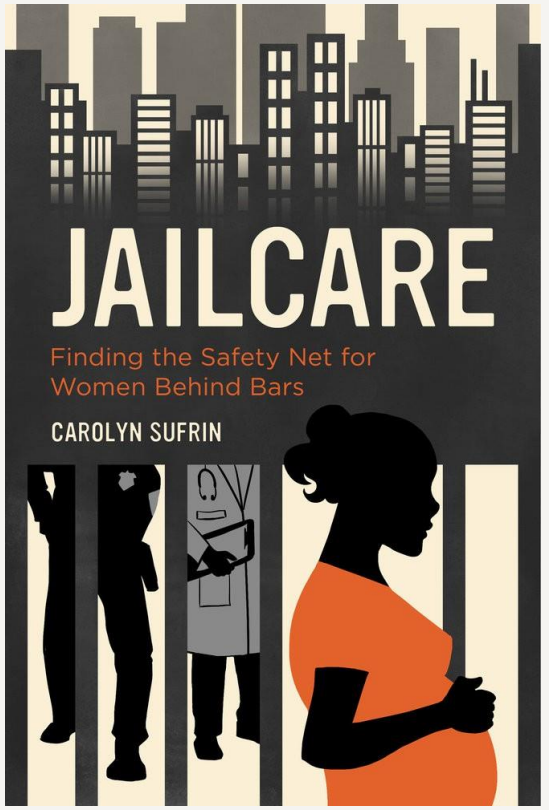
MLLC: Jailcare

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2026



What is "Jailcare"?



- " 'Jailcare' suggests the disturbing entanglement of carcerality and care…This is the crux of jailcare: a form of care in which the state's impulses to govern and tend its citizens are knotted into each other not merely as a controlling strategy, but as everyday, affective relationships. This form of care that emerges behind bars is a symptom of broader social and economic failures to care for society's most marginalized people. " (6)
- Jail vs. Prison
- 4 macro level forces impact jailcare and how "inequalities surrounding the jail make it possible for intimate care to flourish inside" (61)
  - Safety net intertwined with mass incarceration
  - Legal
  - Professional
  - Public health

Legal Basis: *Estelle v. Gamble* (1976)



- Not providing prisoners with medical care = cruel and unusual punishment
- Therefore violates 8th Amendment (Thurgood Marshall, SC Justice)
- "Since Estelle, prisoners have been the only segment of the US population with a constitutional right to health care. This fact raises 2 important contradictions.
  - Incarceration is a deliberate technique for suspending most rights of prisoners as part of their punishment. And yet, a prisoner's constitutional right to health care is something that nonincarcerated citizens cannot claim.
  - ...the presence of healing medicine in an institutional state setting designed to administer dehumanizing, repressive punishment. Medical care has the potential to nourish people in this environment of deprivation, but it can also, when inadequate, inflict further harm." (7)

Standards of Equivalence

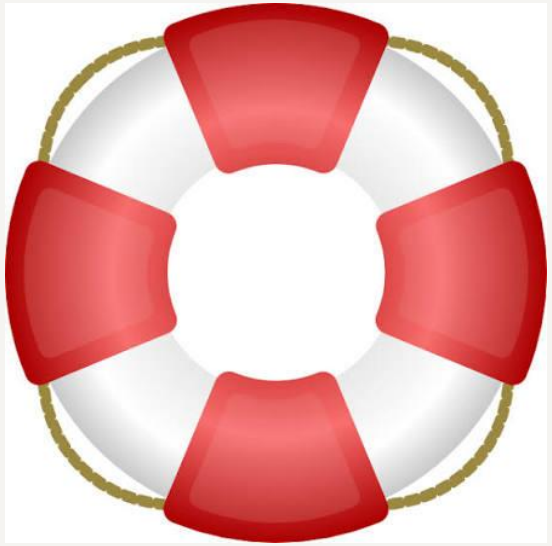


- National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC): “Medical care for prisoners must be equivalent in quality to the care which is available in the community.”
- Consider the quality of healthcare in the community and what impacts that quality
  - Classism
  - Racism
  - Sexism
- "Contestations over equivalence are moral in nature, as they consider individuals’ health-related deservingness inside with respect to health systems outside." (88)

"Everyone says I got arrested, but I got rescued." - Evelyn

- Who is Evelyn?
- What would have to be true about someone's life outside of jail for jail to feel like a rescue?





The Central Paradox

PUNISHMENT

- Confinement
- Surveillance
- Loss of autonomy
- Institutional control
- Separation from family

CARE

- Prenatal care
- Food
- Shelter
- Medication
- Addiction-related stability
- Relationships with healthcare workers

Sufrin is arguing that care can exist within a fundamentally punitive institution and that the two entities are heavily intertwined.

Major Themes

- **Jail is a safety net:** Sufrin frames incarceration as a racialized strategy for managing poverty in the absence of a function welfare state. It make s up for the shortcomings of the public services/policy (housing inequity, war on drugs, defunded mental health and addiction services)
  - Evelyn's story (pg.43)
  - " 'Safety net' is an apt metaphor for jailcare, for a net can both rescue and constrain." (236)
- **Deservingness of care:** There has been considerable debate throughout history by the legal sphere to carefully control resource access among underserved communities.
- **Care and imprisonment are not independent entities but inextricable:** Sufrin argues that incarcerated individuals experience care and imprisonment concurrently.
  - Jailcare is not free. The cost is not monetary but rather personal freedoms and dignity.
- **Incarceration is used as a way to silo people out of regular society**, preventing us, the general public, from accepting the inequity of community services and public policies that affect individuals from underserved communities.
  - The public mindset needs to shift from "well-fare queen" ---> how can we improve quality of community resources.
  - "The prison therefore functions ideologically as an abstract site into which **undesirables** are **deposited**, **relieving us of the responsibility** of thinking about the **real issues** afflicting those communities..."(Angela Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete?)
- **Nuance of Choice:** Sufrin is careful to not romanticize jailcare or contribute to the "welfare queen" stereotype. She repeatedly describes how women "choose" jailcare only in circumstances where all other alternatives are worse (i.e. the street, an abusive home, addiction
- **Anthropologist vs Clinician**

Clinician As Researcher *and* Caregiver?

- How do you differentiate your roles between caregiver and researcher?
- What ethical framework should we develop to provide optimal patient care while advancing research/knowledge?
  - Ethics of researching underserved populations
  - Historical examples
  - How does your role as a clinician gain you access to underserved populations?

Safety Net

- " 'Safety net' is an apt metaphor for jailcare, for a net can both rescue and constrain." (236)
- "Jailcare reflects the ***failure*** of society to provide an adequate safety net and the failure of our social imagination to consider that these women have contributions to make to society."
- "Jailcare is a central feature of a society that depends on incarceration for much more than keeping the public safe from dangerous criminals." (240)
  - Incarceration as a silo
  - "The prison therefore functions ideologically as an abstract site into which **undesirables** are **deposited**, **relieving us of the responsibility** of thinking about the **real issues** afflicting those communities..." (Angela Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete?)

Discussion Question: Who is seeking a safety net?

