



## RACE, DEMOCRACY, AND A NEW RECONSTRUCTION

EDITED BY

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[Chapter 1]

### The Place of the Prison in the New Government of Poverty<sup>1</sup>

*Loïc Wacquant*

Grasping the changing roles of the penal state in the post-Fordist and post-Keynesian age requires a double rupture. One must first break out of the dominant paradigm of “crime and punishment,” incarnated by criminology and criminal law, which keeps us confined within a narrow law-enforcement perspective that cannot account for the rising punitiveness of the authorities inasmuch as it steadfastly ignores the extra-penological missions of the prison. A simple statistic suffices here to spotlight the glaring and growing disconnect between crime and incarceration in the United States: in 1975 the country locked up twenty-one inmates for every 1,000 serious crimes (homicide, rape, assault, robbery, theft, and car theft counted together); by 1999 this ratio had reached 106 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001, 528). Holding crime constant reveals that American society is *five times more punitive now* than it was a quarter of a century ago. But one must similarly sweep aside the oppositional tale of the “prison-industrial complex” elaborated by activists, journalists, and scholars mobilized against penal escalation, who variously misattribute America’s carceral boom to the global restructuring of capitalism, intensifying racism, and the frantic search for profit via prison building and the superexploitation of convict labor.

When we stop to think about it, we also realize that the label “War on Crime” is a misnomer on three grounds, rhetorical as well as substantive. First, wars are waged by the military against foreign enemies of the nation whereas confronting lawbreaking, however harshly, involves civilian agencies handling citizens and denizens who are protected by an array of rights and who, instead of being exiled or annihilated on capture, mingle

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back into society after their stint in penal custody. Second, the so-called war proclaimed by federal and local authorities was never waged on “crime” in general. It was targeted on certain categories of illegalities perpetrated in a definite sector of physical and social space: essentially street crime committed in the segregated lower-class districts of the American metropolis. Third, and most important, activating the fight against crime has been but the *pretext and springboard for a broader remaking of the perimeter and functions of the state*, which has entailed the concurrent and convergent “downsizing” of its welfare component and “upsizing” of its police, courts, and correctional wings.

### *The Triadic Institutional Nexus of the Prison*

Between 1975 and 2000, the carceral stock of the United States exploded from 380,000 to 2 million while the welfare rolls plummeted from 11 million to fewer than 5 million. To quadruple its inmate count between 1980 and 2000 and place some 6.5 million under criminal justice supervision (including parolees and probationers), the United States increased the combined budgets of federal, state, and local correctional administrations by 50 billion dollars and added half-a-million staff, making jails and prisons the country’s third largest employer in 1998, behind only Manpower Incorporated and Wal-Mart. Every year since 1985, the nation’s custodial expenditures have exceeded the monies allotted to both Food Stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC): in 1995, on the eve of “welfare reform,” the United States spent \$46 billion to operate its houses of detention against less than \$20 billion for AFDC (Gifford 2002, 8; Committee on Ways and Means 1997, 921). Yet, because public administrations could not expand fast enough to contain the ever-rising tide of convicts, the carceral boom led to the renaissance of private incarceration. In just a decade, for-profit operators captured 7 percent of the “market,” offering 120,000 extra beds in 1998, equal to the carceral populations of France, Italy, and Spain combined.

More than the specifics of statistical figures and trends, however, it is this deep-seated logic of this swing from the social to the penal that one must grasp here. Far from contradicting the neoliberal project of deregulation and decay of the public sector, the irresistible rise of the penal state in the United States constitutes, as it were, its negative—in the sense of obverse but also of revelator—since it manifests the implementation of

a policy of the *criminalization of poverty that is the indispensable complement to the imposition of precarious and underpaid wage labor* as civic obligation for those trapped at the bottom of the class and caste structure, as well as the redeployment of social-welfare programs in a restrictive and punitive sense that is concomitant with it. At the time of its institutionalization in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, “imprisonment was above all a method aiming at the control of deviant and dependent populations,” and inmates were mainly poor people and European immigrants recently arrived in the New World (Rothman 1971, 254–55). Nowadays, the carceral apparatus of the United States fills an analogous role with respect to those groups rendered superfluous or incongruous by the twofold restructuring of the wage labor relation and state charity: the declining fractions of the working class and poor blacks snared in the dilapidated core of formerly industrial cities. In so doing, the prison has regained a central place in the panoply of instruments for the government of poverty, at the crossroads of the deskilled labor market, the collapsing urban ghetto, and social-welfare services “reformed” with a view to buttressing the discipline of desocialized wage work.

