

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A JOURNAL OF CRIME,
CONFLICT & WORLD ORDER

Vol. 42, Nos. 3-4

SPECIAL ISSUE

Mexican and Chicana
Social Movements



edited by Maylei Blackwell
& Edward McCaughan



\$18.95

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Mexican and Chicanx Social Movements

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Vol. 42, Nos. 3–4 (2015)
Issue 142

Founded in 1974, SOCIAL JUSTICE is a quarterly peer-reviewed educational journal that seeks to inform theory and praxis on issues of equality and justice. SOCIAL JUSTICE (ISSN: 1043-1578), formerly *Crime and Social Justice* (ISSN: 0094-7571), incorporates *Issues in Criminology* (ISSN: 0021-2385) and *Contemporary Marxism* (ISSN: 0193-8703).

Please send all business and editorial-related correspondence to:
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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Published quarterly.

One year individual: \$48 (domestic), \$52 (foreign).

One year institutional: \$136 (domestic), \$148 (foreign).

Single copies: \$14.95; double issues \$18.95.

Back issues dating to 1986 are available in print. All recent issues and articles are also available in digital form on our website. (www.socialjusticejournal.org).

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Mexican and Chicanx Social Movements

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Social Justice and Feminist Activism: Writing as an Instrument of Collective Reflection in Prison Spaces

Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo*

The Life Stories Workshop is important to me because it opens a door to an unknown world that must be considered to eliminate the inequalities we experience in our country. It is also a way to sensitize the hearts in order to create a sisterhood within women of different social classes. In my small space in the female prison area, where different minds, customs and certainties of women inhabit, it is interesting to join our voices and outline life histories, liberating them from this place and making the outside world to know and think about the reality we live in here. This workshop will help achieve women's unity on a shared common goal. It is a way towards mutual support as spokespersons of real stories. Personally, it has allowed me to live a new experience in the world of writing, and feel proud for supporting those who have been silent for too long. My writing will serve those who wish to tell their story. For illiterate women, this workshop has been a means to liberate their story, to unburden themselves on a receptive ear and recover the courage to be a woman that society took away from them.
—Testimony of an inmate in the penitentiary newspaper *¿Y ahora que sigue?* (2008, 3)

IN THIS ARTICLE I WANT TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCE WORKING AS AN ACADEMIC AND activist in penitentiary spaces in Mexico, with indigenous and mestiza women who are victims of a penal state that criminalizes poverty and social protest.¹ I arrived at the CERESO² female penitentiary in Atlacholoaya, Morelos, in 2008, thinking that my anthropological research concerning the Mexican justice system might have something to contribute to improved access to justice for women; I did not imagine the ways in which the reflections and experiences of these women would change my life.

Through this experience, I have been able to witness the importance of oral history as a tool of feminist reflection and as a strategy for the destabilization of

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colonial, racist, and sexist discourses. Although feminist theorists have written widely about the importance of recovering the history of everyday life and of paying attention to women's experiences as expressed in oral history (see Diane Wolf 1996; Reinhartz 1992), I could not have imagined how the reconstruction of individual histories could function to create sisterhood among diverse groups of women and to write a counter-history that would reveal how the coloniality of power excludes indigenous peasant women from access to justice.

In this context, oral history ceases to be a methodological tool of the researcher and instead becomes a means for collective reflection through which the naturalization of difference becomes destabilized. The testimonies that women shared in their writing uncovered the way in which race and class hierarchies marked inmates' distinct paths of exclusion from access to justice. Contrasting experiences between indigenous and non-indigenous women, between peasants, workers, and professionals, and between homosexuals and heterosexuals has made evident the hierarchies that structure the justice system in Mexico and society as a whole.

With the purpose of cultivating ethnographic intimacy within the penitentiary space, I decided to work in what is locally known as the Female CERESO of Atlacholoaya, documenting the life histories of the indigenous female prisoners in this center.³ At the onset of my research about indigenous women's access to justice, I developed an interest in using collaborative methodologies within the prison, something which implied new challenges for me because it did not involve working with already organized women fighting for social justice, as I have done in the past (see Hernández Castillo 2008), nor accompanying organizational processes in which I was a participant. One option might have been to approach a human rights or women's rights organization that might have wished to participate in our research team's project.⁴ However, collaboration arrived through another route.

