

Kaylee Beeman
Humanities
Philosophy Cover Letter

"With liberty and justice for all." We all know this line by heart but as a kid you have no idea what liberty or justice even means. These words are the foundation that we base everything upon, but as we get older we begin to see, witness and inflict injustice. A great example of this are the ways in which our country infiltrates punishment and the safety of our nation, but we have very little knowledge of how we do this. Criminals are "bad" people, who are put in a cage and kept from inflicting harm, all in the hopes of bringing "justice" upon our country. These are the beliefs we are fed but as I have come to find out, this does not tend to be the case at all. To understand our current problems within the system, one must look back on the history of how these places used to be. For the sake of simplicity I want to focus on women's correctional facilities alone.

In the late 1800's two Quaker women by the names Sarah J. Smith and Rhoda Coffin, began to try and create new prison systems for the "fallen" and unclean women of America. (Jones) They sought change in the way we as a country facilitate prisons and decided to act upon what they saw needed to be done. Together they created 3 separate facilities, the most important of these being the Indiana Women's Prison because it was the first stand alone women's prison in the US. These two were seen as faith driven heros and they saw it as their duty to "occupy the position assigned to them by God" by reintegrating these women back into society. By 1878, the Board of Managers reported an 82 percent success rate of these "fallen" women becoming a part of society again (these being measured by Smith's visits and correspondence) and their idea of rehabilitation of women and girls was quite a success. This was up until 1881 in which case the Indiana Women's Prison was put under a thorough investigation based on allegations of physical abuse of inmates by Superintendent Smith and her staff. After investigation they found that these allegations were true to say the least. (Jones)

Eventually people started to take on the idea of placing women in separate institutions then the men. In 1981, after the development of "all-female" facilities the conditions were still unethical. These women were placed under solitary confinement and suffered many cases of sexual and physical abuse. In one prison specifically the women were not very monitored and their meals were given to them by male guards. A lot of time women were forced to perform unconcesented acts, such as vaginal or oral sex, in order to recieve food. Do to the lack of protection many women ended up pregnant because of this. One woman in particular by the name of Rachel Welch was raped by a guard and later became pregnant. Once knowledge over this surfaced the guard who impregnated her beat her to death. This terrible occurrence brought forth change in the housing of incarcerated

women. ("Section X." *The Incarceration of Women: Punishing Bodies, Breaking Spirits*, by Linda Moore and Phil Scraton, Palgrave, 2014.)

Today there are women's correctional facilities (women's prisons) all over the US. Although they are in much better conditions than they were back in the late 1800's and early 1900's they still have a lot of growth in my opinion. These facilities still hold many unjust activities. From not having freedom to receive personal hygiene products if they don't have money for commissary, to being strip searched on a weekly basis for no apparent reason, to being shackled while giving birth to a kid. Many women face difficulty especially with sobriety and lack of help for doing so.

Most women that enter these prisons have some sort of addiction problem which tend to be drug related. A lot of these women are obviously forced to quit cold turkey but do to serious withdrawal symptoms these conditions can cause serious pain and/or death. These women also face a lot of problems with the guards. Many of them are forced to perform sexual activities and other things they do not want to do. These guards may hold visitation rights above their head or simply just convince them that no one will believe a prisoner over a guard, which tends to be true. When visitation rights are taken it can be hard to keep relationships with people on the outside which in turn can make it impossible to earn money from the outside in order to buy what is considered "luxuries" such as tampons/pads, shampoo and other items.

Guards are legally allowed to watch over an inmate when changing, going to the bathroom and are also able to write inmates up for practically anything they can think of. There have even been reports of getting written up for looking at a guard a certain way. Solitary confinement is also still legal in all states for women above the age of 18. This is the most severe punishment in which case can result in depression, anxiety and in some cases hallucinations.

