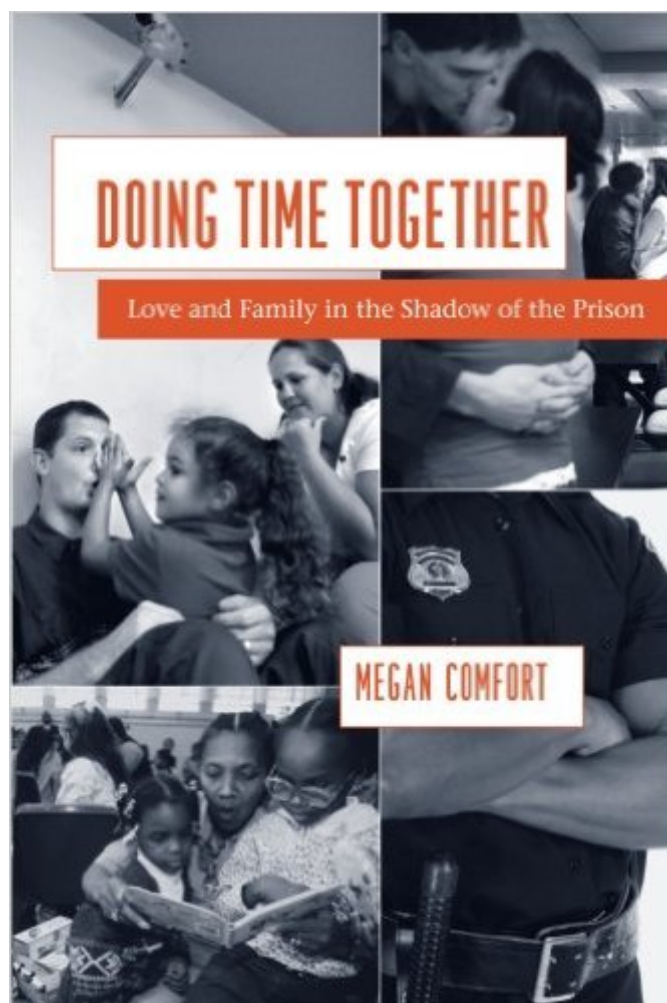


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# Doing Time Together: Love And Family In The Shadow Of The Prison



## Synopsis

By quadrupling the number of people behind bars in two decades, the United States has become the world leader in incarceration. Much has been written on the men who make up the vast majority of the nation's two million inmates. But what of the women they leave behind? *Doing Time Together* vividly details the ways that prisons shape and infiltrate the lives of women with husbands, fiancés, and boyfriends on the inside. Megan Comfort spent years getting to know women visiting men at San Quentin State Prison, observing how their romantic relationships drew them into contact with the penitentiary. Tangling with the prison's intrusive scrutiny and rigid rules turns these women into "quasi-inmates," eroding the boundary between home and prison and altering their sense of intimacy, love, and justice. Yet Comfort also finds that with social welfare weakened, prisons are the most powerful public institutions available to women struggling to overcome untreated social ills and sustain relationships with marginalized men. As a result, they express great ambivalence about the prison and the control it exerts over their daily lives. An illuminating analysis of women caught in the shadow of America's massive prison system, Comfort's book will be essential for anyone concerned with the consequences of our punitive culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There's a fair amount of research on locked up men, but what about the women who love them? Why do they stay? What do they tell their shared children? Do they want the world to know about their men's plights? Are they ever happy about the incarceration? This sociological book tries to

answer these questions. Dr. Comfort emphasizes the term "secondary prisonization." Wives and girlfriends get mistreated by prison staff. They receive myriad rules they have to follow. Caring for a locked up loved one cramps their styles, and especially their wallets. Those setting prison policy don't really try to empathize with the free wives of male prisoners either. Womanist scholars like hooks, Davis, Trinh, and many others have said feminist work too often ignores equally important issues of race and class. This book tackles race and class, not just gender. Most of these female interviewees are working-class or poor. Most of the women have Black inmates as husbands or boyfriends. The interviewees do not just play the loyal female role, they are also very critical of the racism and classism their men experience. The author does her best not to place these women on a pedestal, but not to mercilessly slam them either. The sneakiness from both men and women comes up here. On the one hand, male prisoners call wives just to make sure they are chained to the phone. Many of these men are abusive or adulterous when in the free world. However, this book has examples of women calling police to arrest their husband and then acting like, "Gee, officer! Why are you here?!" I think Foucault and his followers would love this as it speaks of those assumed to lack power being able to use power.

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