Performative Religion and Hard Labor: How Faith-Based Drug
Rehabilitation Programs Operate Within the Ideological Framework of
the Prison Industrial Complex

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By

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Abstract –

This thesis takes theoretical framings of the relation between the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and the Global South and extends them to reveal how non-carceral faith-based rehabilitation programs operate under the same ideological grounding of labor exploitation within the PIC. I do this through an analysis into Life Changers Outreach (LCO), a faith-based drug rehabilitation program. I will track themes of conflation between capitalism and Christianity and look to see how the dominant capitalist classes reorient institutions to distort morality in a way that falsely justifies this unpaid labor. Performative aspects of this brand of Christianity are a façade for free-market capitalist impulses that drive this exploitation of labor. Throughout this thesis, I will outline how different institutions within LCO perform religiosity in different ways, but all with the same goals of maximizing extraction of profit. The performative nature does not change the affect for the audience of the performer. While religion might be a façade ideology, this thesis will explore what the implications of this performance are for members.
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Introduction –

When I first became familiar with Life Changers Outreach, a 12-month faith-based drug rehabilitation center founded in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee by Pastors Juanell and Mark Gallo, I immediately became very interested. It was October of my Sophomore year, myself and a couple friends drove out to a Walmart at King of Prussia mall outside of Philadelphia to pick up Halloween costumes. At the time, I was supposed to be looking for examples of religion in ‘every-day life’ for my Junior Religion Seminar to learn more about how Protestant Christianity appears in both hidden and clear ways throughout U.S. ‘popular culture’ and how American Protestantism operates in constant relation to capitalist motivations. It was before entering this Walmart that I had my first encounter with a member of Life Changers Outreach (LCO). His name was Jim or John (something with a J but definitely not Jerry), he was wearing a brown beanie tightly around his head and stood in front of a table with t-shirts, bracelets, and other cross emboldened trinkets (see fig. 1). It was the t-shirts that initially caught my eye and got me to walk over. He had a gentle and welcoming demeanor and when I approached and explained my business of scholarship, he was more than willing to talk to me about his mission on behalf of LCO. After speaking with him I knew immediately that this was what I was going to write about for my essay. Two things stuck with me after the completion of that project.

The first thing is how the connection between Protestant Christianity and capitalism in the U.S. exists as a moral framework. Characteristic of both Evangelicalism and capitalism is the goal of (rapid) expansion. As a result, individuals and institutions operate in this same way; the expansion of constructed geography and capital is prioritized over humanity.

The other thing that has stuck with me was the singular phone interview I conducted as a part of my research. I remember speaking with Travis, an intake officer at the Pigeon Forge
location, well. He was a younger man, early to mid 20s. He spoke in a low register with a slight southern drawl. While I do not remember every part of the conversation, I remember a couple key parts. The first was how he told me he was a recovering meth addict. He told me about his children and how if he wanted to be able to spend time with them without a court ordered supervisor, then he would have to complete the LCO program. This was the beginning of my realization that prisons, and what I would later realize is unpaid prison labor, play a major role in my analysis of this group.

This left me with a few significant questions. My first essential question is how are faith-based drug rehabilitation centers connected to the Prison Industrial Complex? This question is quite broad, so I offer some follow up questions to narrow the scope. Another essential question is how does the intersection of capitalism and Christianity orient labor within faith-based drug rehabilitation centers? And finally, how do the structures (labor, religious structures within program) of LCO play into or reject the relationships of dominance that perpetuate cycles of incarceration?

When I set out on this journey, I first had to gather primary source materials. I began by scouring their website, Facebook pages, and any other information that could be found online. I found a ton of information, but it was almost always performative and incredibly vague. The best information I found without asking LCO were the public tax documents that show the annual revenue of the program. I knew that if I wanted to receive information that could actually lead me to answering these questions, I had to speak with a member again, just like I had done a couple years prior. I conducted
interviews to add to my primary source material. I conducted 5 interviews over the course of a week with 5 different intake officers at 5 different locations. The members I talked to were (in no particular order), Cody from the Beckley, WV location, Hannah A. from the Asheville, NC location, Melanie from the Rolla, MO location, Ashley from the LCO headquarters in Pigeon Forge, TN and Sarah from the New Mexico location. In a perfect world I could have done this fieldwork in person, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic I was limited to phone interviews. Of these 5 interviews the three that were the most fruitful were the first three. I will come back to these interviews later but here I was able to learn about the day-to-day activities and about some other aspects of the program that are not available to be learned on the internet. For example, I
learned about what actually goes into what they call ‘fundraising trips’ where members drive to Walmart stores in the region around the location for an entire weekend to sell LCO merchandise, but as I realize later, they are also selling themselves. These fundraising trips are grueling and are where the bulk of the labor performed during the program goes. Before I go too in depth into my interview material, I want to take a step back and readdress the essential question of how does LCO overlap with the Prison Industrial Complex?

The Prison Industrial Complex, or PIC, is the expansive network of for-profit institutions that operate within or in relation to the U.S. carceral system. The private businesses use both private and public prisons to make money in a number of ways, but they all revolve around the subjugation of incarcerated populations through dehumanizing labor structures. The PIC is a term that is very general and has a wide set of definitions depending on the frame in which you view the structure. Even if we ‘narrow’ it down to be more specific towards labor, the institutions that I wanted to point to at the start of my thesis as the ‘reason’ behind this situation was not sticking. For example, one rabbit hole I climbed down was whether there was a correlation between the number of private prisons in any one given U.S. state and whether that state also had a LCO location. My hypothesis was that if a state allowed for private prisons to be run at higher rates (or at all), then there must be something within their legislative practices that encourage programs like LCO that are fueled by unpaid labor. However, this line of thinking had me grasping at straws and I began to assess why this approach did not work. It was not until I found Tanya Rawal’s Geographies of Debt: The Prison Industrial Complex and The Global South that I began to see how this primary source material revealed connections to the PIC. I will discuss Rawal more in depth later, but part of her main point is that the term the ‘global south’ can be extended to the PIC because of how discourse of aid and rehabilitation is the façade
through which capitalists or ‘developers’ articulate the laboring spaces from which they exploit free labor. Essentially, the debts that the capitalist class owes to the laboring class because of exploitative labor practice are reoriented within this system to be held as a moral debt or obligation by the laborer themselves. A new laborer is created through this relationship of aid and rehabilitation. The moral debts actually held by the capitalists who exploit the worker are reoriented to be held by the laborer, who cannot, in theory, be seen as exploited because their labor is in a moral and or financial debt to the capitalists for their ‘aid.’

