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Placing (In)Justice: A Reassertion of Urbanism in the Age of Mass Incarceration

Sophia L. Burns
April 27, 2018

Senior Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies

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Introduction

I often tell people that my academic interest in the criminal justice system started at Vassar. It seems like a logical progression for my interest in prisons and the communities they impact to have grown out of a class. In many ways, my experience taking a course at the Taconic Women's Correctional Facility during my second year influenced this commitment. It was there, where I would arrive with my classmates and professors after bucolic, hour-long drives, that I saw my experiences become relevant to my then-uncertain academic interests. Being part of a classroom community made up of Vassar students and incarcerated women moved me to think about my mother quite often. I was frequently reminded of how I felt when, a few years prior, she was arrested and moved through an erratic and opaque jail system. At the same time, this experience changed the way I conceptualized these events and the way they forever impacted my world. Learning about the policies, attitudes, and systems that intertwined and diverged to justify the massive numbers of incarcerated people—especially women—in the U.S. chipped away at the stigma I felt so deeply. My thesis represents a renewed sense of honesty and pride in my own story through the critical engagement of both theory and lived experience. Through a reorientation of the lens through which we view mass incarceration, it is my goal to emphasize the dangerous everyday-ness of a phenomenon that so violently disrupts social relationships. I posit that, like myself, one's relationship to massive reorientations of community and family life can be realized from several perspectives—a legal one, a political one, or a historical one. I ask that we embrace this multiplicity, and use it to challenge our assumptions of society and government, choosing instead to view them as relative, highly subjective forces. It is in this embrace of subjectivity that I believe we might find a renewed approach to the study of communities and the spaces they claim.

The study of cities has expanded to encompass a fuller view of society as “urbanized,” increasingly interconnected because of the centrality of cities to economic, political, and social life. Cities have come to represent more than a definition against what is “rural” into massive urban networks, calling for a look at a widespread urban society rather than a myopic focus on what does or does not constitute a city. With this focus on interconnectivity, I decide that it is of utmost importance to center the points where notions of community and collective experience are challenged or wholly ruptured. In a time when the phrase “mass incarceration” has solidified its place in conversations of racial justice, sociology, criminology, and history, it is curious that the expansion of the criminal justice system has not been of more interest to those seeking to define what an “urban society” actually entails. Presently, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts, one in 31 adults in the United States are under surveillance, whether via incarceration, probation, or parole. The shift to such pronounced punitivity has been abrupt. The ACLU finds that the U.S. now incarcerates people at 700 times the rate it did in 1970. Mass incarceration has reshaped entire communities, and, critically, communities’ relationships to one another and to the state. As state forces increasingly push for removal, relocation, and punishment as the response to interpersonal violence, illness, and “disorderliness,” the state takes on a new identity. The carceral state does just this, using the prison as a tool for redefining social life and relations. While it is often assumed that incarcerated people are fully removed from society, this could not be further from reality, as families, friends, and neighbors are all impacted severely when a person is marked “criminal” and forcefully moved from the community to the prison.

This movement marks urban society, but only for select groups. In this thesis, I ask how a society that is allegedly so interdependent can be simultaneously defined by a logic of labeling and removing people from the “outside” to the “inside.” As communities are transformed by

their relationships to the prison, with some seeing it as a distant, unimaginable place while others see it as an irrefutable part of life, there arises a dynamic by which our connectivity becomes subjective in ways that are coercive. While urban society can, for some, bring about greater democracy and access to decisionmaking, I question whether that can be true under the carceral state.

I begin my analysis in Chapter One by drawing together the critical concepts of urban theory, such as this idea of urban society and urbanization, and the logics of punitivity and “carcerality” (the tendency toward incarceration). I seek to, as Henri Lefebvre proposes, make my own urban epistemology concrete, suggesting a “carceral urbanism,” or one that sees the city and the prison as inextricably linked as a result of both urban society and the carceral state. By viewing the two together as co-constitutive, I propose that mass incarceration can be understood as a force that remakes this current urban society in ways that often go unnoticed in the urban discourse. In Chapter Two, I assert that the carceral state’s reinvention of the city has redefined governance or, as I explore, “governmentality,” and citizenship in order to sustain itself through urban society. I make clearer what is meant by the “carceral state” through a selected history of criminal justice policy and practices enacted from the federal and local levels. Illuminating the attitudes underpinning conversations on crime, race, and cities, I sustain that in urban society, the city has been recreated as a punitive actor in itself. In Chapter Three, I argue for the use of oral history as a method of crafting this reconsideration of urban theory, noting its particular ability to emphasize the subjective and relational nature of such large, systemic problems. I realize oral history as not only a tool for urbanists to understand communities, but for all members of urban society to explore questions of injustice from the ground up. An urban epistemology that embraces such a focus, I pose, is one that has the power to locate and uplift potentialities for

collective consciousness and liberation. By centering the lived experiences and personal worlds of those most impacted, I view this approach to urbanism as a tool in the larger pursuit of prison abolition. Finally, in Chapter Four, I highlight my own journey in foregrounding this practice. I describe the oral histories created by three of my participants, all of whom responding to my inquiry into how they see mass incarceration impacting their communities. Importantly, I find that this practice allows for a reinterpretation of urban life and “lived space” that implores listeners to embrace multiple understandings of a place they might think they know. By challenging the assumption of homogeneous experiences of urban space, I pose that participatory history-making acts against the restrictive, coercive nature of the carceral state. As such, it is a means of urban practice or praxis that encourages us to imagine a more just urban society. Throughout this thesis, I use four central frameworks to understand and describe key concepts and events. These frameworks aid my pursuit of a multi- and interdisciplinary carceral urbanism by not only calling upon diverse epistemologies, but also, more importantly, allowing me to seek out and discuss their points of convergence. In all of the theoretical traditions that I draw upon, there exist fissures in their discussions of mass incarceration. By bringing them together, I find that they illuminate previously underestimated, if not entirely unacknowledged factors that should push research, including my own, in different directions and toward different sources of information. A carceral urbanism that is explicit in its interdisciplinary focus, I believe, is one that will hold up to the subjectivities inherent to this study.

The first framework that I work with consistently is the theory of planetary urbanization, or the urban age thesis, that has been previously alluded to in this introduction. This is the belief that society is urban, and has grown out of a progression of different urban societies. At this point in the progression, we have arrived at a period in which cities, towns, and rural areas all

depend on the same resources and institutions, whether that is regionally, statewide, nationally, or globally. The fluidity of capital as well as the interdependence of international markets has demonstrated that we now live in a period of heightened interconnectivity and, potentially, homogenization. To combat this apparent homogeneity in the age of global cities and interurban networks, it is necessary to adopt a spatial approach that seeks to understand the particularity of spaces as well as their unique interactions and exchanges with others. History can be viewed spatially, then, by focusing on space instead of time. By this, I mean that we can look at phenomena like global capitalism or mass incarceration through how they impact elements of the human experience such as mobility, citizenship, and social and civic participation. These are all deeply related to where one is geographically situated in urban society, and therefore highlight the political implications of urbanization.

Drawing on the works of critical geographers Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, I also incorporate a framework that generally understands space as a productive force. While this will be discussed and illustrated in greater detail in the chapters to come, it is important to note that a spatial perspective is no different from a social or political one. In fact, it is capable of encompassing both, as we explore how differences in how space is constructed have tangible impacts on social and political life. The prison and the city, then, are not inert places where events occur. Instead, they are, in my view, actors in themselves, promoting and upholding hierarchies, hegemonies, and other sociopolitical structures that often go unseen. Urbanism's focus on the built environment (i.e. the physical city) can sometimes perpetuate this invisibilization of forces. As I present space as an agent in instituting and normalizing injustice, I also encourage urbanists to use a spatial perspective to destabilize these hegemonies, such as the acceptance of the prison as a necessary and unquestionable institution in democratic, urban society.

Last, my engagement with policy and governmental action necessitates a view of these forces as equally constructed and variegated across space and social difference. Concepts from Critical Race Theory, an outgrowth of the larger Critical Legal Studies, are used to emphasize the often-covert ways in which the U.S. criminal legal system (a term used to reflect the culpability of the legal system in creating unequal access to justice) enables and reinforces racial inequity. It follows, in this view, that the law is not a universal, normative code that does not “see” race; in fact, the law is complicit in social inequality. Critical Race Theory exposes the ways in which colorblindness—the refusal of individuals and institutions to note the many impacts of one’s racial identity—and the misconception that Americans live in a post-racial society ultimately allow for new forms of discrimination to arise. Critical race theorists markedly understand storytelling as a useful source of information and analysis that undermines the assumptions of dominant groups. By doing so, storytelling can give power to the experiences of marginalized people by asserting that experience is socially produced. Maintaining this allows scholars to not just include these stories, but to position them as inherently valid and central to our discourses on inequality in “diverse” society. Similar to the spatial perspective, Critical Race Theory holds “situatedness” at its core, encouraging our reflection on how social/political difference and similarity are created and can potentially be challenged.

By revisiting mass incarceration and the forces that maintain it through the urban lens, I establish an exchange between the city and the prison that necessarily situates them both as incomplete and porous. I challenge the categories that separate the “inside” and the “outside,” complicating both as in constant conversation with the other. This dynamic thereby normalizes the prison and criminalizes the city, contributing to the collective inattention to injustice as it manifests through space. Choosing to explore mass incarceration through space is a decision to

make the urban political, and to uplift the power that urban society has the potential to inspire if only we break down and understand the institutions that presently inhibit equitable participation. Thus, a carceral urbanism can arise in a way that influences all concepts of “the urban,” reasserting its potential as a framework for spatial justice.

Chapter 1.

Toward a Carceral Urbanism: The State, The Prison, and the Neoliberal City

As Henri Lefebvre theorizes the shift from the industrial city to post-industrial urban society, he posits that urbanists must make our practice “concrete” by identifying the urban as a “productive force.” As urbanists, we see beyond the progression of cities as they are unilaterally subjected to political-economic change—we see them as actors in these dynamics (Brenner 2014, 42). As the “urban fabric” spreads, then, there arise new, intimate ties through, for example, food networks and commuting patterns that bridge once-disparate places under one, urban society. While critical, the built environment is not so much the defining quality of the urban fabric, but an instrument thereof: as Lefebvre asserts, “In this sense, a vacation home, a highway, a supermarket in the countryside are all part of the urban fabric” (Brenner 2014, 38). Structures affect the way that spaces are defined, utilized, and consumed, and illuminate who has authority in making these decisions. The introduction of Wal-Mart in rural and suburban areas, for example, has forever altered the quotidian geographies of labor, production, and consumption, interrupting local economies. Although Wal-Mart may not immediately match popular schemas for what counts as “urban,” it actively brings marginal communities into the grasp of the global economy, enabled by urban society (39). I view the carceral state similarly—as a critical node in our present urban society that alters social, economic, and political relations by redefining spatial relationships. Thus, I construct urban space—in the city and beyond¹—as an active participant in the creation and maintenance of the carceral state. Ultimately, I strive to

¹ While much of my discussion throughout this thesis does focus on “the city,” my engagements with urban theory link to the theory of planetary urbanization. I argue that the city has not been demolished, but instead occupies a new

build a foundation for making “concrete” the need to identify and interrogate a carceral urbanism that has manifest before and during the neoliberal era.