Through personal connections, I was invited to one of the workshops that were being carried out in the Female CERESO of Atlacholoaya, Morelos. The workshop, titled "Woman, Writing Changes Your Life" and coordinated by feminist poet Elena de Hoyos, had been operating for more than a year, with the participation of 10–12 inmates who were interested in learning to write in a literary style. The majority of participants were female prisoners with some level of education ranging from primary to advanced levels, and none of these women were indigenous. Upon presenting myself to the group and explaining my interest in knowing and documenting the life histories of indigenous female prisoners, they came up with the suggestion that I could teach them the methodology and practice of life histories, and they would interview and write the histories of their indigenous prisoner friends.

Thus was inaugurated a space of dialogue and collective construction of knowledge that has brought me new challenges as an academic and activist. What began as a writing workshop ended up as the editorial project *Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra* (Sisters in the Shadows Editorial Collective of Women in Prison), which so far has published eight books and a

number of magazine articles on culture and prison; these accounts have influenced revisions of judicial inquiries and the liberation of a number of women who had been unjustly imprisoned.⁵

But this was not an isolated endeavor; as I started working with the editorial collective, I discovered the existence of a global network of men and women who, like us, have made of their work among prison populations a political challenge in support of social justice.⁶ Many of us who have chosen, using various strategies, to act as bridges between the incarcerated population and outside society, share a rejection of penitentiary structural violence as a means to solve social problems. We find surprising the backwardness of a society that, at the same time as it develops technologies to reach other planets or delve into the human genome, has not been capable of creating societal institutions or arrangements not involving the physical punishment of social isolation for those who fail to comply with state legislation. In so-called pre-capitalist societies, those who break the rules are often sheltered by the entire community and helped to pick themselves up again; they are considered to be highly vulnerable, and in great need of collective support. In peasant societies, such as in the communities that together constitute the Regional Coordinator of Community Authorities of Guerrero (CRAC), those who commit crimes must undergo a process of reeducation that includes community work and also the strengthening of moral values such as group solidarity (see Sierra Camacho 2009).

The Color of Prison in Mexico

In Atlacholoaya we have learned that law and justice are not always the same thing, and that those who break the law are treated differently by the authorities of the state. Prison in Mexico is for the poor, who by coincidence are mostly dark-skinned (*moreno*) and of indigenous descent (including many from the urban margins, who have been racialized by discriminatory ideologies and practices). The few exceptions prove the rule, and these cases are often victims of other types of exclusion, based for example on gender or sexual preference, or else their imprisonment is the result of power struggles among elites. That is, in Mexico, prison has a color, and failing to acknowledge this is to deny the racism that continues to be prevalent in our society.

Feminist analysis has shown how prisons work as fields for the control and domestication of female bodies, in which racism and sexism determine how poverty and dissidence are criminalized (Davis 1981; Díaz-Cotto 1996; Sudbury 2005). Just as the racialization that characterizes US culture has marked the prison system in the United States, so have these racialization processes determined the experience of indigenous women in Mexico, though the historical processes are different. As critical race theory analysts have pointed out, wherever societies are characterized by the existence of racial hierarchies, those situated in the lowest echelons tend to be overrepresented in the correctional system. The most studied case is that of

the United States, evidenced by the findings of Loïc Wacquant, who contends that justice selectivity has a racial character:

On a life-long accumulated probability, a black man has a one in four possibilities to serve at least one year in prison; a Latino has one in ten while a white man has one in 23.... Actually, the gap between whites and blacks is not the result of a sudden divergence in the propensity to commit crimes and felonies. It speaks rather of the fundamentally discriminatory police and judicial practices furthered in the "law and order" policy followed during the last two decades. (Wacquant 2000, 100)