#### 1. Prison and the Deskilled Labor Market

In the first place, the penal system contributes directly to *regulating the lower segments of the labor market*—and it does so in a manner more coercive and consequential than labor legislation, social insurance schemes, and other administrative rules, many of which do not cover insecure work anyway. Its effect on this front is threefold. First, the stupendous prevalence and escalation of penal sanctions helps to discipline the reticent fractions of the working class by raising the cost of strategies of resistance to desocialized wage labor via “exit” into the informal economy. Faced with aggressive policing, severe courts, and the likelihood of brutally long prison sentences for drug offenses and recidivism, many shrink from getting or staying involved in the illegal commerce of the street and submit instead to the dictate of insecure employment. For some of those coming out of “the pen,” the tight mesh of post-correctional supervision increases pressure to opt for the “straight” life anchored in work, when it is available (Nelson, Dees, and Allen 1999). On both counts, the criminal justice system acts in concordance with workfare to push its clientele onto the peripheral segments of the deskilled job market.

Second, the carceral apparatus helps to “fluidify” the low-wage sector

and artificially depresses the unemployment rate by forcibly subtracting millions of unskilled men from the labor force. It is estimated that penal confinement shaved two full percentage points off the U.S. jobless rate during the 1990s. Indeed, according to Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, when the differential between the incarceration level of the two zones is taken into account, the United States posted an unemployment rate higher than the average for the European Union during eighteen of the twenty years between 1974 and 1994, contrary to the view propagated by the adulators of neoliberalism and critics of "Eurosclerosis" (Western and Beckett 1999). While it is true that not all inmates would be in the labor force if free, that gap of 2 percent does not include the Keynesian stimulus provided by booming public expenditures and employment in corrections: the number of jail and prison jobs at the local, state, and federal level more than doubled over the past two decades, jumping from under 300,000 in 1982 to over 716,000 in 1999, when monthly payroll exceeded \$2.1 billion (Gifford 2002, 7).<sup>2</sup> Penal growth has also boosted employment in the private sector of carceral goods and services, a sector with a high rate of precarious jobs and turnover and that is rising along with the privatization of punishment (since the source of the "competitiveness" of correctional firms is the exceedingly low wages and meager benefits they give their staff).

Western and Beckett argue that carceral hypertrophy is a two-pronged, delayed mechanism with contradictory effects: while it embellishes the employment picture in the short run by amputating labor supply at the bottom of the occupational ladder, in the longer term it can only aggravate it by making millions more or less unemployable. In their view, "incarceration has lowered the U.S. unemployment rate, but . . . sustained low unemployment in the future will depend on continuing expansion of the penal system" (Western and Beckett 1999, 1031). But this overlooks a third impact of hyperincarceration on the labor market, which is to facilitate the development of sub-poverty jobs and the informal economy by continually (re)generating a large volume of marginal laborers who can be superexploited at will. Former inmates can hardly lay claim to better than degraded and degrading work because of their interrupted trajectories, distended social ties, ignominious judicial status, and the manifold legal restrictions and civil liabilities it carries. The half-million convicts streaming out of American prisons every year provide the vulnerable labor power suited to fuel the temporary employment sector, the fastest growing segment of the U.S. labor market over the past two decades

