Purdon/Mundis

Golden Venture: The Eagle (WIP)



<https://www.mocanyc.org/collections/stories/fold-golden-venture-paper-sculptures-2017/>

(Warning/Introductions)

Attention (Trigger Warning) : Before we begin, we’d like to warn you that this episode covers sensitive topics like harsh prison conditions and mistreatment of detained immigrants.

*Series intro music fades in after the credits*

Shane: Our scene opens upon a constructed Eagle, it stands alert with wings bowed as if it is ready to take off, its white feathered head a smooth papier mache tipped with a bright yellow beak with black beads for eyes, a bird of freedom, a bald eagle. This is a freedom eagle, a sculpture constructed meticulously by a Golden Venture passenger, yet sadly, and as we will be discussing that passenger would be thrown into prison, yearning for freedom behind bars for four years among several hundred others.

[Series Introduction music]

(Both): Welcome to another episode of Golden Dreams, I’m Sara, and I’m Shane.

Shane: In this episode, we will be discussing the conditions of the passengers of the *Golden Venture* experienced during their 4-year battle for freedom regarding prisons and general detainment

Sara: We will learn about the differences in treatment between certain prisons, and the accounts of three involved figures. As well as the reforms made by the government.

(Transition Music to Treatment of refugees in Detainment)

(Music here)

Sara: As we look into the Golden Venture and the struggles that the passengers went through, The Immigration and Naturalization Service (also known as INS) had detained the passengers not long after their arrival. The passengers sent all over the country with some being kept in New York City, and the women were sent down to Louisiana, and some were kept as far away as California.

154 of the Passengers aboard the *Golden Venture* were sent to the prisons in York County, Pennsylvania. Joan Maruskin is the founder of the People of the Golden Vision and currently a Program Administrator Religious Service Program at the Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program in York, she spoke about her experiences at the time, Prison Reforms and Detainees, became her passion. She even spoke to me about her experiences with the refugees in York PA.

Joan: “Among the asylum seekers… they were the first asylum seekers ever detained in the United States, because, prior to that landing, uh, asylum seekers had been given papers to be free and work and seek asylum.

Shane: This must have been the first time that immigrants were brought to the York County Prison right?

Sara: No, in my interview, Joan talked about York’s long history with immigrant detention.

Joan: So they were sent to the York County Prison which had unknowing… without the community really realizing it, then holding immigrant detainees since the ’50s and I believe that the men being brought to the York County prison was divine serendipity. Because, at that point in time I do believe the York County Prison was the… most humane and kindest immigration detention center anywhere in the country.

Sara: Another thing that Joan stressed in my interview was just how nice the guards and the warden at the York County Prison were.

Joan: “We learned that inside the prison, that one of our concerns became that there was a mixture, there were Christians and there were Buddhists and probably a couple of other types of religion, and one of the things that we learned and that was of concern to the inner faith group was that although they were Buddhists the only… religious services were for Christians and it took a fair bit of advocacy before the Buddhist monks were allowed into the prison. And that became a roots for a grassroots movement that in ten years, turned into a multi-faith religious services program for all immigration detention centers in the country, because of the concern here and the concern we saw in the other detention centers it grew and that now… any immigrant who entered the detention center had access to religious services of his or her faith. The detainees were treated quite kindly in the York County Prison, we did not get the complaints of mistreatment and abuse that was coming out of other detention centers and because detainees of this high profile, was a completely new event for the country in fact, this had never happened before, two things happened. First, we learned because of media that the men were in New Orleans, they were in Virginia, they were in Elizabeth New Jersey they were in Varick Street in New York which is a um… it's a detention center I think it was on the seventh floor of an apartment building and they never got to go outside and that they did not, they did not have good treatment, so a detention network began to form because of the men of the Golden Venture and the publicity about them…”

Sara: Another issue that the passengers faced at the York County Prison was the food in the prison. Joan had a lot to say about this in my interview with her.

Joan: “The prison sitatuon was one that was good uh as far as detention centers go the men of course complained about the food and that’s a problem for all detainees because, when they come to an American they get white bread and cheese and things that their stomachs could not… could not digest very well, so the food was maybe a bit of a problem

Sara: Another problem that Joan talked about in my interview was the passenger’s access to religious services inside of the prison.

