stories that weren’t being told.”

Their new book certainly tells many of their stories - either first-hand accounts of personal experience, or through the experience of those who work in all areas of the system. Described by the respected film maker and criminologist Roger Grae as, “A precious gift to justice professionals and those experiencing the justice system,” the book is a compendium of stories, opinions, and commentary, covering just about every possible criminal justice circumstance. Published with the support of the Monument Trust it is an extremely informative and deeply insightful piece of work with the potential, in my view, to have a widespread positive impact across the whole of the prison system. I asked Gerard about his book, The Good Prison. “People thought that was quite a controversial title,” he says. “How can prisons ever be good? But my experience of meeting a lot of people in prison or who work in prison is that there are lots of good things going on. Even if they are not what we want them to be, we will have prisons for a very long time and we need to make them good places, where people can have hope and purpose and the staff can feel they are valued.”

**Why help prisoners?**
That’s the challenge, I say, for any civilised society. Why should we help people who have hurt us? Law abiding citizens often baulk at the idea of giving prisoners anything that looks like a treat or a perk. Why should they care about what happens to them in prison? “There are two answers to that. First, obviously you want people to come out and not re-offend, so we all have an interest in that. But some people are not coming out soon. Others might take a different view, but I do think society, any society feels that people who do something wrong, who hurt other people, should make amends for what they have done. I do believe that. But I think there are lots of ways of doing that without over-use of imprisonment. I’m a strong advocate of restorative justice for example.”

But prison doesn’t really allow people to make amends does it? Just being banged up with little purpose other than to ‘do time’. That’s hardly making amends. “No,” says Gerard, “but it could. In all our work, that is what we have been interested in. Its easy to criticise, its harder to say, there are many different angles.” How many of the contributions are from serving or former prisoners? “About a third,” says Gerard. “Their voices are equal-ly important and we wanted to high-light some of the lesser known initi-atives that are going on in prisons. Like the Orpheous project for exam-ple, where young disabled people go into prisons and make music with prisoners. And the Shakespeare plays set in a women’s prison.”

**Parenting is not for Cowards**
Rob Parsons, The sixty second father
“2017 is my twentieth year working with prisoners, the last ten of which have increasingly been about working with those who become isolated, stigmatised, and socially disadvantaged: the children and families of prisoners. The mes-sage that was most clear is to slowly but surely make all depart-ments and aspects of the prison recognise the benefits of sup-porting and becoming involved in family intervention work.”
Corin Morgan-Armstrong

**Big piece of work**
There are over fifty essays in the book. By any measure it is a remarkable achievement. How did they go about finding their contributors? “We put out a call in October 2016,” explains Paul. “It was a big piece of work, much bigger than we anticipated. The call went out to organisations that are part of the Monument Fellowship, each had its own data base with lots of contacts, and we had a tremendous response. I was very keen to have different ways of expressing the voyage of self-discovery through art and through poetry. As one person commented, we had a complete festival of contributions looking at the whole subject from many different angles. Many of the contributions are from serving or former prisoners? “About a third,” says Gerard. “Their voices are equal-ly important and we wanted to high-light some of the lesser known initi-atives that are going on in prisons. Like the Orpheous project for exam-ple, where young disabled people go into prisons and make music with prisoners. And the Shakespeare plays set in a women’s prison.”

**Optical training labs in prisons**
Tanjit Dosanjh is an optometrist. He was encouraged by news of an optical programme in California prisons where one optical lab in 1989 had grown to five labs manufacturing 400,000 spectacles for state health insurance companies. Inspired Tanjit set out to turn his own vision into reality. By 2015 Tanjit had secured start-up funding to finance an optical training lab in Maidstone. The grants came from the Monument Trust, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Triangle Trust. So how does a contributing prison view this initiative? Rosemary is a prison officer and Trustee: “The opportuni-ties offered by Tanjit are worth their weight in gold. The right prisoners who value a second chance will become hard-work-ing and loyal employees.”

**Feel good factor**
What do they hope the impact of the book will be for people who work in our prisons? The prison officer, or the prison governor who reads it for instance, how do they want him or her to react? Gerard replies. “Feel good about yourself. Feel enthusiastic about what you are doing, both in the job and over and above the job, and don’t be afraid to do new things that other people are doing. Be different, be free. If you could just take a couple of ideas from the book, that would make all the difference.”

---

**Parole Board Hearing?**
IPP, Lifer, Standard, Licence Recalls.
Independent Adjudication?
Sentence Wrongly Calculated?
Oral Hearing? - Tariff Reduction?
Appeal against Sentence or Conviction?
Second Appeal through the CCRC?

The above issues are still covered under Legal Aid! So if you need help get it from dedicated London based Prison Lawyers, helping prisoners fight for their rights throughout England and Wales.

Write To: Prison Law Dept, Office 226, 4 Spring Road, Ealing, London W5 2AA
Tel: 020 8123 3404
Email: info@mkslaw.co.uk
www.mkslaw.co.uk

**MKS Law, Criminal Law Solicitors**
ADJUDICATION & PAROLE SPECIALISTS