

Caught on Camera

Kevin Lewis O'Neill

Carlos had pissed himself. That much was clear, but the pastor pushed the point, dragging his thumb and index finger across the surface of his smart phone until the image rubber-banded, bouncing back to fit the device's zoom limit. A pair of soiled trousers filled the screen. "This photo," the pastor whispered while tracing the image with his finger, "it's a blessing. A testimony. It shows us the soul."¹ We spoke on the first floor of a Pentecostal drug rehabilitation center. These are informal, unregulated, and largely for-profit centers that keep pace with Guatemala's growing rapprochement with crack cocaine. They warehouse users (often against their will) for months, sometimes for years. "Carlos is here," the pastor added. "We found him in the streets. High on crack [*pedra*] and totally out of control." He held his phone up to me: "Look at how dirty he is. . . . That face. That filth. Those eyes." The pastor then pinched the image, snapping the photo back to size, adding almost as an afterthought: "So we took him."

This essay explores the imbrication of taking photos and taking men, assessing not only the visual technologies that forge new forms of social surveillance

1. All interviews in this article come from fieldwork conducted in Guatemala City between 2011 and 2015 in and around Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers. Basit Kareem Iqbal provided research assistance. Those I interviewed remain anonymous or are cited by pseudonym. In some cases, certain details (insignificant to the analysis) have been changed to protect the identities of certain people. That includes the use of composite scenes that contain elements from more than one situation. They accurately reflect actual events, but have been rearranged to preserve anonymity. Quotations are from recorded interviews or from detailed notes. All translations are my own. All images, edited to preserve anonymity, are published here with the subjects' oral consent. Fieldwork was supported by the Wenner Gren Foundation, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Open Society Foundations, and the American Academy of Religion. This essay began as an invited talk at the Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, and Stanford University. I thank each of my hosts: Marie Griffith, Eric Hoenes del Pina, Thomas Klubock, and Graham Denyer-Willis.

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but also the Christian ontology that prompts these pastors to see (and seize) drug users. Discernment is absolutely central to this story. But rather than a mode of aesthetic judgment, with philosophical concerns for beauty and taste, discernment as a Pentecostal practice distinguishes the truly repentant soul from all the rest.² Rooted in scripture (1 Cor. 12:10) and based on a rather dramatic division between good and evil, discernment is the ability for Christians to appreciate the relative sincerity of a sinner, to perform what one theologian calls “a hermeneutics of life” (Yong 2004: 84).

Taking up this divine gift, directors of drug rehabilitation centers arm themselves with digital devices in hopes of reading the body for signs of the soul. It is an imperfect effort that generates vast archives of digital content. These are photographs and videos of users buying and selling, smoking and fiending, recovering and relapsing. A descendant of the missionary photograph, with shades of the nineteenth-century mug shot, these images constitute the drug user as a particular type with a recognizable look (Smith 1999: 68). And while the body has long been a contested terrain upon which Christians distinguish the sinner from the saved (Griffith 2004), these images facilitate the literal arrest of their referent (Sekula 1986: 7). They underlie the user’s extrajudicial incarceration. “How long has Carlos been here?” I asked. “For months,” the pastor answered. “Has he ever been outside?” I wondered. “Not once,” he replied.

On the outskirts of Guatemala City, amid extreme levels of biomedical inequality, the discernment of digital images has become a technique of capture. The practice not only delinks surveillance from the state but also frames the former as more providential than panoptic. For while drug prohibition across the Americas has recently experienced a rush of new visual technologies, including body-worn camera systems, in-car camera technologies, and surveillance drones, Pentecostals in Guatemala City are far less concerned with comprehensive coverage than their state-affiliated counterparts are. “All I need is a photograph,” the pastor explained, “a single visual testimony [*testimonio visual*] to discern someone, to truly see them.” Blessed by the Holy Spirit, these pastors deploy an optics that currently organizes the outer edges of today’s war on drugs. The fundamental problem is that the image tends to overshadow most everything else—in ways that keep users such as Carlos locked up for months, sometimes for years.

2. The philosophy of aesthetic judgment is expansive and expanding. The contrast that I establish here is between a Pentecostal theology of discernment (Yong 2000) and a philosophical tradition of discernment largely organized around Immanuel Kant’s ([1790] 1928) notion of a judgment of taste. See, for example, the work of Monroe Beardsley (1958), Edmund Burke (1998), and Eddy Zemach (1995).

