

***Review of Inside this place, not of it: Narratives from women's prisons, compiled and edited by Robin Levi and Ayelet Waldman, San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2011***

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Robin Levi and Ayelet Waldman's compilation centers on the stories of eleven currently or formerly incarcerated women. The title could not be more fitting because, as all readers will come to find, those sharing their stories in this publication have lived prison, but prison has not defined them. Each story is powerful in its own way, and could easily become an entire book of its own. Levi, and Waldman present just enough information about each woman's life to create a clear picture. These stories are that of humanity, in a biographical sense that is so universal and appealing when the mind is open to different life experiences and the idea of "prisoner" and "criminal" are set aside, or even changed. While all the stories presented have great power, I found the narratives by Emily Madison, Taisie Baldwin, and Charlie Morningstar the most compelling.

I spent a day reading through *Inside this Place, Not Of It*, deeply engaged and thoroughly enjoying hearing more stories, bringing me back to the group of 14 women in Lusk, Wyoming. I felt so honored to be a part of the class then, and I feel so honored to be able to be a part of the audience for the 11 inmates interviewed by Robin Levi and Ayelet Waldman. The footnotes and appendix are full of high caliber information that provides great insight to the more complex concepts and processes that are part of the criminal justice system and the United States prison system. There are many recently published books related to women's prison and yet this one truly stands out as unforgettable due to what Michelle Alexander, in her foreword, describes as the book's "breathhtaking candor." It is no wonder that this collection has been selected as a Voice of Witness book.