.

⁷² Donna Harraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 589.

Harraway also argues: “Situated knowledges are about communities, not isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular.”⁷³ The shared knowledge of the Collective in the film, I argue, provides an alternate history of P4W and an impassioned argument against the prison system as it continues to exist today.

In my interviews, I spoke with Collective member and prison and philosophy scholar Professor Lisa Guenther, who has written extensively on the ontological “haunting” and “healing” around P4W.⁷⁴ However, I removed her from the edit because unlike the others, she had no personal connection to P4W, and I was concerned that as a white academic she would appear to be an expert voice used to authenticate or provide context for the women’s experiences. As Linda Alcoff writes in her essay “The Problem of Speaking for Others”, an individual’s social location “has an epistemically significant impact on that speaker’s claims and can serve either to authorize or disauthorize one’s speech.”⁷⁵ Lisa Guenther’s voice as a well-spoken intellectual might have unintentionally undermined the incarcerated women as the authoritative narrators of their own stories. The only non-formerly incarcerated woman I include in the film is Professor Jackie Davies. Though I had not planned an interview with her, she ended up coming with me when I went to shoot the Prison Museum archives—she had never been there before, despite living in Kingston for over thirty years. Her situated experience as a young Queen’s student volunteering at P4W importantly highlights a young non-incarcerated woman’s experience parallel to many of the same-age women inside the prison, as well as the inextricability of Queen’s and P4W mentioned earlier.

⁷³ Harraway, ““Situated Knowledges,” 590.

⁷⁴ Lisa Guenther, “Healing and Haunting at Kingston’s Prison for Women.”

⁷⁵ Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” *Cultural Critique* 20, no. 20 (1991): 7.

Interview Questions

My interviews with Ann and Fran were planned in advance, and they each selected locations outside we could spend the day together and talk. My interviews with Cheryl, Molly and Joey all happened in spare moments during the Prisoners' Justice Day weekend, August 10 and 11, 2018. Interestingly, all of these interviews took place outside, which was clearly where the women all felt comfortable. I didn't overly prepare a list of questions for these interviews because I wanted the women to guide the discussion, which resulted in us talking a lot about healing and self-care after prison, and the relationships between the women of P4W today. I never asked a provocative question like, "How bad was it?" or "Tell me about the violent riots in 1996" that would be re-traumatizing or need explicit detail; instead I was interested in having the women explain their present-day lives, how they want P4W to be remembered and what a memorial might mean to them. I would also give participants the option to refuse to answer any question they were not comfortable with.

The interviews are edited so that the women are almost always on-screen when they are speaking, with the exception of Ann introducing us to the horses on her farm in the beginning. Otherwise, the jump cuts in my interviews intentionally expose where edits were made in order to be as transparent and true to what the women had told me as possible. I did not overly edit dialogue, in order to accurately represent the way the women speak, including "okays" and "ums" in the style of an oral history.

Though I never wanted to document a full testimony of these women's experiences, the traumatic details included are intended for witnessing, to make legible this knowledge or alternative history of P4W. Scholars Green, Mann and Story discuss this as the "radical

dependence” that takes place in this speaking-listening relationship when sharing trauma.⁷⁶ They argue, “when we care, we experience the other as a ‘face’, as an irreducible being toward whom we are utterly obligated.”⁷⁷ They argue witnessing vulnerability through testimony can be a call either to care or to dominate (further otherizing the vulnerable subject) and this is a precarious balance in documentary filmmaking. Including the Collective’s on-screen interviews is intended as act of care, and in the best possible case, a minor part in the women’s healing process. However, I am aware that including personal traumatic details that though may feel important to the story, runs the risk of re-traumatizing my participants or portraying them as victims by sharing their pain publicly. This also can all too easily become a *Titicut Follies*-style “if only the public actually knew” plea—I am not fully convinced my film escapes the latter trope.

One section I struggled with including was Joey Twins’ discussion of self-harm towards the end of the film (see *Figure 10*). Though she brought this up unprompted in the interview, and many women reported to have self-harmed or “slashed” while in prison, I worried this piece was sensationally violent and contributed to an oversaturated media representation of the pain and trauma of Indigenous people. I debated about removing it, but after speaking with Joey, who was fine with it, and consulting my supervisor, I decided to leave it in. I still feel it is ethically questionable for myself, as a white settler filmmaker, to be portraying the trauma of Indigenous people on screen. However, I concluded that to not include this, which is what Joey and all the participants wanted to be known to the larger public, would do them a disservice and ignore their agency in shaping the narrative of P4W’s history. This detail of self-harm, though difficult to

⁷⁶ Rochelle M. Green, Bonnie Mann, and Amy E. Story, “Care, Domination, and Representation,” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21, no.2&3 (2006): 185.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 185.