Captured**Caught on Camera**

Shifts in US interdiction efforts have dramatically increased the availability of illicit drugs in Guatemala. In 2004, 10 percent of the cocaine produced in the Andes for the United States passed through Guatemala, while the rest sailed across the Caribbean (Gootenberg 2009). The numbers then flipped. By 2011, hugely militarized maritime blockades prompted traffickers to make Central America their principal transit route. Today planes, boats, and submarines ferry some 80 percent of US-bound cocaine along the Pacific coast to northern Guatemala (UNODC 2012: 39). One effect of this flip has been a spike in the use of crack cocaine in Guatemala City (O'Neill 2014). Drug-trafficking countries, the literature notes, often become drug-consuming countries (Feilding and Giacomello 2013).³ A second effect, related to the first, is the proliferation of Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers (O'Neill 2013).⁴

An extreme lack of social services drives the growth of these centers. Alongside the privatization of state enterprises, the liberalization of trade, and the relaxation of government regulation, economic restructuring in postwar Guatemala has included the systematic disinvestment in public health. Less than 2 percent of Guatemala's total health budget addresses issues of mental health, with its hospitals flatly denying medical service to those patients seeking support for substance abuse (WHO 2011). The Roman Catholic Church has also proved criminally impassive by self-consciously constituting itself over the past century as an erratic charitable entity. The church runs a detoxification center in Guatemala City for alcoholics. Expensive even by middle-class standards, the center has six beds. Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers, when taken in the aggregate, have an estimated six thousand beds. This radical disparity in cots mirrors equally disproportionate rates of conversion. Once overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, Guatemala is today as much as 60 percent Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2006).⁵

3. Guatemala's continued rapprochement with crack cocaine begins with the fact that the movement of this drug comes with considerable logistics: equipment, labor, infrastructure, and security, for example. Traffickers pay for none of this in cash. Instead, they pay with cocaine, which actually holds very little value in Guatemala. There are simply not enough Guatemalans who can afford the drug. To turn cocaine into cash, laboratories mix the drug with baking soda to make crack cocaine and sell it throughout Guatemala City (Feilding and Giacomello 2013; UN Committee Against Torture 2013).

4. These centers are not specific to Guatemala. They represent an emerging genre of captivity (IHRD 2009; UNHCHR 2009; Wolfe and Saucier 2010) seen throughout the world, including Mexico (Garcia 2014), Ecuador (Wilkinson 2013), Thailand (Pearshouse 2009), Cambodia (Human Rights Watch 2010), and even Philadelphia (Fairbanks 2009).

5. This subsection contains updated passages found in O'Neill 2014.

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More important than numbers, however, are the visceral truths that Pentecostal Christianity promises its people. They include the felt reality that salvation is real and hell is eternal. Another imperative also follows: radical change is possible. One effect of this faith has been a growing network of Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers. These sites warehouse users inside of onetime garages, factories, and apartment buildings. Each has been repurposed for rehabilitation with razor wire, steel bars, and iron gates. Inside pastors practice *teoterapia*, or “theological therapy.” This is a mash-up of Pentecostal theology, twelve-step programming, and self-help psychology. Its most basic assumption is that captivity will give way to conversion. It rarely does. Yet this bald fact has done nothing to slow the growth of these centers, and the reason is simple. These centers provide a practical solution to a concrete problem. Drug use is up. State resources are down. And Pentecostalism is the discourse of change. Jesus saves. The net result is a shadow carceral system infused with Pentecostal imperatives not just about sin and salvation but also about who can be held against their will and why. It is a theological construction that carries considerable consequences. Today more Guatemalans find themselves literally tied up in Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers than locked up in maximum security prisons (O’Neill 2013).⁶

Photography facilitates this Christian captivity. Much of this has to do with the rise of affordable, portable technologies. Over the past decade, Guatemala’s mobile phone market has grown by 550 percent, while the average price of a handset has dropped by more than half. Today 15 million Guatemalans own and operate 22 million cellular phones (Central America Data 2014). This means (among other things) that there is a camera phone in the pocket of nearly every Pentecostal. “I own three phones,” the pastor mentioned with some pride, “and I can save the photographs to my laptop. To edit them and print them.”⁷ Deputizing the faithful not only as missionary photographers but also as impromptu surveillance teams, these mobile technologies provide a new platform for an age-old ontology

6. Guatemala’s prison population is eighteen thousand inmates (International Centre for Prison Studies 2013). This number includes pretrial detainees and remand prisoners. The Guatemalan prison system holds fifteen hundred of these prisoners in maximum security facilities. My own fieldwork suggests that there are as many as two hundred Pentecostal rehabilitation centers in Guatemala City. Some hold as many as 150 people, some as few as 10 people. A conservative average is thirty people per center. This puts the number of people inside Pentecostal rehabilitation centers at least at six thousand people.

7. Of importance is the pastor’s striking disengagement from social media. These images rarely end up on Facebook, Twitter, or any other platform. Part of this is a ministerial decision to be discrete. The other part is that only one-quarter of Guatemalans have access to the Internet, and far fewer have regular access (World Bank 2016).

about the body's optical relationship to the soul. "Some movements of our souls," Augustine speculates (Cary 2008: 81), "are apparent in the face and especially the eyes." So pastors squint at an avalanche of images to discern the complexities of a good Christian life. "Everyone changes their story," the pastor explained to me, "even if a little." He slid one of his cell phones into his pocket while reflecting over the impossibility of ever really knowing anyone. "But if you have a photograph," he said, "or better yet, a video, then you can really see [*conocer*] a person."