When speaking with intake officers at LCO, I asked each one for their personal opinions about the fundraising trips and they were (at least in part) honest about how grueling of a weekend of labor it is. It is important here to note that the members I spoke to were working for LCO as intake officers, meaning they field calls and convince individuals to join the program. They are probably both aware that there are negative reviews online that call out their fundraising practices and are trained in some capacity to handle these types of questions. That being said, Hannah from Asheville told me that their members will sometimes drive up to 10 hours to get to a single Walmart to set up shop. However, as each member spoke to the rigor of these fundraising trips, they always quickly followed up by saying that “it’s how we keep the program free.” The fact that the program is free is not a justification for why their labor is exploited. The realities of the exploitation of their labor are obscured because the structure is predicated on the capitalist providing a service to the laborer that the laborer is expected to repay. This justification is the embodiment of Rawal’s point on the discourse of aid articulating the entire geography that extracts value from exploited laborers. LCO members that are fully bought into the program will never be able to acknowledge the ways that the program exploits

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1 Rawal, “Geographies of Debt”
them as they will justify it as a fulfilment to the system that provided them ‘aid’ in the first place. This relationship between the aid giver and aid receiver creates a laborer that cannot in theory be exploited.

Now that I have outlined the methodology through which I gathered materials for my analysis for this program and have begun to show the theoretical framing that I am looking at for this program, I will try to briefly outline my argument. This thesis’ main intervention is how religious performance is used as a façade ideology to help rearticulate labor structures to justify the exploitation of the laborer. I will show this by building on Tanya Rawal’s idea of aid-based relationships and also bringing in other theoretical texts, like Lisa Guenther’s *Prison Beds and Compensated Man-Days: The Spatio-Temporal Order of Carceral Neoliberalism* and Erin Runions’ *Immobile Theologies, Carceral Affects: Interest and Debt in Faith-Based Prison Programs*. I will use these two texts to defend my main intervention and also articulate the point that religion operates as a framework for these aid-based relationships that create an always indebted prison laborer that may look to escape the exploitative labor systems through self-progress but is inevitably stuck within them.

Life Changers Outreach is not a part of the U.S. carceral system by definition, which would be institutions like the courts or the physical prison itself, but it is connected to the carceral system insofar the laborer is trapped within the structure that has been articulated by the capitalists. As I am extending Rawal’s connection of the Global South and U.S. PIC to non-prison faith-based rehabilitation programs, the multi-dimensionality of the religious aspects of the program can easily be lost. I have begun to describe how performances of religiosity are a façade for exploitative labor practices that occur within LCO, but over these next few pages I will attempt to outline how Life Changers Outreach performs their brand of Christianity.
First, before I delve into the religious performances of LCO, I want to address whether LCO has expansionist goals in mind.

The first religious performance I would like to address is the hierarchy of the program. As I mentioned earlier, Mark and Juanell Gallo are the co-founders of LCO, and because of this they sit at the apex of this structure. Below them are the Apostolic Trainers and Chief Administrators. The Apostles sit directly below the trainers and administrators and then at the bottom of the hierarchy lie the members, or students as LCO calls them (I am not calling them students because I feel that would be embracing the dynamics of aid relations that justify their exploitation). I will address the implications of this structure more in depth in section 2, when I discuss Cornel West’s concept of Constantinian Christianity, but for now I am particularly interested in the role and general concept of the Apostles. Essentially their job is to teach the members the bible and oversee their development throughout the program. While that was the answer Melanie gave me, I am more interested in how the Apostles are situated within the relationship between God and the members. As I mentioned above, LCO demands complete obedience to God. The Apostles operate as the enforcers of an invisible God, to keep members accountable in their obedience. The Apostles are present in the member’s relationship with God in order to maintain LCO religiosity. The moral grounding for members is hypothetically determined by God and the bible, but in reality, this moral structure has been artificially constructed to satisfy the business side of LCO while maintaining religion as a facade. LCO ensures a docile and unpaid labor force through enforcing the religious theme of obedience.

Religious performance of obedience to God (and subsequently the Apostles) by the members is one example of how religiosity operates as a justification for the construction and

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2 LCO Interviews. Melanie, February 12, 2021
entrapment of individuals within exploitative labor practices. Religiosity through obedience goes beyond the walls of LCO locations. Using social media platforms like Facebook, LCO is able to connect to a network of obedient followers to advertise for their program. The Facebook posts range from images of scenic landscapes with quotes superimposed (see fig. 2) to posts requesting donations to help support the opening of a new location. Most posts are branded with the LCO logo and if the actual text of the post does not have a link sending you to the donations page, then there will be a comment doing so. Their Facebook pages enact classic social media marketing strategies like content that is consistent both with the theme of the business and its daily content. The religious language that fills their content and the words on their t-shirts is purely performative and used to sell merchandise.

What is American Evangelical Christianity, or any religion for that matter, without performance? For groups like LCO, this performance is sincerely enacted to hide the realities of LCO business pursuits of expansion. The construction of an American Christian morality that supports market fundamentalism is a purposeful conflation by the capitalists who are able to orient social and moral structures through the movement of money.
“You can’t stay in one kingdom while trying to get the benefits of another.”

Dustin Smith
Literature Review –

In this thesis I use a select group of authors, all of whom are contemporary, to help create a theoretical framework through which I will analyze my group of study, Life Changers Outreach. These texts are Tanya Rawal’s “Geographies of Debt: The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global South,” Joshua Tuttle’s dissertation “Stewards of the Kingdom: Neoliberalism and Christianity,” Lisa Guenther’s “Prison Beds and Compensated Man-Days: The Spatio-Temporal Order of Carceral Neoliberalism,” Erin Runions’ “Immobile Theologies, Carceral Affects: Interest and Debt in Faith-Based Prison Programs” and finally I use Cornel West’s chapter “The Crisis of Christian Identity in America” from his book *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. Each of these theories are tangentially related and through this literature review I will attempt to weave them together in a way that reveals the lens through which I will analyze Life Changers Outreach.