[Figure 10: Joey Twins' Interview]

hear, is part of a larger portrait of the suffering that the women survived.⁷⁸ However, if I were to do this project again, I would find a different creative strategy to convey the truth of this suffering that does not rely on the participants sharing these painful details—which in this case, I feel I was not fully prepared to handle once the camera was turned on and they did.

I include myself asking one question at the end of Joey's interview, in which you can hear me say, "Was this weekend healing for you?" to expose myself behind the camera and hint at the types of questions I was asking them. I also included my own and my cinematographer's Christina hands in the film as we comb through the slides in the Museum and lay out Ann's

⁷⁸ Note: after my Doc Now Screening, I did remove this scene from my final cut because I felt too uncomfortable sharing this painful piece of Joey's life with the public. I also removed one mention where Molly Goddard discusses being suicidal. In preparation of sharing this film with the wider public, I also inserted trigger warning for content dealing with suicide.

photos on her kitchen table. This is again to highlight my presence as the filmmaker, literally artistically directing these images in front of the lens. These signals to the audience felt crucial as I grappled with own uncomfortableness of being an outsider to the incarcerated women's world and yet the author of this documentary.

On Collaboration & Consultation

Having the trust and confidence of the Collective has been essential for me throughout this process. Throughout filming, I reiterated that any woman interviewed could request photos or certain statements be removed from the film if they felt uncomfortable with them later. It would be inaccurate to describe the filming process as fully collaborative, though they would often make suggestions about what would be good to film and I would include them (for example, Fran taking me to visit her turtle mural or the Collective having lunch at Ann's). Because I was still orchestrating the scenarios, like asking the women to go looking for old photos to share, and posing interview questions to them, my approach was more in consultation with them and their wishes.

Upon finalizing my cut, I approached the Collective with the scene of their personal archives prior and asked them to approve the faces seen and names mentioned—I ended up removing one woman's name at their request. I then sent them each a copy of the fine cut to watch and approve. While I stated I would not completely re-edit the film, if they felt a piece of information should not be included or needed to be included, I would make those changes. I had extensive phone conversations with Ann, Fran and Cheryl about the film, who all approved but made suggestions regarding the title ("Our Fallen Sisters" was their choice) and music they would like included (which I was not able to license). My hope is that *The Garden Collective*

fulfills a promise of reciprocity to support the P4W Collective and to share their work with a wider public.

There was also a community-engagement component of this project alongside the film. Modern Fuel, an artist-run centre in Kingston, reached out to me and asked if they could use the images and transcripts from my interviews on Prisoners’ Justice Day for a publication called *Syphon Journal* they were releasing alongside an art exhibition on incarceration (see *Figure 10*).

I reached out to Ann and Molly and asked if they were comfortable with their transcripts being published, and we edited copies of them together. Modern Fuel paid all three of us for the use of the media.

INTERVIEW

P4W Healing Circle Participants
Molly Goddard and Ann Hansen
Interviewed by Sara Wylie

Molly Goddard
Date: August 11, 2018

Great, it's short – introduce yourself!

01:01 My name is Helen Margaret Goddard and I am my mother's namesake but everybody calls me Molly. My Indian name is Biabnookwe and I am from the Moose Clan.

02:01 I spent the majority of my younger years in Prison for Women. I was 19 when I went in and was 20 when I finally got out for good. A common pain I suffered doing life on the installment plan. Which means I was in prison more than I was out. In my opinion the system is set up to fail. I was in angry, confined young women when I was sentenced to Prison for Women and I was still angry and confined 10 years later. There were no programs to help me with the underlying issues of sexual abuse and being brought up in a dysfunctional home. They were very worried about my alcohol and drugs abuse. The justice system is a revolving door.

03:01 I was finally at the end of my rope literally and I was running out of options when I decided enough is enough. I stayed away from the home made brews and the drugs that always made it over the walls and I became heavily involved with the Native Sisterhood and the Elders Program that was implemented after the loss of some of our sisters to suicide. It seems so unfair that they created programs for Native women after they committed suicide. I just wasn't right.

04:01 After the suicides and the riots it seemed like the prison settled down. The Native Sisterhood was a place we could go to talk and best out our frustration on drum and have access to Elders from all the four directions. I was finally released on a day parole to Houchens House which is a Native not halfway house approved by Corrections. It was there I was finally able to settle down and heal through ceremonies. I got accepted into prison and went on to do some Native Studies at Laurentian.

