Carina Magazzeni  
2017 Recipient of the Marty Memorial Scholarship

Summary Statement of Studies and/or Research:

Famously known as Canada’s prison capital, Kingston has been put on the national map, in a sense, by its historical and contemporary relationships with its penitentiaries. Over the past few years in particular, the city’s reliance on its carceral sites has increased dramatically, especially with the introduction of Kingston Penitentiary (KP) tours. Framed by the marketing demands of the city, and fueled by narratives of carceral punishment, prison tourism and the popular discourses around it sensationalize incarceration long after the closure of a prison. Kingston’s Prison for Women (P4W) was decommissioned in 2000 and while it no longer houses incarcerated women, the narratives surrounding it within Canada’s Penitentiary Museum continue to perform cultural work that engages with sensational aspects of historical injustice. Jacqueline Wilson has defined this growing trend in sightseeing as “dark tourism,” where people gravitate to sites, attractions or exhibitions associated with tragedy or suffering. These dark touristic narratives based within the Correctional Service of Canada's KP tours, or Canada’s Penitentiary Museum, glorify incarceration while simultaneously glossing over the mass incarceration of Indigenous peoples (most especially Indigenous women), those living in poverty, racialized peoples, trans and/or queer peoples, and/or individuals with mental illnesses. The colonial violence inherent to the prison industrial complex is effectively shielded under kitschy tourist gimmicks within penal sites of dark tourism. What are the unheard histories of Kingston's prisons? Where are the stories from those with lived realities within these carceral sites? How can a different practice and ethics of witnessing allow for a re-storying of incarceration that shifts away from the spectacle of dark tourism?

These questions are the focal point of my research project: "Alternative Archives: Kingston's Carceral Histories and Contemporary Realities." This project takes the form of story gathering and archival research that uncovers and communicates narratives that are left out of predominant penal discourses. As part of this research, I am inviting responses and contributions from individuals who have connections to Kingston's prisons to have their stories shared, songs sung, histories told, poetry read, and voices heard. This material will be developed into an alternative archive space confirmed to be hosted at the Centre for Indigenous Research Creation, located at Queen’s University under the supervision of Dr. Dylan Robinson. Alternative Archives will provide critical opportunities for student and community engagement, with open drop-in times, communal tables, large scale presentation boards, and poster- and zine-making material to develop the archives through a collective research-sharing politics. By not only collecting my own archival research, but also making accessible forgotten, neglected, or personal materials, Alternative Archives will preserve a collection of surviving stories while placing the lived realities of incarceration at the forefront. Outreach to various groups in the Queen’s and Kingston communities will include the Elizabeth Fry Society, Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre, AKA Autonomous Social Centre, the Other Kingston Project, and OPIRG’s People History Project. This outreach is integral as it places emphasis on documenting and presenting community-led and first-hand experiences of those most closely connected to prisons.

Alternative Archives will also function as preliminary research for an upcoming exhibition that I will be curating (with a publication), aimed at critically responding to Kingston's reliance on
dark tourism. The exhibition is confirmed to be hosted by Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre and will include work by multiple contemporary artists engaged in critically re-examining narratives of incarceration. Alternative Archives is a timely research endeavor, with the city of Kingston's carceral landscape shifting: Queen's is considering divestment of its ownership of P4W, the KP tours continue to grow, and community consultations surrounding the future use of the now decommissioned buildings are in place. While Queen’s has a legacy of prison-related research in its close proximities to incarceration sites, it is imperative that a reciprocal relationship be established with members of our communities most closely affected by incarceration. My vision with Alternative Archives is to weave together elements of archival documents and personal histories, counter the city’s dark touristic narratives, and place focus on lived experiences. By moving beyond the scope of the individual archivist/researcher, multiple voices and stories are being invited to shape the research itself.