Arrested

Take the photograph of Carlos, wet pants and all (fig. 1). It marks the moment of his abduction. "How did Carlos get here?" I asked the pastor. "I told you," he answered, "crack cocaine." I clarified my question: "But who brought him here?" The pastor reached for his cell phone. "We took him from the streets," he said. "His family called me. They couldn't manage him anymore, and so they paid me to bring him here." The pastor flipped through his collection of JPGs and MP4s. "By force?" I asked. "By force," he answered, before asking more grimly: "Who wants to be here?"

By "here" the pastor means a modest two-story house in a troubled part of Guatemala City. He and his family live on the first floor; sixty-two users live on the second. Steel bars fortify the windows, while an iron gate separates the two levels. "I have a video," the pastor offered. "It's of us bringing Carlos here." He pressed play. While the audio proved to be a nonstarter, the video was clear as day: three men from the center back Carlos against a wall. Two grab him by the



Figure 1 Carlos

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arms, while a third lifts his legs. Carlos struggles in vain. The three men then pull Carlos into the backseat of a car. The video ends as abruptly as it begins, with a total running time of twenty-six seconds.

The content of this video is critical to Carlos's capture, as is the photograph. Read through a Pentecostal theology of discernment, Carlos's disheveled state, attempted escape, and inevitable arrest all index a troubled interiority. "I can look at someone," the pastor explained, "and I can see if they've bathed or not. I can tell if they're dirty or not. But do you know what I can't see?" He paused for effect: "I can't see what's inside of them. I can't see their interior [*el interior*]. It's completely obscured [*oscuro*]." And so the pastor patrols Carlos's body with digital precision for outward signs of inner turmoil. "It's a gift of the Holy Spirit," he beamed, "to be able to discern someone. To be able to read a visual testimony." The pastor scrolled past dozens of files to find one labeled "Carlos." Organized into lists and batches, filtered into folders and then subfolders, the pastor's handheld digital library creates the structural possibility for meaningful difference. His archive sets the conditions for discernment, as the archive always has (Stoler 2010).

In the mid nineteenth century, first in France and then in the United States, the invention of photography coincided with the rise of criminology. The two practices

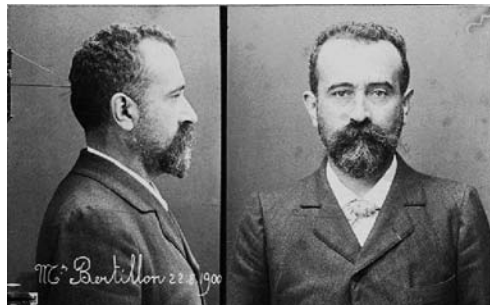


Figure 2 Alphonse Bertillon (1853–1914)

intersected in the mug shot (Tagg 1993). Inspired by the empiricism of botany and zoology, French police officer Alphonse Bertillon mapped criminal bodies with photographic precision, ultimately standardizing the genre with a split screen. A proper mug shot would consist of a portrait and a profile (fig. 2). The format gained popularity as Bertillon proved prolific, documenting delinquency at a rate that quickly outpaced the possibilities of taxonomy itself. In less than a decade, Bertillon (1896: 12–13) systematized more than one hundred thousand photographs

across a vast network of file drawers and identification cards, archiving as many as two hundred images a day. While his immediate intention might have been to create a system that could calculate rates of recidivism, the ultimate consequence of his pursuit proved to be nothing short of a semiotics of the soul.

Emerging alongside soft sciences such as physiognomy and phrenology, the mug shot prompted experts to read deviance directly onto the body through a series of contrasting visual signs. Along with the photograph, law enforcement officials also recorded height, standing and sitting, and the measurement of no fewer than nine body parts: head length, head breadth, arm span, left middle finger length, left little finger length, left foot length, left forearm length, right ear length,

and cheek width (Finn 2009: 23). When paired with the mug shot, these measurements allowed criminologists to shift conversations away from episodic concerns for *a* criminal toward an empirical interest in *the* criminal (Sekula 1986: 18).

The mug shot made it to Guatemala, at least in spirit, not long after it became standard practice in San Francisco in 1854, New York in 1858, Cleveland in the 1860s, and Chicago in 1870 (Phillips, Haworth-Booth, and Squiers 1997: 19). Its arrival in Guatemala City, however, rode the coattails not of criminological reform so much as the piety of the Presbyterian Church. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, the Reverend Dr. Edward M. Haymaker traveled from Warrensburg, Missouri, to Guatemala City in 1887 (Clifford 2000: 48). He made the thirty-day trip at the insistence of the Guatemalan government. In an era of liberal reform, the Guatemalan president understood Protestantism as a means to an end. The religion, he reasoned, would transform illiterate Guatemalans into God-fearing proletarians (Garrard-Burnett 1989).

