# A — B

# CORRECTIONS

ZORA J MURFF

# OFF PAPER: PETE BROOK

The extreme cruelties and systematic failures of the United States' brutal prisons are, at this point, well known. Far from being a solution, mass incarceration in America exacerbated profound social problems, widened the gap between the haves and have-nots and set generations back. We're starting to think less-and-less of prisons as institutions that solve the behaviors and social dynamics that lead to the state's need to control. Across the country, prisons and detention centers are now considered a last resort for the disciplining of children. As criminal justice departments employ community supervision more and more, monitoring systems are used more and more. James Kilgore – academic, activist and a man who was once electronically monitored – has described ankle bracelets as "going viral in the criminal justice system." In 2005, 120,000 people wore an electronic monitoring ankle bracelet; in 2012, the figure was 200,000; and in 2015, we can assume the figure has grown further still. Proportional within the 7 million people under correctional supervision in the United States, a larger percentage of youth wear monitoring devices than adults. Imprisonment is known to negatively impact young minds and bodies far more severely than those of adults and current policy – and carceral logic – deem ankle bracelets a palatable, convenient, and more humane alternative. There are, of course, truths and blind-spots to this logic.

Zora Murff's *Corrections* comes at a crucial moment. Electronic monitoring (EM) has come into its own in the age of GPS. Faster, more accurate and more reliable than previously-used radio-based devices, GPS technologies provide the state agencies responsible for managing sentenced and pre-trial citizens with the rhetoric and assurances of security. EM is painted as a more humane, productive and progressive means of social control. Companies such as iSecure, Trac, Secure Alert, Pro Tech, GEO and Omnilink, which manufacture ankle bracelets, also talk up the cost savings to their state and county agency clients. All this to say, that this moment, in which we as a society are turning ever more faithfully to electronic monitoring, is not based solely on enlightened policy based upon enlightened morals and the prioritization of the human, but based also on salesmanship in growth industries and the rhetorical promise of redemption through technology. *Corrections* is an opportunity to reflect upon what it means to rely on widespread, diffuse, and near total surveillance to correct antisocial behaviors. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to interrogate the outcomes of such surveillance upon larger society and the problems GPS-powered panopticism purports to address. Do ankle bracelets prevent criminal acts? Does EM propel, distract or compliment our investment in educational, economic and healthcare systems, which we know to improve citizens and reduce antisocial behaviors?

While many of the recent headlines about juvenile justice reform have focused on New York State, California and the South, ankle bracelets are utilized nationwide. It is fitting that *Corrections* emerges from Iowa, the heartland of America. The young men and women its images depict are ordinary children, just like all children are ordinary. And yet, we have a propensity to think of urgent debates about the social contract we share as being those centered on the big cities. GPS tracks kids the same in the Midwest as it does in urban cores; it "knows" geography but does not adhere to our regional stereotypes. *Corrections*, in its modest way, puts the debate about electronic monitoring of youth into all our communities. Helping children to modify and understand their behavior is a vital task. Ask any of the teens who are monitored and they would say they were happier being out in the community than locked in a box. But that does not mean that all the teens evaluate their monitoring as fair or right. Having a clunky box strapped to one's leg can hamper one's feeling of freedom just as much as being locked in a box. This tension, this constant to-and-fro about the costs and benefits of EM is what informs Muff's photographs, but his images provide some, not all, avenues to explore the tension. *Corrections* avoids tropes; these kids are anything but armed and dangerous. The evasive gesture and posturing of anonymous subjects is, for me, less a metaphor for their prior furtive behavior, but more a metaphor of our collective unknowing of the mechanism of the monitoring systems we fund and they inhabit.

If the portraiture in *Corrections* is artful and poetic, then the studies of objects are pure documentary. Images of standard-issue deodorant, case files, uniforms, bracelets, and other accouterments remind us of the regime and the industries behind it. A youth writes, "I have what I need to be fine," on a self-assessment form and reminds us of the gulf, often, between what a child in crisis needs and what a caring society might be able to provide. It puts us right there. In tension. By contrast, a beautiful sun-dappled portrait of a youth seems so very far removed from the contested system and its narrative. Until you notice the ankle bracelet. But seeing the system and understanding the system are not necessarily the same thing. Indeed, the ability to see is a great privilege. GPS "sees" relentlessly. Can *Corrections* help us understand the psychology and control that play as well as EM purports to understand the needs of youth and community? Some of these images fill our gaps in knowledge; others inhabit blind spots in our collective understanding of a legally protected arena. What we learn, mostly, from *Corrections* is that we've more to know about how we're helping troubled kids. We know that we're using electronic monitoring more readily. How far will we proceed with this brave, new technology? What does Murff's document of fracture and healing from Iowa tell us about this very 21st Century practice? What is this version of freedom and control? Do we accept it?

