



2017

## Imprisoning Sexuality: The Abuses of the State in Homosexual Male Incarceration at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary (1934-1957)

Vic Overdorf  
*Butler University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses>



Part of the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Overdorf, Vic, "Imprisoning Sexuality: The Abuses of the State in Homosexual Male Incarceration at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary (1934-1957)" (2017). *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*. 413.  
<https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/413>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Scholarship at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@butler.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@butler.edu).

BUTLER UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Honors Thesis Certification

Please type all information in this section:

Applicant Vic Overdorf  
(Name as it is to appear on diploma)

Thesis title Imprisoning Sexuality: The Abuses of the State in Homosexual  
Male Incarceration at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary (1934-  
1957)

Intended date of commencement 6 May 2017

Read, approved, and signed by:

Thesis adviser(s)	<u>William Dens</u>	<u>5/2/17</u>
	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>5/2/2017</u>
Reader(s)	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>5/2/2017</u>
		Date
		Date
Certified by	_____	_____
	Director, Honors Program	Date

**Imprisoning Sexuality: The Abuses of the State in Homosexual Male Incarceration at  
Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary (1934-1957)**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of History

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Vic Overdorf

3 May 2017

## Introduction

In January of 2016 I came across a Warden's note from Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary<sup>1</sup> detailing the "reasons for transfer" of a man named Angelo Paris.<sup>2</sup> Warden James Johnston wrote, "Subject is a military prisoner now serving sentence of 10 years for sodomy... He is a moron and may not have wit enough to go straight but his confinement at Alcatraz will do a lot to restrain him." Warden Johnston also wrote that Paris "is a man of low intelligence, lacking in ethical and moral sense...he has been in conflict with the law because of his abnormal sexual traits..."<sup>3</sup> Prisoner files at the San Francisco National Archives revealed twenty-eight more men who were incarcerated at Alcatraz on the basis of a sodomy charge. While reviewing these files, I watched each man emerge from the piles of official state histories that they were buried under. Each man who was brought to Alcatraz was ex-military, many of whom never admitted guilt, and most of whom were diagnosed with sexual psychopathy when they arrived on the island. Prisoner Leroy Dohrman grew old at

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1775, a Spanish ship landed in the San Francisco Bay. Lt. Juan Manuel de Ayala looked upon an unnamed island where pelicans flocked and decided it would be called "La Isla de los Alcatraces:" Island of Pelicans. Over a century and a half later, the island was handed over to the Federal Bureau of Prisons to carry out their experiment in maximum security.

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to use the full names of the Sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz in this piece with the full understanding that the only information that is publicized about their lives is the information that the state felt was useful in framing the narrative of the violent homosexual male. Homosexual men - Alcatraz prisoners included - are an over-surveilled population that did not consent to their information becoming public record. With this in mind, I have decided that it is important to challenge and saturate this narrative with the goal of decriminalizing the memory of men who are otherwise dishonorably memorialized through their legal reputation as sex criminals, and as dishonorably discharged military men.

<sup>3</sup> Warden's Note for Angelo Paris by James Johnston. 21 January 1937. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives. (Hereafter "AZ, SFNA")

the Penitentiary, continually denying his guilt, insisting that his arrest was a set-up, and eventually enduring extended solitary confinement and electroshock therapy. Prisoner Thomas Cartwright was seen by a custodial officer carrying on what was referred to as a “love affair” with another inmate, leading to a psychiatric report resulting in the diagnosis of sexual psychopathy. Frank L. Bolt was a sodomy prisoner kept at Alcatraz during the transition between the state military prison and the federal penitentiary because he fit the profile of the type of offender that Alcatraz intended to house. The investment of the state in biopolitical control via the incarceration and punishment of homosexual bodies at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary began on the penitentiary’s first day of operation as J. Edgar Hoover signed Inmate #1 – Frank L. Bolt’s – admission papers.<sup>4</sup>

President Calvin Coolidge appointed J. Edgar Hoover as the sixth director of the Bureau of Investigation in 1924. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt came into office in 1933, J. Edgar Hoover was the “only significant conservative bureaucrat retained from the Coolidge and Hoover administrations,”<sup>5</sup> so Hoover made efforts to stay in the President’s good graces. This included funneling Bureau resources into causes that President Roosevelt felt were of the highest importance, such as apprehending “the sex criminal.” Between 1934 and 1957, Hoover signed documents approving the transfer of over twenty military men charged with “Sodomy” to Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary in order to assuage the moral panic

---

<sup>4</sup> Transfer Admission Document re: Frank L. Bolt, 16 August 1934. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas M. Charles, “Policing Public Morality: Hoover’s FBI, Obscenity, and Homosexuality,” in *The FBI and Religion: Faith and National Security Before and After 9/11*, eds. Sylvester A. Johnson and Steven Weitzman., (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), . 137.

spreading across the country regarding sex crime.<sup>6</sup> Chrysanthi S. Leon describes this moral panic, writing, “The monolithic notion of the sexual bogeyman, whether it is called a “sex fiend,” “sexual psychopath,” or a “sexually violent predator,” has justified control strategies that have assumed individuals who are quite distinct from that monstrous image to be from the same mold.”<sup>7</sup> By situating homosexual men as a threat to the American public (particularly children and families), the state was able to use the incarceration and punishment of homosexual bodies as a tool of biopolitical control.

Historians engaging with the intersection of homosexuality and the carceral system often focus on the formation of the homosexual identity by the state. Margot Canaday describes what she calls the “straight state”<sup>8</sup> referring to how the state shaped the narrative of homosexuality in the United States in terms of immigration, welfare, and the military. She argues that the state created the category of “homosexual” in order to maintain control over the population, and that the “closet” is a device through which heterosexuality is validated and promoted as the social

---

<sup>6</sup> Chrysanthi, S. Leon, *Sex Fiends, Perverts, and Pedophiles: Understanding Sex Crime Policy in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

A “moral panic” is the widespread belief and concern that something or someone is a threat to society and moral order. The “moral panic” of the 1930s was in regards to homosexual men, particularly homosexual men as sex criminals. Families feared for the safety of their children due to several high-profile kidnapping and sexual abuse cases of children. The FBI and J. Edgar Hoover pointed the American public towards homosexual men as a target for blame, fueling a widespread desire for homosexual men to be in prisons and mental facilities to keep them away from children.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and American Citizenship, 1900-1969*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004).

and moral norm.<sup>9</sup> “Don’t ask don’t tell” is a project of this closeting, which also connects public moral codes to the military.<sup>10</sup> I go further to connect both the general public and the military to the carceral system, exploring the existence of a heteronormative carceral state by examining the state’s investment in the incarceration of homosexual men, and their creation of both the homosexual criminal and the homosexual mentally ill. Historian Athan Theoharis has authored several books in which he analyzes J. Edgar Hoover’s involvement with the FBI and his role in both creating and affirming the moral panic which outcasted, criminalized, and pathologized homosexual men. I use Theoharis’ expertise on Hoover’s life and FBI career – most notably in his book *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* – as a basis when outlining his involvement with the incarceration of sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz.<sup>11</sup>

Sodomy prisoners brought to Alcatraz joined a group of men infamous for their violent offenses, and for their notoriety. Since the island was isolated and conditions were severe, Alcatraz was the designated site for the United States to imprison undesirable people: violent men who they did not want to rejoin society. When considering the term “sodomy” – which in 1934 was legally defined as “any

---

<sup>9</sup> The “closet” is a metaphor for revealing one’s gender or sexual identity if it deviates from “the norm”.

<sup>10</sup> “Don’t ask don’t tell” was a policy of the U.S. military in place from 1993-2011 which barred gay and lesbian people from the armed services, encouraging gay and lesbian people to conceal and suppress their identities if they wanted to serve (U.S. Department of Defense, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Theoharis’ writings on Hoover include: *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc, 1991); *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc, 1995); *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); and *Boss* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

penetrative sex between two men” – in the context of World War II-era United States, “sodomy” as an offense does not fit Alcatraz’ reputation. Alcatraz was teeming with men such as James “Whitey” Bulgar, who was convicted of *nineteen* murders, and Al Capone, a famous crime boss.<sup>12</sup> For twenty-nine men to have been imprisoned alongside figures such as Bulgar and Capone simply because they engaged in sexual contact with other men was not accidental, but was instead a project of the state to associate homosexual identities with violence.

Between 1934 and 1957, the United States intentionally imprisoned at least twenty-nine men at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary on the basis of their sexuality in order to remove the perceived homosexual contagion from a masculinized World War II United States. This was achieved through harsh imprisonment and non-consensual medical procedures. The mission of Alcatraz was shaped by the state’s desire to imprison homosexual bodies as a means of biopolitical control.

Homosexual men – whether self-identified or perceived – were brought to Alcatraz for the specific reason of punishing and containing their homosexual identity, not to penalize the physical act of sodomy. The physical act of penetrative sex between two men was considered violent not for its physicality, but for the perceived threat of the homosexual identity. The state provoked this perception of violence through campaigns that equated male homosexuality with mental illness and crime, such as a 1956 poster that reads “Homosexual Menace: A Trap for your Sons!”<sup>13</sup> Once

---

<sup>12</sup> David A Ward and Gene G. Kassebaum, *Alcatraz: The Gangster Years*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> "Homosexual Menace: A Trap for your Sons!" (*DARE*, 1956).



brought to Alcatraz, these men were subjected to medical procedures and psychological treatment on the basis of their 'illegal' sexuality. *Imprisoning Sexuality* connects the dots between twenty-nine military men's incarceration at Alcatraz; the social climate in 1930s-50s California in the context of a broader, wartime United States; the medical pathologization of homosexuality; and the nature of masculinity in the military to argue that the incarceration of these twenty-nine men was a calculated decision by the United States to eradicate homosexuality from the military, and from the social sphere. My work draws on the extensive collection of prisoner files at the San Francisco National Archives, which I examine in order to track patterns of a "sexual psychopathy" diagnosis, extended prison sentences, dishonorable discharges, and evidence of homosexual conversion therapy within the penitentiary. My work is the first to make the connection between these elements in order to implicate Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the intentional imprisonment of homosexual men. These connections, combined with the legal and social history of Greater California during WWII, allows me to track a single point in the rise of what I classify as an increasingly violent heteronormative carceral State.