In the Mexican context, both social science and public policy have refused to accept the existence of racial hierarchies and therefore have declined to analyze the institutionalized racism that characterizes Mexican society. Despite the fact that a few authors have started to study racism in Mexico (Castellanos et al. 2008; Gall 2004; Paris Pombo 1999), the myth of the mixed-race nation promoted by post-revolution governments is still used to deny the existence of racial hierarchies and discriminatory practices against indigenous peoples in Mexico. The penitentiary system reproduces these same hierarchies, since it is either poor dark-skinned *mestizos* or indigenous peoples who suffer the most under the power of the penal state. Rita Laura Segato ponders on the difficulties of naming this racialization of justice in Latin America by pointing that:

We should wonder why it is so difficult to talk about race, pin it down with a name and realize what should be self-evident by observing the incarcerated population throughout the continent.... Trying to enunciate what is seen when entering a prison, declare the race of the imprisoned people, is hard because it touches the sensibilities of enshrined actors: the traditional academic left because it entails giving flesh and bones to the mathematics of class by rendering it with color, culture, ethnicity and ultimately, difference. It touches a sociological chord because data for these topics is scarce and hard to pin down objectively due to the complexities of racial classification. It also strokes the sensibilities of the law operators and enforcement agencies because it hints to state racism. (Segato 2007, 145)

Even though the racialization of penitentiaries is hard to quantify, it is self-evident once one experiences any CERESO. There is a sharp contrast between the skin color of people in power who benefit from drug networks and the people in detention for their roles in drug distribution. I am not implying that there are no racialized groups working for organized crime groups. They are part of those brown faces we see every time the TV transmits one of the "victories" in the war against drugs. However, political power groups that benefit from the survival and growth

of drug trafficking networks are part of a white oligarchy that is usually spared the consequences of penal reforms allegedly aimed at combating organized crime.

In the specific case of indigenous women in prisons, their experiences of exclusion in the intersection of a racist, sexist, and classist penal system are fundamental in their personal narratives. The 20 life stories of indigenous female inmates collected in our Life Stories Workshop at Atlacholoaya Correctional Facility in Morelos allow us to understand the journeys of exclusion that have characterized the lives of these women since birth (see *Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra* 2010, 2015).

Those 20 life histories reveal common elements in the experiences of oppression suffered by these women: extreme poverty and gender discrimination, frequently manifested as sexual and domestic violence and racism. In this sense, I would like to follow the intersectional theory approach suggested by feminists of color as a means to analyze how socially constructed categories such as class, gender, sexuality, race, and generation interact to configure unequal social relations (Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins 1990; Hill Collins and Andersen 2007).

Rather than analyzing capitalism, patriarchy, and racism as three separate oppression systems, I am interested in observing how they mutually construct each other and determine the social hierarchies in which prisoner women are situated. In other words, capitalism, in its current neoliberal existence in Mexico, cannot be understood without recognizing its racialized and sexist character, which situates indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women in particular in the lowest echelons of the social pyramid.

Likewise, imprisoned indigenous women's narratives allow us to access the privileged standpoint of those who have experienced and are thus aware of the multiple oppressions that characterize Mexican society.

Life History Workshops

If we recognize that prisons contain not those who are dangerous to society but those who cannot afford the price of justice, and if we accept that the purpose of incarceration is not rehabilitation and reinsertion into society but punishment and isolation, why support educational projects that ultimately maintain and reproduce penitentiary spaces? I wish to engage this question by clarifying that at the same time that we wish to help create a window to the outside world for those in confinement, our goal is to use writing to denounce the violence that is exercised against these women and their children through incarceration and isolation.

Although it might seem contradictory, I believe it is necessary to work in a parallel manner, at once making more livable the experience of confinement and denouncing the system that has "abducted" these women. I would much prefer to be working with Marisol, Florencia, Galia, Charis, Maria Elena, Esperanza, Socorro, Ángeles, Laura, and Rocío in a community of free women in which writing could be a tool for collective reflection and the construction of new social

relations. Lamentably, however, we find these outstanding women "penalized" in Atlacholoaya, and we are forced to work with them in a small multipurpose room with four small barred windows, in which they paint, make surgical masks for the penitentiary industry, and write poetry. Starting in this room we have traveled to their places of origin or to imaginary places that we have constructed collectively.