One afternoon, Murff was sat in the bedroom of a young man for whom he was responsible for monitoring. The teen was playing his guitar and Murff was making a photograph. Then, a friend of the teen came to the bedroom window. He was confused by Murff, his camera and the scene before him with. Without missing a beat, the teen told his friend that he had just been signed to a record label and that Murff was from Rolling Stone Magazine. I end with this anecdote because the teen, in spite of his circumstances, is witty, present and with agency. Lighthearted moments are harder to come by when people are implicated in the criminal justice system. *Corrections* is a serious body of work about a serious project, but it has been built on years of very personal interactions. For the protection of the youths, all of the subjects remain anonymous but that doesn't mean they are distant. What we think today affects what we do tomorrow. As you leaf through these pages, think about how you would feel as a kid under monitoring, think about your current attitudes about "delinquent" kids, and think about if those can change. Think about these things because tomorrow, certainly, there'll be more monitoring systems in use than today.

omniunk
Do not short circuit, may explode if damaged or disposed of in regard to the accessories. Do not exceed the Omniunk charger.
Nr. 1 or
denotes particular the
is to dispose waste. Separator
Sep/gen. No. 2 separator
is to dispose of. Separate
separate waste. Omniunk
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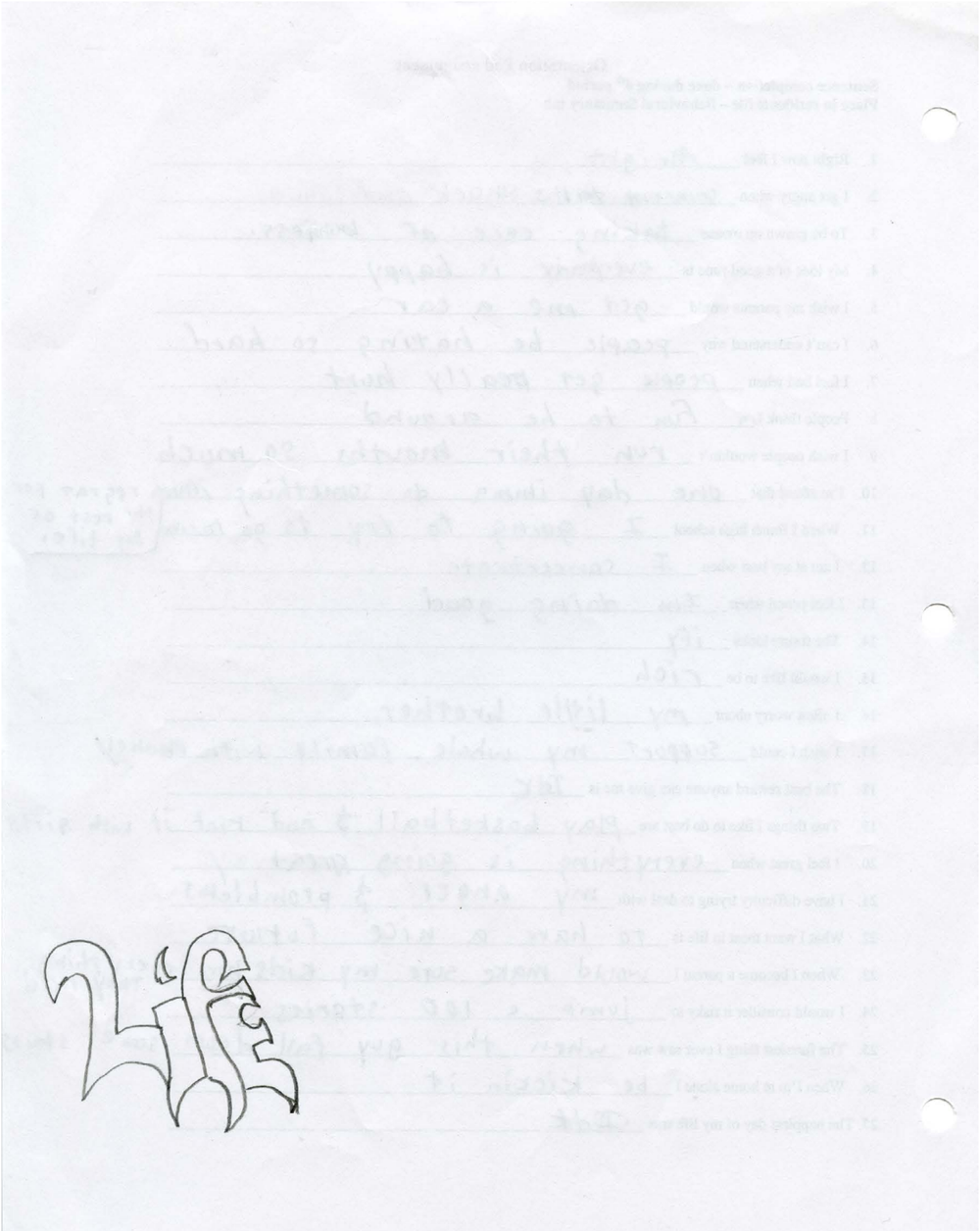
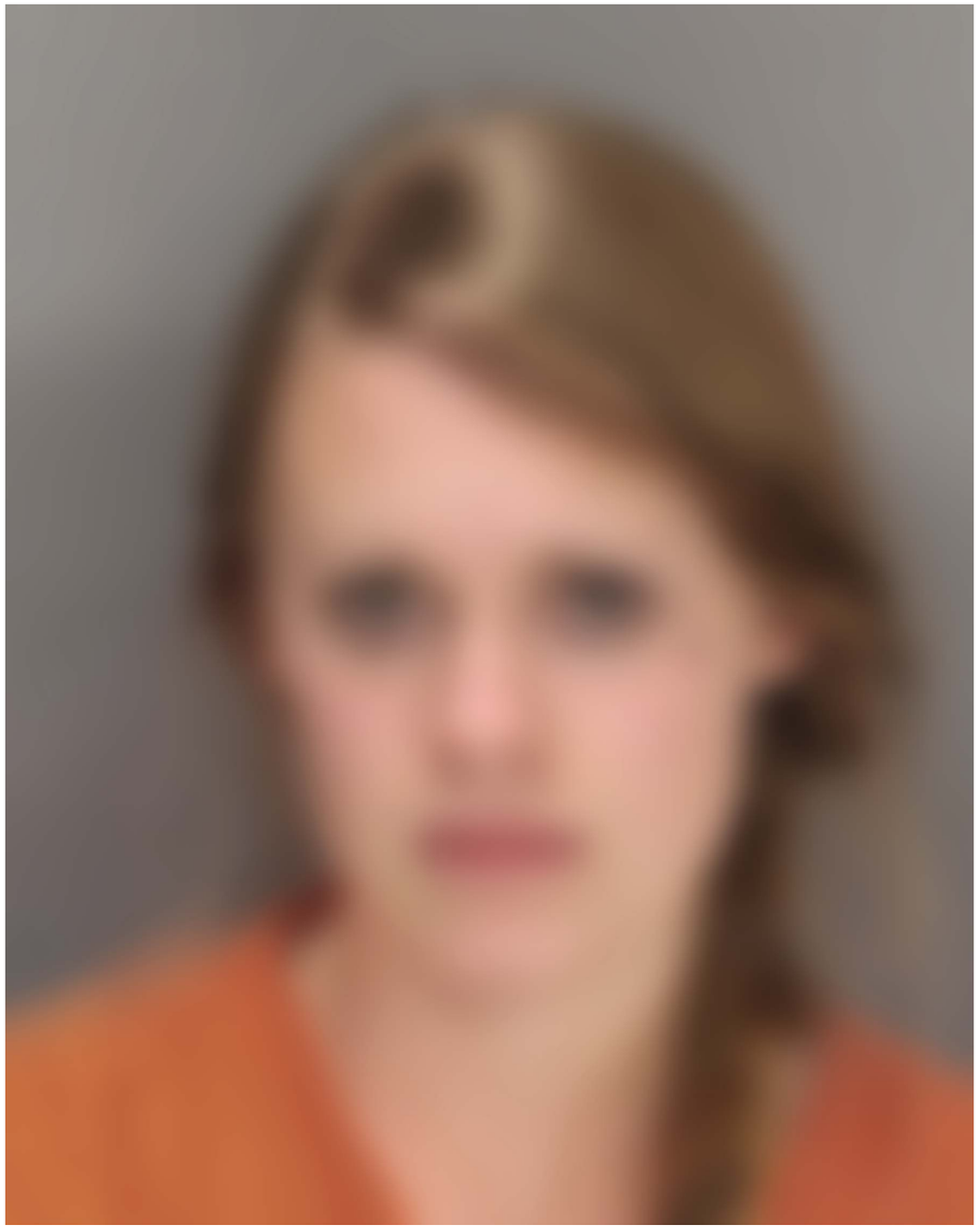
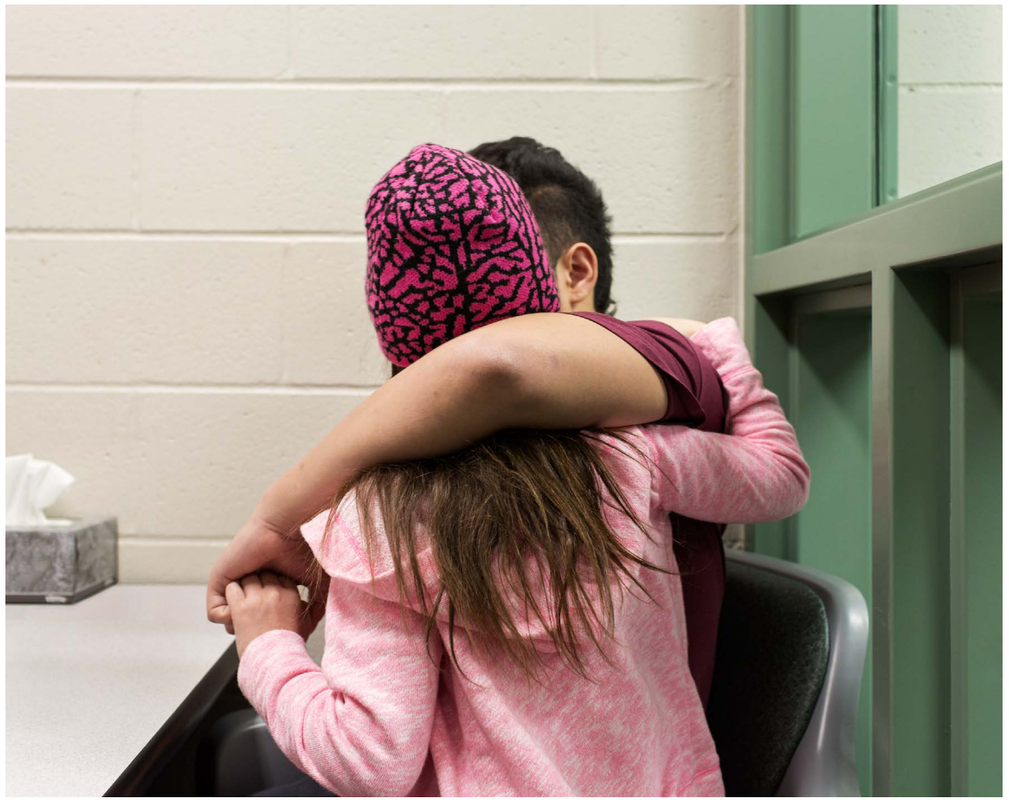