### **A Short History of Law in the United States**

Laws criminalizing sodomy have been maintained by the United States government since the founding of the original thirteen colonies, as their laws adhered to the previously established English Common Law, which found sodomy to be morally and legally reprehensible. George D. Painter writes, "Every state adopted

some form of a sodomy law as it joined the United States, either in acceptance of an unwritten common law or in formal codification. A slow modernization of laws away from a religious doctrine into a secular system reduced penalties over time in a piecemeal fashion.”<sup>14</sup> This modernization period overlaps with the years of operation of Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary, in which the law reflected the public’s desire to uphold “Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards.”<sup>15</sup> The consequences of modernization were largely unknown to the public, such as the extended incarceration of service members. “Sodomy” in the 1930s when Alcatraz opened its doors was most often classified as male-to-male penetration of any orifice, as “sex between women was viewed as an oxymoron.”<sup>16</sup> The dominant ethical standards of the early to mid 1900s were consistent with post-Victorian era ideas of sexuality, which looked favorably upon solely procreative and married sex. Cultural Anthropologist Gayle Rubin best expounds on this standard in *Thinking Sex* through her model of sexual hierarchy, which explains “the charmed circle” and “the outer limits.” The traits in the “charmed circle” include, “married, monogamous, procreative, in private, vanilla...” etc. The “outer limits” include, “bad, abnormal, unnatural, damned sexuality, homosexuality, promiscuous”<sup>17</sup> etc. Homosexual men in the 1930s were positioned in “the outer limits” of society, and *were* seen as bad,

---

<sup>14</sup> George Painter, “History of Sodomy Laws.” *Sodomy Laws*. (Portland: Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Chief Justice Warren Burger, defense of maintaining strict Sodomy laws, *Bower v. Hardwick* (March, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> George Painter, “The History of Sodomy Laws in the United States – Kansas,” *Sodomy Laws* (Portland: Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Duke University Press, 2011), 137-81.

abnormal, and unnatural. This was in part due to a moral panic that was crafted by the pointed moral compass of J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

While sodomy laws effectively allowed the state to criminalize and incarcerate men accused and convicted of sodomy, there are several instances of extralegal judicial decisions, which show state motives to incarcerate homosexual men, not just sodomy offenders. In the 1934 case of *People vs. Barber*, the defendant was on trial for sodomy, but the act of penetration could not be proven. There were witnesses on the stand who testified that penetration did not occur, but the defense was permitted to dismiss that testimony. The judge found the defendant guilty of sodomy despite the legal requirement for a penetrative act. This case represents that the interest in charging a person with sodomy was not to punish a physical act, but instead to punish and criminalize the identity of being homosexual.

From its early 17<sup>th</sup> century legal roots, sodomy in the United States was legally and socially considered to be a “crime against nature,” which cemented the moral (and, at times, religious) intent of the incarceration of homosexual men.<sup>18</sup> Romans 1:27-1:31 reads: “They [homosexual men] have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no

---

<sup>18</sup> Sodomy Laws date back to the Middle Assyrian Law Codes of 1075 BC, but their history in the United States began in 1610 when Virginia passed a prohibition against Sodomy.

understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.”<sup>19</sup> This was the nature of language used to support sodomy laws during Alcatraz’s years of operation, framing homosexual men as violent, untrustworthy, and evil, propelled forward by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI’s agenda to criminalize homosexual men. Just before this passage in Romans reads: “In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.” The state, with the help of vocal public opinion, and the guidance of J. Edgar Hoover, sought to carry out this ‘due penalty’ through the Carceral system, and through sodomy laws, effectively ‘playing God,’ and delivering the spiritual and moral justice desired by the American public. The twenty-nine men imprisoned at Alcatraz for sodomy were military men who – upon arrival at Alcatraz – were subjected to treatment and medical procedures that sought to punish them for their deviant genders and sexualities. The laws pertaining to their treatment were not unlike the Assyrian law codes, as sterilization and castration were both legally permissible in cases involving mental patients, prisoners, sex offenders, and any intersection of those three.

### **The Psychopathic Offender Laws**

To supplement anti-sodomy laws, California passed a “Psychopathic Offenders” law in 1939. This law “made an effort to protect the public from “sexual psychopaths” (“persons with criminal propensities to the commission of sex

---

<sup>19</sup> *Romans*. New International Version (Biblica Inc., 2011).

offenses”) by authorizing their commitment to mental institutions.”<sup>20</sup> These laws were upheld using seven assumptions: women and children are in danger; sex crimes are committed by “degenerates” and “sex killers;” sexual psychopaths have no control over their sexual impulses; a sexual psychopath can be identified before committing a crime; the catch and release system with these “perverts” isn’t working; they should be segregated until cured; and lastly, that their diagnosis should come from psychiatrists only.<sup>21</sup> The language of these proposals was geared heavily towards the “protection of women and children,” as the moral panic was focused on protecting the most vulnerable lives in society (which at the time was presented through the “delicate nature” of young, white, women and children). The law before 1939 allowed the government to “prohibit and restrict any sexual activity,” and deemed that “any act...which openly outrages public decency would be punished.”<sup>22</sup> Additionally before this law was passed, the federal government had already asserted their willingness to pursue extralegal charges when confronted with sodomy accusations, such as through the case of *People vs. Barber*. This case was an early example of a visible succession of collaborative abuses between the political state and the criminal justice system in regards to the systematic and precise criminalization and incarceration of homosexual men.

In order to substantiate a sexual psychopathic diagnosis, the presence of an act (i.e. sodomy), and a “mental state” (i.e. homosexuality) had to be present. In the

---

<sup>20</sup> Edwin H Sutherland, “The Sexual Psychopath Laws,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 40.5 (1950), 543-54.

<sup>21</sup> Sutherland, *The Sexual Psychopath Laws*, 543-54.

<sup>22</sup> Language used in the case of *People vs. Barber* in 1934

case of the Alcatraz prisoners, their sodomy charges solidified the “act” in this equation, and the sexual psychopathic diagnosis was established once the individual was at Alcatraz, through inter-prison psychiatric diagnosis. In the case of Angelo Paris – a sodomy prisoner received on June 19, 1934 – his “sexual psychopathy” was documented on April 4, 1931 during the period between 1868 and 1933 when Alcatraz was solely a military prison. The *Sexual Psychopath Laws* making sexual psychopathy a legally supported diagnosis were passed between the years of 1935 and 1939, meaning that Paris’ diagnosis in 1931 was acutely premature. The pressure on the psychiatric sector to provide a diagnosis can be contextualized within a period called the “War on the Sex Criminal”<sup>23</sup> beginning in the 1930s, which was called for by J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from 1935 to 1972. In a 1947 article in *America Magazine*, Hoover wrote, “The most rapidly increasing type of crime is that perpetuated by degenerate sex offenders...”<sup>24</sup> This article, called *How Safe Is Your Daughter*, emphasized the intentional centering of homosexual males in the “War on the Sex Criminal,” as “these campaigns essentially equated male homosexuality with the sexual abuse of children.”<sup>25</sup> The introduction of these Sexual Psychopath laws intended to criminalize *and* pathologize homosexuality, as a sodomy offense could (and did) prompt sexual psychopathy diagnoses, therefore allowing the federal government to use incarceration interchangeably with psychiatric care. In a 1956 paper in the

---

<sup>23</sup> Melissa Hope Ditmore, “Male Prostitution,” *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), 277-278.

<sup>24</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, “How Safe is your Daughter” (*America Magazine*, 1947), 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Ditmore, “Male Prostitution”, 277.

*California Journal of Medicine* authors Walter Rappaport and Daniel Lieberman wrote, "In California sexual offenders apprehended by the law are examined by court-appointed psychiatrists to determine whether they are "sexual psychopaths" as defined by California law and need treatment in a mental hospital."<sup>26</sup> Men were evaluated based on the nature of their offense and on their criminal history. In the case of Alcatraz sodomy prisoners, if a man was already incarcerated when he received his diagnosis, he would be "treated" in prison, and would not be taken to a separate psychiatric facility, even if his sexual psychopathy was thought to have triggered the act of sodomy.

The Great Depression placed economic strains on various areas of public care. One of the most impacted sectors was psychiatric care. During the 1930s, psychiatric and correctional facilities were overflowing with patients. These patients could not be seen at the rate that they were flooding in, and budgets for these facilities were continually cut due to the country's economic crisis, and lack of concern for mental health. This took a turn after World War II, as the number of soldiers discharged for mental illness hit an all-time high.<sup>27</sup> This resulted in the *National Mental Health Act* of 1946, which funneled money into psychiatric facilities.

The psychiatric care crisis of the early to mid 1930s heavily affected military men, as every single prisoner with a "sexual psychopathy" diagnosis was a dishonorably discharged ex-military man. Sodomy was a legally punishable offense,

---

<sup>26</sup> Walter Rappaport and Daniel Lieberman, "The Sexual Psychopath in California" *California Journal of Medicine* 85.4 (1956), 232.

<sup>27</sup> Ted R. Watkins and James W. Callicutt, *Mental Health Policy and Practice Today* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 18-19.

which made the imprisonment of sodomy prisoners legal, and allowed for any psychiatric care that was deemed necessary to occur within the prison. This was considerably cheaper than individualized psychiatric care outside of prison, and it also had the effect of keeping the men further away from society. This economic reality combined with sodomy law, the sexual psychopath laws, and the moral crusade against homosexual men constructed a reality in which men were legally incarcerated due to behavior that the state classified as “homosexual.” This reputation may not seem to fit a “sodomy” charge, as it does not initially seem to be extremely violent, but homosexuality – in the socialized eye of the public – was considered a violent identity to have, particularly because J. Edgar Hoover and FBI associates made sure that the public felt that their safety was compromised by the “homosexual menace.”

