

Editors' Introduction

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THE HYPOTHESIS OF A STRUCTURAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE RISE OF neoliberalism and the expansion of punitive strategies of social control has become a recurrent theme in the contemporary literature on punishment and society. Particularly since the appearance of Loïc Wacquant's pathbreaking analyses of the US punitive turn as the emergence of a new model of government of social insecurity in the wake of the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state, several contemporary critiques of penalty have developed along the common thread of an elective affinity between the ascent of neoliberal ideology and the rise of mass incarceration (see Harcourt 2011; Melossi 2011, 199–252; Wacquant 2009).¹

Despite such broad convergence among recent critiques of neoliberal penalty, however, different specific diagnoses of the punitive turn have appeared in the literature. In particular, whereas some analyses have tended to frame the construction of a massive carceral apparatus in the United States—and, to a lesser extent, in other late-capitalist societies—as a consequence of the dismantling of the welfarist paradigm of social regulation, others have emphasized the direct role played by penal expansion in the very consolidation of the neoliberal paradigm of capitalist accumulation (see Camp 2016, De Giorgi 2012, Wacquant 2010). According to this latter

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view, the punitive governance of social marginality through carceral expansion would not unfold simply as a set of technologies aimed at neutralizing the potentially explosive social contradictions created by the unchecked dominance of free markets, deregulation, privatization, and welfare retrenchment—such as rising unemployment rates, widening social inequalities, and the reproduction of a racialized labor surplus. Indeed, particularly when observed through a politico-economic lens inspired by Marxist theory, the rise of the carceral state reveals itself as a constitutive element of a new regime of capitalist accumulation grounded in the systematic devaluation of the poor, the predatory exploitation of precarious workers, and an ongoing redistribution of social wealth from the bottom to the top of society's racial and class structure (Harvey 2005, Piketty 2014). The penal experiment of the last 40 years thus emerges as a crucial component of the broader assault on the social wage unleashed by the US power elites as a revanchist strategy of penal discipline aimed at restructuring the racial and class cleavages that had been shaken at the foundation by the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s (Alexander 2010, Flamm 2005, Melossi 2000). In this sense, as Jordan T. Camp argues in his recent book *Incarcerating the Crisis*, the US punitive turn should be considered as a form of domestic counterinsurgency in which “moral panics around race, crime, disorder, security, and law and order became the primary legitimating discourse for the expanded use of policing, prisons, and urban securitization in the state's management of social and economic crises” (Camp 2016, 4–5).

Along the lines of the structural critique of neoliberal penalty briefly sketched above, this special issue of *Social Justice* aims to provide a cartography of some of the multiple forms of social suffering experienced by marginalized and oppressed populations in the shadows of the US carceral state. We adopt here the concept of social suffering in the broad formulation elaborated by critical anthropologists Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock in their edited volume on the topic:

Social suffering ... brings into a single space an assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social forces can inflict on human experience. Social suffering results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems. (Kleinman et al. 1997, ix)

In an attempt to trace some of the forces at play in the reproduction of social suffering among oppressed, racialized, and criminalized populations,

as co-editors of this special issue our goal has been to extend our critical lens beyond the immediate impact of mass incarceration on the social groups directly targeted by the penal arm of the state. Thus, we asked the contributors to this issue to project their critical gaze not only on the prison and its ancillary institutions, but also on other forms of social and/or institutional confinement experienced by dispossessed populations in the United States.

The term *confinement* alludes to a wide range of spaces of exclusion or subordinate inclusion—prisons and jails, immigrant detention centers, homeless shelters, drug rehab programs, deindustrialized urban areas, etc.—charged with the task of containing the surplus populations constantly (re-)produced by the neoliberal paradigm of capitalist development: an engine of capital accumulation that is grounded in the widespread criminalization of marginalized social groups as much as in their state-sanctioned neglect across zones of urban containment (Ayuero et al. 2015, De Giorgi 2017, Wacquant 2008). Extending the critique of the carceral state in these directions seems necessary in order to capture more accurately the production of social suffering at the crossroads of racialized carceral regimes, hyperpoliced urban spaces, and widening zones of social abandonment (Biehl 2005). These intersecting spaces of social marginalization reveal that the neoliberal order thrives as the boundaries between carceral institutions and other spaces of confinement tend to dissolve. The resulting system of punitive governance has its roots in social exclusion, structural violence, and the creation of a permanent state of social insecurity achieved through decades of planned shrinkage of essential social services for the poor, coupled with a vertical expansion of the penal powers of the state.