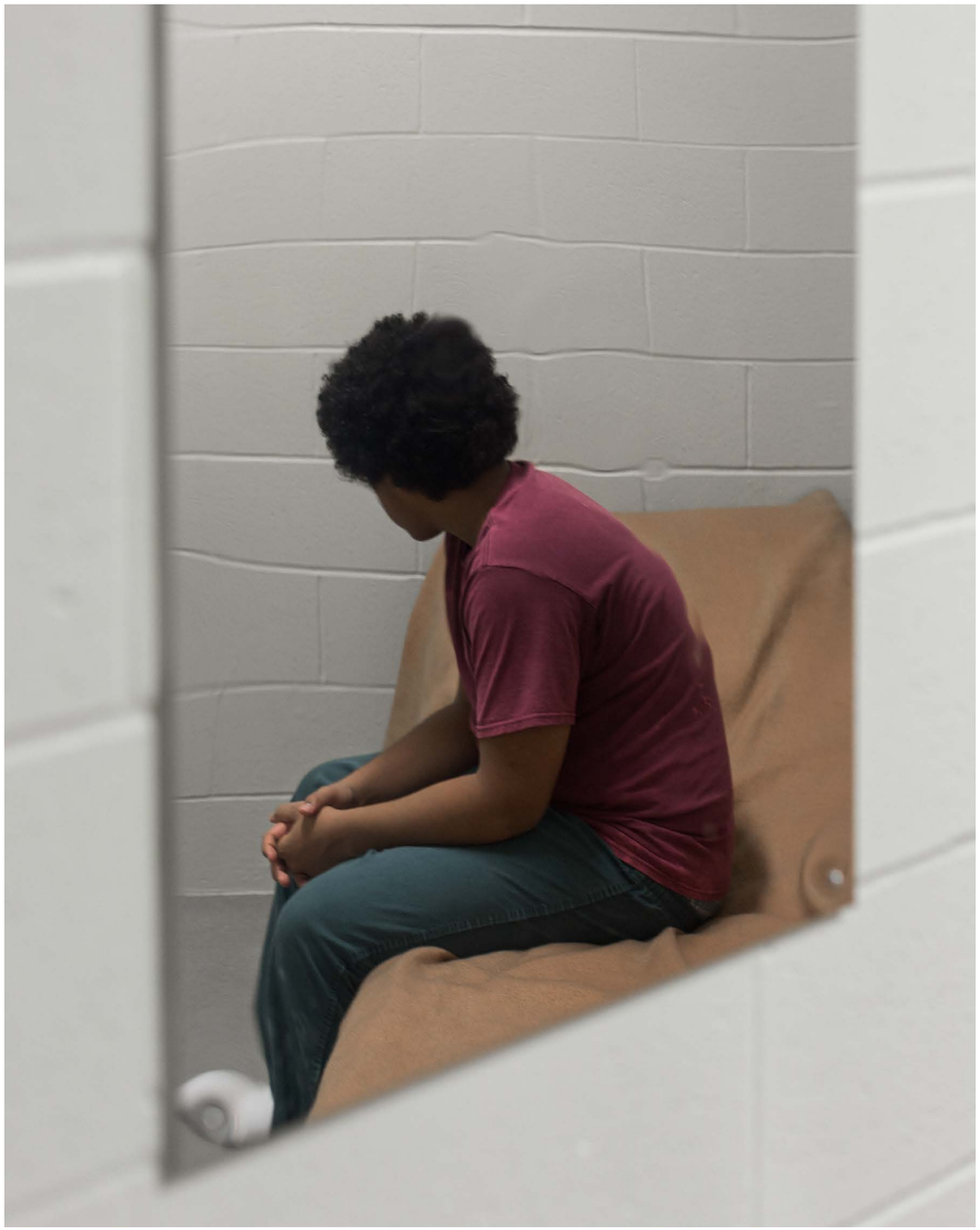

VENUS
GANG



I played football as a kid and basketball. also I remember Christmas was my favorite Holiday because I love receiving gifts. people who influenced My life? No one really I always did what I wanted too. Some pleasant memories in my life when I moved back from Atl and hung out with my girlfriend the whole 1st month, I was down here and another pleasant memories is when my sister was born 12-21-05 and some positive steps I will take is not feeding into negative behavior, I will turn this time to think and get ready to do something better with my life. my goals are to be sucessful and to get out of detention. other things is that I wanna be rich so I can take care of my family and I want to be a basketball player because I really love basketball and I'm really good at it.


PHILIPS


FIVE
STAR



My past charge is assult on my mother - again nothing wrong.

I've been to foundation two for five days. I've been to St. Luke's syc ward for five days. I've been two the U of I syc ward for 5 days. I've been to four oaks for 6 days.

I don't do realationships.

I don't care to remember my childhood.

I don't have pleasant memories.