Neoliberal urbanization, surplus, and spatial difference

Urbanists generally locate the beginning of the economic and spatial restructuring popularly understood as neoliberalism in the 1970s with the end of Fordism, an economic system that relied on highly-systematized mass production and consumption coupled with government and union regulation (Soja 2010, 116). While the Fordist period did not ensure stability or equity—especially for racial/ethnic minority groups and the working class—it represents grounds for retrenchment in the neoliberal era.² The United States came to define itself by this rapid, purportedly unregulated economic growth, which was predicated on this economic order as well as a reorientation toward the city as the site for innovation and development. The city was a laboratory for mitigating the movement, access, and interchange between social groups and institutions. This was also supported by a larger mission to reconstruct parts of the city as “surplus,” as useless to the demands of the political economy. This would later allow for the reliance on incarceration as the solution to social problems and inequality. Discussing “banishment” as urban social control, Beckett and Herbert assert that through exclusion within the city (i.e. the creation of “ghettos”), governments “enable a significant increase in the power of the police and other actors in the criminal justice system to monitor, arrest, charge, and jail those considered disorderly” (Beckett and Herbert 2010, 38). This, I argue, operates through neoliberal urbanization and ultimately works to tie the city—socially, economically, and culturally—to the prison, widening the net of the carceral state.

² I use retrenchment to signify legal and political backlash against social progress, as used in legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw’s works, including “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law.”

The concentration of poverty that resulted from deliberate disinvestment from the city represents an attempt to reinvent the city as literal grounds for economic and social dispossession, masking the state's involvement in the "urban crises" of the 20th century. The practice of redlining that began in the 1930s allowed, at its core, discriminatory mortgage lending practices based on coded maps of urban regions. "Best," "Still desirable," "Definitely declining," and "Hazardous" clearly demarcated which areas were worthy of lending to, and which would be allowed to "decline" further. These designations were largely based on racial compositions of neighborhoods—Black neighborhoods, most prominently, were marked as hazardous and their residents were "blacklisted" from receiving credit.³ Suburbanization—the relocation of the growing white middle-class—was not only the result of the aforementioned Federal Housing Authority loans and the Federal Highway Act of 1956.⁴ While a comprehensive history of these policies is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to briefly establish a foundation on the discourse of urban pathology. Take, for example, the logics of urban renewal, which continued redlining's coded language of "hazard" and blight. Poor communities were deemed unsalvageable at both the local and federal levels, as evidenced by Title I ("Slum Clearance and Urban Development") of the Housing Act of 1949. Title I sought to make large swaths of privately owned land available for private redevelopment, and failed to ensure that adequate housing—public or otherwise—would be built to replace these units. As urbanist Susan Fainstein deduces, "Planners saw renewal programs as providing them the opportunity to realize their dreams of imposing order on the unruly city, and eliminating blight..." (Hayward and Swanstrom 2011, 151). The era of urban renewal can be defined by this top-down, totalitarian

³ The Federal Reserve provides a useful handbook to understand redlining, which was made illegal by title VIII of the Civil Rights Act (Federal Reserve, n.d.).

⁴ The Federal Highway Act is commonly linked with urban renewal, as projects like the Cross Bronx Expressway historically cut through poor, predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhoods.

attitude toward urban governance (Klemek 2011, 3). This mode of urban management gave way to the perceived decline of cities into the 1970s and 1980s, as successive presidents and urban bureaucrats collectively abandoned the liberal project, leaving cities' most marginal areas, in the infamous case of the Bronx, to burn. Spatial chasms, then, were ushered in by neoliberalism. As urban economist Tim Koechlin writes,

“The dysfunction and inequality of U.S. capitalism are perhaps most evident in its cities...In 1960, residents of U.S. cities were, on average, more prosperous than residents of U.S. suburbs; the ratio of central city per capita income to suburban per capita income in 1960 was 1.05. By 2000...this ratio had fallen to .83” (Koechlin 2014, 4).

How were these chasms created and supported? As as unionized, industrial jobs became relics of the past, the “urban crisis,” the “New Economy” had an opportunity to redefine the city. This economy can be defined as “decentralized” due to the globalization of capital, the rise of “flexible” service labor over manufacturing, and the decimation of labor unions via this shift. The rejection or retrenchment against Fordism welcomed rapidly shifting consumer demands, a global labor pool (favoring the Global South), and a domestic clampdown on unionization, ultimately creating an environment in which workers' agency over their conditions deteriorated.⁵

This hierarchy operates under the current guise of equal opportunity. In the post-racial discourse expertly critiqued by critical race theorists, the myth of equal opportunity demands that, because the racism of the pre-Civil Rights Act era is “over,” all people have the ability to be prosperous, if only they try. This extends to spatial inequalities—in a nation that has quashed class struggle and circumvents accusations of systemic racism and sexism, drastic differences between, perhaps, Detroit and upper Manhattan appear like natural casualties of urban economic

⁵ On flexibility, Edward Soja comments, “corporate restructuring [was enabled] as a tool for increasing productivity and profits and for greater control over labor” (Soja 2010, 117).

history. Edward Soja finds that, in the U.S., the law and its supposed universality work to obscure and invalidate spatial discrimination; because the law lacks a framework for spatial analysis, it is unable to comprehend let alone litigate this type of injustice (Soja 2011, 49-51). Thus, in crafting a carceral urbanism, this purposeful blindspot must be mitigated in order to identify the power imbalances that have been built into U.S. cities.

Soja uses apartheid as an example of hegemonic geographies. These impose spaces that encourage relational differences between groups—in the case of apartheid, the spaces in which white people could walk, live, and work depended on the cleansing of any and all Black presence. These spaces were valuable, encompassing better resources and protection from the state, precisely because they were racially exclusive. Soja posits that “polarized landscape(s)” such as these operate through the “development of underdevelopment” (Soja 2010, 39-42). The turn against the city reveals how this “development” takes place in urban society. Spaces are surreptitiously selectively identified for “underdevelopment” by the depletion of the tax base, the removal of viable jobs, and the physical disruption of neighborhoods. This not only creates “ghettos,” but also spaces of exception where the “rest” of society is not subjected to seeing or hearing this deterioration except, perhaps, for on the evening news.⁶ As with apartheid, those benefiting are aware of the suffering they are protected from—Hayward and Swanstrom write that “spatial segmentation and racial and class-based segregation can...render injustice invisible and hence depoliticize it” (Hayward and Swanstrom 2011, 6). What is hidden by our myths of

⁶ Michelle Alexander notes that police have occupied “ghetto” communities, especially as a result of the War on Drugs. This creates relationships with the police/state that those outside of these communities are entirely unaware of, and shocked by. She quotes a Chicago Law School student’s observation during a ride-along with Chicago police. The student remarked, “Each time we drove into a public housing project and stopped the car, every young black man in the area would almost reflexively place his hands up against the car and spread his legs to be searched. And the officers would search him...This repeated itself throughout the entire day. I couldn’t believe it. This was nothing like we learned in law school. It just seemed so normal—for the police and the young men” (Alexander 2014, 123). Referring back to the law’s apparent universality, these vastly different reactions and interactions with the police highlight the need for Soja’s spatial justice framework.

equality is that in order for the places that the white middle class call home to afford them (apparent) comfort and safety, the homes of others must be systematically undermined. Indeed, the depoliticization of inequality is critical to note, as the horizontal segregation with the disappearance of class and racial struggle to ultimately deter arguments of structural difference and promote “urban revanchism.”⁷

Inequality depends upon the active differentiation of groups’ relationships to space. The difference confronting purposely “underdeveloped” communities is founded upon how they experience elements such as access and safety in their daily lives. The invisibility of spatial injustice, as Soja finds, enables “exogeneous,” top-down, authoritarian geographies of dominance to quietly shape difference (Soja 2010, 33). In urban society, these geographies are centered in the city, not as physical form but as active representation of centrality. If the city, according to Lefebvre, is the economic and political hub of society, its role is ultimately to concentrate power in and via space. Commenting on Lefebvre’s urban age thesis, Christian Schmid writes, “centrality becomes a political question; cities become contested terrain. That is why Lefebvre programmatically calls for a ‘right to the city’: the right not to be forced into a space that was produced solely for the purpose of discrimination” (Brenner 2014, 72). The political meaning that has emerged from the city in the neoliberal era is precisely that of exclusion—the creative destruction of deliberately under-resourced spaces. Thus, when attitudes toward groups are solidified because of the places they are permitted to live and work in, active decisionmaking on the part of the state is disguised as unfortunate reality of urban times.

⁷ Urban revanchism is the revenge against poor people, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people after the fall of the 1960s welfare state. Similar to Kimberle Crenshaw’s racial retrenchment, it is the desire of those in power to go back to a time when these groups were more explicitly excluded from public life. In his argument for a spatial criminology, Keith Hayward states, “[U]rban revanchism is not simply about the monolithic state exercising control over urban public space. Instead, the public realm is today being sanitized by a more diverse alliance of (neoliberal) forces comprised of institutions and actors with different intentionality” (Hayward 2016, 213).

From economic control to social control: making poverty into crime

How is the reshaping of the city on an ideological level, then, relevant to the tangible event of mass incarceration? The implementation of hegemonic space, first, operates in tandem with socio-economic processes. Urban sociologist Forrest Stuart links this to the proliferation of “surplus labor,” the treatment of which, according to Marx, transforms with each “historic period of capitalist production,” to social policy in the neoliberal era (Stuart 2011, 199). Stuart finds that the economic transformation in the last half century has forced marginalized groups to subsist outside of traditional means. The state has reacted with increased criminal sanction of corresponding behaviors, thereby *making* crime “in accordance with capitalism’s evolving mandates” (Stuart 2011, 200). Stuart’s study of Los Angeles reveals that these urban policies enabled a “divergence between geographies of affordable housing and geographies of employment” in the 1980s (Stuart 2011, 202). The city came to represent a rock and a hard place for the working class, whose places of residence were dispossessed of economic opportunity. At the same time, Mike Davis’ concept of the “psychogeography of fear” was successfully implemented to justify “prisonlike” geographic partitioning (Soja 2011, 42). Crime was invented spatially through this emotional geography that carried unprecedented political clout. The fear of the “ghetto” justified a renewed form of segregation against poor, mostly Black workers.

The 1976 Containment Plan moved affordable housing and social services to Skid Row, the most poorest and most stigmatized section of Los Angeles, funneling the city’s homeless population into the fifteen square-block area. A buffer zone delineated by a physical border of factories surrounded the area in order to deter those in Skid Row from leaving (Stuart 2011, 204). This form of urban quarantine, as Stuart puts it, is necessitated by a neoliberal political economy that favors intense but invisible control via removal. Skid Row, a partitioned sub-city

of its own, quickly came to resemble a police state in the 21st century—it is evident that this was the ultimate goal of the Containment Plan. Using social services as a lure, urban space was remade into a quasi-prison, realizing the critical co-dependency between social support and punitive measures that characterize the neoliberal city and society (DeVerteuil 2014, 881). The 2006 Safer Cities Initiative (SCI), a \$6 million annual investment, positioned fifty additional beat officers and fifty “plainclothes, mounted, bicycle, and scooter officers” in the 15-square-block area (204). Socio-spatial reconfiguration, then, is a tool of selective control rather than safety for all: 1,474 arrests were made in the first fifteen months, and, ultimately, the city has spent \$117,000 per robbery prevented—indeed, property crime has been the only “injustice” affected by the Initiative (205).⁸ The overwhelming costs of the Initiative are the material outcomes of manipulation of the city for punitive ends. While cities and states claim to be unable to support secure jobs, a living wage, affordable housing, or improved education, the carceral apparatus—increased surveillance and criminal sanction—is well-funded. The SCI and its motive to “contain” is an exemplary representation of the punitive outcomes of the neoliberal city, as well as the attitudes that shape current urban society.

