



PROJECT MUSE®

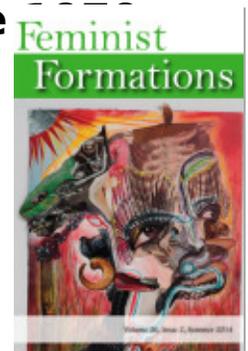
Against the “Prison/Psychiatric State”: Anti-violence Feminisms and the Politics of Confinement in the

Emily Thuma

Feminist Formations, Volume 26, Issue 2, Summer 2014, pp. 26-51 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: 10.1353/ff.2014.0022



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ff/summary/v026/26.2.thuma.html>

Against the “Prison/Psychiatric State”: Anti-violence Feminisms and the Politics of Confinement in the 1970s

Emily Thuma

The article examines the grassroots organizing efforts of the Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence, a broad-based alliance of prisoners' rights, mental patients' rights, and feminist groups in Greater Boston that opposed the expansion and medicalization of maximum-security units for women in Massachusetts's prisons and state mental hospitals in the 1970s. The case of the coalition, it argues, illustrates how grassroots feminist opposition to incarceration produced an epistemology of “violence against women” that complicated and contested liberal feminist demands for more aggressive criminalization and law enforcement of sexual and domestic violence during this period. The coalition forged an understanding of institutional violence that linked the politics of mental health to the repressive punishment of women prisoners' agency, and the expansion of medicalized incarceration to hierarchies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. The article explores how activists' critique of what they termed the “prison/psychiatric state” engendered alternative conceptions of health, safety, and justice that, in turn, suggest the need for a more capacious understanding of opposition to gendered violence in the feminist 1970s.

Keywords: behavior modification / coalitions / gendered violence / grassroots activism / incarceration / Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Framingham / prison / psychiatric state / women's prisons

On October 1, 1977, nearly a thousand demonstrators took to the streets of Boston to protest the planned opening of a Center for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital in central Massachusetts. Organized by a local group called the Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence (CSIV), the march

culminated at the Boston Common, where spokespersons outlined their objections to the center and all others like it. Already the subject of investigation for its treatment of male psychiatric inmates, the state hospital would function as an institutional outpost for the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Framingham (MCI–Framingham), the state’s sole, and the nation’s oldest, women’s prison. The Center for Violent Women, an exemplar of a recent national turn toward medicalizing practices of administrative segregation in US prisons, was the latest in a series of similar proposals issued by the state’s departments of Corrections and Mental Health to establish an offsite location for placing Framingham prisoners deemed a threat to themselves or others. CSIV members pinned their protest on correctional authorities’ pliable and elastic use of the designation *violent*, suggesting it veiled the highly political nature of the center. Under the euphemized language of “treatment,” they contended that prisoners might be subject to a range of behavior-modification techniques, including psychotropic drugging, sleep deprivation, electroconvulsive shock, brainwashing, and psychosurgery. Turning the language of “violent women” on its head, the demonstrators carried signs that read “Stop the Violent Unit!” and “Stop Violence Against Women.” These activists sought to name and illuminate what they understood to be the structural and social conditions of violence in imprisoned women’s lives, from manifestations of racial, economic, and gender oppression to the process of institutionalization itself.¹

CSIV represented a coming together of diverse organizations and constituencies from across the greater Boston area, from those advocating for the rights of prisoners and mental patients to the Prostitutes’ Union of Massachusetts and the Boston Committee to End Sterilization Abuse. At the core of this wide alliance existed a coordinating body of women activists who traversed lines of race, class, sexuality, and direct experience with institutionalization. The organization’s efforts to oppose behavior-modification programs compelled its members to also stretch beyond local radicals to engage sympathetic legislators, lawyers, and civil liberties advocates invested in ameliorating prison conditions. This coalition politics proved instrumental to CSIV’s ultimate success in blocking the opening of the Worcester center after several years of defeating its earlier incarnations.

This article uses the case of CSIV to illustrate how grassroots feminist opposition to incarceration in the 1970s produced an epistemology of violence against women that contested liberal feminist demands for more aggressive criminalization of rape and battering that were increasingly met by a growing carceral state. Anti-violence work has been a focal point of both popular imaginaries and scholarly studies of second-wave feminisms. Accounts of the emergence and development of rape crisis centers, battered women’s shelters, and state and national coalitions of these organizations have deepened our understanding of the institutionalization of social movements (Bevacqua 2000; Bumiller 2007; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Matthews 1994; Reinelt 1995; Schecter 1982).

Recent scholarship has shown how this institutionalization dovetailed with a burgeoning and highly racialized crime victims' rights framework that helped enable US prison growth and eclipsed prospects for more socially transformative anti-violence agendas (Bumiller 2007; Gottschalk 2006; Richie 2012). In conversation with this literature, I argue that the example of CSIV is part of an alternative trajectory of anti-violence feminism—one shaped by both local conditions of possibility and an antagonism with the “law and order” state.

This local story also invites a rethinking of women's prisons in histories of both the feminist 1970s and postwar radicalism more broadly. Independent scholar Victoria Law (2009) has argued that resistance within women's prisons remained at the margins of anti-prison movements of the 1960s and '70s, and subsequent research and scholarship, with some notable exceptions (Díaz-Cotto 1996; Faith 1993, 2000; Kunzel 2008), generally reproduced this elision. Activism inside and surrounding women's prisons has also remained peripheral in synthetic histories of the feminist second wave (for example, Baxandall and Gordon 2001; Rosen 2000). The article contends that this often-overlooked site functioned in some locales as a lightning rod for cross-movement coalition-building, and as a catalyst for intersectional feminist organizing and thinking during this period. As geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007, 11) writes about prisons in US culture and politics, their “apparent marginality is a trick of perspective, because . . . edges are also interfaces” (11).

The case of CSIV adds to conversations about the central role played by coalitions in facilitating the cross-fertilization of feminist and other social movement ideologies. Paying attention to feminist coalitions, as Stephanie Gilmore (2008, 2) suggests, “moves us . . . away from movement leaders and ‘stars’ and into neighborhoods, community centers, and other local sites of day-to-day, grassroots activism—where coalitions most often take place.” Tending to the local and the spatial in the writing of feminist activist history can help us grasp the ways in which individuals and movements outside the bounds of feminist identification pivotally influenced and participated in its directionality (Enke 2007; Gilmore 2008; Valk 2008). Through “practical activities of social contestation” (Lipsitz 1988, 10), CSIV generated what we might consider a *queer* feminist theory of violence—a theory about the normalizing power of the state and of medicine to define the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate violence and “normal” and “deviant” gender performance. Coalition members joined a growing chorus of prison abolitionists and health radicals who identified the prison and the mental hospital as irredeemable institutions designed to confine and subordinate racial and economic “Others,” and they disseminated their critique of how these institutions policed and punished gender and sexual nonnormativity.

The original research for this article is based on primary historical sources culled from university- and community-based archives and from alternative newspapers and journals, and it especially draws on a collection of CSIV's

records deposited in the Archives and Special Collections Department at Northeastern University's Snell Library. Members maintained a substantial trail of correspondence between themselves and government officials, press clippings, published and unpublished writings of their own, records of public hearings, campaign materials, and other ephemera. These sources provide key evidence that allows me to reconstruct the origins and formation of the coalition, and to also analyze its public discourse and trace the queer connections that CSIV activists made among structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. Although less copious, meeting minutes and other documentation of the group's internal workings provide some insight into the coalition's organizational structure and culture, and also gesture to how CSIV negotiated differences of social power among its membership. Drawing on these records together with the group's published and unpublished tracts, I also provide a discussion of its more schematic articulations of long-term strategies for social transformation, including "community-controlled" alternatives to incarceration, and how these informed its organizational practices.² I conclude by briefly considering how this history contributes to contemporary scholarship and debates about the intersections of intimate and state violence in the present context of mass incarceration.