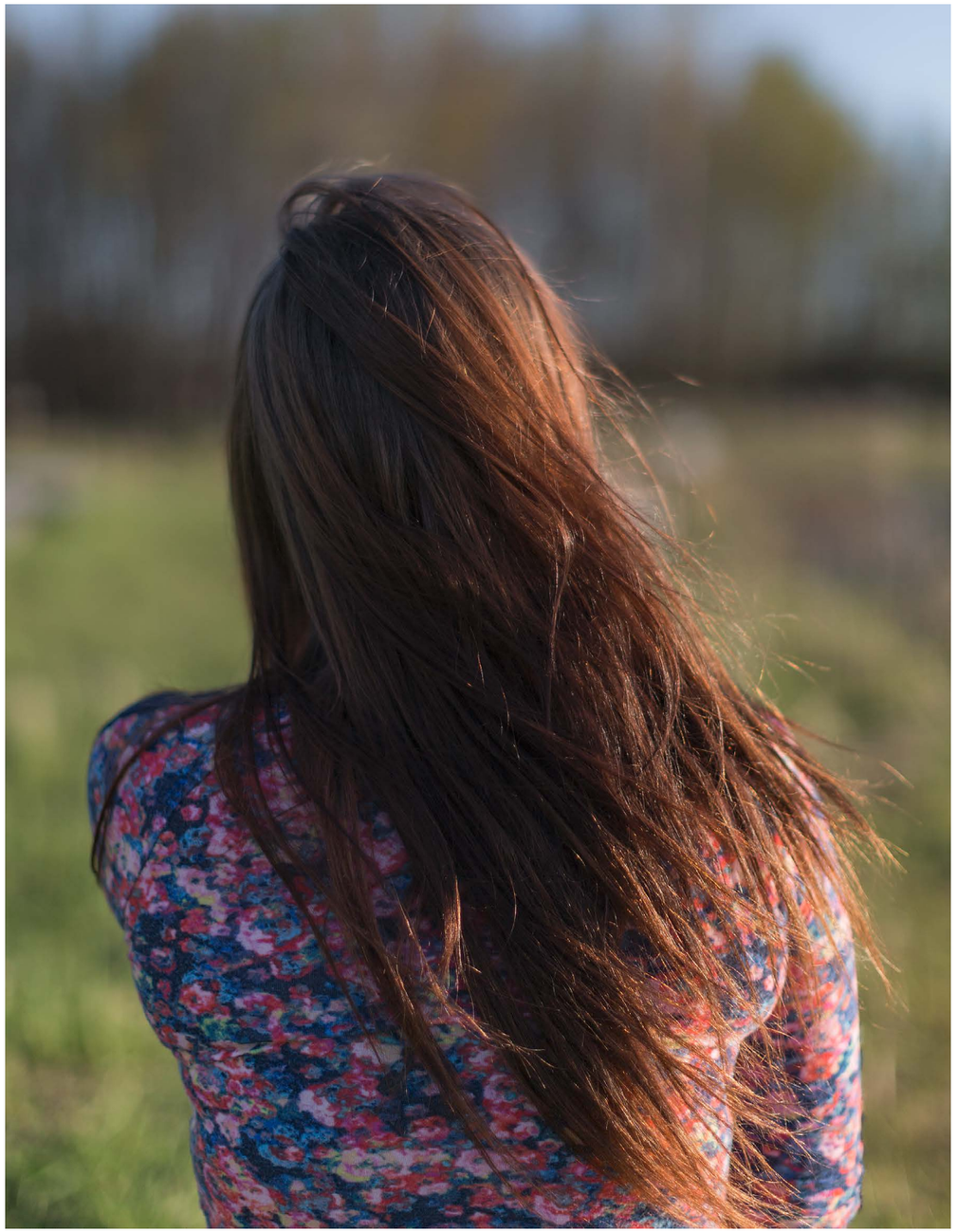
I do not care about anything.


ILLINOIS

**Orientation Pod assignment**

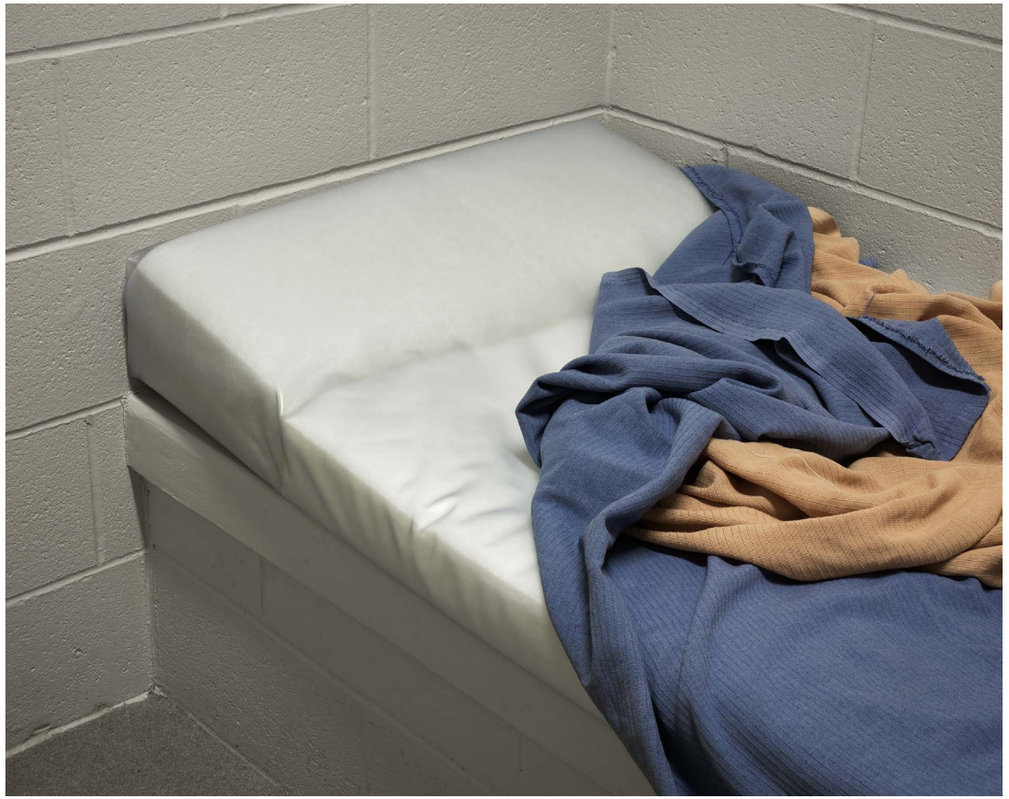
**Sentence completion – done during 4th period**
**Place in residents file – Behavioral Summary tab**