Haymaker had slightly different ends in mind. Inspired by a then popular social gospel, Haymaker set out to save, as he called them, “the Great Unwashed” (ibid.: 129). Yet for Haymaker their dirt was as much a visual distinction as it was a moral one. His extensive photographic work routinely juxtaposes indigenous Guatemalans dressed in traditional clothes with those dressed in Western clothes, actively constructing what Johannes Fabian ([1983] 2002: 25) has called “the emerging other.” “It is better,” Haymaker (1892: 27) insisted, “for them to climb slowly and laboriously along their own foot paths of improvement and reach enlightenment gradually and spontaneously, than it is for them to try to leap the chasm and fall fathoms down into municipal and individual destruction.” Haymaker’s missionary photography, in fact, joined a much larger movement within Protestant circles to manipulate the mug shot’s capacity to discern these developments. But rather than a profile and a portrait of the same person, the evangelical innovation paired two portraits of the same person. Separated by not just time but also salvation, the portrait on the left depicted a life before Christ, while the portrait on the right presented a life after Christ.

The pastor’s most compelling digital subfolder is titled “Antes y después,” or “Before and After.” “We take a picture when they come into the center,” the pastor explained, “and we take a picture when they leave.” The pastor’s son then edits the two images together, placing the sinner and the saved side by side. To listen to the pastor read these images is to understand just how important Protestantism has been to the development of criminological thought; it is also an opportunity to hear the extent to which criminology constitutes the logic of Christian concern. Both traffic in the belief that an image can open a window onto a person’s soul.



Figure 3 José

skin. His skin is so dark. . . . Did you know that the streets make the body darker?" He dragged his finger from left to right. "Dirt makes the body darker," he explained, "but also the drugs. The drugs turn the skin browner and then black." He looked up from his phone, adding: "It only takes a month, maybe two months for drugs to change a person's physical features [*fisonomía*]." I took this as an opportunity to shift the conversation back to Carlos. "Does Carlos have an 'after' photo?" I asked. The pastor shook his head. "No," he said, "Carlos hasn't changed yet."

Framed

I asked Carlos why this was the case—why he hadn't changed yet. On the second floor of the pastor's center, with sixty-one other users milling about, Carlos considered my question against the backdrop of our ongoing conversations—about drugs, dependency, and what we both understood to be his unlawful detention. He heard my question, thought for a moment, and then casually told me to go fuck myself ("Vete a la verga"). Carlos had a point. By the time I asked him my question, he had been inside the center for more than a year without ever having been outside to visit his family, take a walk, or even go to church. Instead, he jockeyed for position over not just scarce resources but also the politics of representation. For these users know the power of photography better than most anyone. His answer to my question, in fact, echoes something that Roland Barthes (1977: 21) once argued—that "the photograph allows the photographer to conceal elusively the preparation to which he subjects the scene to be recorded." Or, to return to Carlos's extended answer: "All of this shit is staged [*inventado*]. All of it. It doesn't matter what you do. It only matters what the pastor shows your family." And this is true. Families pay the pastor a monthly fee to keep their loved ones off the streets, but the terms

The pastor opened a file labeled "José" (fig. 3). Two portraits of the same person filled the screen. And yet the quality of the user's clothes, the clarity of his eyes, and the cleanliness of his hair all differed in kind. The José on the left had given way to the José on the right. The pastor then drew my attention to José's skin. "We found this guy in the streets [*la basura*]," he explained. "And just look at his

of their confinement are set by none other than the pastor himself. There is no state oversight or industry standard, no legal arbitration or medical examination. In place of diagnostic tests and patient files there are digital photographs that pastors examine to discern whether a user is lost or found.

The predictable problem is that the pastor is more than capable of manipulating this media. Some of this comes in the form of editing actual images. Several of the pastor's "before" photographs are obviously staged. Typical images include users posing with distant stares and remorseful postures. Some users even have what seem to be albums of "before" photographs. The result of some sort of photo shoot, they show multiple poses in various settings to convey different degrees of destitution: in the streets with eyes facing downward, just outside the center with chins shying away, and in the center itself with faces strained upward (fig. 4). Each tries to achieve what David Morgan (2009) might call the "look of sympathy" and a bit of "distant suffering" (Boltanski 1999). Many of the "after" photographs have also been modified. The fact that Lester's skin is noticeably lighter with Christ is suspicious. More telling than the use of preprogrammed photo filters, however, are the actual outtakes that appear in the pastor's unedited videos. These extended cuts show the pastor giving stage directions to the users—about what to say, where to move, and how to act.

One video has an original running time of just under two minutes. The first moment shows the lanky legs of a young child (fig. 5). He dashes into the right side of the frame to make a funny face and then runs offscreen. This boy's silliness suggests the extent to which these "sensational movies" (Meyer 2015) unfold not only in the open air but also in full view of a live audience. These are carefully crafted videos, for sure, but they are also public performances that underscore the axiom "A secret punishment is a punishment half wasted" (Foucault 1977: 111).

The intended plot of this particular video is for a thirty-year-old man to enter the center on his own accord. He will walk himself into rehab. This, of course, was not what happened to the man. The pastor had hunted the user down, wrestled him into submission, and then driven him to the center's front door (O'Neill 2017). "It happened so fast," the user later recalled. "I was asleep in my bed, and then the next thing I know I'm being pulled into the back of a car." He looked scared, adding: "My feet never touched the ground." But more important than this backstory



Figure 4 Anonymous



Figure 5 Pastor

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is how this bit of street theater sheds some light on how a Pentecostal preoccupation with the image can produce a parody of Christian compassion. This particular scene, in fact, pulls into focus the amount of work that goes into making the user appear on the very brink of being saved.