I will begin with Tanya Rawal and her framing of the American Prison Industrial Complex as an extension of the same structures of neoliberalism that dominate developing spaces. The concept of ‘developing’ spaces are characterized by their relation to the developer. “So long as a geography is discursively constructed to be surplus, poor, or “southern,” the labor of the subjects that occupy that space can be rearticulated in such a way that the capitalists’ moral debt accrued by the extraction of surplus-value is misrecognized as the laborer’s obligation to the sovereign. Identifying the capitalist as being always already indebted to the worker reveals the capitalist’s interest in obfuscating that debt.” The labor that is performed within the spaces constructed by the capitalist will be seen as a fulfillment of an “obligation to the sovereign.”

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3 Rawal, 34
relationship between capitalist and worker as one of gratitude. This obligation is false and it is the capitalist who creates the very spaces that articulate this obligation. The moral debt held by the capitalists is reoriented and used to oppress the laboring class. “This essay’s major intervention is its recognition of how the discourse of aid and rehabilitation produces an indebted laborer who cannot, in theory, be seen as exploited. The exploitation of the prisoner is misrecognized as payment for the debt owed, and the beneficiaries of prison labor therefore free themselves of any guilt, or moral debt, that might accumulate from the surplus-value that said labor creates.”

The discourse around aid and rehabilitation is the connection to the American PIC. The implication of the provision of aid creates a system of debtor and creditor relations that is taken advantage of to free the capitalist from any moral debt and accomplishes imperialist aims of economic control. Rawal does not directly discuss the financialization of incarcerated Americans but does speak to this concept of indebtedness. “Debt, in both its moral and monetary values, is that thing that the southern trope obscures.” This is crucial for my exploration as this debt connects the capitalist and laboring classes through a relationship of dominance. Here we begin to build our understanding of both the PIC and neoliberalism in this context.

We return to the PIC with Lisa Guenther’s text on the role of corporate interests and political deregulation. Guenther outlines how there are physical parameters of the ‘prison bed’ and the ‘compensated man-day’ through which surplus-value is extracted from prison laborers. This is helpful as one of my aims in this thesis is to connect LCO, a non-prison program, to the Prison Industrial Complex. Guenther follows the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) through their attempts to gain a hold of the Tennessee prison system. CCA tried several times to gain a hold of the Tennessee prison system but was thwarted by the legislature. However, they

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 45
eventually succeeded and cemented incarceration as a billion-dollar industry. My thesis focuses on the fact that this privatization created a runoff of PIC-auxiliary programs like LCO. The labor performed within these tangential spaces results in the same exploitation as prisons. Because of this, exploring the neoliberal aspects of the American PIC and the labor within it is necessary. I also found this text helpful as it phrases the carceral system as a social relationship between oppressor and oppressed. Marginalized populations are made vulnerable and economized through these neoliberal systems. This economization or financialization of individuals within prisons results in a “dehumanization” of the incarcerated individual in favor of “humanizing” the tax paying citizens. By implicating the taxpayers of the county in this violence, the taxpayers are now a part of the dominant side of this social relationship, giving them an economic reasoning behind their moral justification of this exploitative systems. Guenther’s strongest claim is that these physical markers provide a framework through which the capitalist class extracts wealth. These physical materials are the foundation for the social relationships that define the carceral system. By bringing this concept of caging to life Guenther both makes an important claim on the American PIC and helps me expand my definition of carceral to accommodate religious programs that may not explicitly be a part of the prison system but use similar markers of physicality to extract surplus-value.

From Guenther we will turn to Erin Runion’s and her text on faith-based prison reform programs. Runions speaks to a contradiction between the self-interest and the indebtedness of the incarcerated. Runions sets up incarcerated individuals as self-interested-yet-always-indebted.”6 This is a similar claim to that of Rawal. However, since Runions is assessing religious programs, the language of rehabilitation and aid that we saw in Rawal is replaced with religious language of

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6 Runions, 55
sin and salvation. This is crucial as the religious aspect of carceral labor adds a dimension of
caging that goes beyond other neoliberal discourses. “Prisons are a way of punishing those
whom financial interest apparently has not served as imagined. They provide the literal and
figural immobilization of those who cannot be rationalized into the proper pursuit of financial
interest or self-interest—cannot be rationalized because no matter what the calculation, the odds
are stacked against them so that the usual financial/structural/ emotional avenues for following
interest are not easily available.”7 By setting up the concept of self-interest as antithetical to debt
systems, but also that incarceration necessarily places individuals in moral and financial debts,
Runions reveals to us the caging nature of this structure.

7 Ibid., 61
Section 1: LCO as a carceral institution -

While the Life Changers Outreach program is not a prison nor are the members physically forced to stay, there are carceral aspects of the program that lend itself to being a part of the Prison Industrial Complex. During the course of this section, I will first argue that Life Changers is an auxiliary part of the PIC and second that the religious language around LCO further increases this caging effect. Here I want to pause briefly and outline two terms. The first is carceral. Per Miriam-Webster’s dictionary, carceral is an adjective suggesting characteristics of a prison or jail. Carceral takes on an entirely different context within the United States’ penal system. For the purposes of this essay, I will use carceral as an umbrella term for the physical and figurative caging executed by a dominant class (capitalists, creditors, incarcerators). The Prison Industrial Complex is the term I will use when describing the extraction of wealth from those the capitalists entrench in this carceral system. I also want to make a note of the term I use when discussing the ‘members’ of LCO. When conducting interviews, it was made clear to me that the program made efforts to call their members ‘students’ and would even correct me if I made this mistake. However, calling them students would be validating a practice of dominance that I am not comfortable doing. For this reason, I am sticking with the more general, ‘members.’

Borrowing from Tanya Rawal’s geographies of the global south, we see the similarities between western imperialism and the American PIC. Imperialist efforts to exploit the resources of developing nations through neoliberal aid and rehabilitation as a guise for extraction of wealth and the American PIC that relies on marginalized populations to fuel their private prisons are connected in this way. The trope of the “global south” or “south” for short is predicated upon the fact that a capitalist class has articulated the spaces through which the laboring class is exploited. This exploitation is obscured by the dominant class and reoriented to essentially trick the
working class into thinking there is a moral debt owed to the capitalists in addition to any real financial debt that may have been incurred through legal fees, hospital bills, etc. “And because the capitalist is always-already indebted to the worker, it is in the interest of the capitalist to obfuscate that debt. The PIC accomplishes that by means of the prisoner’s punishment, which voids exploitation—rendering it not only justifiable but also the only method of ensuring that the prisoner pays his/her debt to society. The capitalist, in other words, does not have to be concerned with appropriating the surplus-value of the prisoner’s labor, because the exploitation of the prisoner is misrecognized as payment for the debt owed.”