Joan: The one thing that was of concern to us because the people of the Golden Vision was a faith-based group was that because uh... The uh prison had a Christian chaplain who was there, it was part of his job to basically he was working for a private Christian organization to uh, proselytize the detainees there were a number of Buddhists there and so we asked if the Buddhists could have their Monks come to visit them, at first that was denied but then after we advocated for quite a while they did permit that to happen and it, that was the beginning of relearned practice in prisons across the country.

Shane: Wow Joan had a lot to say about the prisoners in the York County Prison, but what about the other prisons around the country?

Sara: Joan did talk about the other detention centers in my interview with her.

“The Connections with the outside was good yknow… but I will say this that enabled us to connect with other detention centers around the country and thats where we saw the horrible prison conditions other detainees were in, they were treated badly, they were abused that lived in inhumane conditions, detainees that were housed in warehouses around the country, detainees that were mistreated by the guards and so that began a network of people interested in immigration detentiary as well as connected with the detainees in the Varick Street Prison in New York City and they had not, well there were some people there, had been there for seven years and had not seen the sunlight because it was inside an office building in Manhatten, um we also found the warehouses in New Jersey that housed the detainees, some of them were kept in Virginia in New Orleans, Louisiana in Oakdale Louisiana and uh it became a connection of seeing other detention centers what was happening how they were connecting and how they were building a network of people around the country that helped to build detention watch network that is now uh coers country and immigration in detention centers, thats kinda the history of it.”

Sara: Joan has a strong passion for immigration laws, especially in regarding the Golden Venture. She recalls how the impact of detention centers have been breaking families apart and the people of the Golden Venture had a huge impact on these conditions. Especially when it comes to the immigrants that were living in the detention centers. She stresses the importance of reforming family detention, which is tearing families of immigrants apart.

Shane: I know you had also gotten in contact with Harriet Miller Sara, what did she have to say?

Sara: She was the founder of the Friendship House, where immigrants were kept in comfort and safety. Unfortunately I was having technical issues but that didn’t stop me from getting the information that I needed, so I had to write down everything that she was talking to me about.

Sara: The friendship house continued its work even after the *Golden Venture*.

And I have to say, What was amazing about her stories was how the churches collected groceries and food for the refugees, while they were waiting for their doctors appointment. She laughed about how she took 2 men to their doctors appointments and claimed to be their mom, even though they wre in their 40’s one was from Africa and one from Asia.

At one point Harriet and her husband had 40 refugees living with them on their farm. She remembered how some were scared to step off the front porch of fear of what would happen to them. Yet once comfortable they made dinner as a way of showing their gratitude for their freedom. Their appreciation came from being stuck in detention centers and the horrible voyage.

Sara: I did look more into what refugees had been saying about the conditions while being on the Golden Venture. According to the York Daily Record, one refugee recalled how the conditions were horrible, with only a rice cooker for food, tainted water, and stuffed in the packed confines of the ship itself. Also, recalling how the ship had hit multiple storms, and there was screaming and crying that was heard throughout the ship. Once detained in the United States, they were still a far cry from being free. The detention centers provided them with the basic necessities, they were confined for years in limbo. And this is why advocates like Joan, Harriet, and Craig, who we will be hearing from later, became involved and helped change the process of refugees.

(Transitional Music)

Shane: Craig’s work was really critical to how Golden Venture unfolded with him having become a major connection point between most major protest groups and activism, while also representing a few clients himself and actively fighting against the otherwise debatable choices of the government. He told me about the art that the prisoners made. He said how the art began as something the prisoners did to pass the time, how they used all sorts of materials like paper and glue, paper mache, and even unconventional materials like folded legal papers and markers. It would be this artwork that would influence York Prison at least to see the refugees as human beings. Yet more important is what we discussed about the prison experience both internally and externally.

Shane: Craig talked about the massive changes the Clinton administration made in their response to the arrival of the *Golden Venture*.