05:01 So we had that that came to Prison for Women, it was after – I was there during the suicides as well. I lost a very, very good friend of mine, Johnny. And I lost another very good friend of mine, Lorna. They both committed suicide while they're in there. And I guess it's very hard for me to talk about them because I don't really think that I'll meet with their deaths, you know? I still miss them today. And they were just young women, like I think now, but we were a young Native woman back then. We had our whole lives ahead of us. You know? And I think that's the one of the things that made it so hard for me to be in that prison for women.

06:01 I am not sure when but years ago a judge commented that the prison wasn't fit for babies to live in and Justice Louise Abbott shared the same sentiment. So why house women who are already broken into a cold, cold environment. The prison is so old and all the cells were open bars and we were given bed brown sheets to hang for privacy. It was not a kind environment but for any women who was sentenced to over 7 years that's where you were sent.

07:01 When I was first sentenced to Prison for Women, I was given 27 months for a Breach and Enter. I admit in the beginning I too believed at the time that was on TV. I was so scared. But it was Johnny who took me under her wing and showed me the ropes. Just her that place but she will always have a place in my heart.

08:01 I tried to commit suicide. I was in segregation for something and I actually made the news just a smooch my neck and jumped. I talk about it now like it was nothing but I guess the Creator had different plans for me. I woke up in the hospital and Ann Salomon who is credited for bringing our culture into the prison system. I am not sure where I would be if I wasn't allowed to have our ceremonies, our medicines and our way of life in prison. I was able to use our culture in a good way and I was able to share with my sisters and our sisters all these things that brought me to prison in the first place. When I left Prison for Women for the last time, I wasn't the same angry young woman from years before. I was proud and beautiful. I carried our way of life with me everywhere. It felt good. I wasn't scared anymore because I had courage and strength with me everywhere.

You can really sense the bonds that you had together, just from being here with you all.

09:01 Yes, I would definitely say we all share a bond. I haven't seen Ann or Fran for over 30 years and it was just like I saw them yesterday. I don't know I think women go home differently. I think that maybe we have shared similar experiences in one way or the other and I think because as women we are usually the care givers. Not always but it's like we all took care of each other. Even at Christmas little gifts were given and I remember just came back off a parole violation and I was still given a little bag of goodies.

10:01 I guess what I'm trying to say is that women like I said, just handle things differently, we just do things differently. It's more caring, giving, sharing, rather than anything else. And I think because of that, that's where we're bonded like sisters. Because we were a family in there, we had nobody else but ourselves, right. And then those other sisters took their lives a lot of us were really affected by that because they were part of our family.

Phone ringing. Sara: It's on hold. Could you just say that last part again about your family, sorry to say you again.

11:01 Just about the sisters, you know, we were all family, right. So we all took care of each other. That's why we have that bond with each other, like sisters, you know, in arms almost. So, sisters in spirit, you know, that's what we are, so... (Sara is crying) And we'll never lose that bond, we'll always have it. I will just say that other, we're all back with us every day, right. You know some sisters are different – there are some sisters that are no longer with us, you know, they're at different points in their lives.

So I just wanted to ask you a bit about the idea of a memorial. What does a memorial to P4W mean to you?

12:01 Well for me – I know – I was listening to them in their talking and I know that the memorial has to incorporate something to do with these women, right. I think that the memorial should encompass those sisters that have died in the walls, inside those walls. And when I was sitting there, and I was thinking about women, in our culture, women are the givers of that life, we're the keepers of that water right. So I was thinking that it would be really nice to have a fountain or water to represent that women – to represent women – and maybe a place that maybe doesn't have – incorporate all the women's names – and maybe those names don't need to be mentioned. Maybe those sisters, something in sisters in arms, or sisters in spirit, you know. Something has to be put there to remember the struggle that women went through in there, and I think that they should have a place that's maybe not the sisters name, but maybe something similar.

13:01 They should also incorporate the Native culture, because the majority of the women that died in prison were Native, meant for us. But the majority of them were Native, so there should be some Native aspect, maybe for the four colours, or the four medicines. But I think that those kinds of things should be incorporated within the garden, even, yeah. That's all sort of came up with. And maybe the four colours that represent all sisters, you know. The black, – because it doesn't matter what culture you come from. I think that sisters that are black or yellow, red or white, we all have struggles. I mean this is our time now to speak out, right.

14:01 And I think that there are still women out there of all cultures that are still struggling and they need to – this is the time for them to speak out, and to speak up. And to stand up, you know, and start doing what they were meant to do. Because a long time ago, it was women who did the work, it wasn't men. Men – we could have got done it without men, you know what I mean. I mean, we needed them for our children, besides that, we were the caregivers, we were the gardeners inside we took care of the house. Men start coming – I know, you know I saw my man right. He gets on my nerves sometimes, you know that? It's the women who know us.