"At Framingham Prison, the Women Fight Back"

Understanding how and why the proposed Center for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital became a nexus of feminist organizing in Boston requires attention to women prisoners' political agency in its own right. The origins of the Worcester center and its opposition lay, in part, in the state of Massachusetts's response to a series of protests that took place at MCI-Framingham in 1972. A minimum-security prison with cottage-style housing, it sustained a population of roughly 125 in the early 1970s—a disproportionate percentage of whom were African American—and the majority of its prisoners held convictions for check forgery, drug use, prostitution, and petty theft. Longstanding concerns on the parts of prisoners about healthcare and labor practices (the principal prison industry was sewing American flags, inspiring the refrain "How long must we be Betsy Ross?") were compounded in December 1971 when a new superintendent enforced a dress code of skirts and introduced male guards to the staff. These administrative decisions catalyzed the formation of a prisoner-run grievance committee and the first of several sit-ins. Weeks later, when many prisoners refused to obey an order to cut their New Year's Eve celebrations short and return to their rooms, the superintendent responded by assembling more than a hundred male guards from nearby men's prisons to search all rooms and persons for contraband. Although press accounts vary on the exact figure, between twenty and forty women were placed in maximum security or transferred to other institutions, including half of the representatives

on the grievance committee. Rather than quell rebellion, these transfers ignited prisoner organizing. In March, nearly half of MCI–Framingham’s prisoners participated in a three-day sit-in to demand: the prompt return of their transferred peers; improvements in medical care, educational, and job-training programs; the removal of male guards; and the dismissal of the new superintendent. At a press conference in the gymnasium, prisoner spokespersons recounted their experiences with the facility’s medical provider, who allegedly refused to treat people experiencing urgent symptoms (on the grounds that they were, in fact, hysterical, rather than physically ill) while regularly encouraging and performing medically unnecessary hysterectomies. Other grievances outlined for the press included sexual harassment from male guards and censorship of the Black Panther Party’s newspaper and other publications deemed “politically inflammatory.”³

MCI–Framingham prisoners challenged the conditions of their confinement in the context of a nationwide wave of protests in federal and state prisons and city and county jails that crested with the September 1971 uprising at the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. The state’s militarized response at Attica brought unprecedented publicity to questions of prisoners’ rights and inspired numerous solidarity actions that drew attention to the imbrications of structural racism, poverty, and imprisonment (Samuels 2010; Thompson 2009). In Massachusetts, the events at Attica emboldened men prisoners at MCI–Walpole to engage in a series of demonstrations and work stoppages. This surge of direct actions compelled the Department of Corrections (DOC) to promise substantive changes and establish new forms of bureaucratic oversight (Bissonette 2008).

Although MCI–Framingham authorities made similar gestures in response to mounting prisoner unrest, they also made public their desire for an alternative institutional setting that possessed the capacity to “deal with” a small number of “violent women” in a “total and planned sense,” and began quietly transferring several prisoners deemed “serious management problems” to the Bridgewater State Hospital for the Criminally Insane—a former practice of their counterparts at MCI–Walpole.⁴ The deplorable conditions at the thousand-bed men’s facility had only recently been made famous by filmmaker Frederick Wiseman’s 1967 documentary exposé *Titicut Follies* (Anderson and Benson 1991). The Women’s Prison Collective, a Boston-based feminist group that grew out of the Framingham protests, helped to politicize the Bridgewater transfers by emphasizing their illegality—Bridgewater was defined by statute as an exclusively male institution—and encouraged prisoners’ rights and feminist organizations in the greater Boston area to fill the courtrooms when judges heard the transferees’ appeals cases. Although the courts ultimately ruled in favor of the prisoners, the DOC and Department of Mental Health (DMH) formalized a partnership in the fall of 1973—characterized by the ad hoc group that opposed the transfers as an “unholy alliance”—when they established a task force to explore the possibility

of rewriting the institution's statutes so as to construct a new maximum-security unit (MSU) for women at Bridgewater.⁵

Among those who supported the prisoners' appeals was Sunny Robinson, director of education and training at the recently created Prison Health Project (PHP), an initiative housed within the DOC and funded through the federal Office of Economic Opportunity, the infrastructural center of what remained of 1960s War on Poverty programs. Although Robinson and other staff members strongly objected to the proposal for a women's MSU at Bridgewater, the PHP's executive director co-signed the new task force's proposal. This development drove a wedge between the director and other project staffers invested in decarcerative and harm-reduction approaches. According to Robinson, her attempts to thwart the PHP's support for the Bridgewater proposal led to her dismissal in January 1974, prompting five other staff members to quit in protest. Their energies no longer harnessed by the government-sponsored project, these disaffected advocates shifted their focus toward solidifying a community-based alliance to oppose the Bridgewater proposal.⁶

The ad hoc coalition sponsored public demonstrations, petition drives, and behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts in 1974–75 as part of its campaign to defeat a series of bills that proposed authorization and allocation of funds for the MSU at Bridgewater. This grassroots mobilization benefited from the hospital's severely compromised reputation, soured not only by the controversy surrounding *Titicut Follies*, but also by three coterminous federal lawsuits brought against the institution on behalf of patients. The Bridgewater unit failed to garner the backing of the state legislature. However, DOC and DMH officials emerged from the rubble of the Bridgewater struggle with an alternative proposal in 1976 for the Center for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital, compelling their opponents to officially declare themselves a "Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence."⁷

Medicalizing the "New Rebellion"

The DOC and DMH attempts to establish formal pipelines between MCI–Framingham and Massachusetts's high-security mental hospitals reflected a broader categorical shift in corrections policymaking toward the expansion and medicalization of administrative segregation. Accounts of this transformation have primarily focused on men's prisons; however, the case of MCI–Framingham is but one of several that illustrates how women's prisons also served as sites through which the logics and practices of behavior modification were developed and contested. This section situates CSIV's emergence within what historian Alan Eladio Gómez (2006, 60) describes as the 1960s–'70s "dialectic of prison rebellions and repression," and briefly traces how prison activists in several different locales made behavior-modification programs for women a target of their efforts during this period. At stake for reformers and radicals alike was the propensity for corrections officials to enlist biomedical knowledge and

practice in the service of quelling dissent and eroding constitutional safeguards for prisoners' rights.

Jonathan Metzl (2009, xii) has importantly shown how cultural and political discourses about racial protest imprinted on medical diagnoses of mental illness in the 1960s and '70s, and "new 'psychochemical' technologies of control merged with concerns about the 'uncontrolled' nature of urban unrest." As activists involved with Black liberation, Puerto Rican independence, anti-war, and the Red and Brown Power movements entered jails and prisons on charges linked to their political activities, prison administrators registered an acute, collective sense of concern that prisoner dissent was aided and abetted by imprisoned radicals and the larger social movements with which they were affiliated (Gómez 2006; Mitford 1973; Samuels 2010). Scholars and activists have demonstrated how prison administrators identified the control unit (or, alternatively, the maximum-security, special housing, or alternative program unit) and attendant behavior-modification regimens as a frontline strategy for suppressing the so-called new rebellion and routinely targeted Black, Latina/o, and Native American prisoner organizers for isolation and treatment (Berkman 1979; Gómez 2006; James 2005; Rodríguez 2006). Prison psychiatrists underwrote the expansion of these practices by investing control units with medical expertise. As sensory deprivation, psychotropic drugs, and electroconvulsive shock therapy eclipsed psychoanalytic and education-based approaches that predominated in the 1950s, they "muddled commonplace distinctions between what constituted punishment, rehabilitation, and torture" (Gómez 2006, 59).