At the same time, these dynamics of racialized confinement create enormous market opportunities for a vast archipelago of private and semi-private actors mushrooming in the shadows of the carceral state. These market entities include, but are not limited to, multinational corporations operating private prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers; high-tech industries providing surveillance technologies to parole and probation agencies; health providers delivering substandard health care inside prisons (Fleury-Steiner 2008); nonprofit organizations offering reentry services to former prisoners and support to undocumented immigrants (Longazel & Fleury-Steiner 2013); and corporate actors profiting from the outsourcing of workfare programs (Kilgore 2015, 167–96; Macías-Rojas 2016; Miller 2014; Soss et al. 2011).

In an attempt to offer an interdisciplinary range of critical perspectives on the fields outlined above, this special issue of *Social Justice* features both

theoretical and ethnographic interventions on such topics as the politico-economic roots of the contemporary penal state, the commodification of deindustrialized areas as carceral spaces, the racialized exclusionary practices at play in urban gentrification processes, the hybridization of punitive criminal justice and welfare regimes in the lives of criminalized poor people, the increasing centrality of addiction recovery as a neoliberal control technology, and the growing overlap between racialized practices of mass criminalization and the punitive governance of global migrations.

In the opening article, Jordan Camp offers what might be defined a political genealogy of the US carceral state. In his contribution, Camp situates the origins of the contemporary penal state within the coordinates of the broader counterinsurgency strategies deployed by power elites, both internationally and domestically, in reaction to the crisis of hegemony produced by the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In this context, argues Camp, the expansion of policing, prisons, and permanent war—legitimized through periodic racialized moral panics about crime, disorder, and (later) terrorism—became the building blocks of a new hegemonic project aimed at reinforcing the existing structures of capitalist accumulation while imposing widespread social suffering on America's racialized poor.

A genealogical approach to penalty also informs Lisa Guenther's contribution, which provides a critical map of nuclear, industrial, and carceral power by dissecting the dynamics of capitalist accumulation at play in a 2,600-bed private prison operated by a multinational corporation in Hartsville, Tennessee, on the former site of the Hartsville Nuclear Plant and PowerCom Industrial Center. In her article, Guenther illustrates how the logic of carceral neoliberalism is not aimed at the exploitation of the labor power of prisoners, nor at the disciplining of criminalized individuals. Rather, as a strategy of spatialized capital accumulation, carceral neoliberalism targets marginalized populations for their potential to be warehoused, a potential that doesn't even need to be actualized as long as the demand for prison beds—typically included in the contractual agreements between public authorities and prison corporations—is sufficient to ensure a constant flow of carceral profits.

One of the main engines for the reproduction of disposable populations, suitable to be either warehoused in carceral institutions or confined within zones of social abandonment, is the state-sanctioned vulnerability of the poor to manifold processes of criminalization—both within the hypertrophic criminal legal system and within the increasingly punitive remnants of the US welfare system. Situating their analysis at the intersection of social and

penal technologies of poverty governance, in their contribution Spencer Headworth and Shaun Ossei-Owusu compare the legal rights and statuses of people respectively accused of welfare frauds and street crimes. The authors argue that the criminally accused are afforded, at least in principle, certain rights and protections (including the right to legal representation) that individuals charged with administrative welfare violations are not. In reality, however, for both categories the outcomes of accusation are largely foregone conclusions. In the end, the hybridization of welfare and criminal justice as technologies of social regulation demonstrates the intersection of criminal, civil, and administrative legal systems in the disciplining of the poor and in the reproduction of the multiple forms of social suffering they experience under punitive neoliberalism.

Another defining aspect of post-welfare technologies of social regulation is the tendency—in particular by public and private agencies in charge of reintegrating, rehabilitating, or reforming subjects labeled as deviants—to frame a broad range of structural issues (e.g., poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, homelessness, etc.) according to the neoliberal vocabulary of personal responsibility, free choice, and individual recovery. In a sense, the field of drug treatment constitutes the quintessential embodiment of the dominant tendency to transform “public issues” into “private troubles”, to paraphrase Wright Mills (1959, 8–9). Thus, in their contribution Sarah Whetstone and Teresa Gowan explore the different trajectories through which this powerful shift is achieved under three different models of drug rehab. Drawing on ethnographies of three male residential rehabilitation facilities in the Midwest, each reflecting specific treatment paradigms, the authors shed light on different instances of a broader carceral logic, illustrating how different models of addiction recovery result in different forms of confinement. Based on their ethnographic observations, Whetstone and Gowan conclude that the “strong-arm” model of rehabilitation, which specifically targets poor addicts as an extension of the carceral logic outside prison walls, results in the hybridization of penalty and treatment within a broader authoritarian project to govern the poor.