That was really nice – my last question for you – if you're addressing a public or people who don't know about P4W, if someone asked you why it is important that we remember this or mark it with a memorial or a garden, what would you say?

15:01 I think it should be remembered especially in Kingston because when I was in Kingston, that today, that trigger down bus – they could go to front of Prison for Women and say "There's where we house 15 of Canada's most violent women". That's what they would say as the little trigger car went by. So, this city of Kingston benefited from the riots, right. They benefited from coming in and seeing the prison, you know. It's very strange for a Prison for Women, that looks like an old-fashioned jail, right. But I think that – for that reason in itself, even though we were in prison, we still contributed to this city.

16:01 Right, so I think that even the city should be in and say "Thank you" that they should give us something, to remember those women, to remember that place, because they made money off it. Because the garden is there, they kept in Kingston, they contributed to the – not profit, but the economy. I mean everywhere – it's well – they all had jobs, they all lived in Kingston. And Kingston, I know that's what it's known for – you're either – was going to be a sewer – but you're either a giant or you're a blur or whatever else in Kingston. Or stupid, right?

17:01 But yeah, for years they would bring in from of the – I heard in when I was in the hospital one day. And I heard it, I said, "You're finger 'kidding me!' couldn't believe it, and here was, a little – 19 year old, you know, young the in prison for a break and enter. So it's not fair, you know. Nothing's fair in life. But I think what they should, they should you know, for that reason, that memorial should be put up, you know, for that reason, we contributed. You made money – even if it was a little peace, whatever. You know Kingston is known – when they – a lot of people even today, when you talk about Kingston, a lot of people talk about Prison for Women, right? It's well known, all across Canada.

Especially now, that the main prison of P4W is being turned into a tourist destination, and now the women's prison might be forgotten and less visible to the public.

18:01 Exactly, and that's not fair, right. That's another reason too right, to have that memorial.

That was great, thank you so much for sharing.

Ann Hansen
Date: August 5, 2018

Where did the idea for a memorial for P4W come from? Explain that story.

01:01 Well I have to say, my friend who was in prison with me, I would have to give her credit for the whole concept of having a memorial. Both of us were involved with a woman – different women, separate partners – which is quite common, I think probably more so in women's prisons. So we had deep personal relationships with a woman and in both cases the woman died. In my case, my friend committed suicide a little after I left, and my friend's partner died in a car accident about 6 months after she got out, and she had been in for 15 years, or something like that. So, there was a bit of a personal reason, but we were also in P4W when there was – they call it a cluster – of women committed suicide. I think it was over a period of 2 years, there were 7 women who committed suicide and 6 of them were Indigenous women, so I was really front and centre the years that I was in P4W.

And then, also, there were things, when we were in P4W, it was quite well known amongst the prisoners, and staff, there were these graves, tombstones under the gym. We didn't actually look at the names but we had seen them – we were going under there holding one of the workers more stuff out, like various reasons, and see them. So it became common knowledge that women had died at some point in the history of P4W, and didn't have their tombstones put on their graves. Like, made they weren't claimed by their family, which happened. You know, so anyways, that's why we decided there should be a memorial.

Why is that an important part of the recovery?

02:01 Well it's just the fact that these are the forgotten women. It appears to me though – well it is a fact – that there were women whose families did not claim them for whatever reason. And they were actually used as cadavers at Queen's Medical School. This was quite a long time, I don't know what years, I would say in the 40s, 50s, something like that. So we felt that they should be remembered and honoured, we call them our fallen sisters, you know?

And did P4W ever acknowledge any of that history?

03:01 They've never denied it. I think there is an implicit acknowledgement in the fact that they have published and there's been no denial. And there have been articles written as well about the controversy around during the 60s, women were used in experiments involving LSD and electric shock treatment. In the McGill Reporter, and I don't know off the top of my head the exact volume and date, there was an article that we read researched and documented, regarding women – the names of some women who were used in these experiments. And before the 60s, women who were very used in experiments involuntarily. Well they were involuntary in the 60s too, yeah.

What to you would be an ideal memorial? If you envision something, like a garden, that would really do justice to that, what do you see?