Behavior modification not only blurred understandings of state-sanctioned punishment and torture, but also contributed to the "biologization of violence" (Nelson 2011, 155) in carceral institutions. The Bridgewater and Worcester proposals reflected a more widespread notion propagated by some prison administrators and researchers in the 1970s that "an innate, generalizable female propensity for violence is let loose inside women's prisons" (Faith 1993, 229). Indeed, at the apex of the "new rebellion," the alternative weekly *Boston Phoenix* reported that geneticists from Massachusetts General Hospital collected prints and blood samples from select women prisoners at MCI-Framingham in 1971 as part of a screening program designed to detect the women's genetic capacity for violence.⁸ Although the racial identities of these prisoners were not disclosed, efforts such as these were arguably racially inflected, given the demographics of the nation's penitentiaries and longer histories of both medical experimentation on Black prisoners and the pathologization of blackness in American science and medicine (Nelson 2011; Washington 2007).

As women's prison activism burgeoned in California, New York, North Carolina, and elsewhere, activists mobilized to challenge the construction of units analogous in form and function to those proposed in Massachusetts. For example, Juanita Díaz-Cotto (1996) has documented that at the Bedford

Hills Correctional Facility in Upstate New York in the mid-1970s, administrators labeled many politically active prisoners “mentally ill” and targeted these women for segregation and transfer. When a New York court handed down a ruling in July 1974 that upheld the constitutional rights of Carol Crooks, a Black woman assigned to indefinite segregation for allegedly attacking several staff members, guards brutalized and again isolated her in the prison’s Special Housing Unit. In response, prisoners staged a protest that included taking seven staff members hostage for several hours. Administrators called on state troopers and guards from neighboring men’s prisons to quash the rebellion and transferred Crooks, along with twenty-two other women, to the Matteawan Complex for the Criminally Insane.⁹ Matteawan again served as a Bedford Hills outpost in 1976 when officials obtained permission from the New York Department of Corrections to classify ten prisoners involved in collective protest activities as “mentally disturbed.”¹⁰ According to Díaz-Cotto, “[t]he abuse by male guards was at times complemented by that received at the hands of medical personnel at Bedford Hills and other state institutions. The medical establishment not only stigmatized women who rebelled as being mentally ill, but also perpetuated further psychological and physical abuse through forced medication” (327).

That same year, the California Department of Corrections made its third attempt to open an Alternative Program Unit at the California Institute for Women (CIW) in the state’s Central Valley. Officials proclaimed that the unit would “provide more structure, control, and special program attention for those who have difficulty adjusting to general rules, guidelines and expectations at the prison,”¹¹ while opponents charged that it would “deter women from speaking out against abusive prison policies and/or practices” (Faith 2000, 163). Nearly a thousand people affiliated with Sacramento and San Francisco Bay Area women’s and prisoners’ rights groups traveled to Sacramento in March 1976 to attend a hearing and stage a rally outside the capitol building, after which activist leaders delivered petitions on behalf of more than 2,000 signatories, including 400 of the 700 CIW prisoners.¹² The groundswell especially reflected the activist base cultivated through the Santa Cruz Women’s Prison Project since 1972, an “inside/out” program that brought hundreds of volunteers into CIW over the course of its four-year tenure to teach university-level courses and facilitate other educational and cultural programs (Faith 1993, 2000).

In addition to battles at the state level, the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) spearheaded a campaign in 1976 to oppose the construction of an MSU at the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson. Despite FBI evidence to the contrary, spokespersons from the Federal Bureau of Prisons attested that the nationwide expansion of MSUs correlated to an increase in the number of women committing violent crimes. Upon its opening in 1978, the MSU’s political function was swiftly made clear. While there were no transparent criteria in place for release from the unit, a policy statement from the bureau explicitly emphasized that a record of previous

“involvement in subversive organizations” was just cause for preventative detention, and ACLU researchers documented a pattern of officials assigning to the MSU those prisoners who filed grievances or otherwise fueled dissent. ACLU staffers, combined with grassroots activists and several of the unit’s former prisoners, successfully mounted enough public pressure to shut down the unit on the grounds of civil liberties violations. Among the co-signers of this campaign to close the Alderson MSU was Boston’s CSIV.¹³

Forging a Coalition

If the proposed Center for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital reflected both local and national evolutions in the relationship of medicine and the carceral state, it also galvanized a broad cross-section of activists in Greater Boston to join ranks and understand their respective struggles in new and interconnected ways. Notably, these activists coalesced within a racially and economically stratified metropolitan area, carved out by two decades of “white flight” and discriminatory housing policy and market practices and in a central city racked by the economic crises of stagflation and deindustrialization that defined 1970s urban America (Bluestone and Stevenson 2000). The Bridgewater and Worcester center struggles unfolded in the wake of the 1974 court-ordered desegregation of the city’s schools and the resulting groundswell of backlash known as the “Boston busing crisis” (Formisano 1991; Tager 2001). During its peak activity years (1976–79), CSIV functioned as a network of roughly fifteen groups and several hundred people that transected local “women’s, mental patients’ liberation, and prison abolition movements.”¹⁴ A smaller core group that coordinated and carried out the everyday work of the organization was limited to self-identified feminist women and fluctuated in size and composition over time; some members represented the coalition’s affiliated organizations, and others made CSIV their primary activist endeavor. Although archival records suggest that a marginal majority of this class-diverse group was white and heterosexual, they also document the involvement of African American, Asian American, lesbian, and transgender women and former mental patients and prisoners. This brief section sketches the activist sectors and organizations in Greater Boston that gave shape to CSIV in an effort to show how its anti-violence politics were an amalgam of multiple strands of political thought and a reflection of local conditions.

CSIV drew leaders, supporters, and political inspiration from several different local feminist milieus. Of particular influence, grassroots activists in Boston and nearby Cambridge and Somerville helped found several shelters and safe-home projects, rape crisis centers, and “women-controlled” free or low-cost health clinics as part of their attempts to challenge what they viewed as negligent, paternalist, or abusive public systems. By 1976, two shelters—Transition House in Cambridge and Casa Myrna Vasquez in Boston’s South End—had

opened their doors to battered women and their children, and both the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center and Women's Community Health Center were in their third year of operation. These institutions, and the translocal movements of which they were a part, championed, if only partially realized, commitments to radical egalitarianism, peer education, survivor and layperson expertise, and mutual aid (Bevacqua 2000; Morgen 2002; Schecter 1982). Many of these projects intersected through the Cambridge Women's Center, which was also a "home base" of sorts for CSIV's leadership core. A former Harvard University building procured through direct-action organizing, the center provided meeting spaces and other resources to a variety of groups that emerged from the primarily white and college-educated/attending base of women's liberation in Cambridge and, to a lesser extent, from multiracial, working-class neighborhoods of Boston (Breines 2006). The coalition also gained endorsements from the local chapters of both the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse and the international socialist feminist campaign Wages for Housework, as well as from the Prostitutes' Union of Massachusetts.¹⁵

Boston was also the point of origin for the renowned Black lesbian socialist feminist group the Combahee River Collective (CRC), founded in 1974. Members of CRC and CSIV overlapped in the support committee for Ella Ellison, an African American woman falsely convicted in 1974 of participating in the murder of a Boston police officer, and again, in 1979, in a defense committee for Willie Sanders, a local African American man falsely accused of the rape of a white woman in the Brighton neighborhood. That same year, the CRC also played a definitional, bridge-making role in a broad coalitional response to twelve murders of Black women that were met with woeful neglect from the Boston Police Department (*ibid.*; Grant 1992). Through these and other local activist engagements, as well as through its widely circulated writings, particularly "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977), the CRC's "interlocking" analysis of oppression and critique of single-issue politics indelibly impacted feminist discourse on violence in Greater Boston.