The enthusiasm that the Initiative received from local business leaders, politicians, and welfare agencies despite its ability to reduce crime is demonstrative of the omniscient desire to contain, police, and discipline those deemed economically superfluous. Neoliberal urbanization not only establishes this dynamic, but also secures and justifies greater state control over the wellbeing of individuals and communities. The reinvention of welfare, as seen here, realized the attitude toward poverty (especially homelessness) as indicative of crime rather than a sign of

⁸ Privately owned property, including land, is recognized as a core value of U.S. capitalist society. In the neoliberal era, as public property shrinks rapidly, we witness a reassertion of private property through the criminal legal system. Thus, property crimes are upheld as a central indicator of disorder or, as will be discussed later, disregard for the law, signifying the role of the law in protecting the private sphere where it ignores the public.

public need. At the same time, entire communities can be targeted through spatial reorganization—as spaces are simultaneously deemed vulnerable and dangerous, the state can intervene, installing police where people are hungry and unhoused. Feminist political economists LeBaron and Roberts posit that the coercive governance that neoliberalism requires necessitates the cultural and political acceptance of heightened punitivity (LeBaron and Roberts 2010, 25). They contribute to the “carceral matrix that contains and manages the tensions and contradictions of neoliberalism” as people are contained and placed under surveillance: inability to cooperate with the global economy is thereby recast as disorder (39). The “development of underdevelopment” results, then, in the recreation of the city as the center for upholding the carceral state, quietly dissolving the boundary between the city and the prison.

On the inside/outside: troubling the prison boundary

Urbanized society requires a renewed interest in boundaries. While Skid Row was, indeed, physically partitioned from the rest of Los Angeles, it is clear that it was highly visible and included within the police apparatus. This border was endowed with meaning that stretched far beyond the city limits of L.A.; while L.A. was the “meanest city,” it was not alone in the U.S. or the world in cracking down on the poor (DeVerteuil 2011, 885). The carceral state relies on the apparent inevitability of separation, like in the case of Skid Row. In urban society, boundaries themselves are productive forces—they may be invisibilized, but they are increasingly socially, politically, and culturally generative (Brenner 2014, 78). Institutionalized geographies of inequality have been obscured by the discourse of the dangerous and criminal “inner-city,” which obscures what Soja calls spatial discrimination. Popular conversations about inequality have not recognized the social construction of these differences—rather, they attribute injustice to “unavoidable consequences of urban living” (Soja 2011, 48). Indeed, the city is the

hub for competition for all resources, from affordable housing to healthy food to educational opportunity; it is also the place where inequality is constructed and normalized. The “margins” have outgrown the city, and with that urban life has assumed a punitivity. Control has thus been unbounded, instead relying upon this “disorder” and segregation disguised by the neoclassical language of “choice” to determine good/bad, deserving/undeserving places. Loïc Wacquant views the U.S. metropolis as the location where modern crime control has been developed—where the national “crime epidemic” was allegedly contained. Urban policy has, since the sponsoring of single-family suburban homes and the choice of the highway over public transit, promoted individuality as a means of achieving greater punitivity as the answer to social problems (Wacquant 2009, xiv-xv). With that, an exploding criminal justice system is supported by urban society’s porousness. Inside and outside commonly describe life and society as they relate the prison. This language is invoked to create sharp distinctions between freedom and confinement, criminal and innocent, citizen and non-citizen. This relies on the naturalization of “inside/outside” as the primary descriptor of prison/nonprison, a dichotomy rooted in spatial hegemony.

Labeling is critical to the production and maintenance of punitive relations between people, the places they live, and the state. This is a result of the bounding process—in this case, the imposition of real and imagined lines between good/bad, rich/poor, dangerous/safe places. At the same time that these categories permanently alter lives of entire communities, they also become less effective in separating, acting instead to unite. In his attempt to reframe geographic thought in terms of the bounding process, geographer Reece Jones asks us to reject the conception of boundaries as absolute facts, and instead question the qualities of boundaries themselves. Boundaries do not occur naturally, but rather they arise through social, cultural, and

political processes—they are not inherent to space itself.⁹ Drawing on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Jones realizes the purpose of boundaries in reducing human multiplicities, those intersections in experience and identity that unite us, into divisive tools of control (Jones 2008, 177). Our world is, on any scale, unrelentingly heterogeneous, whether we study the a village, a city, or a nation—these multiplicities are as common as they are profound. Jones writes, “[Categories] do not simply mimetically represent the world but instead simultaneously create it and limit it. The power to define categories comes from the ability to establish...what is on the inside and the outside” (177). Divided categories serve not an innocent simplifying role—they do not pose names and orders solely for the sake of better understanding. They establish (nodding to his Foucauldian approach) power through our perceptions of space. Andrew Abbott’s “Things of Boundaries” also encourages us to analyze how and why we negotiate differences and “make” the things we seek to understand: “[B]oundaries are a logical correlate of thingness and vice versa. Therefore, indeed, saying that a set of closed boundaries exists is equivalent to saying that a social thing exists” (Abbott 1995, 860). If we accept this challenge to examine boundaries, we will come away knowing their incompleteness, interchange, and porousness.¹⁰ Because the boundary is not stagnant, failure to do this would allow for unwanted coagulation—“Boundaries concomitantly take diversity and organize it and take homogeneity and differentiate it” (180). It is with this view that we can understand the state’s interest in supposing “fixed” boundaries, especially in crafting fear of the prison and the city. The centrality

⁹ In “For space,” Doreen Massey writes that space and the experience thereof is inherently heterogeneous. To illustrate that, she asserts, “We develop ways of incorporating a spatiality of our ways of being in the world, modes of coping with the challenge that the enormous reality of space throws us. Produced through and embedded in practices, from quotidian negotiations to global strategizing, these implicit engagements of space feed back into and sustain wider understandings of the world. The trajectories of others can be immobilized while we proceed with our own...” (Massey 2005, 8). In essence, she finds that we deal with such multiplicity by retreating into ourselves although we have the ability to embrace the vibrancy of the spaces we experience each day.

¹⁰ This is useful for the state, for example, to legitimate the prison as a site of control and stigmatization over individuals and groups.

of inside/outside to popular discourse on prisons implores us to accept the prison walls as the beginning and end of the carceral state's power—anything outside is freedom. As Dylan Rodriguez asserts, “Prison and civil society, while defined as inversions of one another, are not mutually exclusive domains of experience and existence...rather, they are overlapping and mutually constitutive historical productions” (Rodriguez 2007, 193). Returning to Abbott's argument, the two actively make one another real: the excessively ordered prison needs the disordered, criminal city in order to survive. As the city is treated like enemy territory, the prison enables domination over the internal “other” while concealing the violence of forced displacement and civil death behind its seemingly impenetrable walls (Rodriguez 2007, 190). The process of segregating the prison from society requires a profound examination of how it, as a productive space, alters life on the “outside.”

Carceral mobility

Jennifer Turner's work on the prison boundary places the inside/outside divide under close examination. Addressing the question of what the prison boundary performs or allows, she asserts that the prison is a tool of national sovereignty (Turner 2016, 31). The state “builds” not only the physical prison, which is funded with public money and creates public and private sector jobs, but also the ideology that supports the act of incarceration. Related to Davis' psychogeography of fear, if citizens accept incarceration as a method of keeping “outside” communities safe, the prison is justified and assists in the conceptualization of the United States as a developed sovereign nation. The United States assumes the task of parsing good and bad citizens—those who should remain in “free” space and those who must be confined. The physical boundary of the prison, then, operates in tandem with this division. This divide also occurs between institutions and individuals, deciding which individuals must be institutionalized

in spaces that are expressly state-run. As this depends on “good” and “evil” people and places, this brings to light the categorization that occurs by way of the prison-non-prison boundary (Turner 2016, 33). Reverting to the concept of citizenship, the institutionalization of the prison as a definitive mechanism of U.S. society necessitates the transfer of this border onto individual bodies. As individuals carry with them knowledge of the “total institution,” supposedly after being shut out from society, they come to embody the prison boundary in their language, mannerisms, and physical body—teeth, tattoos, and “yard face” all exemplify this spatial transfer of the prison into the “outside” (Moran 2015, 100). At the same time, they defy the assumed totality of the prison by carrying these signifiers, alluding to the permeability of the boundary as well as the state’s interest in this incomplete boundary.

As Turner finds, once people move “beyond the wall” they continue to experience social and legal sanctions that render them incarcerated bodies anywhere in the bounds of the United States. Employment discrimination and disenfranchisement demonstrate this shift, by which being on the “inside” or “outside” become increasingly similar. For Moran, these legal barriers constitute a critical form of the prison boundary, which is predicated not on prison walls but on a volatile state’s decisive giving/taking of citizenship and legal status (Moran 2017, 102). The impetus of segregating people from society is that of punishing deviant behavior that ultimately reifies the nation as the guarantor of humanity and political participation. Given the porosity of boundaries, especially the prison boundary, it is impossible to “segregate” people in an institution that is so integral to the national project. At the same time, Rather, the act of incarceration relies on this “inchoate” boundary to act on the inside and outside to mask the carcerality that exist in everyday social space.

As carceral geographers continue to examine carceral space as that outside the prison, the field has participated in the “mobilities turn” in human geography (Moran 2017, 11). Engaging this lens, Moran uplifts a “politics of mobility,” which recognizes individuals’ and communities’ unequal relationships with mobility. This shift in spatial perception is particularly useful for locating a carceral urbanism, as we look not only to the aforementioned policies and practices that have criminalized and victimized urban space. These have served as evidence of invasion of the prison boundary into urban space, making urban spaces buffer or transitional zones in which the carceral state is simultaneously conspicuous and invisibilized (Turner 2016, 43). The ways that police presence, surveillance cameras, and the criminalization of petty crime serve to inhibit urban mobility, rendering some spaces more carceral than others. A focus on mobilities emphasises this spatial differentiation. Moving between the prison and the non-prison is a heavily stigmatized mobility—whether a person is cyclically (re)incarcerated due to mental illness or substance abuse, or if someone is visiting a family member or partner in prison. This characterizes a specific form of urban citizenship, which I later discuss as carceral citizenship, as it is largely concentrated among citizens of very specific communities. Thus, it is more productive to understand the prison as “fluid, geographically anchored sites of connections and relations” (Moran 2017, 7) as we focus on their ability to reconstitute urban space and individual mobility. This materializes in Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s observation of the “neighborhood to visiting room to courtroom” pattern of movement that becomes naturalized in communities with high rates of incarceration (Jefferson 2017, 111). Urban life, then, is forcefully redefined by predetermined mobilities, which bring non-incarcerated community members into the reach of the carceral state. Through this proximity to the prison, the prison boundary engulfs selected communities, giving the prison life on the “outside” through the institution of different

mobilities. Difference, then, is enacted because, on a macro level, only some communities come into regular contact with the prison, while others view the prison as a distant never-neverland. Moran characterizes the prison boundary as “embodied, multisensory, emotionally charged, and both spatially fixed and despatialized” (Moran 2016, 102). This boundary manifests outside of the prison as the progenitor of the web of the carceral state, ensuring the maintenance of the carceral underclass that Wacquant and Alexander both suggest. This web demonstrates the fungibility of carceral space and its influence on social relations, personal geographies, and mobilities. By challenging the totality of the prison, this dialogue critically situates society and the carceral as co-constitutive rather than separate, abolishing the inside/outside divide except to study its viability and reification as a boundary.

Deindustrialization and institutionalized precarity

The deindustrialized city, lying physically outside highly-globalized centers, represents the oft-ignored impacts of neoliberal urbanization. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, deindustrialization increased the population considered the “working poor:” in 1990, 43 percent of male workers between 18 and 22 lived below the poverty line (Lipsitz 2014, 160). Cities along the foreboding “Rust Belt” watched poverty rates climb as once-steady sources of income were relocated and automated. Appearing abandoned, these places represent the “edges” of global capital in the Global North, where its reach is extended insofar as it can maximize exploitation. While they are not monitored by the notorious NYPD or LAPD, they are no less visible or susceptible to the reach of the carceral state. If anything, acts of state violence are doubly concealed. As they are simultaneously consumed by the urban fabric and excluded from neoliberal prosperity, these cities play a peculiar role in the urban and carceral growth, especially

in emphasizing the evolution of spatial relations with the carceral state. Specifically, studying deindustrialized cities sheds light on the inequality between urban spaces inherent in neoliberalism. This not only describes the spatial implications of economic restructuring, but it also illuminates how neoliberalism creates opportunities for carceral state intervention by reinterpreting and differentiating urban spaces.