Craig: “Um taken into custody there in New York many of them were given their release papers in New York CIty, um, and within twenty-four hours all of those release papers were taken back from them and given their detainment papers, in other words, it was literally this ship of Chinese where the Clinton administration changed the policy in a twenty-four hour period, uh, that has then gone forward, so they changed their mind because there was so much media attention because these guys landed in New York and it was all over the network news that it literally came out of the White House don’t let these guys go, lock them up. Well it, the York County prison is a prison, its not meant to be, or, at the time in 1993 when these Golden Venture passengers arrived, it was not meant to be a long-term immigration holding facility it is a country prison and it holds people who range from repeat drunk drivers, repeat shoplifters, up through people charged with murder, drug dealers, wife beaters, rapists the whole spectrum people are people and they’ve been committing crimes for thousands of years their all in the York County Prison. Um… York County Prison was built before these gentlemen arrived from China so that there would be extra capacity for the county to grow into it, as the county population grew, etc. And when these several hundred immigration detainees landed in the, what was then called the INS’s lap, they realized ‘Hey York has extra space, and we wanna lock these guys up to be a deterrent, let's throw them in the county prison’ so they were kept in jail cells umm… they were behind bars, um… they were given I believe at the time like maybe one hour a day out in the sunlight, um… the prison is divided up into sections which are called pods and they… the prison would try, but they were not always successful, to try and keep the Golden Venture passengers, separate, segregated from the other criminal uh… prisoners but it didn't always work out and uh, so these guys who were here saying ‘I’m being persecuted because I’m a Christian or persecuted because my family was involved in the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protest or the one-child policy protest’ were walking the prison hallways and in the dining facility with people charged with murder

Shane: One of the most shocking things Craig told me during our interview was that after the INS took the passengers into custody they initially gave them their release papers, but this quickly changed.

Shane: The York County Prison wasn’t originally built to be a detention facility for immigrants and Craig talked about some of the problems this caused.

Craig: Prior to the Golden Venture arriving in America what used to happen was that people would… arrive however they got here say I would like political asylum and they would be given a court date and release, the Clinton administration, President Clinton decided that… his administration believed that, that way of doing business was attracting more and more immigrants to come to America so they took a different approach and they decided that we will start taking people who were applying for political asylum and lock them in prison until their case is over with. But yeah but in contrast, not to put too rosy a picture on it we had about one hundred eighty-some odd of the Golden Venture passengers in York others were sent to other prisons… their experience was completely different, they were treated very poorly um… the women were sent down to a place called the Orleans Parish Prison um… which is basically run, at the time it was run as a for profit prison and treated very badly, horrible healthcare not allowed to go outside, demeaned, we had some in New York they ddint get outside for years. They were very sickly they had extreme emotional stress um... so what happened in York was an aberration it should not be mistaken for what happens to immigrant detainees nationwide I think York was a very special place because of what happened

Shane: “I absolutely agree in this case like I feel as though with what I’ve heard about the Golden Venture.

(Transition Music)

Shane: The prison guards even helped with creating the artwork. Craig talked about this in his interview.

Shane: Craig also talked briefly about how the experience of the Passengers in York was an exception of most to the passengers in other parts of the country.

Shane: The uncertain future of the passengers and their long time cut off from most of the world in prison led to some of the passengers giving up.

Shane: I had the pleasure of interviewing Craig Trebilcock, a former York County Judge who later became an Immigration Lawyer.

Sara: What did he do for the immigrants specifically?

Shane: The passengers were model prisoners while they were held inside of the York Prison and this fact helped to humanize them to the guards.

Sara: Did the artwork created by the passengers also help with the humanizing them in any way?

Shane: That’s absolutely the case Sara, and Craig actually talked about that in my interview with him.