Groups like the Boston Bail Fund, the Prison Book Program, the Worcester Correctional Change Group, and the aforementioned Women's Prison Collective all anchored the CSIV network in local prisoner support and anti-incarceration efforts.¹⁶ Among CSIV's closest organizational partners was Families and Friends of Prisoners, founded in 1974 by African American community activists in the working-class, multiracial neighborhood of Dorchester—a stronghold of civil rights activism since the 1960s and a neighborhood acutely hit by mid-century out-migrations of manufacturing and middle-class tax bases. A "self-help program," Families and Friends' principal activities included peer counseling and other support for former prisoners, providing affordable transportation to prison visitors, and raising awareness of conditions of confinement through community education and by publishing a regular newsletter.¹⁷ Additionally, the coalition found allies in the local offices of both the ACLU and Justice Committee of

the American Friends Service Committee, which put out a coterminous call for a moratorium on new prison construction in Massachusetts.¹⁸

Other integral members of the coalition included the editors of *State and Mind*, an independent journal based in Somerville, and Boston's Mental Patients Liberation Front (MPLF), a grassroots self-help organization engaged in media production, peer-directed support, and direct-action organizing. Organizations like these, along with San Francisco's Network Against Psychiatric Assault, Philadelphia's Alliance for the Liberation of Mental Patients, and others, formed a decentralized and primarily urban network that advocated for the self-determination of people with psychiatric disabilities and the abolition of locked institutions (Chamberlin 1990). These groups reflected and extended a widespread scrutiny of psychiatric practice that marked the broad countercultural context of the 1960s and '70s (Staub 2011). Members of MPLF also helped start the Elizabeth Stone House in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood, a "patient-controlled" residential alternative to state-sponsored institutions for women and their children and another member of the CSIV network (Chamberlin 1978).

"Stop the Violent Unit!"

In the spring of 1976, DMH and DOC officials successfully placed their proposal for the Center for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital on the agenda of the State Senate's Ways and Means Committee. It called for a three-to-one ratio of custodial and medical staff to prisoners and projected an operating budget of approximately \$60,000 per prisoner, per year. Although the committee approved an initial \$150,000 for a diagnostic team of Worcester State Hospital employees to screen prisoners for "clinical pictures of violence," it hinged approval of additional monies for the center on the creation of an advisory body that was to include members of concerned community groups.¹⁹ When their expected invitations to participate in the new entity failed to materialize, CSIV members declared it "a public relations arm of DMH."²⁰ However, they faithfully attended the advisory committee's public meetings, maximizing the question-and-answer periods to express their opposition to the center. In order for the advisors to genuinely serve as women's advocates, coalition representatives attested, they would need the institutional power to ensure that "all other alternatives have been exhausted"; to guarantee that civil liberties were safeguarded, including access to a grievance process; and to participate in the hiring and firing of staff. CSIV demanded that the advisory group undertake a holistic examination of the sources and causes of imprisonment: "financial pressures, lack of a job, lack of education . . . and the many socio-economic and racial influences on who a person is. . . . The woman's whole situation has got to be looked at if she is to be truly assisted. Real help has to support her 'personhood,' not just reshape her to DMH's version of a 'good woman.'"²¹

In addition to their tenacious presence at the advisory committee meetings, activists served Governor Michael Dukakis a petition of 1,500 signatures in June 1977, and in October, they staged the aforementioned demonstration at the Boston Common to denounce the “violent unit.” Several hundred of the nearly 1,000 protestors joined CSIV the following day on the University of Massachusetts Boston campus for a series of educational workshops and strategy conversations.²² These ranged from mixed-gender discussions about the prospect of building a national network of groups around the country working to challenge similar units to a women-only gathering of “organizers working . . . in the areas of battered women, rape, media violence, and sexual harassment in the workplace, and violence against institutionalized women.”²³ In December, CSIV held another demonstration on the State House steps opposing a planned appropriation of nearly half-a-million dollars for renovation of the maximum-security cells at Framingham and construction of twenty new cells, insisting that if the appropriation met with approval, there would “be no need for the Worcester Unit, because the behavior modification, maximum security, holding center for so-called ‘violent’ women will be right upstairs from *all* women prisoners at Framingham.”²⁴

Originally scheduled to open in March 1977, officials acknowledged that the delayed construction of the center was due, in part, to the growing grassroots opposition.²⁵ If direct action, petition drives, media-making, and public-meeting disruptions forced public debate on the Worcester center’s validity and future, the coalition’s lynchpin proved to be Massachusetts’s Ten Taxpayer Group mechanism, which guaranteed self-organized groups of ten taxpaying citizens the right to a public hearing on pending certifications for government-sponsored projects. CSIV activists facilitated the organization of several taxpayer groups, each of which were granted a hearing with officials at the Department of Public Health (DPH) who oversaw the determination-of-need process. These public hearings collected and collectivized the testimonies of former prisoners, advocates, and activists and produced a significant evidentiary archive for denying the DMH its certification. De Courcy Squire, a former prisoner and staff member at the Boston Bail Project, for example, carefully detailed her “own experiences and observations” to substantiate her claim that “psychiatric labeling and transfers can be used . . . to cover up institutional abuses.”²⁶ In addition to her own story, Squire recounted those of several other Framingham prisoners, including a 17-year-old pregnant woman who refused to undress for the guards conducting her admissions examination and was subsequently transferred to Bridgewater. Squire concluded: “The women DOC and DMH are talking about are women who are anxious and women who are angry—because the conditions of our lives have caused anxiety and anger. The Worcester unit is not in any way a solution for this.”²⁷ A taxpayer group of feminist anti-violence activists from western Massachusetts challenged the conflation of any and all resistant, self-defensive behavior with violence by suggesting that “[a]sking a woman to stop

being violent when she is constantly the focus of daily violence, within and outside of existing institutions is the same as asking her to commit suicide.”²⁸ MPLF members forecasted the potential for nonconsensual drug experimentation on the unit’s prospective prisoner-patients. Among the central through lines of these testimonials were the need for alternatives to institutional settings and the provocation that “not only is there not a need for a center for violent women, there is a very real danger in creating one.”²⁹ The DPH sent multiple pages of questions to the center’s proponents in November 1978; the DMH officials failed to respond, and shortly thereafter, the Worcester center was removed from the state budget.³⁰

CSIV’s campaign against the proposed Worcester center not only achieved a tangible legislative victory, but also generated a counter-narrative of gender, violence, and incarceration. Members of the core group communicated their ideas in a variety of media sources, including opinion editorials in the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald* and interviews and feature pieces in activist periodicals like *Sister Courage*, *Aegis: Magazine on Ending Violence Against Women*, and *Science for the People*. The latter tracts often spoke beyond the pragmatics of opposing the Worcester center to argue for a rethinking of the social constructions of criminality and mental illness through the lenses of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and heterosexism. A leaflet outlined, for instance, that “[o]ur opposition to this unit is part of our opposition to prisons and mental hospitals in general. . . . They are extreme and brutal manifestations of the racism and classism of our society, and . . . inevitably reflect and serve the interests of the patriarchal, capitalist organization of society, which is, most basically, what we are fighting.”³¹ Taken together, this collection of writings and propaganda asked how the medicalization and criminalization of sexual and gender deviance, the racial and economic politics of imprisonment, and intimate violence against women converged in the material realities of women’s lives.

The coalition understood initiatives like the Worcester center as part of an historical synergy between medicalization and criminalization. In a signature piece titled “The Truth Behind the Bars,” the group posited that “there have never been clear lines between who can become labeled a ‘criminal’ and who can become labeled a ‘crazy’”; both “correctional and psychiatric prisons” share an objective of “individual adjustment or pacification” to the existing social order.³² In the case of the Worcester center, CSIV saw these parallels transfigured into powerful intersections: by importing the “medical model” into the prison setting, corrections authorities would be granted the mechanism to indefinitely extend the sentences of so-called violent women under the auspices of professional medical opinion. One’s sentence may then come to include subjection to biomedical abuse, which, in turn, might actually “increase disruption” and make for a “self-fulfilling prophecy.”³³ Coalition writers suggested that the act of labeling worked to disaggregate an individual’s behavior from social, political, and institutional contexts—including her prescribed treatment.