As small, “satellite” cities have failed to the neoliberal economy, they have come to wholly represent the stigma attached to the (now gentrifying) “inner city.” In his discussion of the working-class outskirts of Los Angeles, Mike Davis notes that one peripheral city came to be known as the “speed capital of the world,” adding, “Speed not steel is now probably Fontana’s major export” (Davis 2006, 430). Indeed, it is in these spaces where alienation and isolation are magnified. For these drug capitals to proliferate requires a certain amount of willful ignorance on the part of the state, which chooses to react to drug crises with surveillance and sanction rather than as it would to a public health crisis. For illegal drugs to replace heavy industry is particularly illuminative of the aims of neoliberalism in dispossessing and displacing the working class. It is key to recognize the role of the criminalization of drugs in this process. Referring to Lefebvre’s claim of controlled consumption via urban society, it is clear that the carceral state has an interest in maintaining these spaces of deprivation and isolation from the economy.¹¹

In her analysis of this relationship in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, sociologist and ethnographer Elizabeth McLean employs a “risk environment” framework, which looks at the ways an environment interacts with potential risks or influences (McLean 2016, 21). McKeesport lies outside of Pittsburgh, and has not attracted the development that its neighbors have. Drug

¹¹ In conversation with Wacquant, Dominique Moran asserts that the carceral state has filled the chasm left by the supposed “retreat” of welfare. It is noted elsewhere that welfare did not retreat so much as it was purposefully reworked to support punitive interests. Moran writes that the welfare and criminal justice systems operate on “the same resentful and racialized view of the poor” (Moran 2015, 107).

trade and use has proliferated in its place, causing concern for the rate of overdose. In her macro-level analysis, McLean uses ethnography to parse how the city itself contributes to drug use and overdose. She writes, “Nearly every explanation indicted the community at large for the heavy toll of overdose, referencing the stagnant economy, institutional culture, and overall atmosphere of McKeesport as a facilitator of not only overdose, but also drug addiction” (24). The stories related to McLean reveal the outcome of spatial differentiation that has placed McKeesport and places like it at the bottom of the urban hierarchy. Occupying this position in the urbanized world has real consequences for residents of these areas, especially as the welfare state continues to whither. One participant remarked, “If you don’t work at Eat ‘n’ Park, CVS, or Family Dollar, you don’t work” (McLean 2016, 24). An entire community’s reliance on regional and national chains for (mostly) hourly, unskilled, service-sector work reveals the dearth of opportunity that, for many, leads to drug use. Although it is obvious that drugs cause immense suffering amongst residents, the welfare system is so obliterated that its only available response is to summon punitive actors—the police (McLean 2016, 24).¹² Because of the alienation and invisibility imparted on McKeesport and places like it, they are “almost entirely absent from local reportage on overdose” although they are heavily stigmatized in the local geographic imaginary (McLean 2016, 20). When local economies are obliterated by global capitalism they suffer in relative silence at the hands of drugs, police, and interpersonal violence. According to the McKeesport participants, their city locks them into desperate futures.

What does the carceral state have to benefit from this? This is largely illustrated by the political economic analysis described by Beckett and Herbert. As cities generally are becoming dependent upon private funds to survive, those who cannot attract corporate interests endure a

¹² This represents an interesting, if literal representation of how the welfare state and the carceral state have become one in the United States.

different economic shift (Beckett and Herbert 2008, 17). As categorically, if not essentially “poor” places, filled with poor people and drained of public and private investment, they restricted to a criminalized form of consumption. As one participant in McLean’s study said, “people come to McKeesport to get drugs...because that’s what is here...I just think there’s nothing” (25). Stripped of all relevance, economic or otherwise, in the present political economy, these places can be seen as a wider derivation of the pathologized “inner-city,” encompassing entire cities. They are the spatial form of the axial demands of neoliberalism—extreme wealth is made possible by the intense poverty that is made both invisible and criminal. The carceral state is, at present, a useful force for this iteration of capitalism to realign the proletariat via punishment rather than explicit relations to the means of production. The urban fabric is, indeed, penetrated and recreated by the politics of coercion, sickness, and poverty necessitated by neoliberalism. Cities like McKeesport are tasked with the role of immobilizing entire populations, demonstrating that the proliferation of prison-like logics operates through the spread of urban life. Returning to Soja’s idea of hegemonic geographies, neoliberalism normalizes this hierarchy of places based on their economic productivity, or rather their presence/absence of poor populations, and allows the porous prison boundary to extend into impoverished spaces.

Chapter 2.

Urban Society and the Criminalized City: Citizenship and Governmentality Reconsidered

It is no coincidence that the words “police” and politician” are so similar, for they derive from the same Greek word for city-state: polis.

—*Mumia Abu Jamal*

President Nixon’s 1968 treatise, “Toward Freedom from Fear,” during his presidential campaign directed Americans’ trepidation about crime toward “the young people who emerge from these brutal societies in the central cities” (Hinton 2016, 139). He continued, “If we allow [escalating crime rates], then the city jungle will cease to be a metaphor. It will become a barbaric reality, and the brutal society that now flourishes in the core cities of America will annex the affluent suburbs” (McDowell, Harrold, and Battle 2011, 200). Nixon’s thinly veiled message conveyed that, after the implementation of urban renewal, redlining, and suburbanization drew prosperous white populations of cities, the city was represented a location for a politically-necessary fear of crime. That much of the Civil Rights movement had played out in cities, and that the Civil Rights Act integrated white urban spaces, made a fearful, racialized imaginary possible. The federal level from the 1960s forward wielded tremendous power over perceptions of neighborhoods that fit the “inner-city” trope, which had less to do with location and more to do with demographics. As spatial designations were imbued with racial and socioeconomic meaning, criminalization became the dominant mode of containing perceived threats to social and political order.

As classifications such as urban/rural are dissolved by global capital and rise of the metropolitan area, new ones are revealed. The role of race in the differential treatment of space by the criminal legal system¹³ directly represents the inseparability of race and the carceral state in the United States. Thus, we must witness carceral urban space being made through race. Geographer Katherine McKittrick discusses a “Black sense of place” that is mediated (but not defined) by the history of the plantation. Similar to Michelle Alexander, she uncovers the processual, continuous nature of racial oppression via systems of control. She writes,

“[T]his is a sense of place wherein the violence of displacement and bondage, produced within the plantation economy, extends and is given a geographic future...the plantation serves as one (not the only) meaningful geographic locus through which race is made known (and bodies are therefore disciplined differently) across time and space”

(McKittrick 2011, 949).

The “geographic future” we witness is undoubtedly urban. While the plantation is not directly reproduced, it continues to influence the state’s repressive treatment of Black spaces. McKittrick identifies urbicide, or the annihilation of space, as one a central tactic of anti-Black violence in the Americas, and one that is in itself uneven and unequal.¹⁴ This deliberate annihilation of a place takes the form of impoverishment, displacement, and razing, and is “depersonalized” because it is directed at the environment. Given that citizenship is differentiated via space and location in the U.S., the geographic future of systemic racial violence via urban reconceptions of space must be recognized by urbanists as well as those interested in law and policy. While modern urban imaginaries often valorizes the “diversity,” “multiculturalism,” and cultural

¹³ The term criminal legal system chooses to turn the focus on the legal entrenchment and construction of “criminality,” rather than relying on the assumption that it is a system predicated on justice. The law here is emphasized as a body that actively makes decisions, thereby negating that it is irrefutable or a given.

¹⁴ Operating on Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics, which describes the way that bodies and spaces are “put to death” or rendered disposable, lifeless, and/or obsolete, and primed for destruction (McKittrick 2011, 952).

vibrancy of U.S. cities, this language is often employed to 1) attract and assign differential value to urban space and 2) perpetuate a colorblind vision of U.S. society. Recognizing these roots is central to my analysis of legal and policy interventions into the question of how to address crime in urban environments. By grounding my understanding of these events in the realities of urban formations, I identify how the carceral state remakes urban space for its growth.

Race and (urbanizing) space

Indeed, mass incarceration has been slowly taking shape across the United States since the end of slavery. As the economic institution of slavery was outlawed, many white southerners sought to maintain racial hierarchy via social and political reorganization.¹⁵ In order to prevent equality in this period, local legislation arose as a critical mechanism to systematize white supremacy. As Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor uncovers, “The political economy of the modern policing state was created in the opening moments of Black freedom” (Taylor 2016,108). Black codes, a series of regulations that delineated where Black people could be without inviting police sanction, violence, and forced labor. As a mechanism of social death, Joshua M. Price finds, “[Black Codes] recuperated older measures, such as forced apprenticeship and vagrancy laws, that the British had used to get rid of its undesirables and populate its colonies. The Black Codes recast these older measures in racial terms” (Price 2015, 84). As the legal offspring of slave patrols and colonial laws, Black Codes engendered criminal ramifications for such acts as crossing “limits of said parish without a special permit in writing from his employer” and congregating past sunset (Taylor, 2016, 109-110). These Codes married the law, race, and space

¹⁵ This is not to say that economic factors were not at play—this is visible in the labor restrictions of Black Codes, the proliferation of sharecropping, and the restrictions on land-ownership in the post-slavery South. My intent is not to obscure these events, but rather to shift focus to the constructedness of racial hierarchy and how this is institutionalized in the legal system and others.

signifying the larger goal of throttling Reconstruction via the criminal justice system in place of slavery. Police, as the dedicated enforcers of these laws, assumed the post-slavery role in controlling the racial composition of public space; at the same time, white residents were entrusted with a similar role, as they were enlisted to report any suspected law-breaking.¹⁶ Emancipation, clearly, did not include a right to one's place of residence and the social benefits of free movement about space, a critical node of social and political citizenship.¹⁷ Fear of Black uprising clearly motivated these codes, acknowledging the power of organization and community that Black Americans demonstrated before this period; indeed, the barring of public gathering amongst enslaved Black people marked earlier periods (Muhammad 2010, 46). Black Codes, then, represent a similar harbinger, as social perceptions of racial difference enter the legal sphere. Public space, as a conduit of social visibility and collective action, consequently absorbed the state's racial agenda. Mobility, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter, also arises as a threat to white supremacy. Policing the movement of emancipated Black people emphasized the spatial nature of racial hierarchy—the (in)ability to physically engage with the world emerges clearly as a racialized dichotomy.

To realize this hierarchy in economic terms, labor fines represented a key element of Black codes: the codes included such consequences as: “Any Negro violating the provisions of this section shall pay a fine of ten dollars, or in default thereof shall be compelled to work ten days on the public road, or suffer corporeal punishment as hereinafter provided...” (110). Here, it is clear that the Black body was objectified equally as a site of profit and punishment. This

¹⁶ Section 11 of the same Black Codes referenced by Taylor dictate that “it shall be the duty of every citizen to act as a police officer for the detection of offenses and the apprehension of offenders...” (Taylor 2016, 110). Notably, this language indicates that citizens refers only to white people. Thus, through Black Codes, Black citizenship was actively negated in the law.