The video takes place just outside the center's front door, with two cars parked perpendicular to each other. A blue car is at the top of the frame and a red car is on the left side. The pastor casually leans against the blue car, while the user stands with shoulders slumped. He looks exhausted. The pastor tells him, "There's only shit here. There's only death here." He points to the curb and then points to the front door. With snickering bystanders audible in the background, the pastor gives his first set of directions. "Start there," he says, pointing to the curb, "and then start walking to the front door so we can take this video." The pastor's voice grows heavier. "And then afterward," he says, "I can show [your family] how you showed up here looking like shit. Now come on! Let's do this." The user walks toward the curb, takes his spot, and then turns to face the center's front door.

Then something remarkable happens. After positioning himself atop the curb, the user pauses for three full seconds. He stands still to mark the beginning of a new scene, as if someone might lean into the frame with a clapper board to announce a fresh take. Unimpressed with the user's appreciation for this video's eventual edit, the pastor grows aggravated, barking: "Just get over there and start to walk toward the door. Get over there! Just walk over there. Walk. Walk. Walk." The user takes six steps and then looks back at the pastor, reaching his hand out for moral support, which the pastor accepts as they both enter the center together.

The pastor eventually edited this video down from one minute and fifty-four seconds to thirteen seconds. The clean cut shows the user walking from the curb to the center, entering the front door with the pastor's support. The shortened video also ends just moments before the two actually walk into the center. This is because the pastor makes eye contact with the camera at the very end of the video. He looks directly into the lens, only for a moment, but in a way that upsets the entire scene. In theatrical terms, the pastor breaks frame (Brown 2012) and, in doing so, reminds most everyone involved of the power of framing—in the cinematographic sense, for the pastor literally frames the user by providing stage directions (where to go, what to say, when to say it). In other videos with other users the pastor even yells "cut" and "action" to start and stop specific scenes.

But just as a movie can be framed, so too can the innocent (Butler 2009: 8). This video frames this user. It sets him up—by scripting a "before" that will one day stand in contrast to an "after" that the pastor himself will produce. In yet another video with yet another user, the pastor looks directly into the camera as

he points at the user's face. "This guy," he says, "is stubborn as a mule, and all he wants to do is eat straw." The scene signals how visual culture has become a battleground upon which users fight for their freedom.

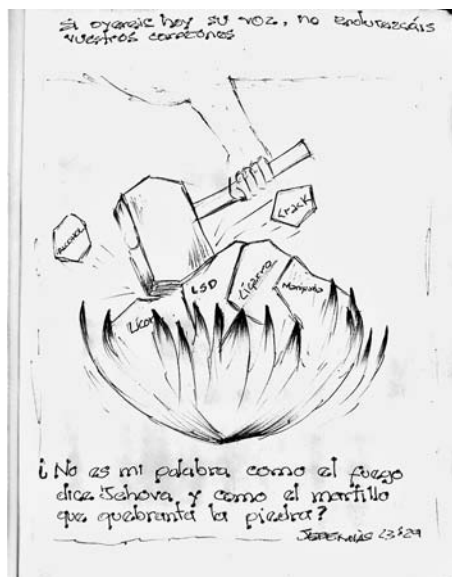
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Making a Scene

This war is asymmetrical, but it is not hegemonic. The pastor does not control every means of visual production inside his center. Digital photography is the most concrete mechanism of control, but there is a wider visual register of expression. The users also try to render themselves legible, no matter how modest the effort. It all starts with the most minor of missives, with notes written by users to their families. Scribbled onto scraps of paper and then passed to visitors when no one else is watching, these illicit letters ask users' loved ones for basic necessities: food, medicine, and toiletries, for example. "Please call my dad," one note reads. "Oscar needs his clothes." These scraps often give way to ornate letters that self-consciously compress Christian metaphors

Figure 6 Photograph by Benjamin Fogarty Valenzuela





Figures 7 and 8

Photograph by the author

into a single frame—hands folded in prayer atop a rose in full bloom all across an empty cross, for instance (fig. 6). Each of these images invokes not simply the resurrection of Christ but also the revival of the user. “I love you Jesus,” one reads.

These sketches also traffic in carceral imaginaries of work camps and chain gangs, with ink drawings of the user’s time spent inside the center equated with the emptiness of breaking rocks into pebbles (fig. 7). Lined with biblical passages, these sketches explore the absurdity of compulsory rehabilitation alongside the optimism of renewal. “Is not my word like fire,” asks the artist by way of Jeremiah 23:29, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces?” From the rock fly pieces of alcohol, crack cocaine, liquor, LSD, cigarettes, and marijuana. Finally, there is Michael the Archangel (fig. 8). His image often appears inside these centers. For Michael commanded God’s armies against Satan’s forces in the book of Revelation (12:7–9), hurling Satan and his angels to earth. Pastors frame time spent inside a center as just such a battle between good and evil, with the very life of the user at stake.