If we view the capitalist as already indebted to the worker then we can reveal the purposeful obfuscation by the capitalists, however, we cannot reveal this exploitation because within the space articulated by the capitalist, there is no exploitation to name. Within the capitalist’s space, there is no surplus-value to extract as any surplus-value is simply repayment for the initial debt. For Rawal, this event occurs in a distinctly neoliberal way when it is enacted under the guise of aid and rehabilitation. This is why the American PIC is neoliberal, it exploits the oppressed group under a smokescreen of rehabilitation. LCO is operated on the exploitation of its members. The program may be free but that is the method through which the laborers are convinced that they are in debt to the capitalists. (For LCO, the capitalist class is the Apostolic staff, the group of individuals who run and operate the program.) The implication that the apostles are taking on any kind of risk is preposterous as the program relies on members to turn a profit, however there is a moral debt still on the members.

LCO extracts surplus-value from unpaid labor of the incarcerated, and then reorients this as an obligation to the program by the very members who are being exploited. The apostles are

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8 Rawal, 42
allowed to do this because LCO operates as a carceral institution, alongside the PIC. Religious language is then used to even further entrench these individuals’ figurative caging. LCO’s mission statement reads, “To set the captive free from the bondage of addiction and bring healing to the communities we serve. To restore and raise God’s people up into the five-fold ministry, so they may carry the Gospel into new areas.” Language of bondage is central to the messaging of LCO as it ensures members will feel this relationship of dominance and helps create a subservient dynamic. There are two forms of caging occurring within LCO. The first is explained by Lisa Guenther in her text *Prison Beds and Compensated Man-Days*. Guenther states that “the “prison bed” and the “compensated man-day” function as basic units of carceral neoliberal space-time; these are the terms by which the potentiality for caging marginalized populations is monetized and wealth is extracted from the poor.” There is a ton to unpack from this quote, but we will start with the concept of the “prison bed” and “compensated man-day.” These characteristics are the physical parameters through which the capitalist class extracts wealth from marginalized populations. These parameters are used to cage individuals and then the surplus value of their unpaid (or essentially unpaid) prison labor goes into the pockets of the capitalists. “From this perspective, a cage is not an inert, atemporal object; it is a sedimented social practice that materializes in specific locations but also secures, reproduces, and amplifies the material conditions for its continued (and continually reconfigured) functioning.” The prison bed and man-day are now the foundation of a social relation of absolute dominance. These social relations are a result of practices that materialize through neoliberal agendas (guise of rehab and aid) and are perpetuated through inexorable corporate interests. This social relationship becomes increasingly problematic when the issue of piety is involved.

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9 Guenther, 32
10 Ibid. 44
Erin Runions and her text, *Immobile Theologies* is extremely helpful for us here to elucidate the role religion plays here. Despite her text being focused on religious programs within prison walls, there is little disconnection between her analysis and what I saw with LCO. “The religious language of sin and salvation in these programs is based on an economic model of debt and payment that contributes to racialized structures of oppression in the United States.” These racialized structures of oppression are the same ones that create the social relationships of dominance and subordination within LCO. Language of salvation is a religious version of rehabilitation and aid central to secular labor exploitation. This salvation is something that can only be given through completion of the program. By making salvation something only attainable through finishing the program, LCO uses a spatio-temporal caging to extract wealth similar to what Guenther describes. Additionally, since salvation is only attainable through completion of the program and completion relies upon finishing all nine contracts and weekly fundraising, the goal of salvation itself becomes a tool through which the apostles can extract wealth. The structure of the PIC relies on dynamics of subordination like these to be perpetuated. While LCO is tangential to the PIC, these characteristics of dominance show clear linkages and the carceral nature of the program.

During my interviews with LCO members, Cody, from the Beckley, WV location spoke to this distinction between secular and religious rehabilitation programs. Being the intake officer, a role that I quickly realized was meant to recruit not necessarily inform, Cody was trying to persuade me of the benefits of Life Changers as opposed to alternative substance abuse programs. Cody set up a binary between what he called “secular” rehab programs and “religious” rehab programs. He told me that secular programs can cost $40,000 while religious programs are

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11 Runions, 57
free. I soon realized that the reasoning behind this is simply privilege. These substance abuse programs are crucial for the PIC as runoff for non-violent drug offenders. If you are a person of wealth with a substance abuse issue, then you go to a program where you pay. There is no implicit debt to be made up through labor, however, with religious programs, they are often free. This is a huge distinction because within secular programs, there is no relationship of unchecked dominance and no caging. A secular rehab program is not a carceral institution but closer to what it truly claims. Religious rehab programs seem to be far more carceral because of their free nature. The lack of price is crucial if the apostles are to convince the members that they owe a debt to the program. Free programs also seem significantly more difficult to complete since you are required to labor rigorously and your completion of the program is subjective as it is up to the apostle’s discretion whether a contract is completed. This situation sets the members up for failure, a purposeful maneuver to keep individuals within the PIC, even if that is tangentially with programs like LCO. We know that corporations will always seek the best way to accrue surplus-value from its laborers, this dynamic does not change in the carceral world. “As critical criminologist Nils Christie argues, “In the criminal justice field, the raw material is prisoners and the industry will do what is necessary to guarantee a steady supply.” Regardless of whether a member is actually “healed” or “saved,” LCO will make a profit. The system is self-perpetuating and the binary between religious and secular rehab programs shows that poor or “southern” groups are actively disadvantaged by this system because they are the ones fueling the PIC.

Corporate interests in private prison labor has a history in the U.S. dating back to the 1970s and the creation of CoreCivic, formerly known as the Corrections Corporation of America. CCA is a business that has made billions through backdoor political dealings in order

12 Guenther, 43
13 Ibid.
to create the private prison industry. In typical neoliberal financialization, CCA created the ability to monetize individuals in new ways. In order to create the private prisons, first the CCA had to convince struggling economic towns to vote to allow CCA’s prisons. This was not difficult in conservative areas and soon there was a trend of private prisons in rural, conservative towns across America. The act of creating prisons to save economically failing towns is called a prison-fix scheme. These schemes, while advertised to make a positive economic impact for the town, most of the tax money goes into the pockets of the wealthiest counties, not back into the pockets of the individuals in the struggling economic towns.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, “Under the direction of Jeb Bush in Florida and George W. Bush in Washington, prisons in many U.S. states have allowed largely privately funded Christian groups to run faith-based programs inside prisons.”\textsuperscript{15} While LCO is not a faith based program within the prison walls, it operates in collaboration with the same structure. This is a structure that relies on the reorientation of capitalist’s moral debt as laborer’s debt. “For many faith-based programs, however, moral debt (to God) is added to time debt (to society) and actual debt (to the victim incurred in the judicial system). Time and monetary debts are not forgiven; they must still be paid. Biblically based theological teaching thus interpellates the incarcerated as figural subjects of debt, who, although perhaps forgiven by God, literally need to pay to make amends, and who, without adequate income, become further indebted financially.”\textsuperscript{16} While moral debts may be payable through piety, labor is not compensated making climbing out of financial holes brought on by litigation or otherwise very difficult.