Indeed, the very behaviors that correctional and mental hospital authorities sought to curtail were reconceptualized in CSIV's analysis as legitimate responses to institutional harm. "Crazy" behaviors were strategies for navigating and surviving the conditions of confinement in prisons and mental institutions. "Any crazy behavior," wrote Arlene Sen (1981, 31) of MPLF and CSIV, "is really connected in some way to the issues of power and powerlessness—sexism, racism, class, heterosexism, ageism, etc." The "especially narrow definitions of appropriate behavior for women" that these institutions enforced rendered any expressions of independence or autonomy as nonnormative and dangerous: "For example, inappropriate behavior for an inmate may include political activism or organizing activity, refusal to accept medication, refusal to accept arbitrary orders, or refusal to do prison work."³⁴ Protest was constructed as a masculinizing activity and thus doubly circumscribed in women's prisons. On the outside of the walls, CSIV noted, "it is not insignificant that the perpetrators of the proposed Worcester unit try to dismiss the vocal opposition . . . by labeling us 'a bunch of dykes.' . . . As women begin to organize and chip away at the system which oppresses us, those with a vested interest in maintaining that system will continue to throw out the labels: 'dyke,' 'crazy,' 'wild,' 'violent.'"³⁵ Notably, CSIV organized in the wake of the success of a several-year grassroots pressure campaign to remove homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's* list of mental disorders (Bayer 1987). Feminist critiques of psychiatry also gained empirical credibility in the early 1970s with the publication of Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* (1972). Cited by CSIV, Chesler's research confirmed that women comprised the majority of psychiatric patients and inmates in the United States, and that diagnoses and treatments, including length of stay, were stratified by race, class, and gender.

The slogan "Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves," an oft-heard call among feminist prison activists of the period, to some extent aptly abbreviates the group's appeals about why the Worcester center could be construed as an attack on "all women." Activists argued that the center was an especially violent "response to all women who are angry and fighting back against the power of the patriarchal system to define our roles and control our lives."³⁶ Invoking this kind of sisterhood solidarity certainly risked effacing inequities and privileging sameness over difference. CSIV writers did, however, routinely emphasize the ways in which race, class, sexuality, and gender expression mediated women's respective relationships to policing and incarceration—and as mentioned above, the core group embodied these differences of standpoint to some extent. Those most likely to end up in a Worcester center, they speculated, would be "poor women, Black women, Hispanic women, Lesbians—any woman who lacks sufficient money and privilege to escape incarceration by the State."³⁷

The center would also extend the reach of the much larger target—the "prison/psychiatric state." If left unchecked, activists reasoned, its expansion would bring consequences for increasing numbers of gender-nonconforming

women, including those who violate norms in an effort to defend themselves from male violence. CSIV spokesperson Lee Austin, for example, speculated in an interview with *Aegis* that women similar in circumstances to Inez Garcia, who was convicted of second-degree murder in California in 1974 for fatally wounding one of her two sexual attackers, might “inappropriately end up at Worcester.”³⁸ For many women of color and white antiracist feminists engaged in anti-violence activism around the country, the cause célèbre self-defense trials of Garcia and Joan Little, among others, that unfolded across the decade illuminated the interconnectedness of issues of rape and battery, institutionalized racism, and violence by law-enforcement and custodial officers (Law 2010; McGuire 2010; Thuma 2011; Valk 2008).

Indeed, it was the impossibility of self-defense in the prison setting that, in part, led the coalition to publicly denounce incarceration itself as a form of “violence against women.”³⁹ By the mid-1970s, this term often functioned in local and national feminist networks as an umbrella for various forms of male intimate violence against women. The implications of including incarceration within this rhetorical frame exceeded basic addition. The most visible segments of the women’s anti-violence movement emphasized the need to increase policing and convictions of rape and battery through criminal law and policy reform. Empowered by fiscal support through federal crime victims’ rights initiatives, these agendas, however unwittingly, corroborated with the highly racialized criminal justice buildup of the late 1960s and ’70s, as well as endorsed a legal imaginary in which *criminals* and *victims* were discrete populations (Bumiller 2007; Gottschalk 2006; Richie 1996, 2012). As it reconfigured *violent women* as victims of institutional violence and foregrounded *imprisoned women* as subjects of feminist discourse, CSIV rebuked a “tough on crime” approach to male violence and called for alternatives to criminal justice.

Creating “Real Alternatives”

Upon their victory in the Worcester center struggle, CSIV activists declared that they “must hold the line and move on to create the real alternatives we need.”⁴⁰ Although they understood campaigns to prevent the expansion of behavior-modification units to be vital efforts, the activists’ larger vision of abolishing “the whole violent system” led them to propose a “strategy that includes four aspects: anti-institutional work, support work for women already incarcerated, support for genuine alternatives for people in crisis or distress, and, finally, personal practice to overcome the violence that pervades our daily lives.”⁴¹ Across its tenure, CSIV straddled a familiar tension for social justice radicals between reforming existing institutions and enacting alternative forms of social and political life.⁴² The former could, and often did, eclipse the latter; however, CSIV activists found ways to advocate for alternative notions of health, safety, justice, and belonging through their writings and popular-education activities.

Their epistemology of violence impelled them to call for what antiracist (and) queer feminist activists have more recently described as “community accountability” and “transformative justice”: approaches to interpersonal violence and conflict that are guided by a goal of large-scale social transformation (Bierria, Rojas Durazo, and Kim 2011; Chen, Dulani, and Piepza-Samarasinha 2011). The group’s organizational structure and process also became an important site for prefiguring aspects of its radical egalitarian and abolitionist vision.

CSIV activists envisioned that the various social movements in which it was anchored would together build a “broad network . . . of communities, families and friends of prisoners and psychiatric inmates, cultural workers, and advocates of alternatives” for the supplanting of the prison/psychiatric state with what they described as a “freedom/struggle culture.” This counterculture would be premised on self-determination, “self-love and other-love,” and social accountability, and cultivated through slow and extensive development of small mutual-aid collectivities⁴³: “We cannot and must not expect that the state will work to make us strong, healthy, and clear, or teach us how to work collectively on meeting our needs. The state needs to keep us divided, wary of our neighbors, scared of deep feelings, and distanced from anyone in crisis.”⁴⁴ Hence, “real alternatives” were community-controlled structures for supporting people in emotional crisis, for holding accountable those who harm others, and for freely and safely expressing grief and anger without punitive or pathologizing reprisal. A criminal legal approach to rape and battery, they posited, both usurped women’s self-determination and promised more institutional violence.⁴⁵ *Community*, then, acquired at least three loose definitions in CSIV’s writings: it was a result of an intentional and possibly arduous process of social organization; an antithetical counterpart to the state; and a staging ground for imagining otherwise.

Although they regularly acknowledged that some women may, in fact, “need intensive emotional support,” CSIV members unequivocally maintained that locked and coercive institutions were not the answer. Nor were state-sponsored community mental health centers, which gradually replaced large state-run hospitals around the country between the 1960s and ’80s. Echoing the criticisms of the broader mental patients’ liberation movement, “[t]he administrators and psychiatrists of these centers . . . are not from the working-class communities in which they are often placed, but are generally from white and privileged communities. . . . They focus on individual ‘sickness’ rather than, for example, unemployment and lack of childcare.”⁴⁶ While the group conceded the necessity of social services in the short term, it argued that “[t]o the extent possible, participation in any service must be voluntary, and show respect for the individual’s need for self-direction and growth.”⁴⁷ Self- and peer-directed services, based in values of interdependency, autonomy, and egalitarianism, would safeguard against forms of professionalism and hierarchy that fostered dependency and exploitation. This ethos coalesced the self-help politics of CSIV’s multiple

political influences: the radical health, prisoners' rights, anti-rape, battered women's, and mental patients' liberation movements.