The most compelling moments of self-expression come in the form of Chicano/a prison art (fig. 9). First appearing in the 1940s in penitentiaries across Texas, California, and New Mexico (Henry 2005), this genre of art now flourishes in Guatemala’s Pentecostal drug rehabilitation centers, quickly laying claim to how interconnected these centers are with state-run prisons in the United States. “I spent a few years in prison,” mentioned one user, pencil in hand. “[I was] in California, in San Quentin [State Prison].” The artwork has extended inside these centers partly because one of the few materials allowed into the center’s second floor are colored pencils. “It’s good for them,” the pastor shrugged, “to try to express themselves on paper. It’s a kind of therapy.”

The stenciling and iconography often drip with religious imagery: Jesus’s bleeding heart breaks the chains of slavery; doves take flight to announce that you can be “free on the inside,” while Christ stands crestfallen, too ashamed to face the materiality of mass incarceration. As with most of these

montages, the artist represents himself. His self-portrait appears in the bottom right corner of this drawing. Defiantly discernible, by the user's own account, the artist depicts himself behind bars, in the shadows, and framed by scripture that he himself has invented: "One comes to understand through pain (Psalm 36:15)." The scriptural passage itself actually reads: "Let their sword enter into their own hearts, and let their bow be broken." But this user's ad-libbed liturgy indexes a struggle to render oneself legible to another. "I didn't know that when I got out of jail [in Guatemala]," the artist explained, "that I was chained up by cocaine. Because all I thought about when I was in jail was that I wanted to be free." Rolling a colored pencil between his fingers, he continued: "But I didn't think about my spirit, my soul . . . that I was chained up spiritually. Basically, I got out of jail and came back to jail, again. And now that I'm in rehab, it's like I'm locked up again."

These interconnected institutions provide a window into the political economy of Christian captivity, but so too do those colored pencils. For the pastor otherwise provides these users only with the most minimal of means. He offers them tortillas and three very thin bowls of soup every day. Bathing takes place across a complicated schedule, with users each getting a few minutes a week to wash themselves. Toilet paper, shampoo, and toothbrushes all come (or don't) from family members. The same is true of food items. Fruits, vegetables, and bread come (or don't) from family members. The logic continues with clothes. A user can wear the same T-shirt and pants for months on end and can go without a shave for that same stretch of time. It all depends on the user's family and friends. And while Guatemalan currency carries a deflated value inside the center, other objects do not. Socks, in fact, are worth a great deal, and more so in December than in March. All of this establishes the conditions for a cashless economic system in which services and goods are traded at negotiated rates. Such bartering is near impossible to prevent. In one instance, the pastor even went so far as to outlaw board games once he realized that Monopoly money had gained actual currency within the community; a collared shirt once sold for \$1,000 (in Monopoly bills).



Figure 9 Photograph by Benjamin Fogarty Valenzuela

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Carlos does not have a collared shirt. His T-shirt is threadbare and he needs new shoes. The pastor's tortillas and soup are also not enough. But this too is part of his punishment. For Carlos used to work in the United States, sending money back to his family in northern Guatemala. He worked construction in Chicago while selling small amounts of marijuana and cocaine on the side. He sold a little and smoked a little, all the while sending money to his parents and five sisters. "I was working," Carlos remembered, "working and working and sending my money back home." Carlos's family used the remittances to buy a better roof as well as to send two of Carlos's sisters to school.

Then there was a car accident. The details are not clear, but the consequences are obvious. Carlos suffered a severe head injury. As his hospitalization in the United States set the condition for his deportation, his behavior became increasingly erratic. He could hold a conversation, but he had headaches and mood swings as well as inexplicable bouts of anger. Back in Guatemala, Carlos began to consume larger amounts of marijuana and cocaine. He claims to have been self-medicating, but his family argues that the drugs themselves caused his headaches and mood swings. The cocaine sparked those inexplicable bouts of anger. At some point, Carlos left for Guatemala City, where he lived on the streets until his father paid the pastor to bring him to rehab.

"We stopped sending him clothes," his sister told me, "and we stopped sending him food." During the first year of Carlos's incarceration, three of his five sisters moved to Guatemala City to look for work. "He'd just give it away or trade with people for stuff he didn't need," another sister explained, adding: "He never appreciated the gifts. He never took care of them. He never used them." Intuiting Marcel Mauss's ([1950] 1990) most fundamental observation about the gift, namely, the moral obligation to reciprocate, Carlos's family grew tired of their brother receiving gifts but never countering with his own recovery. "He just doesn't care about us," another sister added.

Carlos's sisters are only half right. He does trade out his gifts, but this is standard practice in the center. While some users leverage their gifts to increase their relative position within the center's social hierarchy, the vast majority mobilize their limited resources to fashion themselves as saved—that is, to use every means available to look "after" as opposed to "before." With the user's body becoming the most important stage upon which to perform a new beginning, individuals barter for goods to strike the right bodily compartment for their families. To be properly shaven, with a clean shirt and fresh breath, suggests to loved ones that change is afoot—that a conversion may have already happened. And so users routinely forge strategic alliances by way of baked goods and colored pencils,

using these gifts to borrow a collared shirt or buy a secondhand comb. But Carlos never really caught on, and so his sisters cut him off. And the consequences of this miscommunication have been brutal. A little more than a year after his abduction, Carlos does not appear any closer to being saved. Instead, he looks positively shipwrecked.

