

## **COLORS 50: Prison**

With over eight million people held in penal institutions the prison population is one of the fastest growing communities in the world. In the United States, a country which holds 25% of the world's prison population but only 5% of the world population, prisons are now the fastest growing category of housing in the country. The cost of a new prison cell is \$58,000-twice the price of real estate on New York's Fifth Avenue. For this issue of Colors we visited a maxim security women's prison in California.

South Africa has the second largest prison population in the world and we spent two weeks in Pollsmoor Prison, Cape Town home to the infamous numbers gangs. These highly organized and disciplined prisons gangs have existed in South Africa for over 100 years in strictly guarded secrecy. For COLORS 50, inmates disclose survival tactics in the murder capital of the world.

With the lucrative American drug market just over the border, Mexico is now the largest opium producer in the world. But before attempting the dangerous crossing narcotics traffickers visit the shrine of Jesus Malverde, the patron saint of thieves to seek his protection. Many are caught and sent to Culiacan City prison in Northern Mexico. Portraits of the Saint adorn the cells of these prisoners, who despite their devotion have become the victims of the ruthless drug cartels.

In Colombia, some jails are controlled from the inside by the prisoners themselves. Wealthy inmates pay a rental fee to gangsters in order to occupy a cell, while the poorer prisoners are left to sleep in the yard. Wardens are searched and disarmed by prisoners before entering a cell.

By contrast inmates in a Spanish prison one might enjoy all the benefits of a modern holiday resort. The country boasts one of the most progressive prison systems in the world with living facilities for married couples, nurseries, swimming pools and squash courts.

For Colors 50 we have visited 14 prisons in 14 countries and asked a difficult question: Is it possible to rehabilitate a person back into society by excluding them from it? We spoke to murders, rapists, pedophiles, armed robbers, thieves, frauds, drug dealers, pick pockets, high-jackers and prison wardens. In most cases the stories we heard confirm one thing. That prison does not work. In COLORS 50 we ask the inmates themselves to suggest alternatives.