### **J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s War on the Sex Criminal**

Following the famous *Mattson Case* of 1936 in which a young boy was kidnapped, murdered, and sexually abused, Hoover and the FBI were put under pressure to address the issue of kidnapping. Hoover had declared prior to the incident that kidnapping was no longer a concern in the United States.<sup>28</sup> This comment came from a desire to rebuild the public’s confidence in the FBI following

---

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, *The FBI and Religion*, 137.



the Lindbergh kidnapping of 1932.<sup>29</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt responded to public outcry about the Mattson case by asserting that “the FBI would never stop until the Mattson kidnapper had been found,”<sup>30</sup> therefore putting Hoover in a position where he had to provide a solution to not only this case, but to any similar cases that might arise. The target that Hoover’s FBI selected was the homosexual male, or what they called “sex perverts” or “sex fiends.”<sup>31</sup> Because of the nature of the Mattson crime, the American public was already in a state of panic about homosexual men, so Hoover’s assertion that “sex perverts” were criminals who would murder if they got the chance fit snugly into the public’s already growing moral disdain for these men. In order to solve the Mattson crime, Hoover and the FBI created a “Sex Degenerates and Sex Offenders” research file, which was “clearly related to the collection and dissemination of information about gays.”<sup>32</sup> The FBI was never able to solve the Mattson crime, so they used the information that they had compiled on homosexual men from the case to both “educate the public over decades about this particular “criminal menace”,<sup>33</sup> but also to keep names and information compiled in order to solve future sex crimes, as homosexual men were considered potentially violent. From 1934 when the first sodomy prisoner was

---

<sup>29</sup> The Lindbergh kidnapping was an incident in which the 20-month old son of famous aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh was kidnapped and a ransom note was left (followed by multiple, higher ransom requests). The case was handled largely by the FBI, which later determined the culprit to be Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *The FBI and Religion*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas M. Charles, “The Victim of a Degenerate,” *Hoover’s War on Gays: Exposing the FBI’s “Sex Deviates” Program* (Lawrence, KS: U of Kansas, 2015), 28.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

brought to the island, to 1957 when the final one left, “Alcatraz never held a prisoner who had molested a minor child or committed incest.”<sup>34</sup> This shows that the FBI used the narrative of sex perverts and child molesters as a biopolitical weapon that allowed them to also imprison homosexual men who did not fit the stereotype of the sex pervert or the child molester.

J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI responded to a crisis of masculinity and traditional gender roles in the 1930s. Because of the Great Depression, “The American male suddenly found himself struggling to fulfill his assigned roles as husband and father. He lost his job; he failed in supporting his family; he lost his home...”<sup>35</sup> 1930s masculinity was very much tied to economic success, and the idea of being “self made” was the pinnacle of success for American men. The Great Depression put this ideal in flux. Economic hardship put more pressure on men to fulfill stereotypically masculine gender roles, as the gender binary has historically been employed in times of turmoil in an attempt to restore order to the family unit, and to society. This strain on masculinity prompted a discomfort and fear towards homosexual males, who were considered to exist in a permanent space of deviant masculinity. These men were publically cast as a threat to family structures and gender roles as a diversion from the very real threat of the Great Depression. This focus on homosexual men prompted a moral panic and subsequent witch-hunt that allowed the ‘normal’ family to project their economic failure onto deviant bodies. Before the Great Depression, “homosexuality was regarded as a moral issue, but not

---

<sup>34</sup> David A. Ward and Gene G. Kassebaum, *Alcatraz: The Gangster Years*, 457.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, *The FBI and Religion*, 28.

a moral threat to society... now they were seen as significant threats to children and family... recast as dangerous predators and criminals who, during a time of crisis, were considered threatening enough to warrant a federal response.”<sup>36</sup> The moral panic regarding homosexual men as “sex criminals” provided a tangible goal for the FBI in securing public approval and comfort: imprisoning homosexual men to keep them far from the public sphere, and from the American homes to which they were perceived to pose a threat.

One way that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI justified the imprisonment of homosexual men was to highlight parallels between homosexuality and obscenity. During World War II, J. Edgar Hoover created the “Obscene File” as a project of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was a living repository of obscene material, and was later used as evidence to criminalize producers and consumers of “smut.” This file prompted anti-pornography legislation, which added a criminal aspect to what was previously operated solely under public disdain. Hoover publically categorized obscenity as an “un-American influence,” prompting a public fear of terrorism.<sup>37</sup> This fear led to a series of crime bills in 1934 that “significantly expanded the FBI’s jurisdiction, arrest-powers, and ability to carry weapons.”<sup>38</sup> These crime bills happened to appear during the same year that J. Edgar Hoover called for a “Super Prison” to house dangerous persons in the United States. This prison acted as a site for the FBI to deposit the sex criminals that were apprehended

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas M. Charles, “The Postwar Obscene File and Social Regulation,” *The FBI’s Obscene File: J. Edgar Hoover and the Bureau’s Crusade Against Smut* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 39.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 21.

as a result of the obscenity panic, and the 1934 crime bills. The location of the “Super Prison” became Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary. The FBI and J. Edgar Hoover saw homosexual men and obscenity “as similar moral threats that imperiled the American public, and its responses in both cases were similar as well. Both threats surfaced during periods of social and cultural upheaval and were cast as major moral crises tied to a larger moral decline in society.”<sup>39</sup> The power from both moral panics took up significant space in the minds of American people, giving the FBI considerable power in prosecuting these offenses. Prosecution was based on the existing legislation regarding homosexuality and obscenity: sodomy laws and the sexual psychopath laws.

J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI also justified the imprisonment of homosexual men by classifying them as a threat to national security. This prompted witch-hunts in both the government and in the military because both sectors were areas in which national security was considered to be vulnerable. Republican National Committee Chairman Guy Gabrielson said, “Sex perverts who have infiltrated our government in recent years are perhaps as dangerous [a threat to internal security] as the actual communists.”<sup>40</sup> Assertions such as this – which J. Edgar Hoover strongly agreed with – led to an increase in the FBI’s appropriations, effectively allowing J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI to profit off of the moral panic. In 1951, at a House Appropriations Subcommittee meeting, Hoover said that the Bureau needed more money in order to effectively manage investigations regarding the Federal

---

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, *The FBI and Religion*, 136.

<sup>40</sup> Athan G. Theoharis, “The Politics of Sex.” *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 101-02.

Employee Loyalty Program, which formed to remove homosexuals from government office as part of the Lavender Scare.<sup>41</sup> The committee agreed with Hoover, and the increased funding was approved. With this funding came the 1951 “Sex Deviates Program”<sup>42</sup> under which information was collected about government workers, leading to their termination, and in some cases, blackmail. The mass-firings as a result of this funding led to many individuals receiving sodomy convictions or accusations. Their imprisonment as a result of being deemed a “national security threat” constituted sodomy prisoners as political prisoners.

### **World War II Masculinity and the Military to Prison Pipeline**

Just as homosexuals were removed from government office, they were also purged from military service. During World War II, there was a thriving sexual economy in San Francisco, as locals capitalized on the entertainment of military men and women who were stationed there. Historian Nan Alamilla Boyd writes, “To accommodate both the vast influx of military personnel and the quick pace of shore leave, gay and lesbian bars clustered in areas close to the center of town. Queer life, as a result, became much more accessible to both locals and military personnel looking for a good time.”<sup>43</sup> Because of this popular new military culture, and the heightened rates of semi-visible homosexuality within the military, military officials

---

<sup>41</sup> The mass-firings of homosexuals from government office as a response to J. Edgar Hoover’s moral panic regarding homosexual men. This operated similarly to the “Red Scare” in which suspected Communists were purged from government offices.

<sup>42</sup> Charles, *Hoover’s War on Gays*.

<sup>43</sup> Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Policing Queers.” *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: U of California, 2003), 113.

began searching for ways to put an end to gay nightlife. The Military, the Public Health Service, and the American Social Hygiene Association collaborated to create and pass The May Act in June of 1941, which was a way to police sexuality without officially making particular sexualities illegal. The May Act allowed authorities to shut down any businesses that were suspected to participate in prostitution or other forms of vice.<sup>44</sup> This led to the closing of many gay bars in San Francisco, and forced others to operate inconspicuously for fear of incarceration and other legal action such as fines. This was an early example of the criminalization of bar culture for homosexual and gender variant individuals, predating the famous “Stonewall Riots” of 1969, which many believe to be the turning point of LGBT history.<sup>45</sup> Historian John D’Emilio, however, argues, “World War II “marks the beginning of the nation’s, and San Francisco’s, modern gay history.”<sup>46</sup> This fountainhead of gay culture attracted political and military scorn, resulting in swift legal action.

The military also attempted to regulate and criminalize homosexual behavior through a declaration by Army Commander Major General Walker K. Wilson, in which he made three specific bars off-limits to military personnel. More bars would have been added to the list if not for efforts made by the State Board of Equalization

---

<sup>44</sup> Allan Bérubé, John D’Emilio, and Estelle B. Freedman, ““The Gang’s All Here”: The Gay Life and Vice Control,” *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2010), 121.

<sup>45</sup> David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010).

Riots by the LGBT community in Greenwich Village, New York, in response to police raids of the Stonewall Inn bar.

<sup>46</sup> John D’Emilio, “Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco since World War II,” *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds. (New York: Penguin, 1989), 458.

to shut the bars down themselves for “violations” based on codes created for the specific purpose of trapping the businesses in compliance impossibilities.<sup>47</sup>

Additionally, San Francisco Board of Equalization enforcement officer Don Marshall stated, “If the Board [of Equalization] does not crack down on you, the Army and Navy will.”<sup>48</sup> This implies a deliberate partnership between the military and the state of California in “cracking down” on homosexual behavior. This created a military to prison pipeline, which led to the incarceration of sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz; every single prisoner came straight from the military, which was not true for non-sodomy inmates on the island.

Sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz were part of the mass-dishonorable discharging of perceived homosexual males in the military around the time of World War II. Whether or not these men were eventually sent to Alcatraz, many were kept in what GI’s called “Queer Stockades,” which author Allan Bérubé describes as ranging from “pup tents and psychiatric restraint rooms to entire Quonset huts, barracks, and sections of brigs or stockades.” Bérubé continues, “More punitive than even the locked psych wards, these makeshift homosexual detention facilities were outgrowths of the penal system.”<sup>49</sup> This period included mandates that military men and women disclose information of any known homosexuals to commanding officers so that they could be weeded out and “separated from the Armed Forces.”<sup>50</sup> This created a mindset in which military men and women were praised for

---

<sup>47</sup> Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 121.

<sup>48</sup> “State Warns 50 Taverns They Must Oust ‘B’ Girls,” (San Francisco, CA: GLBT Historical Society, 1942).

<sup>49</sup> Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 213-14.

<sup>50</sup> Boyd, *Policing Queers*, 117.

reporting military personnel who they perceived to be homosexual. Many sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz claimed that they were framed for their sodomy offenses, and that the information regarding their crime was given on false pretenses. Keeping in mind the narratives of honor surrounding this betrayal, these claims of false accusations are incredibly likely. They seem even *more* possible when remembering the 1934 case of *People vs. Barber*, in which the state *distinctly* ignored the lack of incriminating evidence in a sodomy case. These abuses of the state extend beyond the political sphere, and can be seen in the military, with homosexual witch-hunts, and in the carceral system, with unsubstantiated sexual psychopathy diagnoses.

