

# make/shift

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## ***The Real Cost of Prisons Comix***

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PM Press

**A**fter reading *The Real Cost of Prisons Comix*, what stands out the most for me is that something as complex as prisons is explained so effectively in comic form! This is for everyone, from the young to the old—no matter your educational background, the *Comix* are easy to understand.

I never knew what went into building a prison until I read this book. But the cost is truly mind-boggling: \$60 billion a year just for prisons in the United States. That's a lot of money coming from taxpayers. I used to be a taxpayer before I came to prison. And it blows me away to know there's actually a Web site, [www.jailbedspace.com](http://www.jailbedspace.com), purportedly set up "to put the buyers and sellers of 'County jail bed space' in touch with each other." That's right—jail administrators can actually go to this site to rent bed space to one another.

The *Comix* not only talk about prisons, but they talk about individual prisoners, their families, the guards, and the guards' families. I see the stress on the faces of these guards daily, but I never thought about what effect this could have on their families until I read this book. Prisons can be bitter, angry, and depressing environments for those of us who live here locked up like animals, but the guards are also locked up with us for eight to sixteen hours a day. Even though they get to go home every day, I can only imagine the feelings they bring with them.

The *Comix* talk about the "War on Drugs" and laws that have been made to lock up more and more people each day. Like the book says, the majority of the women I see coming through this prison are addicts. Instead of a drug-treatment program where they can learn how to stay off drugs, they are sent to prison, where there is a waiting list for all of the programs offered, only to be paroled back into the same community they came from without coping mechanisms to stay off drugs.

And who pays the cost most of all? Our children. The *Comix* tell us that 2 million children under eighteen in the United States have an incarcerated parent. Fifty-three thousand of those children are in foster care. My own child, whom I gave birth to while in prison, was put in foster care, only to be adopted in the end because of the two-year law in Michigan: if a person remains in prison longer than two years, parental rights will be terminated. I know who my daughter was adopted by and am in contact with her. There are many mothers and fathers out there who are in prison and have no idea where their children are or who has custody of them. Is there any limit to the price this country will pay to lock people up? It doesn't look like it.

Teaching others the cost of prisons in comic form is a brilliant idea! This book deserves to be spread to the masses on the inside and outside. It has made me take a whole new look at the real cost of the prison industrial complex.

—KEBBY WARNER