The choice to accompany the process of writing the life histories of indigenous and peasant women in confinement was made on the basis of three methodological convictions: First, these histories would pay attention to the complex experiences of exclusion of the female prisoners in a more profound manner than the prisons' own statistics or research; second, their historical memory could fill the silences left by the official history of justice in Mexico; and finally, sharing and reflecting upon their lives could contribute not only to the cleansing of their bodies and minds, but also to the construction of new female identities and of spaces for support during confinement.

For decades, feminist anthropologists and historians have argued for the importance of life history and oral testimony as sources that draw us closer to women's experiences and have a more profound impact on the histories of peoples (see, e.g., Reinharz 1992). Gender hierarchies influence unequal access to writing, and because of this, women's perspectives are usually not registered in written sources, and their voices are therefore silenced by traditional historiography.

Using women's life histories as a methodology not only promises to confront the silences found in official histories, but also allows us to move closer to other dimensions of social life that History (with capital H) has left out, such as the everyday dynamics that are often not discussed in androcentric representations of the public and the political. Feminist anthropology has shown us that these exclusions have denied the possibility of deeply understanding political, economic, or cultural processes that grow out of the domestic and family space. The preoccupation with such incomplete representations of social life (to make an understatement) has led many anthropologists to reclaim life histories as a feminist methodology (see, e.g., Bataille and Mudén Sands 1984).

Although many of the life histories that have been published in anthropology were the product of intercultural dialogues with female anthropologists or social scientists, rarely have the terms of these dialogues been made explicit, and few critical reflections exist concerning the social hierarchies that mark the relations between researchers and the social actors with whom they work.⁷ On this topic, Marie France Labrecque (1998, 35) indicates:

In the introductory chapters of life histories, the authors insist on the personal character of their relationships with their informants. Very few confront the delicate question of what one and the other represent *for* each other at a structural level. It is not acknowledged that structural relationships are just as important as personal ones. Furthermore, I suggest

that anthropologists are part, structurally speaking, of the life histories of the informants. A life history is part of a wider conversation, not only between two individuals but also between two categories of individual. It is important, then, to concentrate as much on the analysis of hierarchical relations that life history immediately reveals to us as on the analysis of the power relations that link researchers and informants.

Taking these critiques into account, I acknowledge that despite positioning ourselves as allies of women in confinement, as workshop coordinators and members of the editorial collective, our dialogues with them have been marked by race and class differences. Nonetheless, maintaining a permanent dialogue concerning the “what for?” of life histories and testimonies has allowed for such structural inequalities to be minimally compensated for, as these textual strategies are turned into collective forms of construction of knowledge that are part of broader struggles for self-representation. Transforming the old role of female writers and anthropologists from that of narrators of the life histories of other women into that of companions in the process of self-representation through life histories, and even in the formation of their own editorial projects, has been part of our efforts to create and consolidate spaces for the collective construction of knowledge.

It was with the interest of accompanying such processes of self-representation that I developed, from October 2008 to September 2010 and from January 2014 to December 2015, the Life Histories Workshop, which we may consider the second stage of the collective’s broader project (the first being the workshop “Woman, Writing Changes Your Life” coordinated by Elena de Hoyos). Participating in this workshop were 10 female writers, all prisoners in CERESO de Atlacholoya, and 10 indigenous peasant women, also prisoners, who were willing to share their lives. The formal objective of the workshop was to “train the participants in the technique of writing life histories, as a literary resource and one of reflection on gender inequalities.”⁸ Within the framework of the workshop, which took place once a week, each one of the participants worked on her own project, writing the life history of an indigenous inmate colleague.

During the week, the writers would interview their counterparts and take notes, before reworking what they had written into a narrative form, on many occasions weaving it together with their own experiences or including the details of how they had come to discuss different topics. Once a month, the women whose histories were being noted down were invited to listen to what had been written and were given space to make comments, propose changes, or affirm the representations of their lives that were being created. The final products were not only life histories, but hybrid products into which, in many cases, personal reflections and the experiences of the writer were interwoven with the narrative. The participants also elaborated their own theorizations that they incorporated into the biographical narratives, thus creating hybrid novel forms that went beyond mere life histories.