### **J. Edgar Hoover and the Creation of the “Super Prison”**

In the early 1930s, J Edgar Hoover called for a “Super Prison” which was designated at the prison on Alcatraz Island in 1934. Homer Stille Cummings – the Attorney General of the United States from 1933 to 1939 – addressed in an in-house memo “the subject of creating a special prison for kidnappers, racketeers, and individuals guilty of predatory crimes.”<sup>51</sup> Cummings was also responsible for hand selecting the first warden of Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary: James A. Johnson.<sup>52</sup> J. Edgar Hoover presented “persistent assertions”<sup>53</sup> regarding this prison. The language of “individuals guilty of predatory crimes” fits snugly within the language

---

<sup>51</sup> United States. National Park Service. “U.S. Penitentiary Alcatraz.” *National Parks Service*. (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016).

<sup>52</sup> Gregory L. Wellman, “Watching Over the Island: Wardens, Guards and Personnel 1934-1963,” *Images of America: A History of Alcatraz Island 1853-2008* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2008), 70.

<sup>53</sup> National Park Service. “*U.S. Penitentiary Alcatraz.*”



Hoover used to address homosexual men. Hoover even stated, "Should wild beasts break out of circus cages, a whole city would be mobilized instantly. But depraved human beings, more savage than beasts, are permitted to rove America almost at will."<sup>54</sup> As a vocal force in the movement for a "super prison", Hoover brought his views of homosexual men as violent, animalistic predators to conversations regarding the establishment of this federal penal institution. On each prisoner's admission document at Alcatraz, the charge was listed (sodomy), and in the top right-hand corner was J. Edgar Hoover's large, bold signature. The super prison was ostensibly proposed for many types of violent criminals, but it is important to note that the very first prisoner at this "super prison" was Frank L. Bolt: a sodomy prisoner.

It mattered that this "super prison" existed in California, because the California state government was one of the few state governments in the early 1930s that was taking a harsher legal position on homosexuality and homosexual acts. In fact, California was one of the only states implementing "sexual psychopath" laws, and was the *only* state in the Western part of the United States doing so. The special assistant attorney general of California, Eugene D. Williams, wrote, "The sex pervert [...] is just as much a criminal as is the burglar or murderer [...] A sterner approach is required if the degenerate is to be properly treated and cured [...] rather than turned out as he is now from the penitentiary, confirmed in his perversion."<sup>55</sup> The inundation of sodomy prisoners at this time aligns directly with Hoover's "War

---

<sup>54</sup> J. Edgar Hoover. 1947.

<sup>55</sup> Time, "Queer People," (Time, 1929), 52, 54.

on the Sex Criminal,” as well as the implementation of the Sexual Psychopath laws. In 1947, Hoover was quoted in *Time Magazine* as saying, “Most of them [sex offenders] are driven by uncontrollable impulses that do not respond to customary legal procedures [...] Reliance upon traditional juridical procedures has taken us nowhere.”<sup>56</sup> This indicates his desire for more severe punishment for sodomy prisoners, as well as reveals his genuine target: homosexual men. This was not due to the violence of the act of sodomy, which was criminalized even when consensual, but instead to the “mental state” of homosexuality.

In the text *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*,<sup>57</sup> author Phillip Jenkins writes, “The inclusion of consensual offenses like pornography, homosexuality, sodomy, etc., under the same heading as rape and sexual homicide compounded the perception of danger as well as signaled the assumption that all of the crimes stemmed from a common etiology.” Because of the insinuation that homosexuality is not unlike rape or murder, Hoover’s moral panic cultivated public desire for homosexual men to be out of the public eye – out of sight, out of mind. This was a driving factor in the selection of Alcatraz as the location for the “super prison,” as “a remote site was sought, one that would prohibit constant communication with the outside world by those confined within its walls.”<sup>58</sup> During the transition period between Alcatraz as a military prison and as a federal penitentiary, most men were sent to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, and Fort

---

<sup>56</sup> Hoover, *Time Magazine*, 1947

<sup>57</sup> Phillip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> National Park Service. “U.S. Penitentiary Alcatraz.”

Jay in New Jersey, but thirty-two “hard case prisoners”<sup>59</sup> remained at Alcatraz to be incarcerated at the “super prison.” Nine out of the first twenty-five new prisoners brought to the island during this time were sodomy prisoners. This is not a coincidence, as these truths directly align with the moral panic of the “sex criminal,” “homosexual menace,” and the rising legal and medical classification of homosexual men as “sexual psychopaths.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Alcatraz as a Site for Homosexual Incarceration**

California’s long history of investing in imprisonment to solve moral problems set the stage for the events at Alcatraz. Much of this investment stems from the formation of California as a carceral state during the Gold Rush. When the Gold Rush commenced in 1848, governing bodies in California were in a state of transition after Mexico’s surrender of California as a province. This change was marked by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which “guaranteed the property rights of all Mexican citizens, including Indians, living in the lands surrendered by Mexico to the United States”.<sup>61</sup> This essentially left California as its own entity, “neither a territory nor a state, but with a legal system ill-designed to cope with a gold rush.”<sup>62</sup> This newness prompted vulnerability in the state that caused the government and the carceral system to become deeply intertwined. Early in the gold rush, crime was

---

<sup>59</sup> “The Long History of Alcatraz Island, California.” *Legends of America* (2003).

<sup>60</sup> Kathy Lee Peiss, Christina Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America,” *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989), 226-37.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Ridge, “Disorder, Crime, and Punishment in the California Gold Rush” (Montana: *The Magazine of Western History*, 1999), 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

almost non-existent, but as a profusion of diverse, hopeful persons continued to rush into California, clashing morals increased crime, or rather, created a 'need' for criminal laws. When people began to 'steal' each other's gold, or mine in their territories, a demand was created for a system to put an end to these transgressions. Crime and abundance of gold maintained a causal relationship during this time; if gold was abundant, crime was non-existent; if gold was scarce, crime rose exponentially. Due to the panic of widespread crime (whether imagined or real), the California state government passed the *Criminal Practices Act* in 1851.

The *Criminal Practices Act* was a point of amplification for California prisons, as it legalized capital punishment and called for the construction of more California prisons. These laws sparked a lasting legacy of the criminalization of moral deviance in California, impacting the prisoner makeup of California prisons. This early legislation prompted the establishment of San Quentin State Prison – in which most state executions were carried out – and Alcatraz Military Prison, which was established by the 1851 *Criminal Practices Act*. As this legislation was passed in response to the Gold Rush – which prompted a flow of diversity and greed within California – acts that were deemed illegal were specific to the gold rush (i.e. laws regarding mining and theft). It is also important to note that both San Quentin and Alcatraz prisons were built by the prisoners themselves. California was in a state of 'rebuilding' post-Mexican surrender, and the choice was made to build California law around the prison. These prisons were built by prisoners in part for free labor, but also symbolically, as the carceral state of California was built using the hands of those who fell victim to it. This combination of laws removed 'undesirable persons'

from the public sphere, imprisoned them, and put them to work without compensation. The theme of imprisoning “undesirable people” in California continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the Red Scare and the Lavender Scare, in which communists and homosexual men were targeted for removal from government office, and – in some cases – were imprisoned.<sup>63</sup> Further, it sets the stage for at least 29 military men to be imprisoned at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary on the basis of sodomy.

Historian George Painter writes, “In the two-year period from July 1, 1900 to June 30, 1902, there were 20 prosecutions in California for the “crime against nature,” [sodomy] leading to 16 convictions. Amazingly, a disproportionate 10 of the 20 were in San Francisco, with six more in neighboring counties.” The state of California passed state laws criminalizing homosexuality (sexual psychopath laws, sodomy laws, etc.) but the core of the carceral state of California is San Francisco. The systemic investment in imprisoning immoral people in San Francisco contributed to making the discipline and punishment of sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz possible.

By 1934, Alcatraz was designated as the site of isolation and incarceration for problematic and immoral offenders. In a document recommending the transfer of prisoner Daniel Catalano, the Warden of the Federal Reformatory in Chillicothe, Ohio – Robert P. Hagerman – wrote, “His [Catalano’s] transfer to Alcatraz is

---

<sup>63</sup> Holly S. Heatley, “*Com mies and Queers*”: *Narratives That Supported the Lavender Scare*,” PhD diss. (Arlington, U of Texas, 2007), 4.

recommended on the basis of his strong arming, aggressive homosexual activities.”<sup>64</sup> This on it’s own could be understood as a recommendation based on the expectation that violent offenders must be contained, but the very perception of homosexual behavior as violent or threatening speaks to the moral panic that penetrated the walls of the prison, and impacted sentence lengths. Another statement regarding prisoner Thomas Cartwright in 1957 highlights the intentionality of Alcatraz as a site of homosexual punishment. Frank Loveland, the assistant director at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary wrote, “There were serious homosexual overtones in many of the violations in which he was involved. If he had more time to serve we would be inclined to send him to Alcatraz, but since he has only a few months we decided to send him on to Atlanta.”<sup>65</sup> This indicates Alcatraz as an intentional site of punishment for homosexual men to the extent that other institutions were aware of this, and considered transfers on the basis of the sexuality of their prisoners. Ten years before, Cartwright *was* held Alcatraz, and James A. Johnston, the Warden at Alcatraz from 1934 to 1948, known to be a “tough disciplinarian”<sup>66</sup> wrote, “He is an immature individual with homosexual tendencies in need of maximum custody at all times.” Two years before this in 1945, the Warden wrote, “subject [Angelo Paris] was transferred here October 23, 1944 because of homosexual history and the fact

---

<sup>64</sup> Special Progress Report for Daniel Catalano, Jr. at Chillicothe Federal Reformatory, 23 July 1953. Classification Form 2, Reg. No. 7161 3-A., AZ, SFNA.

<sup>65</sup> Note from Frank Loveland, Assistant Director to the Warden at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary re: Thomas M. Cartwright, 14 February 1957. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Esslinger, “For Desperate or Irredeemable Types: United States Federal Penitentiary Alcatraz,” *The History of Alcatraz* (Ocean View Publishing, 2016).

that he required close custody.”<sup>67</sup> Alcatraz was designated within the American carceral system as the site for this close custody for homosexual men, which explains why transfers of sodomy prisoners were occurring.

To this end, prisoners also received extended sentences on the basis of their sexuality. The law regarding sodomy at the time only allowed an individual to be imprisoned for 10 years for the charge. Because of the sexual psychopathy laws, that time could be extended if they were deemed sexually psychopathic, which implied both violent tendencies, and that they would be a danger to society. Referring back to Angelo Paris, the United States Army, in collaboration with Alcatraz officials, stated, “I would recommend it [the advancement of his release date] except for that I have a feeling that he will be a menace to society, therefore doubt the wisdom of advancing his release date.” The language of the claim sounds not unlike the language used to refer to “the homosexual menace” of the early 1950s.

