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The Jingwei Bird Sings Performative Resistance: Music and Arts Programming as Catharsis, Acculturation, and Cultural Remembrance for Refugees in U.S. Immigration Detention Centers

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Annotated Bibliography

Abstract

Scholarship on immigration detention centers as sites for musical exchange and identity formation remain largely unresearched. Adelaida Reyes in her groundbreaking work, Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free, offers insight into the “heterogeneity” of resettlement camps and their ambiguous sovereignty. Her work, however, does not examine the musical environments and ecologies of modern large-scale immigrant detention centers, nor these center’s specific musical identities. Significant analyses of music programming in detention centers include musicologists Donna Weston and Caroline Lenette’s article, “Performing Freedom: The Role of Music-Making in Creating a Community in Asylum Seeker Detention Centres” and ethnomusicologist Julia Morris’s article, “Coping and Confinement on the Border: The Affective Politics of Music Workshops in British Immigration Detention.” While Weston and Lenette provide insight into the ways that music facilitates community and individual wellbeing in detention centers, Morris examines how music can play a role in potentially both inculcating detainees with a sense of agency while also compounding their oppression when used as a form of social control. Weston and Lenette advocate for community musicking as supporting detainee health, while Morris urges ethnomusicologists to question the goals and implementations of such programs. In this annotated bibliography, I explore these discussions on music programming and its potential to cultivate a sense of empowerment and belonging in detainees. I engage with scholarship that documents music, art, and poetry produced by detained refugees (especially in the Angel Island Detention Center) to understand how music is a form of catharsis and remembrance. Through dialoguing with artists and scholars who investigate connections between music and belonging, acculturation, identity, and dislocation, I seek to provide a nuanced and cross-disciplinary approach to understanding the efficacies and possibilities of detention center reform through music.

Dictionary / Encyclopedia Articles

1. Wallenfeldt, J. “Angel Island Immigration Station.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified October 3rd, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Angel-Island-Immigration-Station>.

This brief *Brittanica* entry on the Angel Island Immigration Station offers background information and audio-visual resources on the harsh realities experienced by detainees held in Angel Island. While different in legal classification to the Japanese Internment Camps, Angel Island similarly isolated and fractured its detainees. In response to their harsh and dislocated experiences, these Chinese immigrants wrote poetry as a form of catharsis and remembrance. This paper references some of the themes explored in these poems – loss, grief, and isolation – and how creating Tang-style poetry was, for these detainees, a part of their survival. While this paper does not explore the works of contemporary artists who dialogue with these pasts, such as Chen Yi, it nonetheless attempts to illustrate how the legacy of these detention centers ought to remind

policymakers of a) the inhumane conditions present in detention centers and b) the importance of implementing some form of arts and music programming in these centers.

Dissertations and Theses

2. El Kadi, Rana. "Critical Ethnomusicology Pedagogy with Migrant Youth in Edmonton, Canada: Promoting Cultural Empowerment and Intercultural Learning through Music." PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2017.

El Kadi's doctoral thesis examines the effects of a new critical pedagogical praxis, CEP, on feelings of belonging and individual agency among middle school-aged immigrant children in Canada. Through ethnographic work as a participant-observer, Kadi describes the process of implementing this approach in two school systems and finds that it successfully addresses intersectional and "fluid musico-cultural identities" in the classroom through participatory music making. Kadi deconstructs the flattening, over-simplified dichotomy of *migrant as victim* versus *Canadian-born as oppressor*. Kadi's program shares many parallels with Lennette and Weston and Morris' work on music programming in detention centers. Therefore, her approach enriches discussion on music programming implementation.

Essays in Collections

3. Allen, Erin T. "Sounding Solidarity at the Suffolk County ICE Immigration Detention Center." In *HONK!: A Street Band Renaissance of Music and Activism*, edited by Reebee Garofalo, Erin T. Allen, and Andrew Snyder, 262-273. New York City: Routledge, 2020.

Allen's article "Sounding Solidarity" explores a 2018 musical protest held outside of the Suffolk County ICE Immigration Detention Center. Performed by two marching bands, the musicians performed as a means to uplift detainees and disrupt the oppressive sonic environments of the detention center. Allen provides a qualitative, narrative-based, philosophical approach to the efficacy of music in bringing about socio-political changes. While this article compellingly discusses the potential for music to enact change, it unfortunately lacks input from detainees who benefitted from this musical protest. While it would be ethnically and legally challenging to interview detainees, Allen's chapter would have benefitted by acknowledging this limitation. This article's treatment of music and detention contrasts that of Morris and Lenette's article, which gauges the efficacy of music programming in detention centers through participant-observer ethnographic work.