1. Right now I feel bored
2. I get angry when people piss me off
3. To be grown up means Ø
4. My idea of a good time is having fun
5. I wish my parents would Ø
6. I can't understand why people do the things they do
7. I feel bad when never
8. People think I am me
9. I wish people wouldn't bother me
10. I'm afraid that never afraid
11. When I finish high school I will leave
12. I am at my best when never
13. I feel proud when never
14. The future looks I don't look ahead
15. I would like to be free
16. I often worry about nothing
17. I wish I could be free
18. The best reward anyone can give me is freedom
19. Two things I like to do best are party and be me
20. I feel great when I feel great
21. I have difficulty trying to deal with nothing
22. What I want most in life is life
23. When I become a parent I will love my kids
24. I would consider it risky to nothing
25. The funniest thing I ever saw was someone walk into glass
26. When I'm at home alone I walk around naked
27. The happiest day of my life was hasn't happened

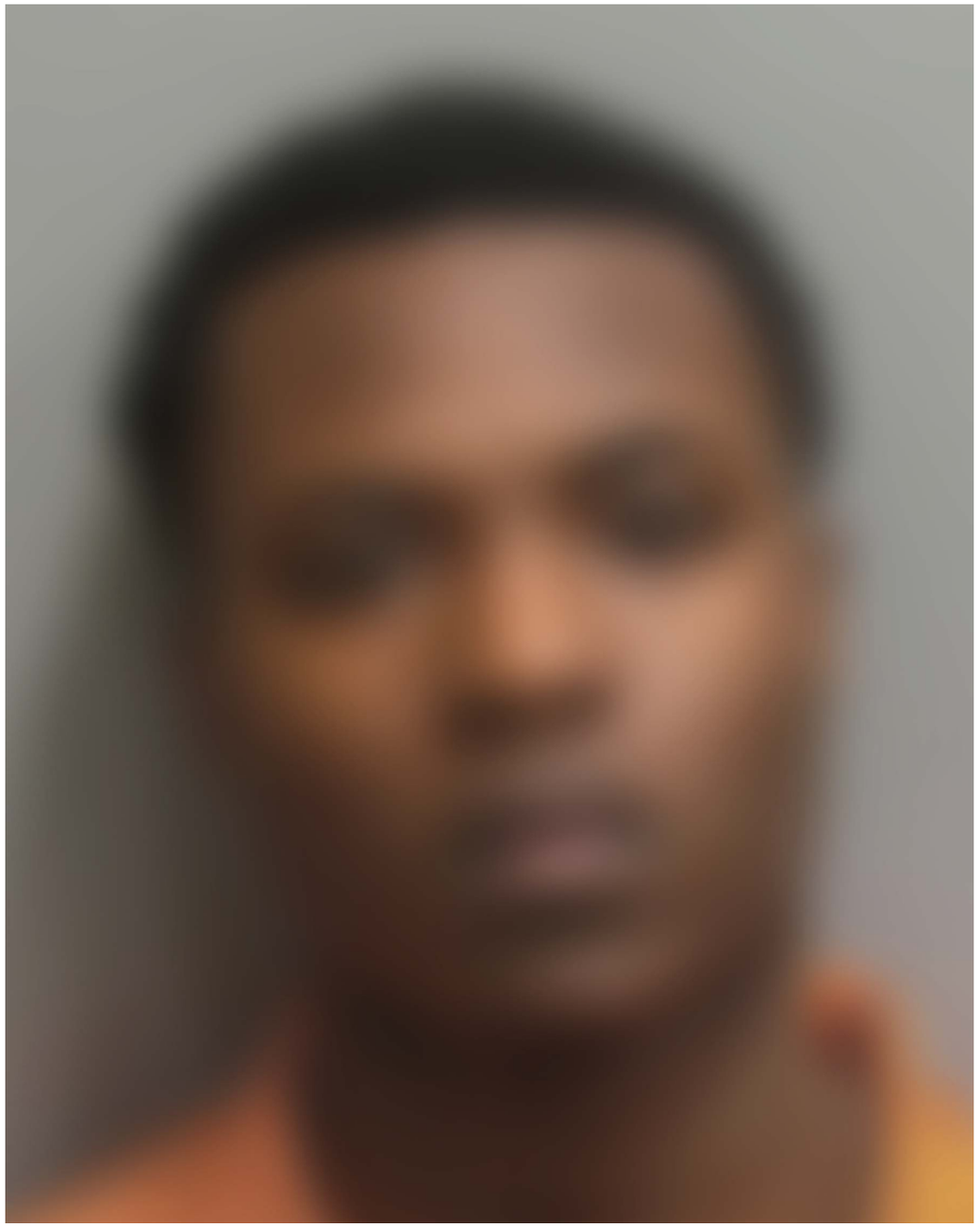


# MY BEST CHILDHOOD MEMORY

My best Childhood memory is when I was in Rock Island and it was my birthday. I had got everything I wanted that day It was my best memory because I got $2565 dallors. That same day I went to the store and I got what ever I wanted and when I get what I want I am in a mood that everybody like and nothing can change it until the next day. Thats my best childhood memory.



NORCHEM
D4147408



my goals are to do better in
my community and not come back
to lock up.



## CORRECTIONS

From 2012 to 2015, I worked as a Tracker for Linn County Juvenile Detention and Diversion Services in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As a Tracker, I provided services to young men and women who have been arrested for crimes, adjudicated, and subsequently ordered to complete probation. Juveniles in my charge were asked to comply with services which included: electronic monitoring, therapies, drug screening, and community service; it was my responsibility to have continual contact with them to ensure these expectations were met.