Thus, intercultural dialogue took place not only between the researcher and the inmates, but also between the inmates themselves, all of whom had had different life paths and different ways of experiencing gender inequalities and state justice. Discussing similarities and differences has been a central part of the workshops:

Personally, I feel this workshop helps me get to know my companions better, learn about their ideas, express ourselves better and I hope it also helps us become closer. I believe it is helping me be a better person, to express my feelings and thoughts and be more sensitive to my companions. To illiterate indigenous women, our work has been a way of making their lives known, and along with theirs our own, as a form of mutual help. (*¿Y Ahora qué sigue?* 2008, 3)

This collective process, which for a time broke with the prison's separation between rural and urban women, allowed for the creation of new ties of solidarity between indigenous and non-indigenous women and opened up a space to reflect upon the racism and exclusion in Mexican society that were being reproduced within the penitentiary space. Through these dialogues, we confronted ethnocentric perspectives on defining a dignified life, while questioning perspectives on backwardness and progress that uphold the contrast between the lives of indigenous women and those of urban mestizo women. When we compare these women's histories, we realize that in most cases the national system of justice does not represent progress in relation to community forms of justice:

Since detention, most of us have suffered beatings, mistreatment, insults from the servants of the law, and in some cases, certain extortions that aren't subject to proceedings. Like magic, the medical reports and testimonies of these aggressions disappear in the trajectory from the prosecutor's office to the prison. And some little lines appear saying that the accused, now the alleged person responsible, appeared of her own free will to give her statement. The *costalazos* [a form of torture in which a person's body is wrapped in gunny sacks before being beaten to avoid leaving marks] don't leave any signs, but they have damaged my inner flesh. (Excerpt from *Los Costalazos*, by Águila del Mar, in *Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra* 2013, 32)

As the participants shared their life histories, they came to realize that sexual and domestic violence take different forms and are more private in urban settings, but they still exist. By contrasting their histories, reflecting on them, and writing them down in a collective text, the women were able not only to denounce the racism, sexism, and classism in the penitentiary system, but also to construct new subjectivities by denaturalizing violence. In the spaces for collective reflection created for the reading of their life histories, participants began to express the

need to strengthen themselves from within to confront violence and, especially, to teach their daughters outside of the prison how to avoid reproducing the types of relationships they had experienced. In an exercise during the workshop, participants wrote letters to women who have been mistreated psychologically and physically:

Break the chains of subjugation caused by the lack of high esteem. Find yourselves again and look around you. Life shouldn't be like it was for our mothers. We need to construct our own way of thinking and communicating with our spouses, instead of repeating the ways of life from our families. To have our own way of living, to know how to express our own feelings and to teach our children to express their own feelings both with the people around them and with their romantic partners. To know how to say "no" to violence. (Exercise by Guadalupe Salgado, Life Histories Workshop, Atlacholoaya Women's CERESO, May 17, 2009)

Woman, if you dare to break the silence, you may be able to put an end to the pattern of violence that surrounds you and that you may actually be reproducing. It's understandable that if we live in a violent home, sooner or later we will reproduce the violence ... but today, I encourage you to reveal yourself to fight against what humiliates you, what tramples on your dignity. Listen, you are invaluable. Don't remain silent. Shout, and fight for your rights, because after all, you're a woman. (Exercise by Susuki Lee, Life Histories Workshop, Atlacholoaya Women's CERESO, May 17, 2009)

Although the topic of violence was not central to these life histories, this theme surfaced in the majority of testimonies. The great challenge we have faced, not just in the second part of the workshop but throughout the long-term process lasting until the present day (July 2015), has been how to avoid re-victimization in the name of denunciation. This has been a permanent preoccupation of those who work on processes of psychological and social accompaniment of victims of sexual violence (see Aranguren Romero 2010). Despite the fact that the women consciously decided to include experiences of domestic or sexual violence in their life histories, as coordinators of the workshops we were concerned by the effects that narrating anew the horror of lived violence could have on the minds and bodies of the victims. We also lacked therapeutic resources to accompany these processes, and some of us had not been trained to deal with situations of emotional crisis. It was partly in response to this concern that we requested the support of therapists Marie Laversin and Pilar Hinojosa who, using various healing techniques, have helped participants work through the painful memories that this process stirred up.

