

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN FINLAND AND CALIFORNIA: EXPLORING JUSTICE IN TWO SOCIETIES

Friday, January 27, 2012 9:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m.

Location: California State University, Fresno, University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room: PB 191

Organized by the Department of Social Work Education, College of Health and Human Services

Open to the public

This one-day seminar held at California State University, Fresno is sponsored by the College of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Work Education. It explores social issues related to crime, incarceration, and families in two very different locations: the welfare society of Finland and California, which has the largest prison system in the western world. The seminar will include presentations, the screening of a new independent film, and a panel discussion with the community.

Questions of how to deal with crime and punishment have always been at the core of what constitutes a just and moral society. The modern prison emerged from the spectacle of public hangings and the guillotine: punishments which came to be viewed as barbaric, capricious, and contrary to the basic principles of justice. As crimes became codified in the 19th century, prisons were constructed as sites of correction that would enforce punishment, prevention, and penitence. This seminar considers the question: How do the distinct cultures of correction in Finland and California contemporary prisons in serve this purpose?

In the mid-1960s, Finland and the United States incarcerated their citizens at approximately equal rates, but the late 20th century saw a dramatic expansion in prisons in California while Finland reduced its incarceration rates. Between 1982 and 2000, the California state prison population expanded by nearly 500% and Finland cut its prison population in half. We ask: how can we understand this different development and what are the human costs of high rates of incarceration?

This seminar examines the differences in cultures of correction between these two societies, what factors are considered to contribute to crime, and the impact of incarceration on societies, families and communities. We welcome community participation in this event!

PROGRAM

9.00 Opening

9:15 Mikko Aaltonen:

Do the social determinants of crime still matter in a welfare state?



Mikko Aaltonen

10:00 Kris Clarke: The Nordic culture of correction

10:20 Julie Lifshay: The California culture of correction

10:45 Coffee Break

11:15 Film: "Troop 1500"

"Troop 1500" follows five Girl Scouts in Texas as they unite with their mothers who are in prison for serious crimes, giving them a chance to rebuild their broken bonds. Facing long sentences from the courts, the mothers struggle to mend their fractured relationships with their daughters. On the other side, the film shows the constant strain on the children waiting for their mothers to finish out their sentences.

12:15 Carol F. Burton: Comments on children and families affected by incarceration and the impact of California prison realignment.

12.30 Debbie Reyes: Comments on the California Prison Moratorium Project

12:45 Panel Discussion: Mikko Aaltonen, Julie Lifshay, Carol F. Burton, Debbie Reyes (Kris Clarke, moderator)

1:30 Closing

Speakers:

Mikko Aaltonen, M.Soc. Sc. (doctoral candidate, University of Helsinki, Department of Social Research – Population Research Unit, Finland), Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania Population Studies Center

Kris Clarke, Ph.D (University of Tampere, Finland), Assistant Professor at California State University Fresno, Department of Social Work Education

Julie Lifshay, MPH, Ph.D (University of California, Berkeley), Health & Special Projects Manager, Centerforce

Carol F. Burton, LCSW, executive director of nonprofit agency Centerforce which for over 30 years old has served to transform the lives of people living in prison

Debbie Reyes, California Prison Moratorium Project, a grassroots community activist and organizer for over 20 years and recipient of a Soros Justice Fellowship for her campaign "Uncaging the Valley"