

# The Forgotten Woman

Jewish and Christian Ladies Are United in Sponsorship of a Project of Rehabilitation at Atlanta's City Prison Farm

by ANNA SCHANCHE

*Secretary, Prison Committee of Atlanta Council of Church Women and Atlanta B'nai B'rith Women*

During the war years, the Atlanta Council of Church Women was introduced to the challenging task of rehabilitating delinquent white women at the City Prison Farm.

In October, 1946, this group was joined by the B'nai B'rith women of Atlanta and thus an interdenominational and inter-religious project promotes a weekly program of music, crafts, devotionals and friendly counseling amongst a group of so-called "forgotten women."

One objective of this joint program is to cooperate with all the organized groups or agencies in our city to a better utilization of the facilities now available through the 89 social agencies serving through the Community Chest of Atlanta. Delinquent women, upon release from short-term sentences have no place to turn for help in spite of all these agencies with the exception of the Salvation Army Home, where they may stay for three days if room is available.

Rehabilitation is a task that involves at times the remaking of a whole personality: body, mind, and spirit. Churchwomen know the intrinsic value of a human soul as well as the temporal needs. The program therefore is diversified to include those needs.

Music is the universal language. It always creates a healthy response of emotional outlet in all our programs. The finest talent in piano, violin, accordion, marimba, clarinet, plus fine vocal renditions have met with the fullest applause and appreciation. Always the women love to sing the old familiar hymns and songs. These often take the form of duets and trios of their own making.

Crafts of a large variety have been introduced. These consist of simple sewing, crocheting, weaving, knitting, bead and costume jewelry making, et cetera. Specialists have presented lessons in millinery, corsage making, and dyeing of materials. Often professional men and women give lectures on hygiene, dental care, and advise as to psychiatric help available to all.

When requested and where possible and



ABOVE—Board members of the Prison Project: (left to right) Mrs. Jerome M. Levy, Mrs. Carl Schanche, Mrs. Joseph Pintchuck, Mrs. Benjamin M. Brodie, Mrs. Robert Lavine, Mrs. L. L. Austin, Mrs. Paul Weir. BELOW—members of the visitation committee and the women of the prison join hands in a communion moment of prayer.

expedient, a practical liaison service is rendered between the inmate and her home. Ages of inmates vary from 17 to 70 years, and the number attending our programs is usually between 25 and 60. On several occasions job placements have been effected and are being successfully retained.

The weekly programs stimulate a natural and friendly feeling by contacts with religious women who believe there is hope for all, and who are motivated by a firm conviction that unlimited spiritual resources can be translated into everyday living through faith plus works. The desire for a wholesome, well-balanced life is created or encouraged. Ways of achieving this more abundant life are considered as opportunities present themselves.

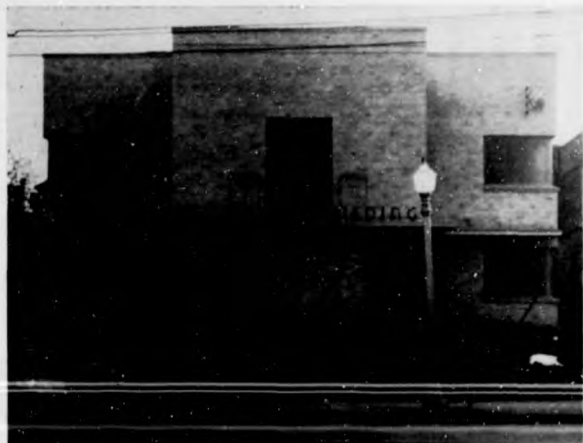
A period of friendly personal visits accompanies the refreshments served to all

by the prison matron. This is in many cases the only opportunity many underprivileged and unfortunate women have ever had to secure real religious friendship and counsel.

Religiously motivated women believe also that, ultimately, all true rehabilitation must begin "within" the individual's inner self, not from "without." The desire for right living must be created and must motivate rehabilitation. Hence, the integral part of our program is the closing devotional service which appeals to the spiritual need. Capable and interested women from all the city churches and synagogues bring inspirational messages of hope, happiness and spiritual guidance.