¹⁷ In his seminal article, “The Right to the City,” David Harvey argues, “Since the urban process is a major channel of surplus use, establishing democratic management over its urban deployment constitutes the right to the city” (Harvey 2008, 37). Witnessing this dynamic during a different stage of urbanization that predates neoliberalism demonstrates the inherent danger of disenfranchisement that springs from governmentality in cities.

stripping of economic agency through forced labor and dispossession represents a nostalgia for the plantation and the prosperity reaped by the white owning class. That monetary charges, forced labor on public infrastructure, and corporeal punishment are equalized reveals what “punishment” would come to signify in the U.S. While not physically detained by Black Codes, free Black Americans were subjected to and surveilled by the burgeoning carceral state. As McKittrick acknowledges in her discussion of the “necropolitics” of Black places, “racist and colonial practices wipe out different facets of geographic life” (McKittrick 2011, 952). By equalizing labor and punishment, Black Codes were an attempt to curtail the creation of spaces of Black autonomy and collective progress. The treatment of racialized bodies and spaces reflect one another, illuminating that the post-slavery state, namely in the South, attempted to govern through the death of Black spaces by codifying racial boundaries. In terms of eliminating the Black population’s autonomy over their “geographic life,” the criminal legal system was a successful tool in “reassert[ing] a racial caste system and to nip in the bud the democratic possibilities implicit in Reconstruction” (Price 2015, 85). Racial violence thereby became geographically fluid by relying not on the plantation but on “crimes” such as vagrancy, racial hierarchy via social and civil marginalization was justified.

The early-to-mid-20th century saw the Great Migration of Black Americans from predominantly rural areas in the South to Northern cities. While there were always Black populations—both enslaved and free—in Northern cities, the Great Migration represented an even greater push for racial heterogeneity in the nation’s geographic power centers. The racialized surveillance and punishment from the previous period would be reinvented as Black Americans carved out space in Northern cities. Efforts to maintain racial hierarchy, then, assumed new spatial configurations. Heather Anne Thompson identifies that a second carceral

crisis marked this era: “African Americans had always suffered disproportionate rates of incarceration...but as the twentieth century... they once again found themselves particularly singled out by a battery of new laws that criminalized the urban spaces where most of them lived...[j]ust as all black rural spaces were criminalized in new ways after the civil war...” (McDowell, Harrold, and Battle 2013, 58). The second carceral crisis was built into the socialization of the diversifying city. Cities throughout U.S. history have presented spaces where discrimination, poverty, and fear of the “other” have proliferated, beginning with European immigrants who were “ghettoized” in slums. The places that “othered” communities inhabited were scapegoated as places of squalor and incivility although, in actuality, they embodied the visceral inequalities of industrial capitalism and white supremacy. Muhammad highlights that these existing conditions made “warnings about the criminal tendencies of impoverished Black migrants [appear] more familiar than alarmist” (Muhammad 2010, 54). Pervasive attitudes toward criminality and ethnic difference in Northern cities, then, signified that Black urban migrants would encounter these pre-existing conditions. At the same time, they would encounter a criminal justice system that was equally omnipresent, but that embraced imprisonment as *the* answer to crime. With these two conditions set, the move to the city presented new, but not altogether different, relations with the carceral state.

Christopher Muller asserts that this spatial shift explains much of the racial disparities in incarceration leading up to the late-20th century prison boom: “millions of Blacks left the South, an area of comparatively low nonwhite incarceration rates, and headed to the North, a region of relatively high nonwhite incarceration rates” (Gottschalk 2015, 121). This urban transformation, then, was a starting point of transformation of the relationship between race and criminalization, ushering in a second “carceral crisis” in the 20th century. While the post-slavery rural South

permitted a reliance on forced labor and fines, urban U.S.' race-space dynamics produced different demands for penal policy. As can be seen in both of these instances, previous systems (forced labor enabled by Black Codes after slavery, criminalization of ethnic Europeans in Northern cities) have enormous bearing on the future of criminal justice system. The plantation is given "geographic future" through the racialization of space, which represents the legal embodiment of racial hierarchy. Race would play a central role in remaking urban space as criminal while the punitive state moved to embrace incarceration as its central tool.

Just prior to the start of the Great Migration, statistician Frederick Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (1896) laid the ideological groundwork for an anti-Black criminal justice discourse in this period, making empirically legitimate what was previously anecdotal (Muhammad 2010, 51). As cities grew, there arose a host of research into social problems and conditions in urban areas, many of which seeking to generalize about the behaviors and values of incoming groups. This is especially evident in the creation of institutions such as the famed Hull House in Chicago, which marked the city as the site for Progressive-era social change, especially concerning recent European immigrants. Black urban migrants did not receive this level of empathy from social reformers and emerging social scientists; rather, these studies mirrored the arguments that once justified slavery throughout the West. According to Muhammad, Hoffman's book features: "[t]able after table of arrest and prison statistics from cities across the nation. Hoffman proclaimed, all '...show without exception that the criminality of the Negro exceeds that of any other race of any numerical importance of this country'" (Muhammad 2010, 51). Not unlike present times, the percentage of incarcerated Black Americans was disproportionately higher than the percentage of Black Americans in the total

U.S. population.¹⁸ Muhammad continues that Hoffman's work performed the same role as the anatomical arguments for Black inferiority made by his antecedents. Hoffman built a foundation for a racial discourse and vocabulary that simply replaced medical arguments with ones about crime; and this new discourse was based on research in cities. With the rise of the city as the core spatial organization of American life, it follows that it would become the main site for the study and discussion of racial and ethnic difference. Thus, it became the laboratory for social studies and, as a result, bringing racial discourse into an urban era. Simultaneously, booming urban populations (especially low-income ones) brought questions of crime and crime control to the forefront of national conversations. Just as Hoffman "wrote crime into race" (51), urban policy of the 20th century wrote race into crime on a national scale.

Governing through carceral space

The emergence of "governing through crime" With an critical eye toward social and urban reform, Elizabeth Hinton traces how the welfare state and carceral state became intimately related beginning mid-century. 1965 saw the waging of President Johnson's War on Poverty, and the Law Enforcement Assistance Act (LEAA) and the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance (OLEA) represented an federal effort to make cities "safe" (Hinton 2016, 1). The LEAA followed a summer of "urban unrest" in pre-Voting Rights Act America.¹⁹ It was still uncertain Black Americans and other racial/ethnic groups were guaranteed basic rights that U.S. citizenship is understood to include. With the passage of the LEAA and the funding of the War

¹⁸ In the North in 1899, the Black incarceration was 69 per 10,000 residents, while in the north it was 29 (Muhammad 2010, 74).

¹⁹ The events of this summer are detailed in historian Michael W. Flamm's 2016 book, *In the Heat of the Summer: The New York Riots of 1964 and the War on Crime*. In his book, he looks to the riots that took place in the summer of 1964 in cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, and Newark to uncover the anti-revolutionary roots of the law and order agenda. Cathy Schneider's 2014 book *Police Power and Race Riots: Urban Unrest in Paris and New York* similarly chronicles the history of protest and the state's response through police.

on Crime came a concerted effort to employ crime control tactics that would make cities “safe” (2). The crime control, anti-delinquency, and public safety measures of the War on Crime were concentrated in urban areas while adopting race-neutral language. Hinton notes that while all working-class neighborhoods experienced “high-rates of delinquency historically,” it was not until central business districts shifted from majority-white to majority-Black in the 1960s that “urban crime” became a national crisis (37). While Hinton provides a comprehensive historiography of Johnson’s reorientation of U.S. crime policy, it is most useful here to focus on one critical component of the LEAA: “Launched as a complement to the War on Poverty...Johnson’s framing of the crime control issue linked law enforcement measures to social programs already in operation in Black urban areas” (80). The LEAA’s massive budget ensured that local governments could insert crime control measures wherever they saw fit, demonstrating a new approach to governance that embraced greater cohesion between the federal and local levels in pursuing common goals. In Los Angeles after the Watts Riot, the LAPD sought to socialize youth in poor, Black neighborhoods to greater police presence by stationing uniformed officers in schools with the goal of “creat[ing] a sense of concern for orderly behavior and a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of law and order” (92).²⁰ The federal government’s growing interest in urban communities was well-funded. In 1968, the budget doubled from \$15 million to \$30 million, demonstrating that through which the state gives a penal response to festering urban ills lawmakers were heavily invested in undoing the urban “tangle of pathology”

²⁰ The University of Georgia’s Civil Rights Digital Library describes the Watts Riot as follows: The Watts Riot, which raged for six days and resulted in more than forty million dollars worth of property damage, was both the largest and costliest urban rebellion of the Civil Rights era. The riot spurred from an incident on August 11, 1965 when Marquette Frye, a young African American motorist, was pulled over and arrested by Lee W. Minikus, a white California Highway Patrolman, for suspicion of driving while intoxicated... The outbreak of violence that followed Frye's arrest immediately touched off a large-scale riot centered in the commercial section of Watts, a deeply impoverished African American neighborhood in South Central Los Angeles. For several days, rioters overturned and burned automobiles and looted and damaged grocery stores, liquor stores, department stores, and pawnshops. Over the course of the six-day riot, over 14,000 California National Guard troops were mobilized in South Los Angeles.”

by fusing welfare and what Wacquant calls “prisonfare” (93).²¹ This funding boost notably followed 1967 uprisings in Newark and Detroit, and municipal governments increasingly relied on crime control funding to attempt to quell the unrest fuelled not by a lack of “law and order” but by raging racial and socioeconomic inequality. While, as Hinton notes, community action, secondary education programs, and urban development (i.e. housing) “far surpassed crime control in terms of their proportion of federal expenditures...assistance to law enforcement was more sustained and more consistent” (94). This reveals that crime control was fundamentally different from welfare efforts in that it had staying power. It singularly retained this federal-local cohesion because it represented a common goal that was rooted in the city (the reduction of crime). Meanwhile, educational achievement and more liveable build communities had effectively been relocated to the suburbs since the start of the post-War period, as evidenced by the continuous funding of FHA loans until 1968 (Madrigal 2014).²²

The convergence of socio-spatial change and the urban crime discourse leads to the emergence of a new form of governmentality. Criminologists Beckett and Herbert view governing through crime through two lenses: political-economic and Foucauldian spatial governmentality. The political economic approach, briefly, focuses on the rise of the post-industrial neoliberal city through “profit enhancement and tax relief” for corporations at the expense of withering social safety nets (Beckett and Herbert 2008, 16-17). At its core, this view emphasizes the role of officials and the law in fostering a robust urban economy by making capital investments and criminalizing low-income residents and residents of color. While these

²¹ Prisonfare is defined by Wacquant as “the policy stream through which the state gives a penal response to festering urban ills and sociomoral disorders, as well as the imagery, discourses, and bodies of lay and expert knowledge that accrete around the rolling out of the policy, the courts, jails, and prisons, and their extensions...Penalization joins socialization and medicalization as the three alternative strategies by which the state can opt to treat undesirable conditions and conduct” (Wacquant 2010, 202).

²² Madrigal’s 2016 article in the Atlantic provides an succinct history of the racial inequality reinforced by the FHA and its impacts at present.

shifts are important, more useful here is the Foucauldian lens of spatial governmentality. The term “governance” critically points to a view of regulation as a process rather than an institution (18). At the same time, they reorient the angle at which we view methods of social control. As a process, the governance witnessed today is not seen as fundamentally different from that of “modernist predecessors,” allowing for a continual, uninterrupted conception of the carceral state (20). Spatial governmentality, then, refers to governance via shrinking public space “and the reliance upon gates, fences and walls as a means of achieving socio-spatial exclusion” (18). These techniques are described as “post-disciplinary,” hinting at the subtlety of governmentality. Regulating space, then, represents a more covert form of social control, as it conforms to the patterns of neoliberal urbanism. This view acknowledges the futility of arguing the benevolence or miserliness of the state—instead, it assumes the state’s inherent investment in social control and is useful, then, in assessing this investment and how this control is exerted. Spatial governmentality is, to anthropologist Sally Engle Merry, not a new technology, but one that cities have historically embraced. However, postmodern iterations of this strategy notably “promote safety for the privileged few by excluding those who are dangerous rather than promoting safety for the collectivity,” thereby reducing collective social responsibility and naturalizing the prison as the site for this exclusion (Merry 2001, 17). This leads to a necessary inquiry into how urban governance becomes carceral governance, and how the preoccupation with urban crime ushered in mass incarceration.