Tracking and other similar community-based services are being increasingly used as an alternative to detention facilities across the United States. These services, which allow juveniles to stay in their homes, have shown a higher rate of success than strict incarceration. Although community-based services are built to foster a collaborative relationship between juveniles and service providers, attaining the actualization of teamwork becomes problematic when juveniles feel that they have done nothing wrong, are victims of circumstance, or do not fully understand why they have committed a crime. The system has been put in place to provide rehabilitation, but it is far from being a straightforward process. Many influences outside of the youths' control such as socioeconomic status, race, and the stigma of being declared "delinquent" all play a role in whether or not they are arrested for additional crimes - all of these factors possessing the propensity to lead them to extended periods of incarceration in the juvenile system or to involvement with the criminal justice system as an adult.

By reconsidering the role that I played in the lives of the kids I worked with, I began to acknowledge the burden that comes with tasking young men and women with continued complicity, as well as the deep-rooted dualities they face once they are deemed criminals. My stance in their lives as a consequence kept our relationships in a state of flux ranging from stable to tenuous - a constant motion mirroring the discord that develops between the system's intentions and outcomes. Through employing ideas of anonymity, voyeurism, and introspection, Corrections is an examination of youth experience in the system and how the concepts of privacy and control may affect their transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

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Dedication: This book is first and foremost for the young men and women I had the honor to work with during my tenure as a Tracker; I hope that wherever you may be, you are well. Know you have all had a profound impact on my life, and I am a better person because of all of you. The creation of these images often seems unreal, and they would not have been possible without the dedication of countless people. To Jeff Rich and Margaret Stratton for all of your guidance. To Dawn Schott, Becca Lindsey, Christina Betts, Darla Meyer, Bre Teeter, and Jake Belay. To Taylor Curry and Carson Sanders for believing in the work. To Scott Christian Hage for designing the cover logo, a play on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. To Pete Brook for providing the beautiful words that accompany the images so well. Finally, to Emily for your unwavering support through the good and the bad. Love on top of love.