The great and stimulating effect of this interdenominational and inter-religious project demonstrates the power of a uni-

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### The Forgotten Woman

versal sisterhood of women under the guidance of a loving Heavenly Father in leading delinquent women to a new concept of life, of hope, security and happiness, both physical and spiritual.

In the course of a year, evidence points to a degree of successful rehabilitation in some individuals who are again assimilated into society as useful citizens. Dozens of letters of gratitude have been received. The following are excerpts from a few showing appreciation for help received:

"Dear Mrs. L.:

*I would like to show my appreciation for all you have done for me while I have been here. I have enjoyed every minute of your visits. God bless all of you.*

Sincerely, H. S."

"Dear Mrs. L.:

*Received the hose OK. They were really appreciated. I am going to miss you all terribly. May God protect and help you in all your good work.*

L. S."

"Dear Mrs. S.:

*Now that I am away from that awful place some people call City Prison, I have recaptured a certain percentage of pride and feel like that was only a bad dream. You can't imagine how hard and despondent I was when I went there, but I gradually had a heart to heart talk with myself and said: "Hey, you! There are two sides to this thing and you are on the wrong side!" I am thankful I chose the right side of the way. I would like to say again how*

*really nice I think you ladies are . . . I am keeping my nose clean. . . .*

*A devoted friend, C. R."*

Through the medium of a "Suggestion Box" our group weekly answers the needs of many women for clothing, shoes, underwear, hose, reading matter, Bibles, et cetera. Also, through the efforts of the joint group, the Carnegie Library of Atlanta has opened a small branch at the City Prison Farm.

Recently, the Central Committee of our Prison Work met the Atlanta Chief of Police in conference, to make the following recommendations:

#### 1. WOMEN'S BUREAU

a. Woman psychiatric social worker, with rank of Captain, as the head. (Suggested hours: 8 to 4).

b. Woman with legal training and experience, with rank of Lieutenant, to serve as first assistant. (Suggested hours: 4 to 12).

c. Woman with social service qualifications and experience, with rank of Sergeant, to serve as second assistant. She could handle individual case histories. (Hours: 12 to 8).

d. Police Women would serve under these three and each woman offender interviewed after arrest and before trial, for entire case history.

In the event of a first (caught) offender, probation is suggested or opportunity to pay fine on installment plan.

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Mrs. J. Pinchuck, President, Atlanta B'nai B'rith Women

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right it seemed to see the Menorah lights and the Christmas candles burning side by side. It was equally natural, after the program, during the course of the tea, for the women of varying backgrounds to exchange experiences.

Two other such programs occurred during the rest of the year. One was held during Brotherhood Week, at which a priest, minister, rabbi trio discussed the distinctive qualities of the three major faiths and the things all held in common. Another was held during the Easter-Passover season, with a musical pageant similar to the first program. All were followed by a social hour.

Between these formerly strange groups had arisen a bond of understanding and friendship which made the Juniors realize, even more than when they started, that the whole world seeks to know and to be known. The results of this project were not outstandingly obvious. There was not evidence enough nor data enough to make charts and record opinions. There was however, at the last meeting, a motion made and carried to hold a joint recreational day in the country. The community sing, supper, and sports events, gave added relish to a day pronounced "swell" by those who were there.

Perhaps the most outstanding result of the entire program was the effort made by all participants to appreciate and understand each other. They found the desire for understanding to be father to the actuality. They found a little effort to be rich in rewards of friendship. They found that personal participation in these programs had made them all more friendly toward other people. They found it takes time and planning to make any program work. . . . but . . . if you ask them. . . they would be willing to do it all over again this year.

### Forgotten Women

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In case the girl is sentenced, it is suggested that first offenders be segregated from "repeaters" and immediate plans begun for rehabilitation upon release — re: place to stay, clothes, job, medical care, et cetera.

"Repeaters" might have indeterminate sentences until their problems can be solved — or, at least studied.

2. No one released from the City Prison Farm in the middle of the night upon payment of fine — or, on week-ends unless they have a home to go to.

3. Medical treatment for alcoholics.

It is the sincere hope and desire of this inter-religious group that a coordinated organization will continue to grow into an effectual rehabilitation of the delinquent women and into a constructive program for the prevention of delinquency in our city.



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