\textsuperscript{14} Runions, 55
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Runions, 66
The fact that LCO members do not get compensated for their labor is doubled by the lack of taxes that LCO pays. Because they are a 501(c)3 company, they are federally exempt from income taxes. This is the same company that brought in millions of dollars last year in fundraising money. “Residential faith-based programs are an extreme case, as they take on full-time care and provide a kinder, gentler form of incarceration. They are attractive to states and private prison corporations because although they may receive some grant money from states, they are largely funded by religious groups and staffed by volunteers, so they cut costs substantially.”17 This contradiction between looking to cut costs and saving money when it comes to paying taxes to the state but looking to drive up profit margins is why prison-fix schemes fail to actually help the towns they were meant to help. These schemes instead create institutions of immobility and incarceration, whether those are actual private prisons or residential faith-based programs like LCO.

17 Ibid.
Section 2: Authoritarianism, Salvation, and Selling –

Throughout this section I will try to touch on some of the relevant institutions and aspects of LCO that contribute to the exploitation of the laborer. Similar to the overarching structures of the PIC in play here, there is nuance within the specific action. However, within each action there are notes of power hierarchies and dominance. There are clear structures of dominance within LCO, beginning with the “Apostolic Staff” which includes the leading administrators and Apostolic Trainers at each location.

More strands of dominance occur when we consider expanding a spatial and temporal caging to adding spiritual caging. Here I extend on Lisa Guenther’s text on a carceral space-time which underlines a what she describes as a neo-liberal caging. The spatial and temporal aspects of the cage provide the literal and metaphorical framing through which the capitalist class exploits the unpaid labor structures. Vague language of bondage throughout the LCO homepage feels like a reduction of Rawal’s nuanced description of the spatial and temporal caging of California’s prison structure. However, the secular nature of California’s incarcerated labor programs lacks the power of LCO’s Religious language of bondage and as I describe it, spiritual caging. In addition to the language throughout the homepage of bondage and “life-controlling issues,” their mission statement reads “To set the captive free from the bondage of addiction and bring healing to the communities we serve.” There is clear reference to a spiritual caging and subsequent breaking of this bondage through this apostolic notion of spreading the gospel into the world. The spiritual caging is my extension of Guenther’s concept of neoliberal spatial and temporal caging. The spiritual caging simply means how religiosity is used to create a space
through which profit is extracted from the laborer. One example of this performance of religiousness are the weekend fundraising trips.

It is hard to get a quality grasp of exactly what occurs on these fundraising trips but through tax documents we can see that LCO raised $5 million of fundraising in 2017 and $8 million in 2018. The program also employed 224 people in that 2018 year. In addition to the tax documents, we also get a glimpse into the actual program through online reviews.

Before I begin to discuss reviews, I found online, I should address concerns towards the validity of these reviews. It would be naïve of me to not realize that it is true that these reviews are an open online forum, and anyone can sign up under a pseudonym and post antagonizing comments. However, there are notable aspects of these reviews that I feel must be discussed. Specifically, a couple patterns of complaints the dismissal of the negative reviews by believers in the program. I will not venture into the realm of truth in regard to these reviews. However, to ignore them entirely is to silence one of the few ways that those I believe are negatively impacted by this program can speak out against it. From the review site there are 9 5-star reviews, only one 4-star review, 2 3-star reviews and 22 1-star reviews. These 32 reviews amount to an average 2.26 stars. Two notable recent negative reviews are by Jeffrey T. who describes LCO as “nothing but a cult hiding behind religion and a money racket,” and Alicia H. in December 2019 who voiced similar concerns saying, “They hide behind Christianity to abuse and manipulate the people to do "fundraising." They brainwash and mentally abuse people. They withhold medications for people diagnosed with mental illness.” One aspect of this review that is substantiated by the program itself is how they withhold medication. The homepage of LCO

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19 Propublica, Life Changers Outreach, 2018,
20 https://www.sitejabber.com/reviews/lifechangers.com
21 https://www.sitejabber.com/reviews/lifechangers.com
22 Ibid.
does specifically state the program is a non-medical, non-psychiatric approach. We will discuss the implications of this fundamentalist attitude later.

LCO is not run directly within a prison but there are several connections to the penal system. Besides LCO being an avenue through which people can avoid jail, this program creates its own kind of caging that is spiritual, temporal, and spatial. As prison expansion boomed around the country politicians legislated policy that created new prisons to accommodate the growing number of inmates. These new prisons were often private and were created by CoreCivic, formerly known as the Corrections Corporation of America. Created in small towns these private prisons often helped ameliorate economic regression in towns that had lost industry. While the prison may have increased jobs in the population it also created a foothold in the community and ends up making more money off of the town rather than paying it back. Just like LifeChangers Outreach these work programs are seemingly optional. However, the choice is ostensibly made for the incarcerated as they are promised a higher likelihood of release if they work a job and many describe prison work as a needed break from monotony. While the incarcerated are not necessarily forced to work in these programs, they also do not necessarily have a choice in the matter if they look to get out of the penal system sooner. There is a dynamic of domination between the imprisoned and the imprisoning that leaves the imprisoned with little room for maneuvering and subsequently closes them in within this neo-liberal spatial and temporal caging.

