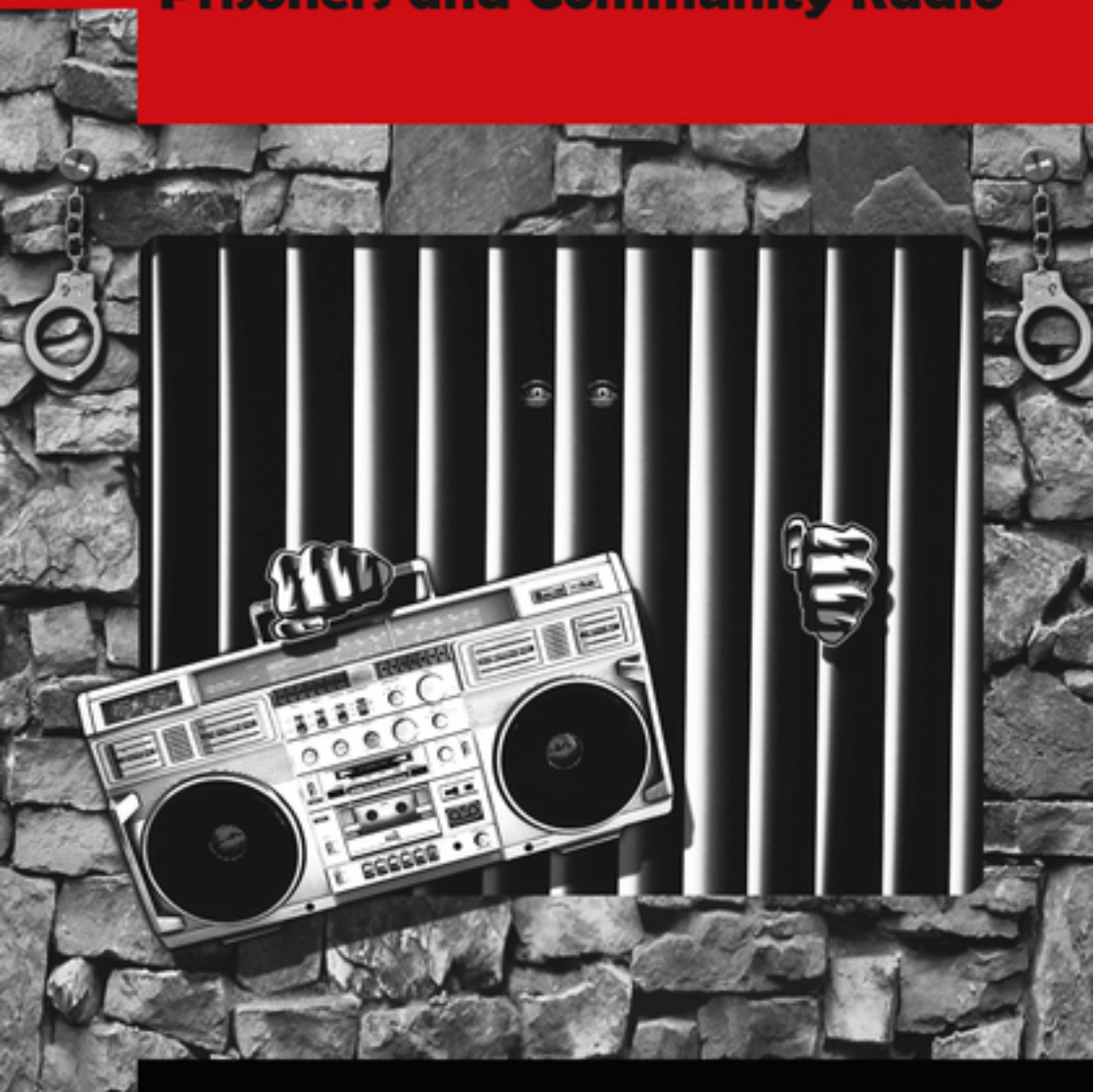


HEATHER ANDERSON

# Raising the Civil Dead

## Prisoners and Community Radio



PETER  
LANG

Anderson Heather

## Raising the Civil Dead

---

**D**efining prisoners' radio is not a simple undertaking. Each program has its own format. However, broadly speaking there are two distinct types of prisoners' show: those that mainly play requests and dedications and those that primarily focus on providing information about prison issues. Just to complicate matters, it is also quite common for such shows to act as a hybrid of sorts, incorporating both information and requests to varying degrees. Internationally, radio that operates for, or by, prisoners exists al-most exclusively within the community radio context.

An all-inclusive definition of prisoners' radio would include at least some of the following elements: news stories, interviews, documentaries and other information that relates to prison and justice issues; song requests to and from prisoners, their families and friends, often with accompanying personal messages; and broadcasting from either inside a detention centre or working with inmates to produce their own radio pieces. Prisoners' radio can involve prisoners, former prisoners, their friends and family, social justice activists and/or government representatives as well as community radio broadcasters and the occasional prison staff member.

What is important to note here is, while there are numerous internal prison radio stations around the world that broadcast to a footprint within the confines of the institution, such radio stations are not within the parameters of this book. While recognising such stations, I focus on programs that broadcast to the wider community. This, to me, is the specific difference between Prison Radio Stations and Prisoners' Radio. I am sure there is justification for challenges to the choice of "labels" or "language" employed to separate the two, but am confident of the distinct differences between the two forms of media. Internal prison radio stations should be treated to similar rigorous study, however, the intention here is to focus on the connection to the "outside world" that strengthens the empowering nature of prisoners' engagement in media production.

Up until this point, little has been documented about the processes and practices of prisoners' radio. Programs tend to exist unbeknown to one another and any links between them are generally developed through personal relationships as opposed to any formal networking. This being said, the primary intention of my research was to examine prisoners' radio on a deeper level than merely cataloguing and describing it. I was interested in the major strengths and weaknesses of prisoners' radio and how these successes or limitations could be measured. By what means can we evaluate prisoners' radio? These issues became pivotal to my research.