04:01 I think a memorial that was... that's a tough question because I haven't really given it enough thought to put it really succinctly. A memorial that I think would do justice to the women would be a memorial that put their identity as a prisoner within a broader context, you know, and in some way would acknowledge that the vast majority of women in prison are there as a result of racist political and social policies of the government – throughout – since settlers first arrived in Canada, inequality in the economic system, you know. Usually the vast majority of women are from very poor families, and have chosen to commit crimes in order to survive in many cases – prostitution, drug addiction, drugs, drug trafficking, fraud. These are the main kind of crimes that women are in prison for, and men as well. I think that that should be part of the memorial so that people can recognize – just so that we have to start taking responsibility. Society has a lot of responsibility for the fact that they are imprisoning people, who are really victims of the most racist and inequitable circumstances that we've created.

05:01 I think it starts at the top with the wealthiest people. They may not do it there and conveniently go to do this and it happens. And it permeates through the media and the educational system – that "these are the people, the scapegoats, the bad people, the people we should be afraid of, so we need more prisons". We shouldn't be afraid of our accidents, of global warming and cancer. We've got to be afraid of the prostitute, the person whose reality is up and down, the people who break into your house when you're gone, stuff like that, so the people to be really afraid of. When in fact those are the people – generally – who are really abused and poverty stricken people.

Do you think attitudes within Kingston have changed, with the recent movement around the memorial, or even there is more public acceptance?

06:01 I'm not sure to say that we – I think that would be going a bit of a stretch. I have to say it but I don't think we've fundamentally changed the attitudes of society, in our own way we're trying to make some change. But I have to say – everything I say here doesn't represent the P4W memorial collective – I don't think everyone would say what I just said. That is how I feel. But I think it is a feeling we share to some degree or other.

Give us an update on what is happening with the memorial.

07:01 Well at this point, the Domekna's construction company, ASNA, have bought P4W from Queen's and we have been speaking with Nate Domekna, and we have been

[Figure 11: A Page from Syphon Journal]

I also arranged a panel at Ryerson University in November 2018 called “Women’s Perspectives on Prison”, to coincide with Ann’s book tour. Both Ann and Joey presented, along with Sara Falconer from the Certain Days Prison Collective and Joan Rusza, a prison advocate. The panel was co-sponsored by the School of Image Arts and the Criminology Department, which provided an honorarium for all of the women. Additionally, Ann Hansen, Joey Twins and Cheryl Maxie were present at the Doc Now Festival screening of this film on June 7, 2019 and participated in the Q&A. To compensate the women for their time and travel costs to come to Toronto, I paid each of the woman an honorarium, some of which may be reimbursed through leftover Doc Now Festival funds. Though paying subjects is a not a traditional practice in documentary film, returning to reciprocity, I feel it is important to compensate the formerly-incarcerated women for their time wherever I can with the resources I have access to. The Collective has also already arranged a screening of the film for August 9, 2019 in Kingston, to be held ahead of this year’s Prisoners’ Justice Day event.

Finally, I reached out to the Collective to provide them with a copy of the film and interviews for their archives. At the suggestion of Lisa Guenther, they will be stored on a drive by the Vulnerable Media Lab at Queen’s University. The Vulnerable Media Lab is dedicated to “the preservation, migration and remediation of the rich and diverse audio-visual production in Canada by Indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ2 and local audio-visual artists in the Kingston region.”⁷⁹ My hope is that by archiving these materials, they could be accessible anytime by the Collective or anyone doing further research on P4W in the future.

⁷⁹ “Social Ecology of Vulnerable Media,” *Queen’s University*, accessed June 1, 2019, <https://www.queensu.ca/vpr/social-ecology-vulnerable-media>.

Conclusion

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, expanding on the ideas of the abolitionist W.E.B. Du Bois, argues “abolition is a theory of change, it’s a theory of social life. It’s about making things.”⁸⁰ An abolitionist film then, is one that is making new images about life beyond the prison. *The Garden Collective* emphasizes the stories and images of the survivors’ strength and sisterhood to offer an oppositional visual portrait of formerly incarcerated women. It is not a comprehensive history of the Prison for Women; instead it explores what archives can tell us and confronts what they cannot.

Though this film is steeped in the ethical quandaries of representing any marginalized population, it attempts to do so through a lens of care and systemic criticality. Additionally, the methodology I employed throughout this project was consistently engaged in those ethical questions and was navigated by the core concept of reciprocity. *The Garden Collective* calls for a memorial to recognize the lives lost at P4W, and in doing has become a part of the memorialization process of a place that will soon be altered or disappeared forever. My ultimate hope is that this film can further the Collective’s vital work and serve as a hopeful gesture towards creating a social imaginary, and eventually a world, where the prison no longer exists.

Word count: 9556

⁸⁰ Petitjean, “Prisons and Class Warfare: An Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore.”

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