In Melissa Archer’s article, the critical focus shifts from the enclosed spaces of the prison, the welfare office, the criminal court, and the rehab center to the urban landscape of a predominantly Black working-class neighborhood of a prominent mid-Atlantic city that is undergoing aggressive gentrification. Here, Archer shows how exclusionary development practices are normalized through racialized neoliberal ideals by the agents of gentrification, but also challenged by local activists who denounce the racism integral to any

gentrification process. As Archer illustrates in her contribution, representations of poor Black communities as blighted, dangerous, and undeserving of empathy or protection construct marginalized residents as a threat to neighborhood safety and stability—thus suggesting the need to cordon off these populations in order to facilitate a neighborhood’s “development.” Wrapped in a color-blind rhetoric of neighborhood improvement and quality of life promotion, punitive “social cleansing” practices are thus legitimized by racially coded tropes that construct poor minority residents as disposable, while gentrification is rendered commonsensical and socially neutral.

The following article, by Tanya Golash-Boza, reveals how the structural processes of racialized criminalization, confinement, and displacement analyzed by the other contributors within the boundaries of the United States also unfold at the global level—in particular, as the boundaries between mass incarceration and immigration control tend to dissolve. Whereas most studies of immigrant incorporation have paid little attention to the criminalization of Black and Latino male immigrants, Golash-Boza’s ethnographic study situates policing and incarceration at the center by interrogating the impact of mass incarceration and structural racism on the multiple forms of social suffering experienced by Black male immigrants. Drawing from interviews with deportees in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, the author argues that the gendered structural racism they face has a crucial impact on their life trajectories.

The special issue concludes with two review symposia. The first is a forum on the critically acclaimed 2016 documentary *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*, by Canadian filmmaker and scholar-activist Brett Story. Moderated by Christina Heatherton, the forum draws from a roundtable held at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers and features an introduction by Kanishka Goonewardena and comments by Brett Story, Jack Norton, Jordan Camp, and Annie Spencer. The second is a review symposium on Judah Schept’s recent book *Progressive Punishment: Job Loss, Jail Growth and the Neoliberal Logic of Carceral Expansion*, with commentaries by Michelle Brown, Alessandro De Giorgi, Keramet Reiter, and a response by the author.

The starting point of our endeavor as co-editors of this special issue is represented by the current crisis of the US carceral state. We see this as a structural crisis, which the recent bipartisan efforts at penal reform—in the unlikely event that they should continue under the law-and-order administration of Donald Trump—will never be able to address at its roots.

Current mainstream reform efforts aimed at marginal reductions of the prison population, with the support of corporate actors eager to capitalize on the resulting human surplus in poor and segregated urban areas, are simply technocratic plans to rationalize the carceral apparatus—initiatives dictated by fiscal concerns over rising correctional expenditures rather than by any serious concern for the welfare of prisoners and of the dispossessed communities they come from (Aviram 2015, De Giorgi 2015, Gottschalk 2015). In this sense, if we observe the current penal crisis through the structural lens provided by the interventions included in this issue of *Social Justice*, it becomes clear that only a massive reinvestment in social welfare, public education, free health care, affordable housing, and a guaranteed basic income—that is, a renewed struggle for the social wage—can begin to address the structural violence produced by a system of neoliberal governance rooted in the normalization of human disposability. Against the recent wave of market-friendly technocratic measures aimed at marginal reductions in the prison population under the banner of fiscal responsibility, we hope that the multiple forms of social suffering documented in this special issue will illustrate the necessity for an ambitious program of “non-reformist reforms,” to borrow from French socialist André Gorz: a radical political agenda “conceived not in terms of what is possible within the framework of a given system and administration, but in view of what should be made possible in terms of human needs and demands” (Gorz 1967, 7).

NOTES

1. This interpretative framework has also been indirectly confirmed by scholars writing from a comparative penology perspective (see for example Cavadino & Dignan 2006, 3–39; Lacey 2008), who have shown that societies less committed to the neoliberal dogmas by virtue of their historical embrace of corporatist, social-democratic, or state-centered regimes of capitalist accumulation (e.g., Germany, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Japan, etc.) have been much less affected by the carceral expansion characterizing markedly neoliberal societies (e.g., United States, United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, etc.).

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