Craig: What evolved over time was that these guys were absolutely model prisoners they didnt give the guards any problems at all they were polite they were respectful they were friendly um… and the guards evolved over time, I got to know the guards I was spending a lot of time at the prison and there was this incredible dynamic nobody expected, where the guards became friendly towards and even affectionate in a very positive and supportive way towards the Golden Venture passengers. You don't see that with traditional um… prisoners yknow, guys who are in or gals in there for criminal charges, if you're a prison guard you have to maintain a professional and personal detachment, um… and… part of that evolution um… manifested itself in the fact that these were very talented people from China and they began to create artwork that was um… seems ridiculous to say made out of toilet paper, Elmer's glue, and highlighters which sounds like a preschooler project and they made incredible pieces of art out of this, and began to give it to people as a way of expressing thanks um... appreciation and further I think just to keep themselves busy because when you're locked in jail time is your enemy to your mental health, well the lawyers the prison warden, the prison guards their supporters outside all saw this art and were quite frankly gobsmacked and it really humanized these passengers to all of us, they stopped being labels, they stopped being… quote-unquote “illegal Immigrants” they stopped being as they were often referred to as “Them Chinese” they stopped being uh… political asylum seekers, they became people one on one with dreams, hope, aspirations, fears and the art talked for them and even for the guys who could not speak English um… and… it was a remarkable evolution.

(Insert clip where Craig talks about the other prisons, this clip begins at 16:31 in the audio and ends at 17:34 in the episode audio)

Sara: Wow that’s shocking. I know that we’ll hear more about the women in the next episode of this series, but it's so shocking how different experiences of the passengers were between prisons.

Shane: Yeah, I’d definitely have to agree with Craig that the York County Prison really was the exception in terms of the treatment of the passengers.

Shane: The uncertain future of the passengers and their long time cut off from most of the world in prison led to some of the passengers giving up.

Shane: So, men were dealing with legal struggles to live in the United States, but were not getting full rights. The Golden Venture had shown an unwillingness to compromise that day, as laws were changed. Craig had stated “It took 24 hours for the refugees to lose their documents and receive their detainment papers” to deal with the refugees. While the ones that weren’t deported, were sent to Immigration and Naturalization Services, also known as INS and had remained in there for 3 and a half to four years, “After four years and a *New York Times* article condemning the example being made out of the passengers, Clinton pardoned the remaining fifty-three immigrants in detention, placing them on “humanitarian parole.”” (Museum of Chinese in America)

(Closing Remarks)

Shane: The issue with how asylum seekers are handled in regards to detainment is still an avid issue, only lessened a little by the events of Golden Venture and the reforms which it helped to create. The issues of immigration are complex and thus how Golden Venture ended is a bittersweet instance of the government trying to enact action towards an immensely complex issue.

Shane: That’s all the time we have for today, we hope you enjoyed this journey into the darker ends of detainment during the Golden Venture.

Craig: “I would agree while during the course of this interview, I’ve told a couple of heartwarming anecdotes about what happened in York there should be no mistake that prison is inherently dehumanizing it stripped these people of their freedom their dignity their ability to be with their families, they lived every day in fear of being deported back to a Communistic dictatorship where they would’ve been sent to a reeducation camp where the survival rate is very low these people were in terror for four years and the prison experience only contributed to that.

Sara: I wonder what the mental state of the passengers was like being in detention for nearly four years.

Shane: I was wondering about that as well, Craig talked about that in my interview with him.

Sara: As we have heard from Craig, Harriet, and Joan, these issues will most likely take time to resolve or even begin shifting to a more positive and sustainable way of handling refugees or undocumented immigrants. Yet we still can promote these changes, through activism and proper emphasis of the issue, we can promote local, state, and federal government action to make a better future for the refugees.

Sara: As we know, immigration laws are complex, the procedures are different for every immigrant. But in this case, it was the same. According to the York Daily Record, immigrants were asked for documentation that were either buried in China or didn’t exist.

Shane: Following the *Golden Venture* asylum cases, there have been many reforms in the handling and operation of prisons.

Sara: When I talked with Joan, she told me about the reforms that happened because of the *Golden Venture*. One which we discussed earlier was better access to religious services for non-Christian prisoners and detainees. Other changes here in York was the creation of the Friendship House which Joan ran with help from people such as Harriet Miller.

(Series theme music begins to play as the episode transitions into the credits)

Sara: This podcast is a production of the spring 2024 Podcasting the Past class at York College of Pennsylvania. This episode was written and edited by Shane Mundis and Sara Purdon.