(it accounts for one-fifth of all new jobs created since 1984) (Peck and Theodore 1998; Barker and Kristensen 1998). Extreme imprisonment thus feeds contingent employment, which is the spearhead for the flexibilization of wage labor in the lower tier of the jobs distribution. In addition, the proliferation of detention facilities across the country—their number has tripled in thirty years to surpass 4,800—contributes directly to the national growth and diffusion of illicit trafficking (of drugs, prostitution, stolen goods) that are the driving engine of the booty capitalism of the street. Countless small towns in rural areas have lobbied hard to build prisons or bring in inmates from overcrowded urban jails in the hope of stemming economic decline. But, along with convicts, they have unwittingly imported the cultural and economic influences of their visitors and associates, including gangs and the gamut of illegal activities they routinely engage in, for which the carceral population provides a stable consumer base.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Prison and the Imploding Ghetto

The massive and growing overrepresentation of lower-class African Americans at every level of the penal apparatus shines a harsh light on the second function assumed by the carceral system in the new government of poverty in America: *to complement and compensate for the collapsing ghetto as device for the confinement of a population considered deviant, devious, and dangerous as well as superfluous, on an economic plane—Mexican and Asian immigrants make more docile laborers (Waldinger and Lichter 2003)—as well as on a political plane—poor African Americans hardly vote and, in any case, the country's center of electoral gravity has shifted away from declining central cities to well-off white suburbs.*<sup>4</sup>

From this angle, incarceration is only the paroxysmic manifestation of the logic of ethnoracial exclusion of which the ghetto has been the instrument and product since its historical inception. During the half century (1915–1965) dominated by the Fordist industrial economy to which African Americans contributed an indispensable pool of unskilled labor, i.e., from World War I, which triggered the "Great Migration" from the segregationist states of the South to the worker metropolises of the North, to the civil rights revolution, which finally gave African Americans access to the ballot box a hundred years after the abolition of slavery, the ghetto served as a "social prison" in that it ensured the systematic social

ostracization of African Americans while enabling the exploitation of their labor power in the city. Since the debilitating crisis of the ghetto, symbolized by the great wave of urban revolts that swept the country during the mid-1960s, it is the prison that is in turn serving as surrogate “ghetto” by warehousing the fractions of the African American (sub)proletariat that have been marginalized by the transition to the dual-service economy and by state policies of welfare retrenchment and urban withdrawal (Kerner Commission 1969/1989; Harris and Curtis 1998; Wacquant 2007).

The two institutions of ghetto and prison have thus become coupled and they complement each other in that each operates in its own manner to enforce the setting apart (the etymological meaning of *segregare*) of an undesirable category perceived as threatening the metropolis with a twofold menace, inseparably physical and moral. And this structural and functional symbiosis between ghetto and prison finds a striking cultural expression in the lyrics and the lifestyle flouted by “gangsta rap” musicians, as attested by the tragic destiny of the singer-composer Tupac Shakur. Born in prison from an absentee father (his mother, Afeni Shakur, was a member of the Black Panthers), the apostle of “thug life,” hero to a multitude of ghetto youths (and hordes of white suburban teens), died in 1996 in Las Vegas, riddled with bullets in a car ambush set up by members of a rival gang, after having himself been accused of shooting at police officers and serving eight months for sexual assault (White 1997/2002).

### 3. Prison and Welfare-Turned-Workfare

As it was at its birth, the carceral institution is now directly connected to the gamut of organizations and programs entrusted with “assisting” dispossessed populations, in step with the increasing organizational and ideological interpenetration between the social and penal sectors of the post-Keynesian state. On the one side, the panoptic and punitive logic proper to the penal field tends to contaminate and then redefine the objectives and mechanisms of delivery of public aid (Katz 1996, 300–34; Handler and Hasenfeld 1997). Thus, in addition to replacing the right of indigent children to state assistance with the obligation for their parents to work after two years, the “welfare reform” endorsed by President Clinton in 1996 subjects public aid recipients to intrusive practices of lifelong record-keeping and close supervision, and it establishes a strict monitoring of their behaviors—in matters of education, employment, drug consump-

tion, and sexuality—liable to trigger sanctions both administrative and criminal. For example, since October 1998, in central Michigan welfare recipients must submit to periodic drug testing, as do convicts on probation or parole, and their testing is carried out by the state’s department of corrections in offices where they mingle with parolees. On the other side, correctional facilities must *nolens volens* face up, under conditions of permanent penury and emergency, to the social and medical hardship that their “clientele” did not manage to resolve on the outside: in the country’s major cities, the biggest homeless shelter and the largest mental health facility readily accessible to subproletarians is the county jail (Fuller 1995). And the same population cycles through from one pole of this institutional continuum to the other in a near-closed orbit that entrenches their socioeconomic marginality and intensifies their sense of indignity.

