



The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation (Routledge Innovations in Corrections)

Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron R. Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, Grant Duwe

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Corrections officials faced with rising populations and shrinking budgets have increasingly welcomed "faith-based" providers offering services at no cost to help meet the needs of inmates. Drawing from three years of on-site research, this book utilizes survey analysis along with life-history interviews of inmates and staff to explore the history, purpose, and functioning of the Inmate Minister program at Louisiana State Penitentiary (aka "Angola"), America's largest maximum-security prison. This book takes seriously attributions from inmates that faith is helpful for "surviving prison" and explores the implications of religious programming for an American corrections system in crisis, featuring high recidivism, dehumanizing violence, and often draconian punishments.

A first-of-its-kind prototype in a quickly expanding policy arena, Angola's unique Inmate Minister program deploys trained graduates of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in bi-vocational pastoral service roles throughout the prison. Inmates lead their own congregations and serve in lay-ministry capacities in hospice, cell block visitation, delivery of familial death notifications to fellow inmates, "sidewalk counseling" and tier ministry, officiating inmate funerals, and delivering "care packages" to indigent prisoners. Life-history interviews uncover deep-level change in self-identity corresponding with a growing body of research on identity change and religiously motivated desistance. The concluding chapter addresses concerns regarding the First Amendment, the dysfunctional state of U.S. corrections, and directions for future research.

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