Although CSIV activists challenged the notion that "communities are organic, natural, spontaneous occurrences" (Joseph 2002), the concept of *community control* nevertheless remained abstract in their writings. When it came to identifying community-controlled alternatives in action, the coalition lifted up many of the organizations in its wider network, particularly feminist-run battered women's shelters and the Elizabeth Stone House, while also pointing to batterers' counseling programs, rape crisis services, food cooperatives, and other community-based initiatives that attested to the potential "to survive without the intervention of the state."⁴⁸ The key element of a viable alternative to institutionalization was "recogni[tion] that emotional crisis happens within a political, social, and economic context."⁴⁹ Although CSIV members likely knew firsthand the potential for such projects to reproduce their own respective forms of social normativity, exclusion, and hierarchy along axes of race, sexuality, language, class, or gender, these common realities do not appear to have been discussed in print. Along similar lines, activists also advocated for "women having control over what happens to rapists and batterers within their communities . . . and offenders learning to live as neighbors in caring communities,"⁵⁰ yet did not comment on how such a vision of "women having control" potentially subsumed other modes of difference. That *community* remained an imprecise concept in their political tracts perhaps illustrates the complex and difficult ideas it could be burdened to capture, or wind up bracketing.

Mission statements and meeting minutes suggest that CSIV did, however, complicate romanticizing deployments of *sisterhood* or *women's community* at the organizational level. The restriction of membership in the core group by gender identity was a conscious choice on the part of CSIV leaders, who sought to establish a visible feminist presence in the larger, mixed-gender anti-incarceration movement, as well as to cultivate "the best possible atmosphere [for their] continued political education and growth."⁵¹ This atmosphere was consciously labored for rather than assumed: each member had to be "dedicated to the work of creating a reality that is more self-determining and mutually responsible than the dominant culture."⁵² Steeped in principles of participatory democracy and feminist empowerment, the organization adopted a number of protocols designed to encourage equitable participation in dialogue and decision-making. Each meeting began with a "check-in," followed by the group working together to develop an agenda. Facilitators and note-takers rotated weekly, decisions were largely made by consensus, and the writing and creation of publicity materials was done collaboratively. While such practices were certainly time-intensive and likely impacted the participation of women for whom a several-hour weekly meeting was not feasible, these practices were explicitly chosen by the group to counter prospective dynamics of entitlement and marginalization between those who had been labeled "crazy," "violent," "sick," or "dangerous" by dominant

cultural authorities and those who were experienced in navigating public bureaucracies as nonprofit, social service, or healthcare workers.⁵³ The diversity of social locations and lived experiences present in the group was explicitly cited as “a strength, not a liability.”⁵⁴ Foregrounded in CSIV’s “Principles of Unity” was a declaration of the importance for members to proactively confront and negotiate differences of “race, class, sex, sexual preference, religion, age, ethnic background, and other life experiences such as incarceration.”⁵⁵ I interpret these directional statements as more prescriptive than descriptive, signaling the kinds of conflicts and negotiations that likely emerged in the process of coalescing a diverse activist network within local “social geographies already structured around gender, race, class, and sexual exclusions” (Enke 2007, 4–6).

During a period in which many of its feminist organizational contemporaries in Boston and beyond contentiously debated the boundaries of women-only spaces, at least one transgender woman participated in the core group. Initially, trans-inclusivity functioned as an informal principle of this self-described “all-women, consciously feminist organization”—one that we might construe was an organic extension of CSIV’s broad political project of challenging the social construction and criminalization of gender deviance. However, trans-inclusion crystallized as a formal stance in 1978 when a nontransgender member criticized the group for failing to alert local feminist institutions about its transgender member, whose presence, she argued, could discomfort denizens of the “Greater Boston Women’s Community.”⁵⁶ Charging the group with deceit for what she characterized as its “covert position on transsexuals,” this member was subsequently asked to leave the coalition on the grounds that her denouncement was “anti-feminist” and “divisive.”⁵⁷ Shortly thereafter, CSIV was asked to appear at a forum called by an ad hoc group representing several local feminist institutions to explain its position on transsexuality. These two challenges prompted the coalition to develop and formalize a political rationale for its refusal to exclude trans women:

We, as a Coalition, stand firmly against the oppression of all people. For this reason we will not tolerate the oppression of any person for any part of their being. . . . What is to prevent other women coming to the Coalition with their own personal definitions of what constitutes a woman, and requiring us to reject those that the definition excludes? We must denounce such a personal definition as unsisterly, and not, in our rush to comply with it, become unsisterly ourselves. Instead, we must learn to recognize divisive attacks, even when they are couched in the language of feminism.⁵⁸

At the crux of CSIV’s campaign against the Worcester center was a politics of gender self-determination; transgender women, former prisoners and mental patients, women involved in the sex trade, and others stigmatized or policed for nonconforming gender performances that joined either CSIV’s core group

or the wider network helped carve out the coalition's relatively more expansive conception of *all-women space*.

Conclusion

CSIV's activity wound down after the Worcester campaign, although its politics very likely continued to percolate through the local movements from which it emerged. Many members rerouted their energies into new and ongoing efforts, including the campaign to free Willie Sanders and one to abolish the death penalty in the state, and to organizations like Families and Friends of Prisoners and Elizabeth Stone House.⁵⁹ Although the group's archived records thin considerably around 1980, it appears that several members reunited in the mid-1980s to challenge the proposed construction of similar "secure care" units for not only adult women, but also youth confined in the state's juvenile justice system whom officials declared dangerous to their peers and themselves.⁶⁰

This article has shown how women's prisons were important sites of cross-movement coalition work and intersectional thought in the 1970s. CSIV's efforts to challenge the consolidation of several prison-to-hospital pipelines in Massachusetts involved building alliances across multiple identities and places, and analyzing the interrelationships of medicalization and incarceration and capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and compulsory heterosexuality. Hence, not only did CSIV bring diverse constituencies together to secure several policy victories, but its campaigns were also coalitional spaces through which social movement boundaries blurred and ideologies cross-fertilized. As local mental patients' rights, prisoners' rights, and feminist groups coalesced, they developed an epistemology of violence that linked the politics of mental health to the repressive punishment of female agency, and the expansion of medicalized incarceration to hierarchies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Within this cross-movement contact zone, CSIV members experimented with formulations of *community* that complicated and reproduced common idealizations of this concept among self-help activists, as well as generated heterodox conceptions of safety and accountability.

CSIV's anti-incarceration activism engendered a feminist politics of violence and safety that set it apart from, and against, concurrent agendas for more aggressive policing and punishment of male intimate violence against women. Scholars have well-documented how feminist advocates of criminal legal reform and crime victims' rights activists helped propel segments of the initially grassroots anti-violence against women movement of the 1970s onto "the terrain of the state" (Reinelt 1995) by the 1980s, and into hegemonic public discourse by the 1990s. Recent scholarship characterizes this process of "mainstreaming" violence against women as one of neoliberal appropriation or absorption (Bumiller 2007), and has emphasized the agency of anti-violence feminism in the expansion of the neoliberal carceral state (Gottschalk 2006) and in the making

of a “prison nation” (Richie 2012). Scholars and activists have also critically analyzed the unintended, uneven, and otherwise contradictory outcomes that a tough-on-crime approach to gendered violence has produced—particularly as they have manifested in the lives of low-income and immigrant women of color (Bhattacharjee and Silliman 2002; Coker 2001; Crenshaw 1991; INCITE! 2006; Richie 1996, 2012). These and other critical voices have increasingly drawn attention to the destabilizing and violent effects of carceral state expansion on communities of color and the imbrications of state-sponsored and intimate forms of violence (Díaz-Cotto 2006; Law 2009; Lawston 2009; Lawston and Lucas 2011; Solinger et al. 2010; Sudbury 2005). As part of the contemporary social movement for prison abolition that has steadily grown since the late 1990s, antiracist and queer feminist activists have advocated for and practiced with alternatives to criminal legal responses to intimate violence (Bierria, Rojas Durazo, and Kim 2011; Chen, Dulani, and Piepza-Samarasinha 2011; INCITE! 2006; Smith 2005).