Finally, budgetary constraints and the political fashion for “less government” have converged to push toward the commodification of welfare no less than that of incarceration. Several jurisdictions, such as Texas and Tennessee, already consign a sizable portion of their convicts to private establishments and subcontract the administrative handling of public aid recipients to specialized firms because the state does not possess the administrative capacity to implement its new poverty policy. This is a way of making poor people and prisoners (the vast majority of whom were poor on the outside and will be poor again when they get out) “profitable,” on the ideological if not on the economic level. What we are witnessing here is the genesis, not of a “prison-industrial complex,” as suggested by some criminologists following after journalists and justice activists mobilized against the growth of the penal state (Lilly and Knepper 1993; Schlosser 1998; Goldberg and Evans 1998),<sup>5</sup> but of a truly novel organizational figure, a partially *commercialized, carceral-assistential continuum* that is the spearhead of the nascent liberal-paternalist state. Its mission is to surveil and subjugate, and, if need be, chastise and neutralize, the populations refractory to the new economic order according to a gendered division of labor, with its carceral component handling mainly the men while its assistential component exercises its tutelage over (their) women and children. In keeping with the American political tradition established during the colonial era, this composite institutional ensemble *in statu nascendi* is characterized, on the one hand, by the deep interpenetration of the public and private sectors and, on the other, by the fusion of the functions of branding, moral redress, and repression of the state.

### *The Demonic Myth of the "Prison-Industrial Complex"*

Scholars, activists and ordinary citizens concerned with, or dismayed by, the runaway growth of America's penal system have failed to detect this new triadic institutional nexus of the prison because they have been obsessed by the apparent linkage between incarceration and profit. For the past decade, the refrain of the rise of a "prison-industrial complex" that would have succeeded (or supplemented) the "military-industrial complex" of the cold war era with defense industry giants retooling from supplying arms to the Pentagon to providing surveillance and punishment for the poor, the fear of the "red enemy" of the exterior being replaced by dread for the "black enemy" of the interior, and private operators acting in cahoots with corrections officials and politicians to constitute a shadowy "subgovernment" pushing for limitless carceral expansion aimed at exploiting the booming captive workforce, has been a leitmotiv of the oppositional discourse on prison in the United States (e.g., Donziger 1996; Rosenblatt 1996; Davis and Gordon 1999; Braz et al., 2000). Anchored in a conspiratorial vision of history, this thesis suffers from four major lacunae that undercut its analytical import and ruin its practical pertinence.

First, it reduces the *twofold, conjoint and interactive, transformation of the social and penal components* of the bureaucratic field to the sole "industrialization" of incarceration. But the changing scale of confinement in America is only one element of a broader redefinition of the perimeter and modalities of state action with regard to the "problem populations" residing in the nether regions of social and urban space. It is tightly connected to, and cannot be explained in isolation from, the epochal transition from "welfare" to "workfare" (Wacquant 1996). By contrast, it is very dubious whether it can be tied to the "globalization" of the overly large and vague "-isms" of capitalism and racism—the two favorite culprits in this activist tale of government evil—neither of which provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for America's unprecedented and unrivaled carceral experiment. To start with, carceral inflation in the United States set off well before the acceleration of capital mobility across borders, and other advanced countries that have experienced a similar internationalization of their economy have sported only modest growth in their prison populations fed by the lengthening of sentences and not increased admissions.<sup>6</sup> Next, while the operation of the justice system is stamped by ethnoracial bias, it is hard to see how discrimination could have *intensified* since the 1970s, given the increased stress on due process and legal safeguards

instituted in the wake of the civil rights revolution, not to mention the growing presence of black police, judges, guards, wardens, and parole officers at all levels of the penal apparatus.