Discerned

Carlos wears a pair of secondhand pants. The waist is far too wide for them to sit on his hips, and so he cinches them with a belt that is itself much too long. He rolls up his pant legs into fat cuffs, with one always longer than the other. On occasion, he even complements this look with a strip of T-shirt that he wraps around his forehead. Of course, Carlos does not generally stand out from the other sixty-one users. The vast majority similarly make do with secondhand clothes. The only difference is that most of these men strategize between family visits for how to pass as recovered, for how to stage a transparent rectitude on visiting days. Carlos does not, largely because he cannot. At their wits' end, Carlos's sisters froze their brother's ability to stylize himself into the very subject they so desperately want to see. Without cans of beans or the occasional candy bar, how could Carlos ever trade up those pants for a pair of slacks?

Carlos, it should be clear, knows what he looks like. He has not lost his coordinates. "I'm looking like shit," he mentioned one day: "Look at these pants. These shoes . . . I need some goddam shoes." He fingered a thin sole. "And this shirt is busted. It's dirty." He paused, only to add: "I'm all fucked up." His time spent inside the rehab had begun to compound negatively, with every day inside the center taxing a finite set of resources: his pair of shoes, his shirt, and his pair of pants. They had begun to fade, though he still had some hustle in him. "I need to get the fuck out of here," he told me. "I need to wash up and get the fuck out of here."

On one visit, while the pastor delivered a sermon on the power of prayer, Carlos asked for one of my business cards. With a fresh card in hand, he flipped it over and began to write with a borrowed pencil. In minutes, he had sketched out his own business card. It read, in big block letters: "Commercial and General Construction—Repairs, Flooring, and Painting." He handed the card back to me. "Get my sister to print a hundred of these," he told me with a bit of swagger. "But what about a phone number?" I asked him. Shouldn't a business card have a phone number? "Yeah," he conceded, "you're right." Carlos sounded defeated: "Let's wait until I get out of here [to print the cards]. Let's wait until I get a phone."

Carlos waits for his sisters to visit him every month. His sisters visit him to

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connect with their brother, to be sure, but also to speak to the pastor. They want to know, understandably so, if Carlos has changed—if he is ready to leave. The most important part of this monthly ritual comes in the form of a photograph. One of Carlos's sisters takes a picture of him with her smart phone. She then sends the image immediately to her parents. Some eight hours north of Guatemala City, Carlos's father assesses the image to decide whether he should pay for another month of rehabilitation. The pastor discerns the image as well. Frustrated and yet full of compassion, the father explained to me over the phone that Carlos "just doesn't look ready." And, to be honest, Carlos doesn't look ready. To see Carlos's first fourteen photographs, each representing a month of Carlos's captivity, is to witness a set of seemingly static images. They form an archive wherein which no meaningful differences appear. Carlos is more alert in some of the photographs than in others. His clothes are also cleaner in some than in others. And his hair obeys him from time to time. But never do these changes coordinate in such a way as to achieve a single, recognizable image of transformation. Instead, what appears across these fourteen photographs is a composite portrait of arrested development—of a user, to gloss Clifford Geertz (1973: 5), "suspended in webs of significance he himself has [not] spun."

The mechanics make sense. Ever since the late nineteenth century, when photography, criminology, and missiology entangled, photographs such as these have not only made moments of intervention absolutely dependent on acts of representation, but they have also prompted people to expect the soulful change enacted through such images—to appreciate the "before" while craving the "after." The semiotics of this split screen correlates physical appearance with individual character through an array of techniques. For while Carlos remains as stubborn as a mule, the pastor has not yet autocorrected Carlos's skin color and never seems to give Carlos the right stage directions; all the while his sisters starve him of the very means by which he could manipulate his own image. And so Carlos finds himself rendered discernible—for all to see.

"Then why don't you just let them take a good picture of you?" I asked Carlos. But he just stared past me. It was admittedly the wrong question to ask. Made for the sake of expediency—in the hopes of just getting Carlos out of the center—the question invoked that very era in which Bertillon and Haymaker drew on advances in halftone printing to render their subjects discernible and, thus, detainable. My question also inadvertently asked Carlos to clean up and straighten out, even if only for an afternoon. "I wouldn't know where to start," Carlos admitted.