Recovering earlier examples of anti-statist, anti-violence campaigns reveals the contiguity between them and current antiracist and queer feminist concerns about the politics of violence, safety, and imprisonment. Indeed, CSIV’s story offers us a view into some of the ways in which grassroots activist formations that focused on women’s prisons—often multiracial and explicitly antiracist, and often inclusive of if not led by lesbians—asked and answered questions about the conjuncture of gendered violence and imprisonment on the front end of mass incarceration. Many concluded, in the words of Janet Howard (1981, 83) of Brooklyn’s Women Free Women in Prison Collective, that “the state is in no way our ally in the struggle against rape and battering.” Shifting our attention to alternative trajectories of anti-violence feminism demonstrates how violence against women was a category of contestation that amassed different meanings in different places. In the case of Greater Boston, the slogan “Stop Violence Against Women” drew lines of connection between MCI–Framingham and Massachusetts’s state mental hospitals; prisoners’ rights, psychiatric survivors’, and sex workers’ rights groups; and women’s shelters and rape crisis and feminist health centers. These coalition politics invite us to conceive of gendered violence and its opposition in the feminist 1970s in more capacious terms.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Alisa Bierria, Dan Berger, Jakeya Caruthers, Christina Hanhardt, Christoph Hanssmann, Sid Jordan, Erica Meiners, Nick Mitchell, Sandy Soto, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this article. Portions of this work were presented at the 2011 annual meetings of the American Studies Association and the Society for Disability Studies, and I thank the conference attendees and panel participants for their feedback. I would also like to thank Lisa Duggan for her invaluable mentorship. A

Heller-Bernard Fellowship from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at The Graduate Center/CUNY generously supported the writing of this article.

Emily Thuma is an assistant professor in the Department of Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of California, Irvine. She can be reached at emily.thuma@uci.edu.

Notes

1. Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence (CSIV), “Dear Sisters,” letter addressed to feminist activists in Greater Boston, August 20, 1977, box 1, folder 12, in “Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence Records,” Northeastern University Libraries, Boston (hereafter CSIVR-NUL); “Worcester Unit Background,” n.d., box 6, folder 112, in CSIV-NUL; letter, Boston Movement Bail Fund to Human Services Committee, March 22, 1976, box 1, folder 12, in CSIVR-NUL.

2. Although this article is based on archival evidence, I also modestly draw on a telephone interview I conducted in December 2010 with former CSIV leader Sunny Robinson for supporting details about the group’s formation, key collaborators, and internal structure.

3. “Women Inmates Stage Sit-in,” *Boston Globe*, March 21, 1972, box 1, folder 4, in “Crime, Prisons, and Reform Schools Collection,” Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts (hereafter CPRSC-SC); Women’s Prison Collective, “At Framingham Prison, the Women Fight Back,” *Boston After Dark*, March 28, 1972, box 1, folder 4, in CPRSC-SC; Kathleen Kilgore, “The Trouble with Framingham Women’s Prison is Men,” *Boston Phoenix*, May 17, 1972, box 1, folder 4, in CPRSC-SC; Rhonda Zangwill, “An Ivy Covered Prison Is Still a Jail,” *Equal Times*, August 28, 1978, box 2, folder 43, in CSIVR-NUL; CSIV, “An Annotated Chronology of the Events Surrounding the Development of the Proposed ‘Center for Violent Women’ at Worcester State Hospital,” November 1977, box 1, folder 2, in CSIVR-NUL.

4. For a discussion of transfers from MCI–Walpole to the Bridgewater State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, see Jamie Bissonette (2008, 26–29, 33–36). CSIV, “Annotated Chronology,” 2–5, and “Ward for Violent Women Opens in Worcester,” *Sister Courage*, December 1976, box 1, folder 12, in CSIVR-NUL.

5. Women’s Prison Collective, “At Framingham Prison, the Women Fight Back”; CSIV, “Annotated Chronology,” 2, and “Ward for Violent Women Opens in Worcester.”

6. Sunny Robinson, telephone interview with the author, December 2010; CSIV, “Annotated Chronology,” 8.

7. CSIV, “Annotated Chronology,” 11–13, and “Ward for Violent Women Opens in Worcester”; Sally Challant, Freada Klein, and Sunny Robinson, “Women in Prison,” *Feminist Alliance Against Rape Newsletter*, November/December 1976, 4, in Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts (hereafter PC-SC).

8. CSIV, “Annotated Chronology,” 7.

9. See Juanita Díaz-Cotto (1996, 324–27), and “Behavior Modification,” *No More Cages* 2, no. 3 (1979): 8–17. See also Victoria Law (2009, 11–12).

10. "Bedford Hills," *Through the Looking Glass* 2, no. 3 (1977), in Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Periodicals Collection, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter ALFAPC-DU).
11. "Updates," *Through the Looking Glass* 1, no. 1 (1976), in ALFAPC-DU.
12. "Women Rally to Protest State Prison Program," *Sacramento Bee*, March 20, 1976, and Women's Prison Coalition, press release, April 6, 1976, both in box 52, folder 14, "San Francisco Women's Building Collection," GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco.
13. Norman A. Carlson (director, Bureau of Prisons), "Policy Statement on the Maximum Security Unit at FCI, Alderson, West Virginia," September 22, 1977, box 11, folder 217; CSIV, "'Violent Women' Slammed in New Jails," n.d., box 6, folder 110; National Prison Project, press release, October, 20, 1978, box 11, folder 217 (all in CSIVR-NUL).
14. CSIV, newsletter, n.d., box 2, folder 27, in CSIVR-NUL.
15. CSIV, newsletter, March 1979, box 2, folder 27, in CSIVR-NUL.
16. *Ibid.*
17. This description is based on my review of several issues of the organization's newsletter, *Doing Time*.
18. CSIV, newsletter, March 1979, box 2, folder 27, in CSIVR-NUL.
19. "21 Reasons for Our Opposition to the Worcester Unit for 'Violent' Women," broadsheet, 1977, box 1, folder 24; Challant, Klein, and Robinson, "Women in Prison," 2; CSIV, "The Worcester Ward: Violence Against Women," *Science for the People* 10, no. 6 (1978): 10; CSIV, "We Stopped the Women's Unit" (flier), October 1979, box 2, folder 27 (all in CSIVR-NUL).
20. "Women in Fight Against Prison/Hospital Unit," *Feminist Alliance Against Rape Newsletter*, March/April 1977, 12–13, in PC-SC.
21. Special Consultation and Treatment Program for Women Advisory Committee, meeting minutes, March 22, 1978, box 6, folder 108, in CSIVR-NUL.
22. CSIV, press release, December 20, 1977, box 2, folder 29, in CSIVR-NUL.
23. CSIV, "Workshop Schedule for October 2," conference program, 1977, box 12, folder 278, in CSIVR-NUL.
24. "Framingham Goes Max," n.d., box 2, folder 27, in CSIVR-NUL (emphasis in original).
25. Marian J. Meyers, "A Ward for Violent Women: A Controversy without End," *Worcester: The Magazine for Central Massachusetts*, February 1978, 12–13, box 6, folder 101, in CSIVR-NUL.
26. De Courcy Squire (spokesperson for the Boston Bail Fund), "Oral Testimony Given Opposing the Application for a Certificate of Need for a Unit for Violent Women at Worcester State Hospital," April 26, 1978, box 6, folder 113, in CSIVR-NUL.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Wendi E. Weinschel (spokesperson for Western Massachusetts Residents Against the Worcester Unit), "Testimony Regarding the DMH Worcester State Hospital Project #2–2723," box 8, folder 135, in CSIVR-NUL.
29. "Testimony for Determination of Need Hearing Regarding the Department of Mental Health Worcester State Hospital Project," March 8, 1978, box 8, folder 135; letter, Boston Bail Fund to Human Services Committee of the Massachusetts General Court, March 22, 1976, box 1, folder 12 (both in CSIVR-NUL).
30. "We Stopped the Women's Unit," n.d., box 2, folder 27, in CSIVR-NUL.

