colonial Australia and continue to spring up in various sites of incarceration within Australia and at its borders; a system that seems intentionally designed to continue the colonial legacy.

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There is a unique kind of knowledge that emerges at the margins of society, among those who come face-to-face with these kinds of systems. We are not only subjected to their violence, we are forced to understand how these structures function in order if we are to resist them.

This project is an attempt to make a bridge to understand how this colonial system and mentality has created different forms of violence that are interconnected and uphold one another. In the face of such vast historical structures of violence that continue to replicate, sharing knowledge and perspectives in order to strengthen our resistance is an important political act. Such an interconnection of marginalised insight is an effective way to challenge power structures.

Collective resistance begins when oppressed people recognise that their struggles are structurally connected. Sharing knowledge and narratives forms a common ground for dialogue and understanding and that becomes a platform for collective consciousness. Identifying, analysing and building solidarity among those who have, in different ways and in different places, experienced these systems of violence greatly strengthens our collective resistance. Oppressed bodies connect to empower each other, because together these experiences and stories are all pieces of a larger puzzle. In this context, solidarity is not empathy alone but transformed to a political act. Resistance knowledge is both epistemic and political: it is the recognition that surviving oppression is inseparable from understanding it, and understanding it is inseparable from connecting with others who face it.

One sunny day in the Manus Island prison camp, a giant officer spoke into his walkie-talkie, uttering a series of codes. A group of guards quickly stormed the compound, seizing a detainee and throwing him to the ground. They handcuffed and beat him before carrying his broken body into a vehicle and finally to solitary confinement.

All this violence unfolded in front of the other detainees and the cameras that were installed everywhere to maintain total control. It was a fairly typical scene, but just one of the many other forms of brutality that we encountered, from the medical neglect that often led to death to less visible forms of violence.

During the years I spent on Manus I also heard or read similar stories about the treatment of Indigenous populations incarcerated in Australia. Despite our different histories and our remoteness from each other, I recognised details in the accounts of their imprisonment that were reflected in my own experiences. Thus a picture began to form in my mind of the two sites of detention as connected – as two pieces of a larger puzzle. Not only were we being punished by the same system; the way we were and the methods used were so often strikingly similar.

Since then my journey has been to try to understand the origins and nature of that system and the deep structures that connect Manus and the many other sites of incarceration that operate within and outside Australia.

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In 2024 I travelled to North Queensland with Vernon Ah Kee and Hoda Afshar to make a collaborative work responding to the crisis of youth incarceration in Australia.

We spoke to many indigenous youths and youth workers about life inside the prison facilities and the effects of incarceration. They described the

complex corridors or concrete rooms and the cold processes and paperwork that entangle them in a twisted, mechanised labyrinth that leads nowhere. They described a sophisticated system of surveillance and the absurd structures that operate as tools of psychological torture designed to humiliate and disorient. They described a system that I could recognise.

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On Manus Island, there is a native bird called Chauka that would appear in the trees and fly above us in the prison camp, singing its melody loudly. This bird is highly respected and celebrated by the Indigenous Manutians as a symbol of cultural identity, custom, and beauty. It appears on the official flag of Manus Island and the sacred bird's song is one with the voice of the Manusian people.

There was a solitary confinement unit within the Manus prison camp that Australian immigration authorities called 'Chauka' too. Any detainee who refused to follow the rules was banished there. I was sent there twice.

For us as detainees, hearing and seeing the Chauka bird was a gentle blessing and a kind of escape. The sounds of Chauka birds and other natural elements became companions to us. Observing birds created a sense of shared existence beyond surveillance and helped preserve our sanity and dignity. Naming a place of torture after Chauka was a deliberate effort to break that fragile bond between detainees and the bird, and to alienate those Manusians who were affiliated with or worked within the prison camp.

In North Queensland I learnt that the units in one youth detention facility that we visited had names such as Lorikeet, Magpie, Brologa, Kingfisher and Jacana. This was just one of the many similarities that I observed between the ways that these facilities operated. Such similarities are not superficial or accidental either. These prison facilities employ the same logic, and they learn from each other.

One of their weapons is to make what is everyday and familiar carry a sense of fear by remaking its associations, whether it is the name of a bird or its song or colour-words which become codewords for emergencies. It is a strategy designed to erase memory and to target the psychological structure of belonging – just one part of an elaborate and sophisticated system that seeks to reshape meaning and identity through explicit and implicit forms of violence; a system that projects total control and the existence of a position from which all of this makes sense, but within which, those who are subjected to it are refused comprehension, leading to the internalisation of hopelessness.

Under these conditions, detainees begin to experience deteriorating mental health and loss of identity. Their sense of self is destroyed. And as I experienced myself in detention, the shadow of death always hovers. Whenever a detainee died from physical violence, suicide or medical neglect, a quiet fear would spread among those of us who remained and we would think: Will I be next?

Even release from prison brings no reprieve, for the system breeds a vicious cycle. One of the children I met in North Queensland told me that on the day of her release from prison, a guard put his hand on her shoulder and said: "You will be back." From warning letters and phone calls to constant checks, the shadow of the law follows released detainees everywhere. Thus the experience of imprisonment and internalised violence is continued through harassment by a system that maintains detainees' precarity and puts the most vulnerable in society at the greatest risk.

None of which is accidental, for this vicious cycle is simply the logic of a system reproduces itself in a pattern of violence that involves incarceration, displacement and family separation; a system whose roots lie deep in the history and psyche of