Language used to publically degrade and pathologize the homosexual male was yet another result of Hoover’s multi-decade long crusade against “immoral sexuality,” which spilled into the McCarthy era. This “Lavender Scare” of which the term “homosexual menace” originated, ran parallel to the “Red Scare,” in which Senator Joseph McCarthy unleashed a panic regarding communists and homosexuals infiltrating the United States government. The protraction of the original sex panic continued the work of incarcerating perceived homosexual males without public query on the matter. The moral panic of homosexuality was passed on throughout the 1900s, most notably between J. Edgar Hoover and Senator Joseph

---

<sup>67</sup> Transfer document note by James A. Johnston re: Angelo Paris, 1945. AZ, SFNA.

McCarthy.

In a 1933 memorandum, Prisoner John Golebowski was denied parole on the basis of his offense – sodomy. The Warden wrote, “Denied Parole March 23, 1933. Reason for most of trouble at Atlanta - “Sodomy” - No reports at Alcatraz.”<sup>68</sup> In a note included in consideration of parole for prisoner Angelo Paris, Edward W. Twitchell, a consultant in Psychiatry at Alcatraz, said he “does not seem the bad sort, aside from his sexual delinquency.”<sup>69</sup> Paris’ diagnosis of “sexual delinquency” was what prevented the approval of his parole. In a transfer document for prisoner Daniel Catalano, the Warden gave an in-depth account of the prisoner’s homosexual behavior, ending with, “This is a 10 year case and same is being continued. Subject, however, does not make a very good impression upon me.”<sup>70</sup> The line between sexual psychopathy as a psychiatric diagnosis and as a social malady was very thin at Alcatraz, which made the above statements valid in preventing transfers, and extending release dates. These men were held not because of their crime, but because the state legally pathologized homosexuality in the wake of sodomy laws losing legal traction. It is also important to note that these prisoners were not diagnosed as mentally ill prior to their incarceration. With the sexual psychopath laws came a new type of mentally ill person: the sex pervert. The state created the correlation between homosexuality and mental illness in order to use it as a

---

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum from RJW to Warden Johnston, Subject: Golebowski- #54-Az, 1933. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Edward W Twitchell to Warden Johnston re: Angelo Paris. December 31, 1934. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>70</sup> United States Board of Parole Transcript of Minutes re: Daniel Catalano Jr., Atlanta, Georgia. AZ, SFNA.



biopolitical weapon, allowing them to incarcerate deviant bodies (homosexual men) in order to police sexual deviance in the greater American public. In fact, in a study of maximum security prisons, criminologist David Ward examined Alcatraz inmate files and “found mental health problems identified in only 41 of 508 case files,”<sup>71</sup> meaning that very few prisoners besides sodomy prisoners were diagnosed as mentally ill. This reflects the prioritization of the state in diagnosing and “curing” homosexuality over other types of “mental illness.”

### **The Diagnoses of Sodomy Prisoners at Alcatraz**

The majority of the sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz were diagnosed with some form of sexual psychopathy. Thomas Cartwright was diagnosed with sexual psychopathy in 1949 following a request from Warden E. B. Swope for psychiatric analysis due to his romantic interest in another inmate.<sup>72</sup> L. Delmore Jr., the Associate Warden of Alcatraz in 1952, wrote, “For quite a period of time he has become thoroughly infatuated with 871 Mitchell – to a degree that they are inseparable – what one does – the other follows suit. It is requested that a complete psychiatric report be furnished on subject.” Because of Cartwright’s “infatuation” with Mitchell, he was diagnosed with sexual psychopathy, psychopathic personality, pathologic sexuality, and emotional instability. This is not due to any physically violent or otherwise harmful behavior, such as the sexual psychopath diagnosis

---

<sup>71</sup> Stephen C. Richards, “Colorado Supermax Study,” *The Marion Experiment: Long-term Solitary Confinement and the Supermax Movement* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2015), 163.

<sup>72</sup> Letter to Chief Medical Officer from Associate Warden re: 731 Cartwright, Oct. 15, 1952. AZ, SFNA.

suggests. In the state's eyes, the fact that the men were imprisoned therefore meant that they were violent; thus the only part of the diagnosis left to "prove" was a "psychopathic mindset." What constituted a "psychopath" was up to the state's interpretation. Holly S. Heatley, a graduate student of the University of Texas writes, "The breadth of interpretation permitted by varying means of the term allowed it to be applied to anyone who did not fit societal norms."<sup>73</sup> The societal norm surrounding sexuality at the time was heterosexual and procreative, so homosexual behavior of any kind easily fit the criteria of "outside of societal norms." Prisoner Charles E. Johnston was noted to have "inferior moral judgment" and "lack of moral stamina."<sup>74</sup> Angelo Paris was diagnosed as "having many of the psychic and physical characteristics of the homosexual," "sexual delinquency," and "abnormal sexual traits."<sup>75</sup> Prisoner Joseph Harrison, 1935, "sex pervert."<sup>76</sup> Frank L. Bolt, 1934, "sexual perversions."<sup>77</sup> Leo Prokopf, 1936, "homosexual pervert" and "homosexual psychopath."<sup>78</sup> These diagnoses upheld a system in which the carceral state, and the political state could hold men captive under the guise of mental illness.

Hubert A. Grindle was a sodomy and manslaughter prisoner brought to Alcatraz on September 4, 1934. Soon after his arrival at Alcatraz, Warden Johnston referred to Grindle as "a neurasthenic" when commenting on his mental state. Like

---

<sup>73</sup> Heatley, *Commies and Queers*, 23.

<sup>74</sup> Summary of Personal History of Charles E. Johnston from the Office of the Psychiatrist, Alcatraz California, Clyde L Brothers. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>75</sup> Parole Case Summary for Angelo Paris. 2 December 1934. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>76</sup> Industrial and Civil Record of Leo Prokopf. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>77</sup> Admissions Summary for Frank Lucas Bolt, McNeil Island, Washington. 8 June 1936. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>78</sup> Industrial and Civil Record for Leo Prokopf. AZ, SFNA.

sexual psychopathy, neurasthenia was commonly criticized as a diagnosis for being too broad in terms of definition. It was widely categorized by “sexual indulgence” which was said to lead to “nervous exhaustion.”<sup>79</sup> In fact, Dr. George M. Beard, the neurologist who coined the term “neurasthenia,” indicated sexuality as the highest tier of “nervous exhaustion” that led to “insanity.” As the evidence for this disease was purely behavioral, neurasthenia was indubitably a socially constructed malady, justified by late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> century moral code. David D. Schuster – author of *Neurasthenic Nation* – wrote, “Some in women’s history argued that neurasthenia represented a medicalized tool of social control that victimized Victorian women.”<sup>80</sup> This diagnosis carried on past the Victorian-era, becoming a convenient device for the pathologization of femininity and changing social roles. In 1934 when Grindle was referred to as a “neurasthenic,” language and diagnoses surrounding neurasthenia were largely antiquated. Psychiatrists at Alcatraz repurposed this language to give an old paradigm new meaning. Instead of pathologizing gender deviation in women, the term pathologized femininity and gender deviance in men, which catered to the same goal of maintaining the heteronormative nuclear family by quelling the disturbance of deviant genders and sexualities. It is clear that at Alcatraz, homosexuality – whether perceived or self-identified – was treated as an illness and as mark of femininity (which was also consistently pathologized). In a medical certificate dated November 30, 1935, prisoner John Golebowski was

---

<sup>79</sup> George M. Beard, “Preface,” *American Nervousness Its Causes and Consequences; a Supplement to Nervous Exhaustion* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1881).

<sup>80</sup> David D. Shuster, “Personalizing Illness and Modernity: S. Weir Mitchell, Literary Women and Neurasthenia, 1870-1914,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79.4 (2005), 698.

described as, “asthenic<sup>81</sup> and feminine body build, scanty feminine type of hair distribution.”<sup>82</sup> Femininity for sodomy prisoners was used to show “defect” and “disease,” therefore a neurasthenia diagnosis for a sodomy prisoner is a further pathologization of a “perverse” mental state based on the collaboration of sexism and homophobia of early to mid 1900s moral code. Shuster also notes that, “neurasthenia faded as a medical diagnosis in the United States by the 1930s.”<sup>83</sup> The report in which Warden Johnston notes his initial diagnosis of Neurasthenia is dated November 23, 1939. In this report he maintains his opinion of this diagnosis. Warden Johnston was not a psychiatrist, but his opinion pushed back Grindle’s release date from Alcatraz.<sup>84</sup> This is because the diagnosis of “neurasthenia” was not to be understood medically, but instead by the shared understanding between the Warden and the psychiatrist of the need to remove the perceived homosexual contagion from the public. The carceral state apprehended the prisoners on the basis of sodomy, and those in power at Alcatraz - notably Warden Johnston - used diagnoses such as neurasthenia and sexual psychopathy to justify their extensive imprisonment.

The only sodomy prisoners noted to have been released before their initial sentences were completed were Daniel Catalano and Hubert Grindle. Catalano was released early on the basis that he had commenced a heterosexual lifestyle. The

---

<sup>81</sup> Asthenia is a medical term to indicate “weakness”. The term *neurasthenia* literally translates to “mental weakness”. *Merriam-Webster*.

<sup>82</sup> *Medical Certificate of Departing Prisoners, To the Warden re: John Golebowski*. 30 November 1935. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>83</sup> Shuster, *Personalizing Illness and Modernity*, 697.

<sup>84</sup> *Memorandum for Mr. Bennett In Re: Hubert Grindle From Arthur D. Wood*. 4 April 1939. AZ, SFNA.

