

PART III

Implications of Carceral Spaces for Animals and for Humans

Introduction

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This section explores the ways carceral logics shape carceral spaces, which in turn impact the lives and well-being of the humans and nonhumans within them. Carceral spaces raise a variety of questions, some of which are explored in the chapters here. Can zoos educate children about the lives of other animals, or is that impossible given the distorted situation in which humans are so clearly dominating and controlling the captive animals? Do conservation efforts justify holding individual wild animals captive or provide an excuse for carceral enclosure? Does bringing animals into prisons for training and care further entrench carceral logics for prisoners and captive animals? How do carceral responses to activism on behalf of animals and the environment impact the potential for social change?

Carceral logics inform the building and justification of captive enclosures that contain humans and other animals. While captive settings vary considerably, there are certain features of carceral spaces that exist across captive contexts, whether one is confined by bars, chains, ankle bracelets, cages, prisons, coops, fences, or locked doors. The most obvious feature is that captives are denied freedoms of various kinds, including freely choosing those things which will satisfy their most basic desires. Of course, none of us is free to make any choice we want; we are restricted by state, economic, and social institutions and ideologies that limit us in a range of ways – by the binary genders we are assigned, by social and psychic worlds structured by ableism, and by the thick boundaries based on class, religion, ethnicity, race, and even our species. But these constraints on liberty, that also are informed by carceral logics, are worsened by the effects of physical confinement.

Among carceral strategies, the decision to pursue or permit physical confinement is uniquely deserving of heightened attention. Those who are physically confined generally do not have the opportunity to make basic decisions about what to eat and when, when to sleep, where to go, whom to spend time with (or not spend time with). Even decisions relating to sexual autonomy, reproduction, and the care of one's offspring may be made by persons running captive facilities. Almost all choices

are restricted, and activities are controlled. Animals held in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), research labs, and zoos and other carceral spaces often suffer from captivity itself, in addition to any specific forms of harm and injury they are subjected to as a result of the purpose of the confinement. They are poked, prodded, branded, injected, shocked, subject to noxious stimuli, forcibly impregnated, and they can't escape. Many have never known freedom as they are bred into commodification or specimenification. Some animals may never go outside or stand on natural surfaces. Even when they have always been captives, their inability to control their circumstances, flee their environments, or have their minds or bodies stimulated in positive ways often leads to behavioral anomalies referred to as "stereotypies," behaviors that do not occur in the wild. "Stereotypies are thought to be caused by brain dysfunction brought on by stress-induced damage to the central nervous system" (Bekoff and Pierce). And the damage and dysfunction are not exclusively a result of "bad" captive conditions, as Bekoff and Pierce say: "There is no such thing as 'good captivity' or 'good incarceration.'" Boredom, self-harm, and other aberrant behaviors emerge from captivity itself.

In prisons, humans suffer in demeaning, often violent, conditions that cause physical and psychological harms. Prisoners experience frustration, loneliness, shame, depression, humiliation, and dehumanizing, deanimalizing indignities.¹ There are long-term psychological impacts that also develop due to boredom, anxiety, lack of loving touch, and general lack of control. Some of those incarcerated had one terrible day when things went horribly wrong and a human or animal was injured or killed. Others have more of a history of harmful or socially disapproved behaviors. Some incarcerated people are activists who worked toward bringing about better conditions for other animals and the environment and their imprisonment is not just harmful to them, but also to the social justice movements they were a part of. One of the points of incarcerating those activists is "to repress the people and ideas that generate resistance to multispecies oppressions and to ensure the continued functioning of a white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, speciesist, ecocidal capitalist state" (Pellow).

Though it is not usually discussed in the context of human imprisonment, animals suffer from the existence of prisons too. Countless animals are harmed to feed those who are incarcerated; other animals are harmed when they find their way into prisons and are exterminated; some are harmed in programs that are designed to

¹ Lisa Guenther notes in her 2012 paper *Beyond Dehumanization: A Post-humanist Critique of Solitary Confinement* in the *JOURNAL FOR CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES*, 10(2) that dehumanization occurs in carceral contexts when human dignity is violated and prisoners are treated "like animals." But solitary confinement, as well as conditions in maximum security and supermax prisons, often cause a type of sensory deprivation that fails to even treat humans like animals. "It is as animals that we are damaged or even destroyed by the supermax or SHU, just as our fellow animals are damaged or destroyed by confinement in cages at zoos, factory farms, and scientific laboratories" (56).

train animals to “work”; and many more animals living near prisons are harmed by the waste that is produced in the prison. Some prisons are now operating factory farms with prison labor. “The prison as structure harms surrounding waters, lands, and ecosystems, often making life impossible for the more-than-human displaced and affected by its presence” (Montford). Prisons are not good for people, not good for other animals, not good for the environment. And most forms of animal confinement harm animals and humans alike. Increasingly, researchers are showing that the health of humans and animals is interconnected, and carceral spaces for any species will likely harm others.

Carceral spaces, whether prisons, zoos, ranches, or some other system of confinement, cause a variety of direct harms to those held within them, and there are also potential harms to those who live around these spaces, as well as those who work there or visit those held captive. Too often the justification for inflicting such harms is not obvious or ultimately tenable. In the context of zoos and immigrant detention centers, for example, human children are often invoked as a way to “soften the edges” of these harmful environments (Deckha). This is particularly obvious in the justification of zoos and aquaria – it is often claimed that putting wild animals on display helps children to develop respect for nature. But in reality, children seem to gain very little from these experiences beyond momentary excitement, and instead their presence does more to justify these spaces. Children serve to create “social credibility” for the existence of these carceral spaces, and the narrative of preserving endangered species for future generations furthers the narrative. Whether captive animals in fact help with conservation efforts and whether their captivity is a necessary part of conservation programs is rarely discussed.

The chapters in Part III make vivid one of the central points of the book: carceral logics are bad for animals and for humans. Incarcerating humans invariably harms animals directly, with little downstream promise of deterring or protecting animals in the community more generally. Likewise, animal confinement often threatens the health and well-being, both physical and psychological, of human communities. The impacts of captivity are not nearly as discrete and limited as often imagined, and advocates for humans and advocates for animals will do well to consider the interconnected ways that carceral spaces enforce and support various oppressions.