While broken windows theory of the 1980s is often seen as the initial attempt to equate physical deterioration with perceived social disorder, precedent existed before the seminal article in the Atlantic. The Nixon and Ford administrations fixated on the idea of “defensible space” in their LEAA decisions. New York City architect Oscar Newman designed a set of public housing

standards entitled “Defensible Space” in 1972, in which he proposed “doubling patrol forces” and other surveillance techniques as a solution to the crime problems that marred Pruitt-Igoe and others. His widely-received (and well-funded) guidelines were “premised on the assumption that the design of housing projects encouraged residents to report to crime” and ultimately suggested that “defensible space” could be crafted through surveillance (288). Put differently (or perhaps geographically), inherently criminal space could be redeemed by changing what “criminals” associated with it. Criminal space is un-policed; safe and “defensible” space is patrolled. If space did not signal disorder, it would not welcome crime. While Newman’s peers criticized his theory for exemplifying “environmental determinism,” it was nevertheless well-received by the policy community. In 1973, the LEAA funneled \$2 million into defensible space projects, such as streetlights and gated walkways called “target hardening.” This funding also went toward “the construction of barriers, walls, and gates in areas of segregated poverty,” instituting “a carceral climate that increasingly mirrored the techniques used in penal institutions themselves” (289). These ideological approaches to crime and safety gained a new level of material reality through the prison boom, which was predicated on urban crime control legislation, seeking to put an end to the need for crime control via incarceration.

The carceral state under Nixon shifted focus from police (although he launched the LEAA’s largest initiative, the \$20 million “High Impact” program, which increased control and surveillance in highly-segregated cities) to the court and prison systems (Hinton 2016, 138). Nixon was, unlike Johnson, convinced that incarceration would solve the persistent crime problem. A March 1970 memo promised an “all out war” on street crime and increased discretionary funds to institute “new opportunities for arrest and sentencing of the citizens whom the White House held responsible for the nation’s crime” (153). Prison construction boomed

under Nixon, as the Bureau of Prisons opened 15 new prisons, and racial sentencing disparities led to longer sentences for more Black and Latinx inmates—the post-Civil Rights prison boom fed itself on racial inequality.²³ Although the Nixon administration produced an extensive reassessment of crime policy, my final note is that the incarceration agenda, like that of crime control, stuck. Prison construction consumed 3 million federal dollars by 1976, and by May 1980 under the Carter administration, state facilities had the funding to incarcerate half a million people (176). Prison policy and urban crime control followed one another in the post-Civil Rights era, solidifying an urban carceral state that disregarded political affiliations and levels of government separation. As governing through crime became a natural trajectory for U.S. local and federal policymaking, the mobility and urbanization of the prison boundary brought the prison into the city, building mass incarceration atop a mass criminalization that acted through urban space. Nixon’s prison zealotry was not motivated by rising crime rates although the rhetoric would suggest that. Rather, rising rates of incarceration were directly related to the size of the Black population and the severity of socioeconomic disparity by state (175).²⁴ The carceral state, then, relies upon the reinforcement of social difference through space, and especially by treating the city and the prison as co-constitutive: the prison provides a place to put undesirables, while the city primes poor people of color for the constant surveillance of prison life.

Loic Wacquant looks to the inconsistencies between the rate of violent crime and U.S. prison populations to expose this capacious “penal net.” Echoing the concept of “adaptive criminalization,” Wacquant asserts, “The quadrupling of the US carceral population in two

²³ Hinton writes that at this time, Black and Latinx people were incarcerated between 2 and 5 years longer than their white counterparts for property crimes and a year and a half longer for drug crimes (Hinton 2016, 174).

²⁴ Hinton provides the example that “Hawaii and Colorado had high crime rates but relatively few Black and Latino residents, and in both states incarceration rates were low,” while in states with large Black and low-income populations but lower crime rates, incarceration rates soared (175).

decades...results from the extension of recourse to confinement for a range of street crimes and misdemeanors that did not previously lead to custodial sanction..." (Wacquant 2009, 125).

This is the process of criminalization viewed beyond the scale of the individual—it is deeply spatial, as evidenced by the move of criminal sanction to the civil and administrative levels of the law. It is the result of the locating of increased punitivity in the city as society urbanizes.

According to Wacquant, 60% of incarcerated people “committed their misdeed by association, impulsively, or because they were cast adrift...far from being “vicious predators (the term consecrated by the mainstream media and politicians)” (132). In this way, status crimes under utmost surveillance by the carceral state. While entire books have been written on the impact of broken windows theory, it is most useful here to emphasize how an article in the Atlantic written by two academics transformed policing and general attitudes toward crime as the 21st century neared. The 1982 article, “Broken Windows,” promoted deterrence and quality-of-life policing as the solution to urban crime and, notably, fear. Describing the contemporary crime discourse, they assessed that

“we tend to overlook...the fear of being bothered by disorderly people. Not violent people, nor, necessarily, criminals, but disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people: panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed” (Wilson and Kelling 1982).

Policing and criminalization were, in this article and subsequently inspired policy, solidified as the appropriate reaction to poverty, mental illness, and youth. The authors famously posited that “broken windows” and other signs of disrepair inspired fear-inducing behaviors. Thus, the unruly city could be controlled by controlling people’s environment and menial behaviors like loitering. Such intrusion into daily urban life fit well with the existing prerogative of police and city

bureaucrats, as evidenced in the previous discussion. Steve Herbert argues that broken windows “emphasizes an inescapably dominant role of the police. This is because, by definition, broken windows holds that communities are incapable of policing themselves” as evidenced by the physical decay of their neighborhoods (Herbert 2001, 450). Urban space and its inhabitants were equalized in this discourse, which police departments such as the NYPD continue to laud as the answer to crime. Indeed, in 2016 New York Police Commissioner Bill Bratton insisted that broken windows did not promote racially disproportionate policing in Black and Latinx neighborhoods, and that quality-of-life policing would continue (Parascondola and Brown 2014). In the era of colorblindness, this is a perfectly acceptable argument, and one that demonstrates how governing through crime was and still is governing through space. According to Jonathan Simon, to accept the institutionalized fear of marginalized spaces is to reassert the “hard back of mass incarceration, further entrenching it in our polity and society” (McDowell, Harrold, and Battle 2013, 206). That communities with few resources were targeted for “advances” in policing strategy exemplifies the continuous reinvention space that promotes punitive solutions to social problems. Broken windows continues to take advantage of this spatial focus of policing, ultimately enabling disproportionate arrests of poor people of color for non-criminal acts. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice study explained in Columbia Law professor John E. Harcourt’s 2015 article “Broken-windows policing is a high arrest program” clearly illuminates an upward trend in misdemeanor arrests from 1990 to 2013, with Black Americans suffering the highest rates (Harcourt 2015). By making high arrest rates a goal, broken windows and the practices it inspired has again codified racialized criminality. Urban space, then, is central to remaking governmentality and citizenship as tools, drawing the “inner-city” and the prison to resemble one another.

Geographies of carceral citizenship

Civil death, a practice carried on from medieval Europe, has historically ensured that “a lawbreaker had no legal status, and [that dishonor and incapacity would be] imposed on one’s descendants (Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2002, 51). Criminologist Marc Mauer sees civil death’s legacy being extended through the common practice of felony disenfranchisement. Currently, 48 states bar people in prison from voting, 34 ban those on parole or probation, and 12 ban anyone with a prior felony conviction in the urban age is predicated on the socio-spatial division and isolation of entire communities. Cumulatively, 6.1 million people in the U.S. cannot vote because of a felony conviction, 77% of whom are at home in their communities (Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016). In a nation that embraces civil death as an answer to “disorder,” illness, and poverty, what does citizenship mean? Further dissolving the inside/outside divide, it is evident that the carceral state uses the panic surrounding crime to justify not only disenfranchisement, but a new definition of citizenship that selectively impacts those falling under the “penal net.” As institutionalized discourses (in criminology, among policymakers, etc.) to compress criminalized bodies into purely economic objects/actors, so too is urban space. Elizabeth Jones critically combines the discourse on colorblind racism and the carceral state, asserting the fundamentality of the latter in the operation of the former, pushing the conversation on mass incarceration toward one of mass criminalization (Jones 2017, 42). Employing the logics of colorblindness as witnessed in previously discussed policies, “neoliberalism has fundamentally changed the definition of what it means to be a citizen occupying urban space” as “Jim Crowism [transformed into] colorblindness to justify increased carceral state interventions in urban centers” (45). Racial hierarchy and spatial hierarchy here are both predicated on economic value

in the post-industrial economy. Again challenging the centrality of economic rationalism, it is necessary to view this as a continuity. Caleb Smith's discussion of the social and political significance of the prisoner is rooted in Toni Morrison's assertion that the "presence of slaves highlighted freedom—if it did not in fact create it" (Smith 2009, 12). The racialized presence of the other as captive is, indeed, what U.S. citizenship is founded upon, and this reflective quality is not accidentally mirrored by the social role of the prison: he writes, "The penitentiary was much more than an innovation in penal policy. It stood for a revolution in the relationship between the people and the powers that governed them" (Smith 2008, 12). Criminalized space, then, arises as a tool for extraction, and of making citizenship thereby. Space must be simultaneously accorded economic and social value in the political economy, allowing for the perpetuation of hierarchy via urban policy. Thus, the move toward "governing through crime" legitimated a new type of citizenship that is inherently spatial. The emotional and political sentiments that enabled this are most visible through a geographic analysis that situates citizenship as relational and politically necessary for the carceral state.

The social production of fear is tied to this process of valuation—the fear of crime (to be committed by a racialized/spatialized actor—i.e. a person from a dangerous neighborhood) gains an urban identity to be exchanged for political legitimacy. The construction of Black neighborhoods and other communities of color as places to be feared by those not implicated in criminalized space reinforces "neoliberal rationalities of state-society relationships" (Herbert and Brown 2016, 773)—the assumed law-abiding other's fear necessitates surveillance and state intervention, even if they never physically enter these spaces. When racialized urban space is "reduced to [its] propensities for criminal activity," these policies, further invisibilize the carceral state. This space, then, is the ideal theater for increased punitivity to be normalized because it is

a threat to (economically, racially) valuable space and citizens, or, referencing the previous chapter, those that are consistent with the dominant desires of the nation, as discussed in the previous chapter's analysis of the prison.

Expanding the reach of the carceral state outside of criminal law allows for this recasting of urban space on a highly intimate scale. In Elizabeth Brown's interviews in a juvenile detention center²⁵, cognitive maps of youth's home communities revealed

“the neighborhood as a carceral space...Several spots in the neighborhood...served as central meeting points for the youths in the neighborhood, and provided a place in which they could congregate without being stopped by the police. Routes around the neighborhood were also important, as police generally concentrated on just two different streets that could be avoided...” (Brown 2014, 381-82).

Citizenship under the carceral state, then, produces yet another “psycho geography of fear” that forever alters relationships between residents and the places they call home. By living in spaces deemed inherently “disorderly” and “dangerous” over decades of punitive urban policy and practice, these residents are not afforded the “right to the city,” but rather the carceral state is afforded a right to their bodies and, critically, their mobility. Such an inverted relationship between urban space, citizens, and the state is necessitated to enforce social, cultural, and political proximity to the prison and the factors that “make” it. Christophe Minke suggests that the prison is legitimized through its ability to alter the mobility of individuals and groups: “[T]o understand the immobilizing prison, one must question the value socially attributed to space,

²⁵ In “Mapping the shadow carceral state,” Beckett and Murakawa discuss the policy changes since the 1970s that have led to the proliferation of juvenile incarceration via status offenses. The 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act attempted to shrink the amount of incarcerated juveniles; however, in 1980, there arose a new amendment to the act called the Valid Court Order (VCO) Amendment. The VCO “permitted the secure detention of adjudicated status offenders of youths violated a valid order of the juvenile court” (Beckett and Murakawa 2006, 230). In 2003, 20 percent of juveniles in custody were detained because of a violation of a court order—an administrative, not criminal violation.

time, and (im)mobility” (Minke 2016, 238). This appears in these neighborhoods as movement is increasingly defined by the need to avoid police for survival, as evidenced by the almost 3,000 people killed by police officers since 2014 mapped by the Fatal Encounters project. According to the Fatal Encounters project’s data visualizations, police killings are concentrated in areas with high poverty rates; therefore, those navigating the carceral apparatus in these neighborhoods must do so not only to avoid arrest and criminal sanction, but also to evade unnecessary threats to their lives. Because, like the prison, orderly/disorderly spaces are imagined as an inside/outside dichotomy, the state can selectively control and effectively prisonize some spaces while others are left untouched because of the widespread understanding of a “geography of crime” or, more aptly, of criminality (Herbert and Brown 2006, 761). The implications of this are not purely physical—they stretch to additional realms where agency and control are determined.

