ated claims: safe sex is a myth; pornography is addictive; homosexuality is perverse; being "born again" alleviates guilt and shame; faith-based Christian programs (all of them? not programs of other religions?) are successful (for everyone?).

Erzen does not recognize or chooses to ignore the facts that in Lawtey and other such "faith-based" (i.e., religious-indoctrination) prisons the state has abdicated its responsibility to rehabilitate prisoners to churches whose aim is to convert them, that such prisons constitute a model in miniature of a theocracy, and that they commit egregious violations of the United States Constitution.

Does not Erzen have the responsibility of letting her readers know that there is ample case law relevant to the question of religious-indoctrination prisons? For example, on 3 December 2003 a judicial panel of the United States Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals (a panel that included former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner and two Republican appointees) unanimously upheld District Judge Robert W. Pratt's judgment against the state (*Americans United for Separation of Church and State v. Prison Fellowship Ministries*), which had found that an Iowa prison program similar to Lawtey's violated the First Amendment principle of separation of church and state. Pratt noted that "[f]or all practical purposes, the state has established an Evangelical Christian congregation within the walls of one of its penal insitutions, giving the leaders of the congregation . . . authority to control the spiritual, emotional, and physical lives of . . . inmates [with] no adequate safeguards present, nor could there be, to ensure that state funds are not being directly spent to indoctrinate . . . inmates."

Or Erzen could have gone as far back as 1947 and *Everson v. Board of Education* to call at least a glimmer of attention to Lawtey's gross violations of the fundamental American principle of separation of church and state. In this regard Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black (a former Baptist Sunday-school teacher) could not be more clear: "The 'establishment of religion' clause of the First Amendment means at least this: [neither the state nor the federal government] can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over the other. . . . No tax . . . in any amount . . . can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions . . . whatever form they may adopt, to teach or practice religion. . . . Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religous organizations. . . ."

When Erzen tells us that there are plans afoot to open thirty programs such as Lawtey's in Florida alone, why am I not comforted?

Roger B. Rollin
Clemson University

Reply:

Roger B. Rollin misinterprets my article as an endorsement of faith-based prisons. Lawtey, along with the other Florida faith-and-character prisons, is distinct from programs like Prison Fellowship Ministry's (PFM) InnerChange program in Iowa, the subject of the court case brought by Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. Lawtey is a state prison with programs run by volunteers. InnerChange is a Christian program that received state money to run entire wings of the Iowa prison and had an explicit mandate that participants become evangelical Christians. However, as I note in my article, the result is often the same. Despite claiming to be multireligious, Lawtey tends to have predominantly Christian programs, which creates more coercion in an already highly coercive space.

My essay discusses the implications of allowing religious groups to enter the prison as the state eliminates funding for college, GED, and job-training programs. This trend reflects the neoliberal rationale of the federal office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives under the Bush and Obama administrations. I argue that faith-based programs treat imprisonment as a matter of individual conversion and redemption and fail to address the racial, social, and structural causes of incarceration. Unfortunately, the

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state of Florida now argues for prison expansion based on the contention that such programs are a solution to crime and recidivism.

In the time I've spent conducting ethnographic research and interviews at Lawtey and other prisons and teaching in several prison-college programs, I've found that incarcerated men and women have complex relations to the faith-based programs. Some view the programs as the only option among severely constrained choices, and others testify to how religion has transformed their lives. It is condescending to overlook or disparage the ways in which imprisoned people describe and experience their religious beliefs and practices. It is also important to recognize their efforts to develop self-knowledge and engage in self-making, religious and otherwise, while elucidating how those efforts relate to larger social and political concerns.

For more information, I refer Rollin to my 2007 article in *American Quarterly*, "Testimonial Politics: The Christian Right's Faith-Based Approach to Marriage and Imprisonment," in which I discuss the PFM program and court case, the politics of faith-based prison privatization, and Christian evangelization.

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Editorial Policy and Peer Review

To the Editor:

Despite the recent calls from the MLA for our discipline to develop a more capacious understanding of what might constitute scholarship, for the time being, at my institution at least, the peer-refereed article largely remains the gold standard of scholarly accomplishment when annual raises, tenure, and promotion are at stake. Given the crisis in the academic-book-publishing industry, as a representation of scholarly excellence the article potentially carries even more weight than in the past. Yet recently, two refereed journals declined to submit my work to the normal review process. In both cases, the editors made this decision. Obviously, this is their prerogative, but neither gave me any real feedback on the piece in question—making the whole endeavor a waste of time.

In contrast, my recent dealings with another journal have exemplified how an academic journal should function. Though my essay was rejected, the readers' reports were so helpful that when I revised the essay in the light of them, it was subsequently published elsewhere. More recently, so generous and collegial was the editorial policy of this same journal that the editor solicited readers' reports from three reviewers, just to be certain that my piece would be fairly considered. Although the reviewers concluded that the essay did not meet the journal's needs, the editor nonetheless solicited from me a briefer piece more appropriate to the journal. If the goal of the refereeing process is to allow all of us in the profession to engage in the extended conversation that is scholarship, this journal provided an excellent model of how such a goal might be achieved.

Even worse than the tendency to provide scholars with inadequate advice on their work is the policy of most literary journals, which routinely refuse to provide any feedback to the author whatsoever. In the university, creative writing increasingly demands to be recognized not only as a legitimate discipline but as a teachable skill, as the burgeoning BFA, MFA, and PhD programs in the field suggest. Yet the editorial policies of most literary journals implicitly subscribe to the idea that writing is a talent and not a skill, that revision is not something a writer can learn, that works of literature are not revisable, and so forth. The excuse that literary journals face too many submissions is just that—an excuse to keep alive an ideology in which artistic genius is at odds with the actual practice of creative writing programs. Such an ideology shores up the authority of those in power by mystifying the processes of literary production and evaluation.

My guess is that the more an essay crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries, the more likely an editor will be to refuse to send it out for review, given the labor involved in find-

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