Second, the imagery of the "prison-industrial complex" accords the role of driving force to the pecuniary interest of firms selling correctional services and wares or allegedly tapping the vast reserves of labor held under lock (Dyer 2000). It maintains that the profit motive is crucial to the onset of mass incarceration when, in reality, the latter pertains first and foremost to a *political logic and project*, namely, the construction of a post-Keynesian, "liberal-paternalistic" state suited to institute desocialized wage labor and propagate the renewed ethic of work and "individual responsibility" that buttress it. Profiteering from corrections is not a primary cause but an incidental and *secondary consequence* of the gargantuan development of the penal apparatus. Indeed, the fact that private concerns are reaping benefits from the expansion of a government function is neither new nor specific to imprisonment: the delivery of every major public good in the United States, from education and housing to safety and health care, grants a vast role to commercial or third-sector parties—relative to medical provision for instance, punishment remains distinctively public (Hacker 2002). Nor is privatization necessary to carceral growth: banning imprisonment for profit did not prevent California from joining the frenzied rush to confine. Between 1980 and 2000, the Golden State saw its convict population skyrocket from 27,000 to 160,000; its correctional budget balloon from \$400 million to \$4.2 billion; and its correctional staff swell from 8,400 to 48,000, all without opening a single private adult facility. In point of fact, if commercial operators were made to vanish overnight, states and counties would face operational disruptions, increased overcrowding, and short-term obstacles to growth, but the overall prevalence and social physiognomy of incarceration would remain untouched.

Similarly, the ritual denunciation of the superexploitation of inmates under conditions evocative of penal slavery cannot hide the fact that only a minuscule and stagnant fraction of the U.S. carceral population works for outside firms (well under 1 percent by the most generous counts) and that no economic sector relies even marginally on convict laborers. As for the prisoners toiling for state or federal industries behind bars (about 8 percent by the largest estimates), their output is negligible and they are "employed" at a net loss to the government, even though their activity is massively subsidized and heavily protected.<sup>7</sup> Its spectacular growth

notwithstanding, it is hard to square the claim made by Goldberg and Evans (1998, 5) that “the prison industrial complex is becoming increasingly central to the growth of the U.S. economy” with the raw statistics of national accounting: the \$57 billion that the United States spent on corrections at the local, state, and federal level in 2001 amounted to barely *one-half of 1 percent of the Gross Domestic Product* of \$10,128 billion that year. Far from being “an essential component of the U.S. economy,” corrections remains insignificant on the production side and acts not as an overall stimulus to corporate profits but a gross drain on the public coffers and a meaningless diversion to financial capital.

Third, this activist vision is premised on a flawed parallelism between the state functions of national defense and penal administration, which overlooks this crucial difference: military policy is highly centralized and coordinated at the federal level, whereas crime control is widely decentralized and dispersed among federal authorities, one hundred state departments of justice and corrections, and thousands of county and city administrations in charge of the police, courts, and jails. The phrase “criminal justice system” hides a loosely coupled web of bureaucratic agencies endowed with wide discretion and devoid of an overarching penal philosophy or policy. Even if some far-sighted ruling group had somehow concocted a nightmarish plan designed to turn the carceral system into a lucrative industry using the bodies of the dark-skinned poor as “raw materials,” there is no single lever that it could have seized and used to ensure their delivery. The simplistic thesis that capitalist lucre drives carceral growth leaves unexplained the specific mechanisms that have produced the remarkable convergence of correctional trends across the different jurisdictions of the United States and only adds to the “compound mystery” of nationwide hyperincarceration in the absence of “a distinctive policy precursor” (Zimring and Hawkins 1991, 173).