In the seven years since this collective process began (from 2008 to 2015), four of the participating indigenous women learned to read. They are now writing

poems and short stories, and are coauthors of 12 books written and edited by them, including the handmade book *Mareas Cautivas* (Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra 2013), which includes the following poem:

De diferentes lugares (From different places)

by Leo Zavaleta*

From different places	De diferentes lugares
With different languages	De diferentes idiomas
But the most beautiful	Pero lo más hermoso
All of us spiritually free	Todas libres espiritualmente
Even though society calls us	Aunque la sociedad nos diga
jailed women,	las presas,
forgotten women,	las olvidadas,
scum, despicable women	la escoria, las malas
we are creative women,	somos mujeres creativas,
warrior women,	mujeres guerreras,
roses in captivity	rosas en cautiverio
doused by our own tears	regadas con nuestras propias lágrimas
fertilized with our own pain	abonadas con nuestro propio dolor
prisoners with great hope	presas con mucha esperanza
captives loved by the Lord,	cautivas amadas por el Señor,
phantom women,	mujeres fantasmas,
women victims of circumstances	mujeres víctimas de las circunstancias
warrior women	mujeres guerreras
women who struggle	mujeres que luchan

* Leo Zavaleta is a Me'phaa/Tlapanec woman who learned to write while imprisoned.

Seven women have been released from prison after their prosecution files were reviewed, and two of them continue to participate and write in a literary workshop coordinated by feminist writer Elena de Hoyos outside the penitentiary. They are also participating in a community radio series called *Cantos desde el Guamuchil* (*Voices from the Guamuchil*), and one of their radio programs, "El Tiempo es Luz que Devoramos" (Time is light that we consume), based on their poetry book *Bitácora del Destierro* (*Binnacle of Exile*) (2013), won an international radio award.⁹

Those who continue to be imprisoned have constructed a group identity as the Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra and have become a reference point for all female inmates, by proposing new ways of interacting with each other, as a sisterhood, and by questioning racism and sexism in the penitentiary through their writings.

We ought to recognize the limitations of this type of methodology, which does not threaten or destabilize the penitentiary system and its powerful effects on the bodies and minds of female prisoners. I acknowledge these limitations and, starting from

them, I attempt to contribute toward the transformation of a system of justice that is corrupt, sexist, and racist, and that not only affects the lives of female prisoners but is also a latent threat to myself and to every single woman outside prison walls.

Final Reflections

This article does not purport to offer formulas or preestablished methods to work with writing in spaces of imprisonment, but it rather seeks to share a collective experience of which I have been part and to outline some ideas on how life histories can become an instrument for self-reflection, healing, and finally political contestation.

In this sense, the narratives of indigenous women deprived of liberty (some of which we have published, above all, in *Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra* 2010, 2015) allow us to access the privileged point of view of those who know and have experienced the multiple types of oppression that characterize Mexican society as a whole. Above all, keeping in mind the space of reflection from which these narratives emerge, we can assert, following the feminist perspective of standpoint theory (Hartsock 1983, 1997), that indigenous women prisoners enjoy a particular epistemological privilege because their experiences of exclusion and exploitation allow them to have more inclusive and critical perspectives than those who experience their social advantages in a naturalized and invisible manner.

Our methodological proposal is directed, then, not only to the women in confinement with whom we work, but also to all those who are interested in knowing—and, to the extent that this is possible, transforming—the justice system of the Mexican state. These women's writings bear historical witness to the reality of Mexican justice in the twenty-first century. Their experiences ought to bring us to reflect upon our own vulnerabilities and upon the dangers that future generations face should we fail to create a system in which the application of the law implies an equitable access to justice for Mexicans of any background, ethnicity, or gender.

NOTES

1. In other articles I have analyzed the characteristics of the Mexican state as a penal state, which uses the law to reduce democratic spaces and criminalize social movements (see Hernández Castillo 2013).