Carlos's aside evokes a photograph published in Thomas F. Byrnes's *Professional Criminals of America* (1886) (fig. 10). Byrnes was the head of the New

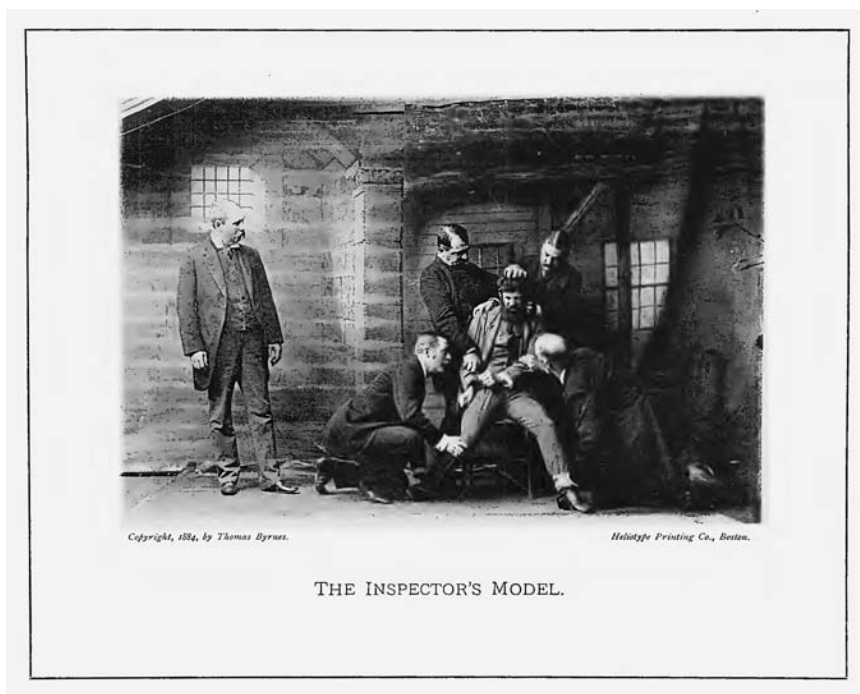


Figure 10 From Thomas Byrnes's *Professional Criminals of America* (1886).

York City Police Department and a champion of what was then called visual criminology. His book presents biographical sketches and photographs of the United States' leading criminals, with one particular image confirming what Carlos already knew: that most people actually "don't know where to start" when having their picture taken. Within the photograph's frame, four police officers wrestle with a detained man to take his mug shot. Two officers each hold one of his legs, while two others secure his shoulders. All the while a hand controls the head by way of the hair. Byrnes notes in an essay titled "Why Thieves Are Photographed": "You see thieves must dress up to their business. . . . If they are among poor people, they dress shabbily. If among well-to-do folks, [they] put on style. . . . It is a great thing to escape notice, and some men have a good deal of trouble to do it" (*ibid.*: 55).

Carlos has a good deal of trouble to do it. He knows well that establishing one's own image is an achievement. Yet the striking juxtaposition between Byrnes's image of the detained man and any of Carlos's monthly photographs is not simply

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the brute presence of the state in the image from 1884 but the expectation that Carlos should be able to corral himself for the sake of the photograph—that he should be able to keep his own feet still, pull his own shoulders back, and hold his own head straight. The expectation that Carlos should be able to do any of these (to himself, for himself) marks the kind of drug prohibition that Pentecostalism makes possible. It is a prohibition organized not just by a kind of visual piety (Morgan 1998) but also by a theology of discernment that demands its subject master himself against all odds. Yet without any of these interventions, Carlos keeps taking the same photograph. To which his sisters and his father keep replying, “He just doesn’t look ready.”

Postscript

After 773 days of captivity, Carlos eventually gained his freedom through a scream, not a photograph. Two of his sisters arrived at the center for their monthly visit, smart phone in hand, but the pastor told them that their brother could not visit with them. His punishment for bad behavior was the loss of visitation privileges. “The pastor looked angry and tired,” one sister remembered, “and he just kept shrugging, telling us to come back some other time.” His sisters pressed the pastor for even a brief visit, given how far they had just traveled and how long it would be until they could visit their brother again. The pastor did not budge. “But then we heard something upstairs,” the other sister said. “We heard all of this noise, stuff falling down and what sounded like people being thrown around.” The sisters had unwittingly visited the center at a time of near chaos. Tensions between captives had escalated overnight, with infighting eventually sparking actual fistfights. For a few moments, the pastor had lost control of his center, with Carlos’s sisters overhearing the very last moments of him taking it back. This included beating Carlos.

“We heard our brother screaming,” one sister recalled. “They were hitting him or something because he was screaming, and so we started to scream, and then Carlos started to scream even louder.” The other sister added, “And so we told the pastor to let our brother go or we’d call the police.” The pastor quickly pushed the three of them out the door. As Carlos suddenly stood in the bright sunlight, with the entire city before him, the power that those images once had on him began to fade. Still “all fucked up,” with the same “busted shirt,” Carlos found himself speaking over and above the moral implications of oversize pants. And while his sisters still found themselves in the position of discerning whether their brother was either a sinner or saved, the grounds upon which this debate took

place shifted, with Carlos now a far more incorporated participant. “Those goddam photographs,” Carlos muttered to me over the phone. “No one would listen to me. They’d just look at those photographs.” For those images ensnared Carlos, and they currently ensnare thousands more users just like Carlos. For in the shadows of a deeply misguided war on drugs, with tens of millions of people incarcerated throughout the Americas, the Pentecostal practice of discernment has become yet another technique of capture.

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