Finally, constricted by its prosecutorial approach, the woolly notion of “prison-industrial complex” overlooks the wide-ranging effects of the introduction, albeit in a limited and perverted form, of the *welfarist logic within the carceral universe itself*. Correctional institutions have been profoundly transformed over the past three decades, not only by changes in the scale and composition of their clientele, but also by the prisoners’ rights movement, the rationalization and professionalization of confinement, and the increasing oversight of the courts (Feeley and Rubin 1998). Thus, judges have demanded of jail and prison authorities that they meet a battery of minimal norms in matters of individual rights and

institutional services, entailing for example the provision of education to under-age inmates and psychiatric services on a mass scale. However deficient it remains, correctional health care has improved substantially to the point where it is typically superior to the meager medical services accessible to the poorest convicts on the outside, and it reaches millions yearly—so much so that public health scholars and officials have come to view the carceral system as a crucial point of intervention for detecting and treating a range of infectious diseases common among low-income urban populations (Glaser and Greifinger 1993).

### Coda

Breaking out of the angelic law-enforcement paradigm and exorcizing the demonic myth of the “prison-industrial complex” are two necessary and complementary steps required to properly locate the novel functions that the prison shoulders in the reconfigured system of instruments for managing deregulated labor, ethnoracial hierarchy, and urban marginality in the contemporary United States. Taking these two steps reveals that the unleashing of a hypertrophic and hyperactive penal apparatus after the mid-1970s is neither the blunt weapon of a “war on crime” nor the spawn of a devilish collusion between public officials and private corporations intending to profiteer from incarceration. It partakes, rather, of the building of a revamped state suited to imposing the astringent economic and moral requirements of neoliberalism after the discarding of the Fordist-Keynesian social compact and the implosion of the black ghetto. The onset of this new government of poverty mating restrictive workfare and expansive punishment demands that we bring the prison out of the technical domains of criminology and crime policy and place it squarely at the center of political sociology and civic action.

### NOTES

1. For all the talk of “lock ‘em up and throw away the key,” upwards of 95 percent of all convicts entering state and federal prisons eventually come out. “Lifers” and inmates sentenced to death contribute only approximate 5,700 bodies to the country’s convict population each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1995, 2).
2. This gives the United States 24 correctional employees per 10,000 residents



in full-time equivalents, compared to 4 per 10,000 for France (24,220 staff), 5 for Spain (22,035), and 8 for England and Wales (41,065) (according to data from Tournier 2001, 47).

3. In addition, rural counties have seen their justice system swamped with cases of felonies committed *behind bars*, amounting to one-quarter or one-third of their caseload, which they do not have the resources to handle. As a result, local prosecutors often overlook prison crime committed in their district (Weisheit et al. 1995).

4. For a compressed historical and conceptual elaboration on the coupling of (hyper)ghetto and prison after the ebbing of the civil rights movement, see Wacquant 2000.

5. A trove of activist writings, calls, and information on the topic is on the site [www.prisonssucks.com](http://www.prisonssucks.com) run by the Prison Policy Initiative (based in Northampton, Massachusetts).

6. The international variant of the tale of the "prison-industrial complex" said to ensnare "women of color, immigrants, and indigenous women" all over the globe due to the collusion between states and private prison corporations (Sudbury 2005) is even more implausible than its masculine domestic version.

7. In fiscal 2001, UNICOR, the Federal Prison Industries program, employed 22,600 inmates to produce a variety of goods (law-enforcement uniforms and Kevlar helmets, bedding and draperies, office furniture, laundry services, bindery, vehicular repair, electronics recycling, etc.) sold to the government for a turnover of \$583 million. Despite financial subsidies, a captive market (two-thirds of sales are to the Defense Department), and inmate wages averaging a paltry 23 cents to \$1.15 an hour, the program turned up a negative cash flow of \$5 million dollars (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2001).

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[Chapter 2]

## America Doesn't Stop at the Rio Grande *Democracy and the War on Crime*

*Angelina Snodgrass Godoy*

As numerous scholars have shown, the war on crime was launched at a time of decreasing crime rates; its rhetoric reflected specific anxieties about race, class, and the shifting balance of power in contemporary society; and its policies have served as a primary mechanism by which structures of exclusion have been reinforced in recent decades. Although it may be true that some of the rhetorical zeal and political force behind this war appear to have been expended, it also appears that new fronts have opened in the years since its inception. To come to grips with some of these transformations, it may be helpful to place American developments in a broader, global context.