31. "21 Reasons for Our Opposition to the Worcester Unit for 'Violent' Women."
32. CSIV, "The Truth Behind the Bars," *No More Cages* 2, no. 4 (1981): 13, in ALFAPC-DU.
33. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 12.
34. Challant, Klein, and Robinson, "Women in Prison," 2.
35. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 15.
36. "21 Reasons for Our Opposition to the Worcester Unit for 'Violent' Women."
37. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 14.
38. "Women in Fight Against Prison/Hospital Unit," 13.
39. "21 Reasons for Our Opposition to the Worcester Unit for 'Violent' Women"; letter, CSIV to CORE Collective at the Cambridge Women's Center, October 28, 1976, box 1, folder 5, in CSIVR-NUL.
40. CSIV, "We Stopped the Women's Unit."
41. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 16.
42. Minutes from an organizational retreat, n.d., box 1, folder 17, in CSIVR-NUL.
43. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 16.
44. CSIV, "The Truth Behind the Bars," 19.
45. *Ibid.*, 18.
46. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 11.
47. CSIV, "The Truth Behind the Bars," 18.
48. *Ibid.*, 19.
49. CSIV, "The Worcester Ward," 17.
50. CSIV, "The Truth Behind the Bars," 18.
51. CSIV, "Principles of Unity," n.d., box 1, folder 22, in CSIVR-NUL.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*; Robinson, interview.
54. Statement on internal process, n.d., box 12, folder 276, in CSIVR-NUL.
55. CSIV, "Principles of Unity."
56. "Open Letter," n.d., box 1, file 22, in CSIVR-NUL.
57. Meeting minutes, n.d., box 12, folder 276, in CSIVR-NUL.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Robinson, interview.
60. Memorandum, "Action Alert," November 17, 1986, box 2, folder 41, in CSIVR-NUL.

References

- Anderson, Carolyn, and Thomas W. Benson. 1991. *Documentary Dilemmas: Frederick Wiseman's Titicut Follies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Baxandall, Rosalyn, and Linda Gordon. 2001. *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bayer, Ronald. 1987. *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Berkman, Ronald. 1979. *Opening the Gates: The Rise of the Prisoners' Movement*. New York: Lexington Books.

- Bevacqua, Maria. 2000. *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Bhattacharjee, Annanya, and Jael Silliman, eds. 2002. *Policing the National Body: Race, Gender, and Criminalization*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Bierria, Alisa, Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo, and Mimi Kim, eds. 2011. "Community Accountability: Emerging Movements to Transform Violence" (special issue). *Social Justice Journal* 37 (4).
- Bissonette, Jamie. 2008. *When the Prisoners Ran Walpole: A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Bluestone, Barry, and Mary Huff Stevenson. 2000. *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Breines, Wini. 2006. *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bumiller, Kristin. 2007. *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement against Sexual Violence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chamberlin, Judi. 1978. *On Our Own: Patient-Controlled Alternatives to the Mental Health System*. New York: Hawthorn Books.
- . 1990. "The Ex-Patients' Movement: Where We've Been and Where We're Going." *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 11 (3-4): 323-36.
- Chen, Ching-In, Jai Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, eds. 2011. *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence within Activist Communities*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Chesler, Phyllis. 1972. *Women and Madness*. New York: Avon Books.
- Coker, Donna. 2001. "Crime Control and Feminist Law Reform in Domestic Violence Law: A Critical Review." *Buffalo Criminal Law Review* 4 (2): 801-60.
- Combahee River Collective (CRC). 1981. "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977). In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 210-18. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241-99.
- Díaz-Cotto, Juanita. 1996. *Gender, Ethnicity, and The State: Latina and Latino Prison Politics*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- . 2006. *Chicana Lives and Criminal Justice: Voices from El Barrio*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Dobash, R. Emerson, and Russell P. Dobash. 1992. *Women, Violence, and Social Change*. New York: Routledge.
- Enke, Anne. 2007. *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Faith, Karlene. 1993. *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance*. Vancouver, BC: Press Gang Publishers.
- . 2000. "Reflections on Inside/Out Organizing." *Social Justice Journal* 27 (3): 158-67.
- Formisano, Ronald P. 1991. *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and the 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gilmore, Stephanie, ed. 2008. *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Gómez, Alan Eladio. 2006. "Resisting Living Death at Marion Federal Penitentiary, 1972." *Radical History Review* 96: 58–86.
- Gottschalk, Marie. 2006. *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grant, Jaime. 1992. "Who's Killing Us?" In *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, edited by Jill Radford and Diana Russell, 145–60. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Howard, Janet. 1981. "Battered and Raped: The Physical/Sexual Abuse of Women." In *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence*, edited by Frédérique Delacoste and Felice Newman, 71–84. Minneapolis: Cleis Press.
- INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed. 2006. *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- James, Joy. 2005. *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Joseph, Miranda. 2002. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kunzel, Regina. 2008. "Lessons in Being Gay: Queer Encounters in Gay and Lesbian Prison Activism." *Radical History Review* 100: 11–37.
- Law, Victoria. 2009. *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- . 2010. "Sick of the Abuse: Feminist Responses to Sexual Assault, Battering, and Self-Defense." In *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, edited by Dan Berger, 39–56. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lawston, Jodi. 2009. *Sisters Outside: Radical Activists Working for Women Prisoners*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- , and Ashley Lucas, eds. 2011. *Razor Wire Women: Prisoners, Activists, Scholars, and Artists*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Lipsitz, George. 1988. *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Matthews, Nancy A. 1994. *Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rape Movement and the State*. London: Routledge.
- McGuire, Danielle. 2010. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Knopf.
- Metzl, Jonathan. 2009. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mitford, Jessica. 1973. *Kind and Usual Punishment: The Prison Business*. New York: Knopf.
- Morgen, Sandra. 2002. *Into Our Own Hands: The Women's Health Movement in the United States, 1969–1990*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Nelson, Alondra. 2011. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Reinelt, Claire. 1995. "Moving onto the Terrain of the State: The Battered Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement." In *Feminist Organizations: Harvests*

- of the New Women's Movement, edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, 84–104. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Richie, Beth E. 1996. *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered Black Women*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2012. *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. New York: NYU Press.
- Rodríguez, Dylan. 2006. *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosen, Ruth. 2000. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York: Viking.
- Samuels, Liz. 2010. "Improvising on Reality: The Roots of Prison Abolition." In *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, edited by Dan Berger, 21–38. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Schechter, Susan. 1982. *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Sen, Arlene. 1981. "Naming Myself." In *Fight Back! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence*, edited by Frédérique Delacoste and Felice Newman, 31–36. Minneapolis: Cleis Press.
- Smith, Andrea. 2005. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Solinger, Rickie, Paula Johnson, Martha Raimon, Tina Reynolds, and Ruby Tapia, eds. 2010. *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Staub, Michael. 2011. *Madness Is Civilization: When the Diagnosis Was Social, 1948–1980*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sudbury, Julia, ed. 2005. *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison Industrial Complex*. New York: Routledge.
- Tager, Jack. 2001. *Boston Riots: Three Centuries of Social Violence*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Thompson, Heather. 2009. "Blinded by a 'Barbaric' South: Prison Horrors, Inmate Abuse, and the Ironic History of American Penal Reform." In *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, edited by Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, 74–98. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thuma, Emily. 2011. "'Not a Wedge, But a Bridge': Prisons, Feminist Activism, and the Politics of Gendered Violence, 1968–1987" (PhD diss., New York University).
- Valk, Anne. 2008. *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, DC*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Washington, Harriet. 2007. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of the Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Doubleday.