4. Said, Edward. "Reflections on Exile." In *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, edited by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West, 173-186. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Said's compilation of essays reflects upon diverse literary works that dialogue in similar and different ways with concepts of dislocation, lostness, migration, race, and exile. Works are selected for their illustration of complex, heterogenous lived experiences across national boundaries. The author importantly references literature that relates music

to transnational and diasporic contexts. From this book, Said's chapter "Reflections on Exile" offers a poignant description of the hardships of living in exile and how exile relates to refugeehood to nationalism:

These and so many other exiled poets and writers lend dignity to a condition legislated to deny dignity—to deny an identity to people. From them, it is apparent that, to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself. You must first set aside Joyce and Nabokov and think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created. You must think of the refugee-peasants with no prospect of ever returning home, armed only with a ration card and an agency number... Negotiations, wars of national liberation, people bundled out of their homes and prodded, bussed or walked to enclaves in other regions: what do these experiences add up to? Are they not manifestly and almost by design irrecoverable?

By referring to the transnational epidemics of political exile, Said powerfully illustrates the profoundly isolating experiences of those estranged from home and society. His work enriches discussion on the myriad of ways that arts and music shape refugee sense of self and complicate notions of essentialized diasporic identities. Program directors ought to consider how music programming will articulate its intentions, values, and position within detention center contexts before implementation. Further, significant literary works should also provide foundational research along with information from migration scholars and refugee therapists for these interventionist music programs.

Journal Articles

5. Alissa R. Ackerman & Rich Furman. "The Criminalization of Immigration and the Privatization of the Immigration Detention: Implications for Justice." *Contemporary Justice Review* 16, no. 2 (2013): 251-263. doi: 10.1080/10282580.2013.798506.

Complementing Marouf's discussion of the oppressiveness of detention centers, Ackerman highlights two corporations, the Corrections Corporation of American and The GEO Group, that own detention centers and profit through exploiting detainees as sources of revenue. Ackerman's article provides compelling evidence to support the need for music and arts inclusion in detention centers.

6. Di Lorenzo Tillborg, Adriana. "Policy and Leadership Discourses in Sweden's Art and Music Schools: The Inclusion of Refugee Children." *Music Education Research* 23, no. 3 (2021): 348-361.

Tillborg discusses the potential for introducing greater inclusive practices through policy reform in Sweden art and music schools (referred to in the article as SAMS). She references Foucault's theory of *problematicization* within educational systems and *subject positions* to describe the process of role playing inherent in educational policy decision. Her work moves into abstract and somewhat esoteric territory in its attempt to

address the motivations behind political bodies in addressing and perceiving particular problems. She concludes by remarking that all groups from various cultures ought to be supported; however, her deliberately vague language and arbitrary groupings of migrant students (one group in “newly arrived” and the other for “refugees”) appears to flatten the complex, intersectional, and constantly renegotiated identities of migrants. Grouping immigrant communities itself is an action that already imposes a power dynamic. While her work is therefore problematic in its insinuations, it provides a perspective from the policy side on the ways that immigration and music are approached.

7. Fatma E. Marouf, "Alternatives to Immigration Detention," *Cardozo Law Review* 38, no. 6 (August 2017): 2141-2192.

Fatma’s article details the humanitarian crisis of immigrant detention and ends with a call-to-action to end detention. The report finds that egregious medical and health violations, transgressions of legal proceedings such as Due Process, ties to private prison corporations, and a collective cost that transcends the incarceration system make detention centers both inhumane and economically catastrophic. This essay dovetails into the ACLU report written by Clara Long, which similarly provides a direct call-to-action to end detention center programs. This report highlights the ways that detention centers harm and traumatize detainees and advocates for creative and intellectually enriching programs in these centers to promote detainee health and wellbeing.

8. Morris, Julia. “Coping and Confinement on the Border: The Affective Politics of Music Workshops in British Immigration Detention.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 29, no. 1 (2020): 107–125.