Mobility in urban space mirrors what Minke calls political and juridical mobility. This final node of carceral citizenship determines that those targeted as subjects of the carceral state—again troubling the inside/outside divide—experience altered access to mode of political agency. Marginalized populations’ ability to control local and state politics is heavily altered by the forced removal of community members, as demonstrated through the confusion over Census calculations. John F. Pfaff’s exploration of the “geography of criminal justice” reveals that, indeed, we must understand the differential politics and priorities of cities, counties, and states: for example, in the case of elected prosecutors, “the communities with the most voting power are rarely those whose members are most likely to face prosecution” (Pfaff 2018, 575). Because prosecutors are generally elected on the county level, the city-suburb demographic split ensures in higher population and voter turnout rates in the suburbs, which on the whole are isolated from the politics and injustices in the central city. This isolation, Pfaff concludes, allows suburbanites

to view the city and crime issues as “abstractions,” and as a result elect prosecutors who are “tough on crime” (Pfaff 2018, 581). This can be viewed as a political outcome of urban society, as the expansion of voting jurisdictions to include metro areas creates a spatial graft in lived experience that distinctly impacts residents of the criminalized city. Thus, residents of these neighborhoods are subjected to the decisions of those who hold fear and contempt for them based on the myth of the dangerous “inner-city.” Specific neighborhoods are additionally devastated by prison gerrymandering, a practice that redistributes city populations to rural areas via the prison and, naturally, mass incarceration. Contrary to popular discourse on the motivations of the rural location of prisons, Pfaff argues that “having prisons filled to capacity may not just be an issue of economic gain for rural legislators, but one of political survival,” as incarcerated people are counted in the Census as residing in the place where they are incarcerated rather than their home communities (Pfaff 2018, 588). So, while incarcerated people cannot vote, they bolster numbers in rural communities that, unlike poor Black and brown communities, vote conservatively. As a result, would-be Democratic voters are disenfranchised while their bodies are used to bolster political power in rural areas and, finally, weaken political power in their home communities (Pfaff 2018, 589). Although prison gerrymandering is not legal in all states, it is legal in the majority (46), and is indicative of a political motive behind immobilization via incarceration. Mobility can be observed as the ability not only to move freely about physical space, but to be able to participate in the public realm generally, whether through voting in elections or simply being counted in the Census to determine the political clout of one’s area. In an especially egregious case, Wyoming senate districts were redrawn to place a prison in one incumbent’s district and push another into a different district to ensure that they would not run against one another (576). Carceral space prioritizes this fluidity, ensuring that prisons and

their populations become tools for politicians who are unlikely to come from high-incarceration neighborhoods. This intense disconnect reveals not only the spatial implications of the carceral state, but also use of incarceration to forcefully change entire communities' political representation against their will, and likely below their radar.

The spatial politics of the “million-dollar block”

The question of citizenship is critical to uncovering the carceral state, especially as it relates to political agency. Revisiting Muller's assertion that the North, in the early 20th century, incarcerated minority groups in a way that the South did not, I view these changes in terms of space rather than time. That is to say that I do not find timeline for carceral citizenship useful—however, I prefer an attention to the perceptions of treatments of space as they relate to the carceral boom. I find that this both supplements earlier economic arguments regarding the creation of superfluous populations and provides a more concrete understanding of the outcomes of carceral governance. Wacquant refers to the prison as a “judicial ghetto” (Wacquant 2011, 205), while simultaneously deeming the “punitive approach to working-class places” an act of “depoliticization” (Wacquant 2011, 30). As noted in the previous chapter, depoliticization is a critical aim of sociospatial segregation, as it hinders possibilities of coalition and political expression. The former classification refers to the loss of social, civil, and human status during incarceration, commonly referred to as social or civil death. Given the political and legal proximity of poor Black communities to the carceral state, it is appropriate to demonstrate how attitudes toward citizenship grow out of the prison—the foremost carceral institution. By looking to the prison, this proximity gains legal legitimacy, as the state evokes the same approach to the citizenship rights of incarcerated people and the communities they are most likely to call home.

Most recently, this is exemplified by the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) of 1995. Following the Civil Rights Movement, incarcerated people in the late 1960s took to legal activism to challenge penal conditions such as overcrowding—the focus was less on an argument for “rights,” and more on demanding the state to decarcerate (Schoenfeld 2010, 731).²⁶ From the 1970s to the 1990s, incarcerated people filed such a magnitude of suits that the federal government responded with the PLRA. This legislation tightened the limitations for incarcerated people to file claims, putting in place legal obstructions that would drastically decrease this influx. Solidifying the meaning of the prison as a closed institution, the PLRA “granted the government near impunity to violate the rights of prisoners without fear of consequences” (Schlanger and Shay 2008, 140). One example of the obstacles instituted by the PLRA is the barring of lawsuits for mental or emotional injury. By this statute, “[p]roven violations of prisoners’ religious rights, speech rights, and due process rights have all been held non-compensable, and thus placed largely beyond the scope of judicial oversight” (Schlanger and Shay 2008, 143). Evidence of physical injury was required to prove a violation of constitutional rights; because physical injury is unlikely to result from these violations, incarcerated people are effectively barred from bringing these cases of sexual abuse and religious discrimination to court. Although brief, this elucidates Wacquant’s proposition, demonstrating how the prison becomes a site where rights guaranteed to “all citizens” can be voided, especially in response to legal activism. The political, social, and cultural agency of a person, when removed and relocated via the process of incarceration, disappears. Given the fluidity of the carceral state, this depersonalization of potential political actors is not limited to the inside of the prison.

²⁶ In the conclusion of *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America*, Gottschalk acknowledges that while a rights-based discourse “can make people more passive and dependent on the state and more vulnerable to co-optation” (Gottschalk 2006, 246). At the same time, she finds that activists and scholars must not completely eschew judicial and policy change; rather, we must challenge the carceral state using a variety of tactics.

The depoliticization of working-class communities and communities of color via carceral practices is realized in the “million-dollar block.” The “million-dollar block” refers to the hyper-local patterns that, following broken windows and other aforementioned urban practices, lead to prison and jail populations that draw from select neighborhoods. This term grew out of the work of researchers in prison. In 1992, Eddie Ellis was released from Green Haven Correctional Facility in Stormville, NY. In an interview with the New York Times, he detailed his research while incarcerated, which exposed what neighborhoods incarcerated people came from. Accompanied by a map, Ellis’ study found that 75% of the state’s prison population came from seven neighborhoods in New York City (Kurgan 2013, 187). After this work was made public, mapping the origins of incarcerated people became a popular practice for researchers in the justice field. To demonstrate that “incarceration is a problem of the city,” Eric Cadora of the Justice Mapping Center furthered this mapping project, adding to it the shocking amount of public funds spent incarcerating non-violent drug offenders in concentrated areas (188). Thus arrived the term million-dollar blocks in the public vocabulary on mass criminalization of urban neighborhoods. Laura Kurgan and her team at the Spatial Information Design Lab (SIDL) at Columbia University built on this research in 2005. Mobilizing criminal justice data and mapping technology, Kurgan writes that the Million-Dollar Blocks Project “borrows and inverts the language of crime ‘hot spot’ maps” to “produce new visual and quantitative meanings” (Kurgan 2013, 188). The centrality of languages and meanings in the birth of the million-dollar block not only reiterates the importance of naming in interpreting mass incarceration, but also the active role that spatial representation plays in this discourse. Crime hot spot or heat maps have been used by lawmakers and police to target specific areas for increased policing; the popular discourse surrounding crime supports such algorithmic practices. Million-dollar block

maps ask viewers to think more critically about how crime is defined and assigned to certain communities. As Kurgan discovers, mapping incarceration rather than crime exposes a very different logic from the ubiquitous crime map: “It is as if by imprisoning the residents of these neighborhoods—making them disappear from their city—we were simply mirroring the disappearance of the conversation on poverty” (196). The constant proximity of poor neighborhoods of color to the (mobile) carceral state, viewed through maps, shifts attention from one-sided questions of crime and perpetrators to ones about criminalization as an urban process. Citizenship, then, is redefined by the carceral state and its many actors, as merely living in a dispossessed space signifies consent to be surveilled and funneled into the prison apparatus.

How police construct the carceral city

The elasticity of the carceral state, as seen in its effect on urban spaces, less visible forms of securitization, directly mirrors the “flexible” neoliberal political economy. Accounts of militarized police, police brutality, and extrajudicial killings have exploded in the national news since the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Police have a, if not the, central role in enforcing state relations with marginalized communities. They have been increasingly militarized, and support for the police—an entity that is supposedly local—has been literally constructed against movements for racial equity. #BlueLivesMatter, has co-opted the language of #BlackLivesMatter, replacing Black, a category of racial identity, with blue, the proverbial color of a police uniform. This “countermovement” advocates against indictment of the police in police brutality cases, and is understood by supporters to be inherently American. In the age of #BlackLivesMatter, the police have achieved national and symbolic status among conservative Americans, signifying a markedly urban manifestation of racial retrenchment. This section is

dedicated to the role of police in constructing the American city space where racial violence is legally sanctioned, and thus where we can observe the embodied enforcement of carceral governmentality and citizenship in the city.

For political scientists Soss and Weaver, police represent the unwanted proximity of the prison to what they term race-class subjugated communities. Indeed, as evidenced by the previous discussion of Black Codes, there is a significant historical premise for the policing of the mobility and gathering of Black Americans. The police, they posit, are the only contact with the state that some communities have; they may be the most enthusiastically funded public institution that they come into contact with as well, as police budgets more than tripled from 1951 to 2017 (Soss and Weaver 2017, 567). As practices like broken windows and the emphasis on status offenses resurged in the 1980s, advances in police technology embraced the use of “hot spot” mapping to identify where additional police presence was necessitated by these logics. Urban spaces were treated by these technologies like warzones, or more aptly, like hunting grounds: in Los Angeles, the term No Humans Involved (NHI) was used by police to describe young Black men (Soss and Weaver 2017, 572). Urban space is, indeed, heterotopic based on its treatment by the police: as the embodied actors of the carceral state, they have the power to recreate the knowledge and identity of a neighborhood, paint it as criminal space, and ultimately dehumanize its citizens. Multiple histories reside in one space—one of the state and one of the people—and converge through these exercises of power. Herbert defines this power of the police as the ability to use force, and not the actual use of force. This potential for violence changes according to where police are—police action will almost invariably be different whether a call is made to a Black neighborhood or a white one (Herbert 1997, 21). This is especially evident in a University of Chicago study on public opinion in regard to the use of excessive force by police:

47 percent of white respondents thought that police exercised additional force on people of color, while 81 percent of Black respondents agreed (The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research 2015). Given the residential segregation that persists in the U.S., this illuminates the power differential of the police as an institution, as they hold vastly different meaning for white and Black communities. As the arbiters of space, relationships with police demonstrate how the carceral state described throughout this thesis is enacted.