But the inside of these facilities are not the only problem. When these women are released it is very hard for them to become a part of society again. With having a criminal record it can be hard to find work and without work you have no source of income. This is a problem for many reasons. For example if you are on parole you are given payments you are forced to make and if they are not paid you will be reincarcerated. If you don't have money, it is also obviously impossible to afford housing or food or anything for that matter. This is a big reason why a majority of prisoners released are homeless or really struggle to live on their own. Another problem is that according to section 115 of the Welfare Act states that if you have had a prior drug related felony you are unable to receive any type of welfare including food stamps, government housing and more. But there is no other section that prohibits any other types of criminals to be refused those services. Meaning a rapist

could apply for government housing but someone who may have gotten addicted to drugs at a young age due to the environment they were raised in and ended up getting caught with drugs later on in life to support their unhealthy addiction, they would not be able to apply for any type of welfare.

I think the biggest improvement for women's correctional facilities would be to eniciation more rehabilitation strategies and programs as well as more community service requirements. According to the "Centre for Justice and Reconciliation" community service , gives "the potential to improve the offender's overall sense of self-worth. This can be an effective means of promoting the offender's legitimacy. Finally, offenders' services can be a tremendous resource to governmental and non-profit organizations." In some correctional facilities they have programs that help prisoners receive their GED which I think is also very essential especially in the world we live in today in order to even try and receive a job. I believe that all prisoners should also have access to basic needs like tampons and pads or at least these prisons should give them diva cups. I also believe that by giving all prisoners jobs, ones that don't take excessive labor but ones that do take effort and give prisoners useful skills should also be implemented, which in some prisons they do. Another recurring problem I tended to see when researching was a better medical facility. By having more physical activity programs as well as more religious and spiritual programs could also be extremely useful in rehabilitating prisoners. These are just some of the areas of improvement for these facilities.

There are several more areas of growth for women's correctional facilities but it took several years to bring forth the system we currently have today. We as a society in the 1800's believed that people (white people) could change for the better. Although this was taken into a religious aspect and was not executed well, the idea is something I see value in. The Dalai Lama once said, "To my mind, the purpose of punishment is not to exact suffering as an end in itself. Rather, the suffering inflicted by punishment should have a higher purpose, namely to discourage the wrongdoer from repeating the offence and to deter others from repeating the offense and to deter others from committing similar acts. Punishment is, therefore, not about retribution but about deterrence." I agree with this. I believe that rehabilitation is the key to a better and safer society. It would not only better our prison systems but by rehabilitating these people, I believe it could reduce recidivism rates in our country and make for a safer America.

Part 2 Rubric: Philosophy Cover Letter

Category	Score/Feedback
<p>Depth of Thinking and Argumentation (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student shows DEEP thinking about their philosophy of justice● Student defends their philosophy with sound argumentation● Students' commentary and evaluation makes connections between any evidence or examples or makes connections between another text.● Student incorporates at least 2 outside texts from their issue research● Each paragraph is focused around a clear idea that is relevant to the main argument● Argument is logical and persuasive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I think that I deserve a 9 for Depth of Thinking and Argumentation.- I think I did really well with my deep thinking skills- I am not sure if I executed making my argument logical and persuasive
<p>Applying your Knowledge (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student is able to meaningfully apply philosophical concepts learned during this unit to their chosen issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I would say that a 3.5 is a reasonable grade for applying knowledge.- Although I wrote very thoughtfully about the history the current state but I feel like my evaluation and solution part should have been better

<p>Refinement/Beauty (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Cover letter meets the minimum length requirement ●Meaning of your sentences is clear and easy to follow ●Cover letter is carefully proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors ●Cover letter incorporates rhetorical strategies to maximize impact on the audience ●Cover letter has been refined for grammatical mistakes and contains no typos ●Try to use proper in-text citation formatting! <i>We're practicing now so we can play to perfection with the thesis paper next semester.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel I deserve a 5 because I don't think I did anything wrong - I feel that I may have issue with proper in-text citations
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