Class #8: Prisoner Stories
Discussion Questions for September 19
Readings: Coles; Film: What I Want My Words to Do to You

Because writing assignments are meant to prepare you for class discussions, you must post a draft question on the Moodle Forum for this date if you want your submission to count. After posting a draft, you must revise and resubmit your final response for a grade by the following Sunday night. In the case of questions posted below, the final draft of your question is due by the end of the day on Sunday, September 22. Include your name, the full question number, and the text of the question on both your draft and final submissions.

Discussion Questions

8-1. Tell a story taken from the film What I Want My Words to Do to You. What happened?

The question asks you to reproduce a narrative. It also relates to an account from Coles, p. 7 where his mentor tells him an incomplete story and then asks, “What happened?” This refers to what in the story conveys meaning or what the point is. It answers the question, “So what?” that is not answered by a simple time log of events. So in this question when you tell what happened you need to tell why the story is significant.

8-2. In the film, What I Want My Words to Do to You, writing group leader and author Eve Ensler tells us that every woman in prison is there because of a mistake and that while the mistake happened at a point in time the woman now has become her mistake. What does this statement mean, and does it have something meaningful to say about rehabilitation?

Ensler could be making a statement about socialization to prison and about the ways self concept must change as people accept the reality that they are prisoners rather than free citizens. Consequence for self would be profound but this may say nothing about whether people could safely be released into society. Alternatively, Ensler could be telling us something deeper about the experience of imprisonment, acknowledgement of guilt, and deep self understandings that make long-term prisoners truly different people from those who committed the crimes.

8-3 Most students in this class have attended an auction for the auction assignment. Think of a story from your auction experience. I want you to tell that story as part of your answer to this question. But before you tell the story, explain how your auction account would be different if you gave a description of the event organized as a time sequence of occurrences in comparison to how your story presents the event. Once you respond to this request, tell your story.