

For Immediate Release

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**Sing Sing's mysterious prisoner "Number 1500" would have cheered for the First Step Act.**

(Warwick, NY) In 1904, one year after his release from prison, a felon who used only the pen name Number 1500 wrote the book *Life in Sing Sing* (HVA Press, February 2019), a rare look at what it was like to serve time inside the legendary penitentiary. The author also presents his thoughts on effective methods of rehabilitation. He comments, "The attitude…toward convicts that belong to the recidivist class is to punish them severely and, having failed with hard measures, to try harder ones."

Now, over 100 years later, The First Step Act states the Attorney General must implement "a system that determines the recidivism risk of each prisoner," and that "all prisoners at each risk level have a meaningful opportunity to reduce their classification during the period of incarceration," which leads to more of the privileges and opportunities that Number 1500 champions in his book.

HVA Press believes they discovered who the anonymous author Number is. Based on the hints scattered throughout the book, he has been identified as the forger Henry Kirke White. Highly educated and articulate, *Publishers Weekly* said White "writes with considerable literary skill." White believed prisoners should have a chance to make a fresh start when released, and throughout *Life in Sing Sing*, he examines the various rehabilitation methods (and the lack of them) at the time. White also sets the example himself by launching a prison newspaper, *Star of Hope,* written entirely by convicts. *The New York Times* said of the Sing Sing periodical, “This production of jailbirds…is superior to half the papers in the United States….”

*Life In Sing Sing* remains an important reference for many. Even Jack London owned a copy, marked up with his annotations, and used it as a reference for his own work on prison life.

Over a century ago, Henry Kirke White said of the plight of the convicts, "What has the state done for them by sending them to prison? Reformed them? No. On the contrary, it has done much to make reform impossible." Perhaps his message is finally being answered.

For the background on how HVA Press was able to determine down Number 1500's real identity visit the book's press page: <http://www.hvapress.com/prkit?978-1-948697-03-3>

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