2. The penitentiary centers in Mexico are called *Centros de Readaptación Social* (Centers for Social Readaptation), known by their initials as CERESO.

3. This CERESO was established in 2000 to replace the old prison of Atlacomulco, in Cuernavaca, Morelos, which had been criticized for the terrible living conditions of its inmates. The new prison was intended to be a modern center for readaptation and to have two distinct areas for male and female inmates, in contrast to the majority of the prisons in the country in which women have no space of their own but are marginalized in designated areas within male prisons (see Azaola and Yacaman 1996). The Female Penitentiary CERESO Morelos is the penitentiary center with the greatest number of women prisoners in the state, with 205 female inmates (34% accused and 65% sentenced) and 15 minors,

children of the inmates who have authorization to stay with their mothers until they are six years of age. The prison's capacity is for 120 female inmates (see Ríos Servín 2009); despite its overpopulation, it is considered a model for prisons in the country due to its modern infrastructure and its sports and educational facilities (see Velázquez Domínguez 2004).

4. My research was part of a wider collaborative project concerning the experiences of indigenous women in relation to state and community justice, entitled "Globalization, Indigenous Rights and Justice from a Gender and Power Perspective: A Comparative Project," coordinated by María Teresa Sierra and myself, with the support of CONACYT. I had previous experience of collaborative research with organized indigenous women: with Mayan women from Chiapas who organized into self-defense groups in order to combat sexual and domestic violence (Hernández Castillo 2004) and with organizations of indigenous women that worked to promote women's rights (Hernández Castillo 2008).

5. With the support of IWGIA and CIESAS, the Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra has published the video book *Bajo la Sombra del Guamuchil. Historias de Vida de Mujeres Indígenas y Campesinas Presas* (2010); with the support of the Morelos Institute of Culture, the handmade books *Fragmentos de Mujer* (2011), *Mujeres Habitando un Sueño de Libertad* (2012), and *Mareas Cautivas: Navegando las Letras de las Mujeres en Prisión* (2013); with a grant from the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, the three volumes of *Revelaciones Intramuros* (2013); and in collaboration with a project of the University Program of Gender Studies at UNAM, *Mundos Paralelos Intramuros* (2013).

6. To share experiences with other collectives that work in penitentiary spaces, we carried out, on June 17, 2012, the "Sharing Experiences of Work with Women in Confinement Workshop," in which participants included members of Colectiva la Lleca, from the project "Women in a Spiral: Justice and Culture in Spaces of Confinement," based in the PUEG-UNAM; the program "Vippassanna Meditation in Spaces of Confinement"; the team "Thanatology in Penitentiary Spaces"; and independent intellectuals who work in penitentiary spaces.

7. Since the origins of the field, anthropologists have made great efforts to discover the life histories of marginalized, above all indigenous and peasant, women. For example, Ruth Underhill in the 1930s broke with the androcentric tradition of North American ethnography, writing about the life of María Chona, a papago woman from Arizona. Since that time, the life histories of indigenous women have opened up new perspectives on the varied impacts that colonialism has had on women's lives. Thus we have the work of Nancy Lurie on a Winnebago woman from the state of Wisconsin who denounces the role of Christian boarding schools in the destruction of native cultures (Lurie 1961); the work of the indigenous intellectuals Anna Shaw Moore (1974) (Pima), Helen Sekaquaptewa (1969) (Hopi), and Maria Campbell (1973) (Metis from Canada), on their experiences as women in relation to the neocolonial governments of the United States and Canada. In Latin America, the testimonies of Bolivian workers' leader Domitila Barrios de Chungura and Maya-Quiché leader Rigoberta Menchú in Guatemala, collected by the anthropologists Moema Viezzer (1978) and Elizabeth Burgos-Debray (1985), have become two classic texts on indigenous women in positions of leadership and the racist violence of the nation-state.

8. Life Histories Workshop Program, coordinated by Aida Hernández and registered with the Subsecretary of Social Readaptation of the State of Morelos, Cuernavaca, Morelos 2008.

9. The program can be accessed at <https://soundcloud.com/radio-encuentros/el-tiempo-es-luz-que-devoramos>.

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