Warden wrote, "While serving his conditional release, [Catalano] met the girl to whom he is engaged to be married. His association with this girl has been an important factor in his changing attitude and ideas. He states that now that he has someone who has an interest in him, he will try to keep within the law."<sup>85</sup> This behavioral shift was legally irrelevant to his criminal charges. His release was allowed on the basis of psychiatric "progress," not criminal penitence. Hubert Grindle was released early because he 'found' Catholicism. Warden Johnston wrote, "Several years ago, Grindle became interested in religion; Father Clark, Catholic Chaplain, converted him and seems to have very good influence..."<sup>86</sup> The *divorce* of prisoner Thomas Cartwright, however, was used against him to show *instability*. His psychiatrist wrote, "He is married, but does not get along with his wife and she expects to divorce him... when normal sexual contacts were not available, he would revert to homosexual activities."<sup>87</sup> This shows how social roles and standards played into the decision of whether or not a prisoner remained incarcerated, or rejoined society. The sexual psychopath laws were based not only in science, but they also overwhelmingly shaped the public's opinion of what kind of people were perceived to be mentally ill, and therefore a threat to society. Because of Hoover's positioning of homosexual men as sex criminals and the FBI's subsequent campaign to connect sex criminals to mental illness, the public was led to regard homosexual men as

---

<sup>85</sup> *Special Progress Report for Daniel Catalano*. Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, Connecticut. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>86</sup> *Letter from Warden Johnston to the Director of the Bureau of Prisons re: Hubert Grindle*. 23 November 1939. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>87</sup> *Reclassification Report (Transfer from Chillicothe)*. Cartwright, Thomas M., 1 November 1944. AZ, SFNA.

mentally ill. James H. Shore wrote, "By the 1900s, mental hospitals were basically custodial; their philosophical approach was that they served to provide refuge for individuals from society and to protect society from the discomfort of having mentally disabled in the community."<sup>88</sup> The prison worked in this way too by keeping 'undesirable' people away from society. High profile kidnapping and assault cases such as the Mattson case prompted a need for the Federal Bureau of Investigation to point to a type of criminal for the public to look out for, leading them to create a plan to remove this type of person from society. By positioning homosexuality as a violent mental illness, the FBI succeeded in delegating their responsibility to ensure sustainable justice to the psychiatric and carceral spheres, effectively putting the public at ease and providing an explanation for why these crimes were occurring. This was done in order to maintain biopolitical control of the population, as the Federal Bureau of Investigation mobilized state apparatuses to justify the incarceration of homosexual men, therefore restoring trust to the Bureau, allowing them to continue to use the prison as a tool to discipline homosexual bodies.

The term "sexual psychopath" instilled fear in the American people and enlisted the public in the project of surveillance, predating the Neighborhood Watch programs, which began in 1972 in response to the murder of Catherine "Kitty" Genovese.<sup>89</sup> This surveillance was possible due to Public Service Announcements

---

<sup>88</sup> James H. Shore et al, *A Pilot Study of Depression Among American Indian Patients*, Diss. (UC Denver, 1989).

<sup>89</sup> Jim Rasenberger, "Nightmare On Austin Street," *American Heritage* (American Heritage Publishing, 2011).

such as the 1961 short film *Boys Beware* commissioned by the Inglewood California Police Department in which the predatory nature of homosexual males is promoted through a scene involving a young boy named Jimmy. Though this film postdates the incarceration of homosexual men at Alcatraz, it reflects the surveillance mechanism that transcended the walls of the prison, criminalizing homosexual men even *after* they were released from prison, or in some cases, to take the place of incarceration. At the end of this scene, the narrator says, “so no matter where you meet a stranger, be careful if they are too friendly. If they try to win your confidence too quickly, and if they become overly personal, one never knows when the homosexual is about. He may appear normal, and it may be too late when you discover he is mentally ill.”<sup>90</sup> This propaganda film posits the homosexual male as predatory and mentally ill, effectively pathologizing the homosexual identity. This film also positions the potential friendliness and emotional intimacy of men as a cause for concern, therefore reinforcing the hegemonic masculinity desired by the heterosexual public in order to combat the structural insecurity of families during the Great Depression, and to strengthen national security.<sup>91</sup> This cause was supported within the military as well, as many service members participated in a homosexual manhunt in order to remove homosexual men from service. Efforts in both the military and among the general public resembled the “see something, say something” campaign promoted by the Department of Homeland Security in 2010 to combat terrorism. *Boys Beware*

---

<sup>90</sup> *Boys Beware*. Directed by Sid Davis. Performed by Timothy Farrell, (United States: Sidney Davis Production, 1961).

<sup>91</sup> Homosexuality was considered an “un-American influence” by many, leading to the Lavender Scare of the 1950s meant to purge homosexual men from the government and the military.

was one of many campaigns intending to mobilize the public towards the surveillance of their communities with the intention of moving the perceived homosexual contagion out of the streets and into a psychiatric facility and/or prison.

### **Conversion Therapy and Forced Sterilization**

In California, three laws were passed after 1909 regarding sterilization, the first “targeted patients in state hospitals and institutions for the mentally retarded, as well as prison inmates. Of the prison inmates, those labeled sex offenders were the most commonly targeted.”<sup>92</sup> Because of the sexual psychopathy diagnosis, sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz were classified as both prisoners *and* mental patients, leaving them considerably more vulnerable to forced sterilization. This sterilization law was not challenged for 70 years, meaning it was active for the entire time that the doors of Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary were open. In a study outlining the number of sterilizations in California between 1921 and 1983, the most dramatic increase of sterilizations occurred between 1933 and 1938.<sup>93</sup> Alcatraz (federal) opened in 1934, meaning that this increase in California sterilizations was occurring during the years that sixteen of the twenty-nine sodomy prisoners arrived on the island.

It still remains unclear what the specific treatment plan was for “sexual psychopaths” at Alcatraz, as the notes in the psychiatric reports only contained progress reports, but information regarding the treatment of the diagnosis outside

---

<sup>92</sup> Lutz Kaelber, “California Eugenics,” *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States*, (2012).

<sup>93</sup> Kaelber, “California Eugenics”.



of Alcatraz makes a good case that the same was happening to these sodomy prisoners. Author Tamara Rice Lave writes, "Surgical treatment is intended not only as a crime prevention measure, but its chief aim is to offer relief to the sexually abnormal, whose mental suffering is a cause to untold unhappiness not only for himself but to his family and to the community in case of sex delinquency."<sup>94</sup> This fits the rhetoric used to criminalize and pathologize the sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz, with the added aspect of "failed" service in the United States military.

The options that sodomy prisoners had for a swift release from Alcatraz were to conform and convert to a heterosexual mindset, or to remain incarcerated. This manifested in ways that evoke the possibility of gay conversion therapy. The 1930s-1950s were a time when lobotomies and electroshock therapy were accepted as legitimate treatments for homosexuality. Both methods were used to deter the subject from a homosexual mindset. In *Covering: The Hidden Assault on our Civil Rights*, Author Kenji Yoshino wrote, "A 1935 presentation before the American Psychological Association cautioned that electroshock treatment would not convert homosexuals unless shocks were administered at "intensities considerably higher than those usually employed on human subjects"."<sup>95</sup> Gay conversion therapies were tools of dehumanization and sadistic outlet for rapidly popularized moral codes.

Leroy Dohrman, a sodomy prisoner who arrived at Alcatraz on February 11th, 1945, was given "shock treatment" on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1949. When Dohrman first arrived at

---

<sup>94</sup> Tamara Rice Lave, "Only Yesterday: The Rise and Fall of Twentieth Century Sexual Psychopath Laws," *Louisiana Law Review* 69.3 (Louisiana State Digital Commons, 2009), 568.

<sup>95</sup> Kenji Yoshino, "Gay Conversion," *Covering: The Hidden Assault on American Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2006), 33.

Alcatraz, his psychiatric evaluation concluded with the classification “not psychotic.”<sup>96</sup> The next year in 1945, Dohrman underwent a second psychiatric evaluation in which the Psychiatrist, Romney M. Ritchey, wrote, “He is clear and well oriented. Memory appears to be good. No history of any disturbance of consciousness... He appears to be under considerable tension but is courteous during interview. He strongly denies guilt on the charge of sodomy and claims there were civilian witnesses to support him in this statement. He claims he was denied use of certain witnesses at the trial and was convicted wholly on the statements of the [military personnel] which was at variance with the facts he claims.”<sup>97</sup>

Remembering again the case of *People vs. Barber* from 1934, it would not be the first time that witnesses were barred from a trial in order to support the interests of the state in a sodomy charge. Dohrman’s understanding of his innocence led to his escape from the military camp in which he was imprisoned, lasting for 537 days before he was apprehended and imprisoned at Alcatraz with a new twenty-one year sentence due to his escape. Dohrman’s psychiatrist at Alcatraz notes in a 1945 Psychiatric Report, “he [Dohrman] is quite upset by the situation in which he finds himself and [strongly] resents the implications of the charge of SODOMY. This he claims was his reason for escape from Camp MoQuade.”<sup>98</sup> Leroy Dohrman’s actions were a result of his self-acknowledged innocence – an understanding that he did not deserve to be imprisoned. Dohrman spent thirty-one years in prison for an offense that he may not have even committed, and for an escape prompted by this

---

<sup>96</sup> Admission Summary for Leroy Dohrman, Psychiatric Evaluation. 1944. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>97</sup> *Psychiatric Summary of Dohrman, Leroy*. 664-A. 14 February 1935. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>98</sup> *Psychiatric Evaluation of Leroy Dohrman*. 1945. AZ, SFNA.

understanding of innocence.

As may have been true in Dohrman's case, service members and military personnel were encouraged to disclose information regarding homosexual behavior of other service members. The act of doing so was considered honorable, leading to false accusations. An easy way to remove these homosexual men from the military was through a sodomy accusation; one that required legal action, and that would remove the individual not only from service, but also from society. In a 1993 study by the National Defense Research Institute, the authors noted that, "the "homosexual" has replaced the "sodomist" as the focal point of legal concern"<sup>99</sup> in the military, meaning that men were removed from service due to perceived *homosexuality* instead of as a consequence of committing sodomy. This allowed for accusations to be made on the basis of character and physical traits instead of the witnessing of a specific illegal action. This marked a shift in criminalizing actions (sodomy) to criminalizing people (the homosexual). Because the Psychiatrist perceived lunacy in Leroy Dohrman's claims that he was framed, he was diagnosed as an "Emotionally Unstable Psychopath." In 1947 he was evaluated again, and was noted to be "tense, hostile, sullen, evasive, and resentful."<sup>100</sup> The behavior that Dohrman displayed in the evaluation was described in a way that suggests feelings of exhaustion or defeat, but the psychiatrist diagnosed this behavior as, "psychopathic personality with marked paranoid tendencies..." November of the

---

<sup>99</sup> United States National Defense Research Institute, *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*, By Bernard D. Rostker and Scott A. Harris (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993).