Shane: This episode was peer-reviewed by Dr. Jacqueline Beatty, Benjamin Werkley, Jeffery Paris, Sydney Slack, Dalton Emig, and Alaina Crowell.

Sara: We would like to thank our interview guests Craig Trebilcock, Joan Maruskin, and Harriet Miller for taking the time with us. We would also like to thank Professor Jeffery Schiffman for his assistance with recording and editing the audio in this episode. Another group we would like to thank is the York Bar Association for helping us with primary source research for this episode. Lastly, we would like to thank WVYC for providing studio space for us to record our episode.

Shane: The music and sound effects used in this episode are courtesy of storyblocks.

Sara: for a full list of our sources see the show notes for our episode.

(Series theme music picks up for a few seconds and then slowly fades as the episode comes to an end.)

Music for outro theme needs to match the theme chosen by the class. In general, the episode is far too long–it’s nearly 70 minutes. This includes a lot of dead air, but also needs significant editing/tidying (see feedback throughout, and I imagine your peers will have suggestions. Take a listen to their episodes/review their transcripts to see how they manage clipping interviews.)

Music for the intro and outro needs to match the rest of the series. You also need to edit down your interview clips. You should look at how other groups are splicing their interviews with commentary from the group. You also need to make sure the audio is stereo (coming out of both sides of your headphones) not mono (only coming out of one side). This episode is also way too long and I think this length issue could be fixed by you guys just cutting down your interviews

I agree this episode was just all over the place for me. You have portions missing from your transcript, you did not have things in order, the interviews just felt random in comparison to the topic, and there needs to be editing here. You guys don’t use the correct music and there are a lot of parts you can edit out to reduce how long your episode is (which is over the maximum time of 60 minutes by almost 10 minutes)

Source List:

[Decades after Golden Venture, York County is an immigration detention hub (yorkdispatch.com)](https://www.yorkdispatch.com/story/news/politics/2019/04/26/decades-after-golden-venture-york-county-immigration-detention-hub/3586202002/)

[Watch: A look back at the Golden Venture saga in York, Pa. (ydr.com)](https://www.ydr.com/videos/news/history/2019/04/26/watch-look-back-golden-venture-saga-york-pa/3585519002/)

[**ICE detention center to leave York County Prison, taking $18.4M in revenue with it: reports - pennlive.com**](https://www.pennlive.com/news/2021/07/ice-detention-center-to-leave-york-county-prison-taking-184m-in-revenue-with-it-reports.html)

[**“Access to Justice”: The mantra of liberty for the Golden Venture (witnessingyork.com)**](https://www.witnessingyork.com/mapping-meaning/access-to-justice-the-mantra-of-liberty-for-the-golden-venture/)

[**A Path out of Purgatory | The New Yorker**](https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/a-path-out-of-purgatory)

[**Golden Venture immigration documentary (goldenventuremovie.com)**](https://www.goldenventuremovie.com/facts.htm#:~:text=The%20INS%20detained%20Golden%20Venture%20passengers%20in%20jails,parole.%20They%20were%20not%20given%20full%20legal%20status.)

[**Museum of Chinese in America -- Oral History Archive (mocanyc.org)**](https://ohms.mocanyc.org/interviews.php?ProjectName=Fold%3A+Golden+Venture+Paper+Sculptures+Oral+History+Project)

[**Golden Venture's Tarnished Hopes; Most of Ship's Human Cargo, a Year Later, Is Still Confined - The New York Times (nytimes.com)**](https://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/05/nyregion/golden-venture-s-tarnished-hopes-most-ship-s-human-cargo-year-later-still.html)

[**Golden Venture 20 years later today: Many lives remain in limbo (ydr.com)**](https://www.ydr.com/story/archives/2013/05/31/golden-venture-20-years-later-many-lives-remain/74873348/)

Notable Mentions:

Interview with Craig: “It took only 24 hours for the refugees to have their documents taken away and receive their detainment papers”

Interview with Joan

Interview With Harriet, talked about one child Policy, and abortions and they were all nice and just wanted a place to live and be free and safe with our families.