In order to gain a full understanding of Life Changers Outreach, I had several phone conversations with intake directors from the program. During these conversations, I spoke to men and women who were in the midst of going through the program. Some of the discussion

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23 Guenther
involved general things about the program but at points we discussed more personal relationships with the program. There were times when it was clear that the interviewee was reading from a script. Pre-written text like the mission statement that reads, “To set the captive free from the bondage of addiction and bring healing to the communities we serve. To restore and raise God's people up into the five-fold ministry, so they may carry the Gospel into new areas.” However, straddling the mission statement that claimed to set the captive free was rhetoric emphasizing LCO’s focus on obedience towards the Apostles and God. This focus on subservience to the Apostles is rooted in the ‘contract work’ that makes up the bulk of the actual rehabilitation process. There is no information on this contract work so the entirety of my information on the subject comes from these interviews. In addition to the contract work, the members with whom I discussed also talked to me about daily activities, the Apostles, ‘secular’ vs. ‘religious’ rehab, fundraising, and the circumstances under which members arrive at LCO. While I was not able to talk directly to an Apostle, this interview process granted me a ton of information into LCO and gave me a significantly better sense of the inner workings of the program.

During the interviews some of my questions were answered while some were evaded by the interviewee. I do not see this as malicious but rather as a lack of critical thought into certain domains. For example, when I asked Hannah, the intake director at the Asheville, NC location, about the relationships between the Apostles and the members she pivoted to the mission statement. However, Hannah was able to tell me a little bit about the Apostles before we moved on to a different topic. First, the Apostles run the entirety of the Life Changers Operation. Apostle is a title given to a senior member of the LCO staff. Each LCO Apostle has also completed Teen Challenge, which has a mission statement of “Our mission is to provide teens & adults freedom from addiction and other life-controlling issues through Christ-centered
solutions.” This language of ‘life-controlling issues’ speaks to ideas of bondage and reiterates a very physical effect of addiction. This physicality of addiction is matched by the non-physical nature of god. However, in both LCO and Teen Challenge there is this rhetoric that the immaterial God can impact the individual physically. This hyperreal God is integral to contemporary American Christian Pentecostalism and while I was not able to discuss it directly, the way that the question dealing with the apostles led directly into the mission statement was telling in some ways.

Contracts –

The allusions made to this hyperreal god was clear throughout the interview process and revealed itself again in discussion around the contract work. The idea of a contract is predicated upon the idea of equal footing in the parties. However, in the case of LCO this equality is impossible because of the obedience that the very contracts themselves necessitate. This contradiction is not isolated within LCO and is proliferated throughout labor under capitalism. One contract in particular that spoke to this problematic dynamic was the rebellion contract. Meant for those who push back against authority, this contract was mentioned in each interview I had as one of the most difficult to complete. The difficulty in its completion is not that the scripture that is memorized is difficult to understand, but because this is the contract most frequently broken which requires the member to do it again. The intake directors I spoke to did not clarify the specific actions that a member would have to take to break a contract, but it was clear that the decision was one of the Apostles. The authority that this gives the Apostles over the members is enormous because completion of the program is a requirement for many of these
people to see their children again or regain their freedom, but it is also a requirement for the members to finish all nine contracts to graduate. This extreme power over a vulnerable population of individuals has the (likely) potential for exploitation.

If LCO was exploiting the labor of a vulnerable population then it would be during their weekend fundraising trips. These trips involve driving to Walmarts in the area surrounding the location and can sometimes require drives up to 10 hours. While this seems like a rigorous workload for an unpaid laborer, Cody, one of the intake directors with whom I spoke assured me that the program retaining its free status was dependent on the fundraising trips. However, the program also has a status of 501(c)3 tax exemption making it a non-profit organization. Despite this status, tax documents showed that LCO amassed over $5,000,000 in fundraising money in 2018 alone. None of this was taxed and instead the program grew. One intake director told me that the program has opened up eight new centers in the past six months alone. This growth does not necessarily mean that the labor is exploited. Cody justified these trips by telling me that a ‘secular’ rehab can cost up to $40,000 for a year. This distinction between secular and religious rehab made me question the entirety of the situation of drug rehabilitation. I immediately became far more skeptical than I already had been because I realized that this dichotomy of secular and religious rehabs was delineated by both the price and performances of the members. There is an extremely lucrative market in drug addiction treatment as the opioid crisis in America continues to rock millions of Americans. The National Institute of Health website speaks to this, “the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is $78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.” The binary decision that Cody presented me, secular vs religious rehab centers show how drug
rehabilitation is less about guaranteeing the member’s success and more about driving profit. However, LCO is about more than just raising funds to fatten the Apostle’s pockets, it is also about a performance of piety that is obedient to Christ and can lead to salvation.

Salvation, or deliverance from bondage and life-controlling issues is the core focus of LCO. However, the bondage stemming from substance abuse is matched by the bondage created by the criminal justice system in America and then reiterated through LCO. As discussed briefly above, LCO has a focus on the submission of their members. The system is not made to guarantee the success of its members but instead created to guarantee the success of the program.

As the members progress through the program, they are tasked with contracts to complete. There are nine contracts in total that members look to complete. The contract itself entails the member memorizing scripture that fit themes of the contract. Once completed, the member must be careful not to violate a contract or else they will have to redo it. The most common ones that are redone are rebellion, forgiveness and obedience. While it does seem that obedience and rebellion overlap, they are two distinct contracts with their own bible passages. The intake officers I spoke with over the phone were not sure what the exact distinction was between rebellion and obedience, but it was made clear that the contracts focused on enforcing the complete subservience of members to the program.

I believe these contracts deserve a more in-depth look because the entire premise of the idea is predicated on there being an even positioning between the two parties engaging in the contract. However, in the case of LCO, the members are not on an equal playing field to the other party. When described to me over the phone, the contract seemed to be an agreement.

24 Interview, Cody, 2/12/21
between the members and a Christian God. This piety is not direct. There is a hierarchical structure within LCO where sitting above the members is the Apostolic staff. The trained clergy, also called Apostles for short, operate LCO and are the top of the structure. Within this structure the Apostles have an ostensibly unchecked authority over the LCO members. This is because the members are often in LCO because of a court order. Leaving the program without completion is not an option for many members who are in the program in a last attempt to retain custody over their children or avoid time in a carceral institution. The role of the contract within the social relationships of the program extend beyond this point and demand a further investigation.