As a sociologist who studies Latin America, I believe there are both empirical and theoretical reasons to undertake such an endeavor. First, America does not stop at the Rio Grande. And I do not mean this only as a reminder that "America" is a pair of continents rather than a single nation—that residents of Buenos Aires or Banff also lay legitimate claim to the title of being American—but, more important, as an attempt to recenter the debate, at least for a moment, in recognition of the transnational dynamics of crime and punishment today. Second, acknowledging the broadening of the war on crime's battlefields invites comparative analysis of the tensions that have given rise to developments in many nations similar to those experienced in America as a result. Not only are globalizing forces arguably exerting a stronger pull today than when the war on crime was launched, but also political conditions within many countries have converged, in some ways, on a common model that pairs the political institutions of democracy with entrenched social exclusion. In today's

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## Introduction

*Jonathan Simon, Ian Haney López,  
and Mary Louise Frampton*

The last three decades have witnessed a Pyrrhic war on crime, with sobering numbers at once chilling and cautionary. Since the 1970s, our imprisoned population has increased five-fold, with a commensurate spike in fiscal costs that many now see as unsupportable into the future. As American society confronts a multitude of new challenges ranging from terrorism to the disappearance of middle-class jobs to global warming, the war on crime may be up for reconsideration for the first time in a generation or more. It is not that the public is no longer concerned about crime; as we shall see, crime remains central to how we have learned to think and act collectively. But, as relatively low crime rates confront scary problems from other sides of the social experience, the mood may be swinging toward declaring victory and moving on.

However, the society-altering impact of this war reaches far beyond the flat numbers; simply moving on is impossible. Over the last thirty-plus years, the government response to social disorder encompassed under the rubric of the war on crime has fundamentally transformed us. The war's impact has been most devastating on those individuals swept up by increased rates and longer terms of incarceration, their families, and the communities bound by strained ties to these prisoners—but it is not confined to them. This impact has instead extended to how society views governance, reshaping not only a wide range of social institutions but also the way we conceive of ourselves. The very concept of policing has changed, as has the place of crime in electoral politics; increasingly, too, schooling, public health, and social welfare overlap with the criminal justice system. Meanwhile, how we view our most basic tasks as individuals—how to raise children, where to live, how to be a good parent, employee, and

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"A lively, smart, combative collection, brimful of ideas and insights, this book takes on 'the war on crime' and shows how America might move beyond it."

—David Garland, author of *The Culture of Control*

"This brave book challenges us, urgently, to rethink crime and punishment for the 21st century. *After the War on Crime* exposes how structural inequalities based on race and class and written into our laws, institutions, and everyday practices have blackened our jails and prisons and reproduced segregated communities inside and out."

—Susan Tucker, Director, The After Prison Initiative, Open Society Institute

"*After the War on Crime* is a gripping, provocative and ultimately transformative anthology by many of the nation's leading scholars and activists. If we want to transform our society toward one that cares more than to stereotype its citizens, this timeless work will lead the way."

—Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., author of *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half-Century of Brown v. Board of Education*

*After the War on Crime* reveals that the impact of America's war on crime reaches far beyond our overcrowded prisons, to influence our neighborhoods, our schools, and our democracy. Since the late 1990s, relatively low crime rates and a host of new social problems are combining to move elections and public debate away from the fear of crime and demands for law and order that have dominated both since the late 1960s.

Since the end of the last century, politicians and the voting public have begun moving away from the punitive demands for law and order that have fueled a nearly four-decade war on crime. Yet simply moving on is not only impossible but dangerous. *After the War on Crime* shows that this war's impact reaches far beyond our overcrowded prisons, distorting our neighborhoods, our schools, and our democracy. It has returned to our communities hundreds of thousands of formerly incarcerated persons, now ill-equipped to resume civilian life; increased segregation across a range of social settings; and generated an American lifestyle laden with expensive and constraining security regimes. In short, recovery from the long war on crime will require a "reconstruction" as sweeping and momentous as that which followed our Civil War.

It is time to consider the tasks this reconstruction must tackle. *After the War on Crime* accelerates this reassessment with provocative essays by a diverse, interdisciplinary group of scholars as well as policy professionals and community activists.

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