

## RESOLVING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN POPULAR EDUCATION AND THE PSYCHOLOGIZATION OF OPPRESSION AT A WOMEN'S PRISON

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Women's prisons contain a community of people who are at the lowest end of the social and economic strata: those who are considered disposable and expendable, those who have been historically debased by gendered and racialized violence as well as colonial conquest and aggressive neoliberal capitalism, and those who will suffer a "social death" by the mark of incarceration. The insidiousness of this social death process is the extent to which the myths of worthlessness have been absorbed into the stories that the incarcerated tell about themselves. In popular education programs in the U.S., there are many practitioners, myself included, who make a lot of effort to center the voices of the oppressed. I have noticed that this can cause tension among criminalized people when those voices are reproducing narratives that reinforce hierarchies and victim blaming. In more effectively utilizing popular educational strategies, I argue that practitioners should better understand how criminalized peoples come to accept the master narratives that "criminals are bad," or that "criminals make unhealthy choices."

The psychological sciences play a large role in perpetuating these myths and reframing criminality as a matter of individual choice (instead of a structural one), particularly in the prison context. Therapy programs in prisons coerce criminalized peoples to accept these master narratives in order to graduate or receive incentives in prison. With this understanding and deconstruction, I will explore the ways in which popular education groups must take into account how these master narratives are affecting efforts to implement more liberatory options in prison. I will use my experience as a starting point, which arises from my anti-violence work with women in prison who have experienced abuse.

This presentation will hopefully be more of an engagement with people in the audience to also brainstorm how to tackle master narratives while also amplifying the ideas and voices of imprisoned women. I hope to contribute something meaningful in this presentation and I am eager to learn from the South American, specifically the Ecuadorian, context.