<sup>100</sup> *Psychiatric Evaluation of Leroy Dohrman*. 1947. AZ, SFNA.

next year, his psychiatric report began with, "This man has been in isolation for several months. It has been noted recently that he has appeared to be rapidly deteriorating, refusing to conform or to accept any assignment." The next year, he was given electroshock therapy. At this point, the question must be raised - should behavior expressed as a result of long-term isolation be grounds for punitive psychiatric diagnosis? Perhaps a non-normative mental state may develop as a result of this isolation, but isolation as a state is unnatural. Therefore, is it ethical to proceed in punitive psychiatric treatment on the basis that it was the individual's *choice* to "rapidly deteriorate?" Psychologist Craig Haney noted, "So much of who we are depends on our contact with other people, the social context in which we function, and when you remove people from that context, they begin to lose their very sense of self."<sup>101</sup> Because of the nature of his offense, and the repudiation of his claims of conspiracy, Leroy Dohrman was forced to either convert in mindset, or remain incarcerated. Whether this conversion therapy was based in assumption of homosexuality, it is unclear, though the hostility surrounding homosexuality and sodomy offenses sparked an interpretation of Dohrman's mental state that resulted in a thirty-one year sentence.

While Dohrman's case is the only direct mention of electroshock therapy, there are instances noted in other prisoner's files of overly aggressive medical regimens for venereal diseases. In the early 1900s, venereal diseases were heavily stigmatized, as they were viewed as diseases of adverse sexual behavior. A 1943

---

<sup>101</sup> Nadia Ramlagan, "Solitary Confinement Fundamentally Alters the Brain, Scientists Say," (AAAS, 2016).

venereal disease info packet<sup>102</sup> circulated by the U.S. military during World War II reads; “A GOOD SOLDIER WILL NOT GET VENEREAL DISEASE”, and “VENEREAL DISEASES AID THE AXIS.” The positioning of venereal disease as both dishonorable and unpatriotic puts military men who contracted venereal diseases, particularly ex-military sodomy prisoners, in a vulnerable position. In a 1934 medical report, prisoner Angelo Paris was noted to have both secondary syphilis and *probable* early neurosyphilis.<sup>103</sup> The treatment that he received for this diagnosis, and secondary *probable* diagnosis was “anti-luetic treatment.”<sup>104</sup> Anti-luetic treatments *were* used to treat syphilis, but the recording of this treatment was given in Paris’ *psychiatric* report, implying that the treatment was in result of behavioral issues. In this report, Psychiatrist George Hess wrote, “In general, aside from his sexual delinquency, he does not seem to be a bad sort. This man is receiving anti-luetic treatment at the present time and has shown remarkable improvement.” Here, Hess noted that the only behavioral trait in question is Paris’ homosexuality, making the anti-luetic drugs a treatment of that homosexuality. It is probable that Paris’ “sexual delinquency” was seen as a symptom of his “probable early neurosyphilis.” This was further exemplified in 1935 when an unidentified army psychiatrist wrote, “He has many of the psychic and *physical* characteristics of the homosexual.”<sup>105</sup> If homosexuality was considered a physical trait to be observed, than any sexual diagnoses, such as syphilis, may have been informed by this fact. In 1936, Paris

---

<sup>102</sup> *Venereal Disease Facts* for Ft. Benning GA troops. 1 January 1943.

<sup>103</sup> *Medical Record for Angelo Paris* by George Hess. 20 July 1934. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>104</sup> *Psychiatric Report for Angelo Paris* by George Hess. 31 December 1934. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>105</sup> *Note re: Angelo Paris* by Warden Johnston. 20 October 1935. AZ, SFNA.

wrote a letter to the Deputy Warden Schuttleworth saying, "On or about May 3 1936 I got a blood test by Dr. Greenburg and it came back Negative. I also took a Spinal Test and on Aug 3, 1936 it came back Negative. Now I have taken 52 shots of Salversan and 56 hip shots of Besmerk and now I am taking shots for no reason whatsoever."<sup>106</sup> These treatments were happening during the same time that the United States Government conducted the Tuskegee syphilis experiment,<sup>107</sup> in which 600 black male sharecroppers were infected with syphilis without their consent or knowledge under the guise of free healthcare. At the same time as *both* of these events, the United States Government infected prisoners and mental patients in Guatemala with syphilis without their consent or knowledge.<sup>108</sup> These experiments occurred with the purpose of finding effective drugs and treatments for syphilis by using human subjects who were already segregated from the rest of their society through race, incarceration, and psychiatric isolation. With the psychiatric classification of homosexuality as mental illness; the fact that Paris was given multiple drugs; and the social, political, and carceral dehumanization of homosexual men, it is not a stretch to wonder if similar experimentation was happening at Alcatraz.

### **Conclusion**

At the core of the abuses of the state in the incarceration of sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz is the question of the ethical value of the prison. Historically, prisons

---

<sup>106</sup> *Letter from Angelo Paris to Deputy Warden Shuttleworth*. 1936. AZ, SFNA.

<sup>107</sup> Allan M. Brandt, "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study," *The Hastings Center Report* 8.6 (1978).

<sup>108</sup> Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues (2011), *Ethically Impossible: STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948* (Washington DC, 2011).

have been a way for the United States to control the actions of individuals who fall outside of dominant moral ideas. If a trait is considered immoral, it becomes criminalized; homosexuality at Alcatraz was not the first example of this. Prisons began in the United States in 1787 as “houses of repentance”<sup>109</sup> mainly for robbery and burglary, but then expanded to include murder (which was previously a capital offense). This definition of crime worthy of incarceration has continued to expand in every year since. After the founding of prisons, it became clear that certain identities and communities in society were, and *are* more vulnerable to criminalization and incarceration than others. The control of the prison has historically been in the hands of people who are wealthy, white, and male, meaning that the moral codes and identities of those persons will likely affect the entire makeup of the prisoner population. In her book *Are Prisons Obsolete*, activist, scholar, and author Angela Y. Davis writes, “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 from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers. This is the ideological work that the prison performs—it relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society...”<sup>110</sup> Like psychiatric facilities during and after World War II, prisons acted to serve the comfort of the people on the outside, not to rehabilitate the people on the inside, or attempt to integrate them back into society. The very concept of “rehabilitation” positions the construct of the “prisoner” as “other” to a

---

<sup>109</sup> The Editors, “Prisons and Executions – The U.S. Model: A Historical Introduction.” *Monthly Review* (2001).

<sup>110</sup> Angela Y Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories, 2003), 16.

normative society. The practice of rehabilitation colonizes “the other” in attempt to neutralize threatening or non-normative behavior. The point in which an individual is permitted to rejoin society is when all traces of abnormality have been literally and figuratively beaten out of them. Then begins a lifetime project of the state to pathologize and criminalize their identity as a survivor of the colonizer’s prison. Homosexual men during the 1930s to the 1960s in particular were undesirable to the American public. The prisons acted to keep them away from the general population because of socially determined moral codes, just as they have done with other “undesirable” people in the past, and in the present. The standard of social and moral value as a litmus test for incarceration has continued to fail the American public since the founding of the prison system. The sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz were not immune to this failure.

What the sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz endured was primarily a product of gears turning behind closed doors at the Federal Bureau of Investigation; conversations between J. Edgar Hoover and his colleagues, the pressure on the bureau from worried families of children across the nation, and the disdain for homosexual men that became more intricate throughout Alcatraz’ years of operation instead of fading away. The abuses of sodomy prisoners in the United States far surpass the bounds of these particular accounts; truth commission has begun in archives across the country, and across the world. Pink triangles<sup>111</sup> are

---

<sup>111</sup> Pink triangles were used in Nazi concentration camps to identify homosexual prisoners, and have since been used as a symbol to signify the LGBTQ rights



held up to the light to be examined, and startling statistics about LGBTQ incarceration await us on the web at a click of a button. The online news source LGBTQ Nation reports that according to National Inmate Surveys since 2012, “the number of people in prison or jail who identify as LGBTQ is roughly twice that of their general population.”<sup>112</sup> These statistics are not a contemporary issue, as the sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz reflect. At least twenty-nine sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary were intentionally imprisoned on the basis of their sexuality, and in fact, the perceived threat of their sexuality on the American public was a driving factor in the decision to open Alcatraz as a site for maximum security.

A very precise string of historical events aligned to make possible the abuses of the carceral state at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary. J. Edgar Hoover bridged the gap between the political state and the carceral state, while facilitating the public’s mental connection between homosexual men and violent criminality. Hoover promoted and used legislation such as the sexual psychopath laws and laws promoting harsher punishments for sodomy prisoners in order to cement this connection. The influx of sodomy prisoners at Alcatraz was not a coincidence. Through socially driven legislation, cultivated moral panic, and the corruption of the political, carceral, military, and psychiatric spheres, men were brought to and held at Alcatraz as not only an experiment in maximum security, but due to a national

---

movement.

<sup>112</sup> Tim Murphy, “There are Twice as Many LGBTQ People in Prison as in the General Population” (LGBTQ Nation, 2016).

investment in imprisoning deviant bodies. This investment increased the vulnerability of effeminate or homosexual service members and effectively transformed service and combat spaces into hunting grounds for the vulturine heteronormative Carceral state.

## **Appendix A**

The information provided below is the most common basic information about the sodomy prisoners that appears in both online archives and at the physical San Francisco National Archives location. Not much is known about the prisoners once they left Alcatraz; some were transferred to other prisons, and others were released but only left very short paper trails. The information below is not exhaustive by any means, but it does enumerate each man, his ethnicity, and the nature of the offense or offenses for which he was incarcerated.