In the first section, I have argued that the Prison Industrial Complex is a net of institutions that houses a number of carceral institutions that are created with neoliberal schemas and are used as a means to financialize imprisonment under the guise of aid and rehabilitation. Tanya Rawal helped us draw connections between the American PIC and the imperialism that has hurt the “global south” in the past. I will continue to explore these connections but now through the lens of Cornel West’s idea of Constantinian Christianity. West’s idea speaks to the departure within Christianity away from the “prophetic” tradition when the state of the Roman empire adopted Christianity as a political tool. Constantine, Roman emperor and namesake of the idea, used Christianity not as a tool to help lift up marginalized populations but instead used it to further oppress them within the system. “The corruption of a faith fundamentally based on tolerance and compassion by the strong arm of imperial authoritarianism invested Christianity with an insidious schizophrenia with which it has been battling ever since.”25 This schizophrenia is the cooperative rise of unmitigated free-market and Christian fundamentalism. Throughout this section, I will argue how LCO operates under a Constantinian framework and how use of the

25 West, 148
term Stewardship and the role of ‘Contract Work’ are used to create a class of LCO members who are working to expand the very ideologies that suppress them. This trivial pursuit of freedom is replicated globally wherever imperialism and authoritarianism exist to oppress marginalized populations.

The American PIC is a prime example of this imperialism. Part of this imperialism is a laissez-faire/free-market fundamentalism that allows for political and social elites to create structures that exploit marginalized groups. For example, in the late 1990s when the CCA was trying to get a hold of Tennessee’s prison system, they faced pushback by the legislature. However, “In May 1997, after secret meetings with private prison executives, Kisber sponsored a bill to lease Tennessee’s prisons to CCA for a $100 million “franchise fee” (Friedmann 1998). At the time, the Tennessee legislature was facing a $100 million budget shortfall.” This is not a coincidence, rather a symptom of the financialization of democracy and the result of this oppressive matrix of free-market fundamentalism. Cornel West warns us of this free-market fundamentalism and oppressive financialization and specifically the connection it has to Christian fundamentalism and the rise of conservative evangelical Christianity. Evangelicalism in America is rooted in what T.M. Luhrmann describes as experiential Christianity or the rise of neo-Pentecostalism in the U.S. This “third wave” Protestant evangelical movement occurred during the explosion of mass media and the way this brand of Christianity is spread is very telling of that fact. For example, neo-Pentecostal churches like Life Changers employ their members to spread the gospel as opposed to the employees who are actually titled ‘Apostles.’ While in more traditional forms of Christianity the apostles would be the ones spreading the bible to the masses, however, in the mass mediated rise of evangelicalism, each individual has

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26 Guenther, 34
27 Luhrmann, 373
the ability to proselytize the masses. This concept of a direct and physical relationship to God (experientiality) and the rejection of modern sciences is indicative of Christian fundamentalism. LCO fits this as they advertise clearly on their homepage that they “offer a non-medical, non-psychiatric approach that focuses on inner-healing.” This claim may be here for liability’s sake, but it also reveals the religiously fundamental nature of the program.

Within the PIC we see market-fundamentalism operating through the financialization of prisons and individuals that are incarcerated. Faith based Christian programming within the system is often rooted in neo-Pentecostalism or Christian fundamentalism. Life Changers is situated at the praxis of these fundamentalist ideologies and the result is an authoritarian version of Christianity that contributes to the caging cycles of neoliberal rehabilitation that we saw in the first section. Cornel West speaks to this caging in a different way. West describes the schizophrenia (not the mental illness but cognitive dissonance) of Christian Americans when it comes to personal contradictions of freedom and religion. He speaks to a cognitive dissonance amongst evangelicals in America that both believe in American ideologies of freedom and democracy while supporting the imperialist aims of US diplomacy abroad. This contradiction exists domestically as well. Since the PIC is an American imperial project, Christians who support faith-based programs in collaboration with the PIC are essentially reinforcing the same structures that limit freedoms. LCO operates under this exact contradiction. The members who are laboring for the apostles are attempting to escape the cycles of oppression that placed them in the situation in the first place. For example, when I was talking to Travis, an intake officer at LCO’s Pigeon Forge, Tennessee location, he told me that the biggest issue for most people with addiction at LCO is their environment. However, the ability to be mobile enough to change your

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28 LCO homepage
living conditions requires a substantial amount of money at one’s disposal. LCO does not compensate their employees in any way making mobility post-graduation from the program difficult. Runions tells us about the immobility created through this contradiction of self-interested-yet-indebted within faith-based prison programs, and while LCO is not a prison, it operates under the same carceral framework.

LCO claims to help its members escape bondage of substance abuse but instead further entrenches them through this immobility. This contradiction is exactly the kind of schizophrenia or cognitive dissonance seen in American evangelical Christianity today. “Most American Constantinian Christians are unaware of their imperialistic identity because they do not see the parallel between the Roman empire that put Jesus to death and the American government they celebrate.”29 Within a program like LCO, the apostles are the ones who preach the gospel to the members. These are the same apostles who benefit from the obfuscation of their own moral debt. “I have no doubt that most of these American Constantinian Christians are sincere in their faith and pious in their actions. But they are relatively ignorant of the role they play in sponsoring American imperial ends.”30 I use LCO to build upon West’s analysis here. The hierarchy of LCO reveals that this ignorance is imposed by a dominant group, like the Apostles, to essentially convert members into willful servants or as the members describe themselves, as stewards.

Stewardship was not something I was familiar with before this project but throughout my interviews with LCO members and research this concept of stewardship, “an obligation to tend to God’s kingdom,”31 became an integral part of my analysis. This is because stewardship, evangelical Christianity, and neoliberalism go hand in hand in our modern religio-social

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29 West, 150
30 Ibid.
31 Tuttle, 14
landscape. Joshua Tuttle argues “that the American Protestants have used stewardship to transform people into obedient economic subjects who pursue hard work, prosperity, entrepreneurship, and liberal charity in capitalist markets. I show how Evangelical Protestants have used stewardship to missionize America and create new stewards of God.”

Tuttle describes how neo-Pentecostal evangelism is the theologically backed spread of neoliberalism. The collaboration between free-market and religious fundamentalism is integral to Tuttle’s argument. He uses Max Weber and the protestant work ethic to articulate his point, “this resonance transformed European and American Protestants into acquisitive and frugal subjects who pursued capital as evidence of their salvation. Weber argued that the beliefs and practices of Protestant capitalists were eventually secularized and imbedded in the laws and administrations of modern states. He maintained that the secularization of ascetic Protestantism as law resembled an “iron cage” that American and European populations could not escape.”

