

Paradigms & Possibilities of Incarceration-Related Records

RHIANNON CATES

Abstract:

Founded and directed by activist Carole Pope (1944-2013), Our New Beginnings was a non-profit residential transitional and alternative sentencing program for women navigating corrections and criminal justice in Portland, Oregon that operated from 1980 to 1992. During this time, the program served over 3,000 women and their children at a non-recidivism rate of 84%. Through Our New Beginnings, Pope also worked with the Portia Project and Project Link-Up, two Oregon non-profit programs dedicated to connecting women in prison with legal and custodial support and services.

Recently donated to Portland State University Library Special Collections & University Archives, this multimedia collection of Pope's records has prompted research and discussion of best practices in the stewardship of incarceration-related records.

Archival collections of this nature call for careful assessment in developing and implementing means of access that are sustainable, effective, and respectful. Employing the Carole Pope and Our New Beginnings Collection as a vehicle for discussion and through a review of existing discourse and similar archival collections, this poster presents research of redaction and collection access and arrangement strategies.

With these conditions in mind, this poster outlines an accompanying oral history project and presents ideas to foster creative and dynamic use of such records by researchers, activists, students, and service providers, venturing further possibilities for collaborative projects within and beyond the setting of an academic archive.

It is my goal to evoke consideration of archives as radical sites and imperative facets of scholarship, activism, and service-learning; to outline tensions and topics to consider when approaching these kinds of records and collections, and to exemplify possibilities of impact in including these narratives and documents in the archival and historical record.

About the Author:

Rhiannon Cates works as a technician at Portland State University Library Special Collections & University Archives in Portland, Oregon. She has a B.A. in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies from Portland State and is interested in queer historiography, feminist pedagogy, and the archival possibilities of activist-scholarship and community organizing.