

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/city-time-on-being-sentenced-to-rikers-island/>

The speaker discusses their motivations for writing a book about their experiences of incarceration on Rikers Island, focusing on the absurdities and difficulties of the prison system. They collaborated with Jared Shanahan, who also has experience on Rikers. Rikers Island is portrayed as a notorious facility in New York City, known for its violence and unsanitary conditions, particularly affecting young men from marginalized communities.

The speaker reflects on their arrest during an anti-fascist protest and the unfairness of plea deals. They detail the psychological toll and societal stigma associated with incarceration, contrasting it with respectable forms of isolation experienced in research settings or space missions. The speaker views their time in jail through an ethnographic lens, documenting daily life and social dynamics among inmates.

The narration highlights the inmates' role in managing their environment, pointing out that they create social structures and norms to cope with the difficulties of prison life. The discussion also dives into the different categories of incarceration, focusing on the unique challenges of city time versus state prison and pretrial detention.

The speaker notes the communal sense of accountability among inmates, including hygiene practices and informal rules. They address the pervasive influence of race, class, and gang affiliations on the prison experience, emphasizing that many inmates enter jail with an understanding of its dynamics based on familial and community history.

The speaker concludes by critiquing the overall effectiveness of incarceration, arguing that it fails to rehabilitate and reflects broader societal issues without providing detailed policy suggestions. They stress the need for a shift towards investing in social services and acknowledge the deep-rooted nature of systemic neglect in the criminal justice system.