This financialization of subjects, embedded into the legal system, and resulting in a “caging” is a fundamental aspect of the neoliberal structures under which the PIC and runoff programs (LCO) operate. The use of the word “secularization” here insinuates that the prioritization of economic interests was imbued into protestant Christianity. Without diving into the complex history of Protestant Christianity, I argue that this secularization is selectively applied in neo-liberal way by evangelical Christians. What I mean by this is that salvation is enacted only in capital’s best interest. However, capital is not a person, rather it is a social relation between the dominant and oppressed groups. We can see this relationship through the hierarchies and the ways that salvation is dispensed selectively by the Apostolic staff. This relationship, which is supposed to

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32 Ibid., 14-15
33 Ibid., 8
be a direct one between God and an individual, is interrupted by this relationship of dominance. In this way ‘stewardship’ is the action through which neoliberalism is spread.

Another term that I heard often during my interviews was this idea of ‘contract work.’ Contracts were described to me as the religious version of a secular 12 step program. As the members progress through the program, they are tasked with contracts to complete. There are nine contracts in total that members look to complete. The contract itself entails the member memorizing scripture that fit themes of the contract. Once completed, the member must be careful not to violate a contract or else they will have to redo it. The most common ones that are redone are rebellion, forgiveness and obedience. The intake officers I spoke with over the phone were not sure what the exact distinction was between rebellion and obedience, but it was made clear that the contracts focused on enforcing the complete subservience of members to the apostles and the program. These contracts are another marker through which salvation is determined. This contract work has a goal of providing an opportunity for accountability for the members but operates in the same way the prison-bed or the compensated man-day are the parameters through which the capitalists extract wealth from the laborers. Because the contracts are biblical scriptures, they are metaphorically a religiously oriented prison-bed. Additionally, these contracts presuppose some sort of mutual agreement between the two sides, but as we have seen there is little equity.

Here I would like to return to a question I posed at the beginning of this work, can there be rehabilitation within a neoliberal structure that seems to entrench and cage marginalized populations within these cycles? To help us answer this question I will return to Cody from Beckley’s point on secular vs religious rehab programs. This binary of program choices essentializes my point. The neoliberal nature of the overarching PIC structure creates a situation
where privilege grants you access to rehabilitation. People of wealth are able to escape the caging nature of the system because they can purchase their own salvation. However, those without the money for a secular program are essentially sentenced to work for 12 months within this program that promises salvation, but only if you can fulfill the requirements set up by the very people who extract wealth from the labor. And even upon completion of this program mobility is extremely difficult if not impossible. The PIC structure, and caging effects of it, are only amplified through religious language. The aggressive market fundamentalism and unchecked Christian fundamentalism create a situation of total dominance over LCO members.

During my research of the group, I found many online reviews accosting LCO’s practices, many of them echoing concerns you can see in fig. 1 below. While we cannot place 100% faith in the validity of these claims, we can cross-reference this alleged experience with some of the things we have analyzed above. The phrase “they hide behind Christianity to abuse and manipulate the people to do ‘fundraising’” is essentially that neoliberalism disguises the extraction of wealth with rehabilitation through salvation. The note about fundraising and the withholding of medication encapsulates how the intersection between Christian and free-market fundamentalism creates authoritarian systems. “They brainwash and mentally abuse people.” Is the obfuscation and reorientation of the Apostles’ moral debt as an obligation by the members to the program. However, saying that the FBI needs to investigate is ironic as the FBI and the rest of the American government operates under the imperial structures that created the PIC and LCO. Rawal showed us how American imperialism abroad creates the same discursive southern trope for marginalized communities in the U.S. However, because the spaces are articulated by the imperialists, the ability to speak to and break free from this oppression is severely limited. This limitation is because mass mediated rise in Christian and free-market fundamentalism
operates intrinsically throughout labor. And as we know from Weber and the protestant work ethic, labor systems in America is salvation, capital is validity. However, surplus capital that could result in mobility is usurped by the capitalists and labor is exploited. This situation exists in many labor markets beyond the Prison industry.

Corporate profiteering and the extraction of surplus-value makes rehabilitation extremely difficult in a program where labor determines salvation. This system hurts more than helps marginalized populations but is portrayed as a net positive by those the system serves. Neoliberal capitalist structures enact religious language often to perpetuate and justify this exploitation. As we have seen through Cornel West, Christianity can be employed in both prophetic and Constantinian ways and I think there is no doubt that the modern brand of evangelicalism in America is more often Constantinian than Prophetic. This movement limits the freedoms of marginalized populations and can only be thwarted through an articulation within the space that is set up by the capitalists. While this may seem difficult, liberation theologians have created anti-imperialist, yet deeply religious ideologies through which we can begin to break down these systems. These systems disproportionately impact marginalized communities and further entrench them within cycles of immobility. However, the neoliberal structures that I have observed effect all individuals, just is a spectrum of ways.
Conclusion –

I struggled for a long time to come up with a concluding section that could neatly wrap this thesis up in a way that was powerful but actionable while presenting opportunities for further research on the topic. But as I sat, trying to think about what exactly I wanted to speak to, I realized that I had been staring at my conclusion all along.

When doing research, I would often take a look at people’s public Facebook profiles who were interacting with the LCO posts. I am not sure whether they were members or just fans of the group but more often than not it would make me deeply emotional as these people have often turned towards the comfort of Religion to help cope with deep trauma and loss, and they display posts that reflect that on their homepages. Many of their pages are filled with posts grieving over the death of a loved one or posting images that carry an enormous emotional weight. I would sometimes be overcome with emotion while looking at their pages, not out of pity for the individual themselves because we all inevitably deal with grief and trauma and we do it in our own ways, but because when you look at these posts you can feel how they carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Capitalists like Juanell and Mark Gallo take advantage of these systems of belief to exploit these individuals as easily accessed populations for unpaid labor.

As I lay this project to rest, I reflect on the past year and how it has oriented this thesis. The issues I have in my life are paled in comparison to the collective grief and trauma the world has felt and is still feeling from the Covid-19 pandemic. Looking at these Facebook profiles that are filled with posts of condolences and images of lost loved ones has made me realize how lucky I am to have the people around me that I do.

While LCO may use Christianity as a facade ideology as a guise for business pursuits the way that it impacts people is very much real. The affective nature of LCO’s religious
performance is part of why it is such a successful business model. The emotionally charged messages and language are used to attract people who are most vulnerable to the predatory nature of the carceral system. While this project was at times difficult to endure due to the emotional stress it caused, I am extremely thankful that I was able to learn about something like this and hope others can build on these ideas in the future so this area can be more deeply explored.
Bibliography –


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