



The Forgotten Room: Inside a Public Alternative School for At-Risk Youth

Mary Hollowell

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Located in a rapidly-growing county in the southeastern United States, Peachtree Alternative School is a dumping ground for chronically disruptive students that regular teachers can no longer handle. The school has some of the toughest kids that society has to offer: kids who have dealt drugs, attempted rape, brought weapons to school, and made terrorist threats. Neglect, understaffing, and overcrowding create a volatile situation; Teachers survive threats, assaults, brawls, and rampages with their therapeutic philosophies barely intact. *The Forgotten Room* is a teacher survival story. It examines the darker side of American education through chronicling the course of Peachtree Alternative School's tenth and final year. It offers a glimmer of hope in the safe zones created by hardworking teachers, but it is also a cautionary tale about the consequences of bureaucrats neglecting troubled teens. Hollowell's multidisciplinary book provides a rare look at public alternative schooling in America. This gritty and compelling ethnography is part of a growing movement in academia to make ethnographic studies more accessible. It exposes punitive school policy, demonstrates the prison-industrial complex, and reveals school board corruption. In addition, it pinpoints quality teaching of chronically disruptive youth. As ethnographic nonfiction, *The Forgotten Room* breaks down the walls between social science and literature.

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