### **Sodomy Prisoners at Alcatraz: (In order of arrival)**

	<b>Prisoner Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Offense</b>
1	Frank Bolt	White	Sodomy
2	Joseph Harrison	White	Sodomy
3	Clyde Hicks	White	Sodomy
4	Alan Hood	White	Sodomy
5	Frederick Holme	White	Sodomy & False Entitlement
6	Charles Johnson	White	Sodomy
7	Angelo Paris	White	Sodomy
8	William Payne	White	Sodomy
9	Leo Prokopf	White	Sodomy & Escape
10	John Golebrowski	White	Sodomy
11	Charles Krug	White	Sodomy
12	Louis Zuckerman	White	Sodomy & Assault (E.R)
13	Hubert Grindle	White	Sodomy & Manslaughter
14	Lafayette Thomas	White	Sodomy & Manslaughter (E.R)
15	Walker Wiggins	White	Sodomy, Assault, Theft & Escape
16	Harold June	White	Sodomy & Attempt to Commit Sodomy (gov't. reservation)
17	Willard Burman	White	Sodomy, Assault & Threat
18	Leroy Dohrman	White	Sodomy, Assault & Attempted Escape from USP Lewisburg (E.R.)
19	Thomas Cartwright	White	AWOL, Sodomy, Disobeying Officer Army prisoner Conditional release 1953
20	Robert Cumming	White	Sodomy, Assault (Military) & Attempted Escape (Civil) from Chillicothe Army prisoner

21	Kethel Osborne	Black	Assault, Disobeying Officer & Sodomy Army Prisoner
22	Daniel Catalano	White	Assault to Commit Sodomy & Sodomy Army Prisoner
23	Robert Radcliff	White	Sodomy & Assault Army prisoner
24	Joseph Bright	White	Murder, Rape, Assault with Intent to Commit Sodomy (Military) & Attempted Escape (Atlanta) Army prisoner Escape Risk
25	Severo Reyes	White	Rape, Sodomy & Assault with Intent to Commit Bodily Harm (5 counts), Theft, Threatening with Violence, & Fraternization Army prisoner
26	William Jenkins	Black	Armed Robbery, Sodomy on Govt. Reservation Transferred to Washington DC Jail 1963
27	Derotha Flynn	Black	Assault & Sodomy Army prisoner
28	Henry Harris	Black	Rape, Sodomy & Robbery Army prisoner
29	Paul Benson	(I)	Sodomy (Alaska)

## Bibliography

### **Archives:**

Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Papers. San Francisco National Archives, San Bruno, CA.

GLBT Historical Society Archives, San Francisco, CA.

### **Primary Sources:**

Special Progress Report for Daniel Catalano, Jr. at Chillicothe Federal Reformatory, 23 July 1953. Classification Form 2, Reg. No. 7161 3-A., Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Note from Frank Loveland, Assistant Director to the Warden at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary re: Thomas M. Cartwright, 14 February 1957. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Transfer document note by Warden Johnson re: Angelo Paris, 1945. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Memorandum from RJW to Warden Johnson, Subject: Golebowski- #54-Az. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Letter from Edward W Twitchell to Warden Johnson re: Angelo Paris. December 31, 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

United States Board of Parole Transcript of Minutes re: Daniel Catalano Jr., Atlanta, Georgia. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Letter to Chief Medical Officer from Associate Warden re: 731 Cartwright, Oct. 15, 1952. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Summary of Personal History of Charles E. Johnson from the Office of the Psychiatrist, Alcatraz California, Clyde L Brothers. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Parole Case Summary for Angelo Paris. 2 December 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Industrial and Civil Record of Leo Prokopf. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Admissions Summary for Frank Lucas Bolt, McNeil Island, Washington. 8 June 1936. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Industrial and Civil Record for Leo Prokopf. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Special Progress Report for Daniel Catalano. Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, Connecticut. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Reclassification Report (Transfer from Chillicothe). Cartwright, Thomas M., 1 November 1944. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

*Memorandum for Mr. Bennett In Re: Hubert Grindle From Arthur D. Wood.* 4 April 1939. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Medical Certificate of Departing Prisoners, To the Warden re: John Golebowski.* 30 November 1935. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Admission Summary for Leroy Dohrman, Psychiatric Evaluation. N.d. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Psychiatric Summary of Dohrman, Leroy. 664-A.* 14 February 1935. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Psychiatric Report for Angelo Paris by George Hess.* 31 December 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Letter from Angelo Paris to Deputy Warden Shuttleworth.* 1936. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Note re: Angelo Paris by Warden Johnston.* 20 October 1935. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Note from Frank Loveland, Assistant Director to the Warden at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary re: Thomas M. Cartwright, 14 February 1957. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Transfer document note by Warden Johnston re: Angelo Paris, 1945. Alcatraz

Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Memorandum from RJW to Warden Johnston, Subject: Golebowski- #54-Az. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Letter from Edward W Twitchell to Warden Johnston re: Angelo Paris. December 31, 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

United States Board of Parole Transcript of Minutes re: Daniel Catalano Jr., Atlanta, Georgia. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Summary of Personal History of Charles E. Johnston from the Office of the Psychiatrist, Alcatraz California, Clyde L Brothers. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives, San Francisco National Archives.

Parole Case Summary for Angelo Paris. 2 December 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Letter from Warden Johnston to the Director of the Bureau of Prisons re: Hubert dd. dd. Grindle.* 23 November 1939. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Admission Summary for Leroy Dohrman, Psychiatric Evaluation. 1944. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Psychiatric Evaluation of Leroy Dohrman.* 1945. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Psychiatric Evaluation of Leroy Dohrman.* 1947. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Medical Record for Angelo Paris by George Hess.* 20 July 1934. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

*Note re: Angelo Paris by Warden Johnston.* 20 October 1935. Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary Archives. San Francisco National Archives.

Charles, Douglas M., "Policing Public Morality: Hoover's FBI, Obscenity, and Homosexuality," in *The FBI and Religion: Faith and National Security Before and After 9/11*, ed. Sylvester A. Johnson and Steven Weitzman. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017. 137.

Leon, Chrysanthi S. *Sex Fiends, Perverts, and Pedophiles: Understanding Sex Crime Policy in America.* New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Canaday, Margot. *The Straight State: Sexuality and American Citizenship, 1900-1969*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004.

Ward, David A., and Gene G. Kassebaum. *Alcatraz: The Gangster Years*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010.

"Homosexual Menace: A Trap for your Sons!" *DARE*, April 1956.

Painter, George. "History of Sodomy Laws." *Sodomy Laws*. Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, 15 Apr. 2007.

Chief Justice Warren Burger, defense of maintaining strict Sodomy laws, *Bower v. Hardwick*, March, 1986.

Painter, George. "The History of Sodomy Laws in the United States – Kansas." *Sodomy Laws*. Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, 2012.

Rubin, Gayle S. "Thinking Sex." *A Gayle Rubin Reader Deviations* (2011): 137-81.

*Romans*. New International Version. Biblica Inc., 2011.

Sutherland, Edwin H. "The Sexual Psychopath Laws." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 40.5 (1950): 543-54.

Ditmore, Melissa Hope. "Male Prostitution." *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006. 277-278.

Hoover, J. Edgar. "How Safe is your Daughter." *America Magazine*, July 1947, 32-33.

Rappaport, Walter and Daniel Lieberman. "The Sexual Psychopath in California." *California Journal of Medicine* 85, no. 4 (1956): 232.

Watkins, Ted R., and James W. Callicutt. *Mental Health Policy and Practice Today*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997. 18-19.

Charles, Douglas M. "The Victim of a Degenerate." *Hoover's War on Gays: Exposing the FBI's "Sex Deviates" Program*. Lawrence, KS: U of Kansas, 2015. 28.

Charles, Douglas M. "The Postwar Obscene File and Social Regulation," *The FBI's Obscene File: J. Edgar Hoover and the Bureau's Crusade Against Smut*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2012. 39.

Theoharis, Athan G. "The Politics of Sex." *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995. 101-02.



Boyd, Nan Alamilla. "Policing Queers." *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*. Berkeley: U of California, 2003. 113.

Bérubé, Allan, John D'Emilio, and Estelle B. Freedman. "'The Gang's All Here': The Gay Life and Vice Control." *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2010. 121.

Carter, David. *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*. New York: Griffin, 2011.

John D'Emilio, "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco since World War II," in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. New York: Penguin, 1989, 458.

"State Warns 50 Taverns They Must Oust 'B' Girls," 1942, San Francisco, CA: GLBT Historical Society.

United States. National Park Service. "U.S. Penitentiary Alcatraz." *National Parks Service*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Apr. 2016.

Wellman, Gregory L. "Watching Over the Island: Wardens, Guards and Personnel 1934-1963" *Images of America: A History of Alcatraz Island 1853-2008*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2008. 70.

Jenkins, Phillip. *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998.

"The Long History of Alcatraz Island, California." *Legends of America*. N.p., 2003. Apr. 2016.

Peiss, Kathy Lee., Christina Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug. "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America." *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989. 226-37.

Ridge, Martin. "Disorder, Crime, and Punishment in the California Gold Rush." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (1999): 1.

Heatley, Holly S. "Com mies and Queers": *Narratives That Supported the Lavender Scare*. PhD diss., U of Texas at Arlington, 2007. 4.

"For Desperate or Irredeemable Types: United States Federal Penitentiary Alcatraz." *The History of Alcatraz*. Ocean View Publishing, 2016.

Richards, Stephen C. "Colorado Supermax Study." *The Marion Experiment: Long-term*

*Solitary Confinement and the Supermax Movement*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2015. 163.

Beard, George M. "Preface". *American Nervousness Its Causes and Consequences ; a Supplement to Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia)*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881.

Schuster, David G. "Personalizing Illness and Modernity: S. Weir Mitchell, Literary Women and Neurasthenia, 1870-1914." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79.4 (2005): 698.

Shore, James H et al. *A Pilot Study of Depression Among American Indian Patients*. Diss. UC Denver, 1989.

Rasenberger, Jim. "Nightmare On Austin Street." *American Heritage*. American Heritage Publishing, 08 June 2011.

*Boys Beware*. Directed by Sid Davis. Performed by Timothy Farrell. United States: Sidney Davis Production, 1961. Film. May 7, 2015.

Kaelber, Lutz. "California Eugenics." *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States*. 2012.

Lave, Tamara Rice. "Only Yesterday: The Rise and Fall of Twentieth Century Sexual Psychopath Laws." *Louisiana Law Review* 69.3 (2009): 568. *Louisiana State Digital Commons*.

Yoshino, Kenji. "Gay Conversion." *Covering: The Hidden Assault on American Civil Rights*. New York: Random House, 2006. 33.

United States. National Defense Research Institute. *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*. By Bernard D. Rostker and Scott A. Harris. Santa Monica: RAND, 1993.

Ramlagan, Nadia. "Solitary Confinement Fundamentally Alters the Brain, Scientists Say." *AAAS - The World's Largest General Scientific Society*. N.p., Dec. 2016.

*Venereal Disease Facts* for Ft. Benning GA troops. 1 January 1943.

Brandt, Allan M. "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study." *The Hastings Center Report* 8.6 (1978).

Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues (2011). *Ethically*

*Impossible: STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948.* Washington DC, 2011.

The Editors. "Prisons and Executions – The U.S. Model: A Historical Introduction." *Monthly Review*. 01 July 2001.

Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories, 2003. 16.

Murphy, Tim. "There are Twice as Many LGBTQ People in Prison as in the General Population." *LGBTQ Nation*. N.p. 23 Feb. 2016.