Morris’s paper describes the complex, liminal zones of immigration removal centers in the UK and the influence of music in these spaces. Through ethnographic research and work as a participant-observer, Morris examines the social and political dimensions of these detention centers and the ways that music plays a role in potentially both inculcating detainees with a sense of agency and conversely compounding their oppression when used as a tool of social control by detention centers. In describing the complexity and tragedy of arts advocates, she writes, “Nevertheless, as much as music is a resisting practice and a means of reinventing detention, it also functions as a technology of social control, perpetuating hegemonic orderings.” The tone of Morris’ work therefore contrasts that of Lennette and Weston’s article which emphasizes the positive influence for music programming on detainee health and wellbeing. Her nuanced discussion necessarily complicates conceptions of music programming and challenges approaches to arts advocacy implementation.

9. Rae, Maria, Emma K. Russell, and Amy Nethery. "Earwitnessing Detention: Carceral Secrecy, Affecting Voices, and Political Listening in The Messenger Podcast." *International journal of communication* 13, no. 1 (2019): 1036-1040.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A592786851/LitRC?u=anon~36758868&sid=googleScholar&xid=709047bf>.

Rae, Rusell, and Nethery's essay describes *The Messenger* podcast, a podcast that highlights the realities of detainees living in detention centers. Each episode contains audio recorded covertly by a Sudanese refugee named Abdul Aziz Muhamat who is currently detained in an Australian detention center. The authors discuss the potential agency that may come from this form of podcasting:

The Messenger demonstrates that, under the right conditions, podcasting can allow detainees to narrate their own experiences of incarceration. As such, podcasts can facilitate a form of "acoustic agency" (Waller, 2018). Podcast consumption may also activate emotional responses in listeners that promote a sense of ethical responsibility. Beyond simply the exchange of knowledge and ideas, there are significant affective dimensions to tuning in to the carceral soundscape—or the "sonic environment" of the camp—which have the potential to disrupt existing "hierarchies of attention" (Dreher, 2009), so that a plurality of voices and experiences can be heard (Bickford, 1996). The acts of podcast creation and "political listening" (Bickford, 1996; Dreher, 2009) can remind, reinforce, and rekindle the audience's political opposition to unjust practices of incarceration and contribute to the humanization of carceral subjects.

These authors' examinations of the politicization of sound through oppressive sonic environments relates to Lennette and Weston, Reyes, and Pettan's works that critically analyze refugee diasporic musical cultures as they relate to sense of agency and belonging. Introducing podcasting as a form of music programming in detention centers would offer an intriguing interventionist way of cultivating a sense of agency and power within detainees.

10. Weston, Donna, and Caroline Lennette. "Performing Freedom: The Role of Music-Making in Creating a Community in Asylum Seeker Detention Centres." *International Journal of Community Music* 9, no. 2 (June 2016): 121–34. doi:10.1386/ijcm.9.2.121_1.

Weston and Lennette's article discusses the roles of music in creating belonging among "accidental communities" in immigration detention centers. It is one of the few sources that discusses the potentialities for music programming in detention centers with visiting artists. The article focuses on the arts collective, Scattered People, who collaborate with Iranian detainees through music. This article provides well-documented approaches to music programming within detention centers. Weston and Lennette's perspective contrasts that of Morris's article. These differences reflect current debates about music programming efficacy in immigration detention.

Reports

11. Long, Clara. *Code Red: The Fatal Consequences of Dangerously Substandard Medical Care in Immigration Detention*. American Civil Liberties Union. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2017.

Long's report addresses Congress, local, and state governments, and ICE. She highlights grave human rights abuses in detention centers and outlines approaches to reforming

these centers. These reforms include decreasing the number of detainees in detention, providing better standards of medical and health support, and introducing greater oversight of current detention center practices. The report culled together research from four non-profits: the ACLU, Human Rights Watch, Detention Watch Network, and National Immigrant Justice Center. Reform in Long's report can include music and arts programming in detention centers.

Secondary or Tertiary Monographs

12. Reyes, Adelaida. *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free: Music and the Vietnamese Refugee Experience*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999.

Reyes' seminal book on Vietnamese refugee communities in the US transformed the field of urban ethnomusicology. Her exploration of community musicking and its influence on identity formation, belonging, and acculturation is an essential resource when considering the impacts of community musicking in the context of refugee camps and immigration detention centers. Although she does not explicitly discuss detention or removal centers in her book, Reyes's work dialogues with many of these sources on immigration and music, in particular, Weston and Lennette's "Performing Freedom" article.