

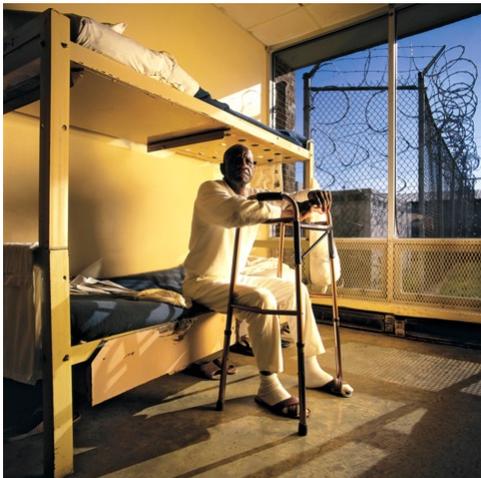
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK



WEBINAR SERIES

AGING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: **Prisoners of Age: Portraits of Elderly Inmates**

WEBINAR DESCRIPTION



"Prisoners of Age" is a series of photographs and interviews with elderly inmates and corrections personnel conducted in prisons both in the United States and Canada since 1996.

The exhibition and 208-page companion book serve to capture the complexity of a subject that is seldom contemplated – aging offenders in the correctional system. The project explores the socio-economic causes of crime and delinquency, encouraging visitors to consider the human dimension of doing time while growing old in prison; the objective being to open the eyes of the public, to play a role in stimulating social and institutional change by addressing these issues of social justice and human dignity through images and interviews.

More than two million North Americans are now behind bars, an estimated 35 percent of them edging far past middle age. "Prisoners of Age" offers a microcosmic glimpse of what lies ahead in this new millennium. Existing prison space is in serious decline, bunk space and medical costs are soaring. Geriatric inmates comprise the fastest growing age group in the United States. Statistically, the risk of recidivism decreases significantly with age. Within a year of release, inmates between the ages of 18 and 24 have a recidivism rate of 22 percent. For inmates over the age of 43, the rate drops to two percent. After the age of 55,

recidivism drops to below one percent. In Canada, the average expense of medical care and maintenance for inmates over 55 is \$79,000 [\$79,000 USD] per year, about four times the norm. Meanwhile, the people who manage North America's prison system are worrying more and more about how to handle the imminent explosion in the geriatric population.



THE EXHIBITION

The portraits in the "Prisoners of Age" exhibition are immense [4'x8'], graphic and command the viewer's attention. The full exhibition comprises 60 4x8 foot prints, vertically suspended from the museum ceilings. All prints include text from interviews with inmates and corrections personnel. It's hard to imagine these old men as criminals running from the law. You see the frailty, the forgetfulness, the universal problems of old age apparent in generations of your own family. Many of their stories are those that ring true today about fits of anger, rage, foolish steps they took in their youth that have brought them to where they are now. Others are remorseless. "Prisoners of Age" seeks a balance of the two dispositions, through images and text, lending insight into the lawbreaker's proclivity to commit crime.

"Prisoners of Age" presents the stories of some of the most marginalized members of our society in their own words, revealing much of themselves. What we as a society decide to do about them reveals just as much of ourselves. It is our ambition that we can persuade a younger audience to avoid making the same mistakes that doomed so many of these inmates.

The project has been exhibited at: Alcatraz Penitentiary [2000-2001], The National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, [2002] Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, [2002], the Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin, Ireland [2004], Alcatraz Penitentiary [2005], Cirque du Soleil Headquarters, Montreal [2006], Fremantle Prison & Museum, Fremantle, West Australia [2010], Powerhouse Gallery, Brisbane, Australia [2011]. The exhibitions run from 1 month to 6 months at each venue.

THE DOCUMENTARY

The television documentary [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/ First Air-date: December, 2004/ 1 hour] explores, illuminates and extends photographer Ron Levine's groundbreaking project with geriatric prisoners. Journeying with Levine on a series of photo shoots in Canadian and American prisons, we discover why he has embarked on this artistic pursuit, what he seeks to reveal, who his subjects are and why we should care. With Levine as our gateway, the film provides an immersion into the world of the aging prisoners, revealing a number of important social issues surrounding the aging prison population, and bringing forth the personal dimension of this human tragedy.

"Prisoners of Age" asks a fundamental question that has no easy answer: what becomes of an inmate who is too old or too ill to stay in the general prison population? Levine's consummate skill as photographer evokes deep sympathy for the inmates' plight, but his images lead us to a second, more disturbing question: what about the justice demanded by the inmates' victims, their families and society at large? The heart of the film lies in this conflict between feelings of sympathy and the desire for punishment, while revealing the artistic role of the photographer in staging this theatre of unresolved emotions.

"Prisoners of Age" ... is a sobering and sometimes shocking examination of what life is like for infirm and aging inmates across North America.' -*The Los Angeles Times*

'So powerful. It is here, when visitors wander in and see "Prisoners of Age',...that tourists take on sombre expressions and talk in subdued tones.' -*The San Francisco Examiner*

'The Alcatraz inmates are long gone, but Photographer Ron Levine and Designer Michael Wou have staged a brilliant exhibit...that shows the faces and tells the stories of men who have grown old in prison in North America.' -*The Globe & Mail, Toronto*

Presenters:

Ron Levine is a commercial and editorial photographer based in Montreal. His series of photographs of geriatric inmates, entitled Prisoners of Age [1996-present], has earned him international acclaim, resulting in solo exhibitions in Australia, Ireland and Mexico as well as the United States and Canada. He is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, and has been profiled in publications such as Harpers, Elle, Applied Arts and Hasselblad Forum. On the subject of his Prisoners of Age documentary work, he has given seminars at the American Corrections Convention [Houston], the Norlandgarna Photography Festival [Sweden], the Care & Corrections Convention [Saskatoon] and the Apple store [New York]. Commercial clients include American Express, Verizon, Air Canada and Deloitte Touche. His photographs are in private and public collections including the Polaroid Collection [Boston], The Musee du Quebec and the National Archives of Canada.

Tina Maschi, PhD, LCSW, ACSW; Associate Professor, Fordham University, President of National Organization of Forensic Social Work; Executive Director of the *Be the Evidence Project*.

Date: Thursday, June 20, 2013

Time: 12:30 pm-2:30 pm EDT

Webinar Link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6199437234376270848>

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