An understanding of such relationships requires an understanding of the control meant to be exercised by police. According to Herbert, police, first, mark out spaces of increased surveillance as determined by the state. As spatial actors, it is their duty to protect some communities from others by limiting the mobility of those deemed dangerous by enacting meaningful boundaries—for example, Skid Row is constructed as fundamentally different from Palm Springs because its heightened police presence is viewed as absolutely necessary (Herbert 1997, 13). That an extreme police presence is abnormal for white, middle-class America allows for the image that poor areas are pacified or made docile by the police, thereby legitimating the police and, consequently, the state's reliance upon punitive measures (Herbert 1997, 15). At the same time, the potential for violence enables police to redefine residents' relationships with their own communities, as evidenced in the interviewee's account in Brown's article. Control is double-sided, and has different if not opposite meanings based on one's relationship to the state (in this instance). The responsibility of the police to "secure public order" is ultimately not to keep all citizens safe, but rather to demonstrate that they are taming or regulating the spaces that society views as disordered (Herbert 1997, 22). If spaces are found disorderly, using the previously discussed schemas of crime and criminality, police are charged with the duty of removal, engaging carceral logics in "free" space: "[O]ne of their most potent means of

exercising control is to jail, an especially severe territorial act...Simply put, many police strategies to create public order involve enacting boundaries...police power rests upon a political geography” (11). The power to exercise social control through what Beckett and Herbert call banishment allows police to occupy the role of apolitical arbiters of space—they decide who can and cannot remain in their community and participate in public life. Again, like the prison boundary, the boundary between safe/unsafe, Black/white, or urban/suburban space relies upon the same inside/outside dichotomy as the prison, further inserting the prison into the spatial politics of the city. The prison and the marginalized urban space come to reflect one another’s constant, punitive relationship with the state. Because police are viewed as necessary to American social order and nationhood, the divides that they create are perceived as necessary, further implicating the narrative of crime into the formation of urban space.

The city is the site of contestation of citizenship in urban society. When Lefebvre visualizes the temporal trajectory of the city from “political city” to “mercantile city” to “industrial city” and, finally, “critical zone.” The political city—the polis—assumed power by pitting the city and non-city against one another, asserting that those outside of the urban political center were effectively ruled out of society. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of this stage of urban transformation, Lefebvre finds, was that power relations could be mapped onto the city, where knowledge and society were centralized (Brenner 2014, 41). The city under the carceral state operates similarly, as national narratives operate in and through a designated space. While the “city” is being consumed by urban society, it is reasserted as a space for criminalized control to redefine social and political relationships. Carceral governmentality and carceral citizenship operate through urban society in that they diffuse out of the city, acquiring legitimacy through their concentration in the criminalized city, quelling fears of spreading urban pathology.

Political agency is mediated through space in urban society. In the following two chapters, I conceive of this political agency, or the process of becoming a political subject, through an urban praxis that centers our lived experiences in space as the site of contestation and transformation.

Chapter 3.

Oral History and Urban Geography: Empowering Lived Space

Perception conceived of broken windows policing, of governing through fear, and of an American imaginary that assumes people innocent and guilty by nature of their geography. If imaginaries, both collective and individual, have this power, it is necessary to contemplate how they are shaped. How did Wilson and Kelling's article start a worldwide trend toward preventative policing that brought back the status offense to feed the prison boom? How could a piece in a magazine exercise that much power? As we have witnessed, historic precedent and existing perceptions of people and the places they inhabit largely aided this mobilization of theory. Our understanding of the places that we do and do not live in is increasingly shaped not by experience, but the information we consume about it. As Mumia Abu-Jamal asks, "Before cops killed Michael Brown, who among us had ever heard of Ferguson, Missouri" (Abu-Jamal 2017, 128)? When we think of places impacted by the criminal justice system, it is easy to think in extremes. It is just as easy to define a place and the people who live there by these landmark events. Stories like Ferguson can be a shock to our systems, or they can be all too familiar—this largely depends on what we have been exposed to and what we know. In discussing racial difference critical race theorists assert that storytelling is a valuable tool for shifting focus from individuals to systems, emphasizing race as socially constructed and as a determinant of most, if not all, aspects of our lives. Mainstream America is subjected to a single story about race—that it has come and gone, and that the end of the Civil Rights Movement brought about racial equality. Richard Delgado presents storytelling as a critical tool of resistance in the colorblind era. He emphasizes that because people with certain privileges—whiteness, maleness, affluence,

heterosexuality—perceive the world differently from those without them. For example, someone who has never been told that their natural is not appropriate for the office or who has never been told they were too “pretty” to be intelligent may assume that racism and sexism are no longer problems in our society. Telling stories about experiences of difference, whether they manifest in prison or in the workplace, work actively against these assumptions. Recognizing difference enables us to view others’ experiences and struggles as valid, opening our eyes to inequalities we were previously unaware of. Delgado writes, “stories and counterstories can serve an [important] destructive function. They can show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel... They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power. They are the other half—the destructive half—of the creative dialectic” (Delgado 2014, 72). In this chapter, I lay out the practicality and ingenuity of oral history as a mode of mobilizing this creative dialectic in my exploration of carceral urbanism. Oral history is not only conducive to the demolition of a narrative that assumes that all are treated equally despite the history previously described, but also generative of an understanding of the carceral state that impacts entire communities by redefining the very spaces they inhabit.

The role of oral history in (de)constructing geographic narratives

Proposing that space is a complex set of relationships rather than an inert object, Lefebvre arrives at the idea that foreign space is not understood through out own intuition, but rather “mediated through concepts and conventions” (Brenner 2014, 96). This he terms “conceived space.” This layer of space is put forth by those charged with “creating” and “representing” urban space. Following this view, architects and geographers occupy a similar position to that of Kenneth Burke’s “symbolic brokers,” or those capable of creating and levying

social and cultural capital (Barthel 1996, 12). News media operates similarly, controlling which stories become “mainstream” and which will not become “news.” As Schmid finds, this attests to the way space is “created in our minds and characterized by images, concepts, and maps,” which beget a sense of empiricism (Brenner 2014, 96). Indeed, as we increasingly engage with places we have never seen or experienced, there arises a need for an understanding of how we process these events, making conceived space absolutely central to our political imaginaries. Michelle Brown’s analysis of “counter-images in the carceral age” demonstrates how our present sources of information and schemas of “fact” prevent us from seeing systemic undercurrents. She writes,

“Although we may see glimpses of global relays and networks of relation across mainstream and alternative news sites, there is still very little in the ways we collectively think the world that allows us to make the kinds of connections and linkages that decenter and dismantle social institutions like the prison” (Brown 2014, 194).

Indeed, there is a sense that amidst all of this information, we are missing something that ties the everyday atrocities of the carceral state to larger societal questions of history, values, and what community means in this age. Looking past powerful actors, how can we envision distant spaces “from the bottom up?” Lefebvre insists that spatial production continues from the conceived—what we learn from second hand sources—to the lived, or that which we experience. The “lived space” (or “spaces of representation”) is based upon personal and social experiences, and is difficult to understand with scientific methods (Brenner 2014, 97). This layer of space is fully dependent upon experiences in a space, which grant them subjective and transitory meanings. These meanings may be passed along through social networks, or they may live and die with one person. Lived spaces can harness emotions and meaning that the observer is unlikely to find through their “objective” analysis. Returning to Brown’s concern, it appears that we must

challenge what is allegedly made “fact” via conceived space. Moving toward an analysis of lived space can allow us to perceive far-away spaces as impacted by the same system by gauging the feelings and reactions inspired by injustice. While the conceived space perpetuated by the media may mislead us to think of cities as physically distant and, therefore, not interdependent, a concentration on lived space can lead us to the valuable connections that upend systemic violence. In order to do so, I suggest looking to methods that not only engage our conversational tendencies as social beings, but also those which require us to imagine places through the lens of those living in them.

Oral histories have emerged, notably in geography, as yet another process by which scholars and activists can challenge hegemonic and often exclusionary discourses. By surpassing the constrictive category of “data collection,” oral histories invoke the strengths of participatory research such as the breakdown of the dangerous researcher/researched power dynamic. Oral history significantly restructures this relationship, placing decision making power into the hands of who, in other methods, may be objectified as the “researched.” In “Talking geography: On oral history and the practice of geography,” Mark Riley and David Harvey argue for oral history’s recognition as a viable element in understanding space as an active social and political phenomenon. They write that it can play a part in “sketch[ing] a world that is socially constructed and contingent, and where knowledges are situated” by “problematizing existing meta-narratives” (Riley and Harvey 2004, 3). In discussing large issues on the level of the community (rather than the global or national focus that “mass” problems demand), it is necessary to employ frameworks that simultaneously do not ignore the interconnectedness of experience. Emphasizing the socially and culturally constructed-ness of our relationships with the state can be easily overlooked in urban research, especially those that rely on the build

environment as the arbiter of urban experience. Sharon Zukin finds this flaw in Jane Jacobs' work, echoing Herbert Gans' critique that she succumbed to the "fallacy of physical determinism" (Zukin 2011, 17). A "meta-narrative" that is contested in this work, then, is this very "physical determinism" that obscures the socially constructed city behind the corporate tower and the gentrified brownstone. Physical determinism is, indeed, what broken windows and its invasive antecedents relied upon, and critical urbanists must problematize this tendency toward to physical through a concerted interest in the socio-political. This is not to eschew the importance of the built city, but rather to emphasize the multilayeredness of urban space. Oral histories have the power to steady us in the social, cultural, and political layers of urban space that are often underestimated in their significance.

Tim Cole recognizes that oral histories of places also disrupt assumptions of oral history by acknowledging place as an active element rather than an theater for more interesting events (Cole 2015, 31). Cole finds that oral histories of places destabilize time/space divides, a problematique for geographers. As this project seeks analyze the impact if mass incarceration in urban space, I keep in mind the inextricable ties between space and time and their combined role in constructing carceral realities (Moran 2015, 46). Indeed, incarceration is defined by the loss of mobility and the creation of productive ruptures. Freedom in the context of the carceral state, as Minke asserts, is predicated not on constant evaluation of one's growth, but in stark differences in mobilities managed by the state (Minke 2016, 239). To create to histories invoking the carceral state, then, is a direct challenge to this immobilization. Sharing stories of it's superfluity and omnipresence frees, at least, an awareness. As Anja Kanneiser finds, listening to oral narratives "[return] the reader/listener to different micro-political perspectives..." as "speakers act as possible worlds" (Kanneiser 2012, 7-9). Worldmaking and the reinvention of social and

political imaginaries of space are central to abolitionist work. The prison is a world making institution—it realizes societal and national goals regarding belonging, punishment, and otherness through the geographic and social relocation of entire populations, whereby politics of governance and citizenship are redefined from the “inside” out. Caleb Smith’s analysis of the “poetics of punishment” and the American imaginary illuminates that the roots of the carceral state is not a question of of chronology, but one of race and geography (Smith 2009, 11). As demonstrated in McKittrick’s Black sense of place, links between bodily and spatial necropolitics dictate the way that space, notably Black spaces, are treated by the state. The American nation state is built on narratives of captivity through the colonization of Native lands, the genocide and forced relocation of Native people, and chattel slavery. The murder of spaces that were once free to Black and Native peoples was necessary for the United States to live. As these notions of space, property, and oppression play out through space, it is necessary to use oral history as a tool for the rediscovery and analysis of historical events using a spatial lens.

In response to Massey and Harvey’s call for “a political economy of space and time” that acknowledges space’s productive qualities, histories that focus instead on lived space can allow the “social and spatial [to] inextricably realize one another” (Kanneiser 2012, 346). The political economy of space, as viewed in previous chapters, operates unseen and unheard, and can be a tool of violence when it goes unseen. It is necessary, then, to realize a carceral urbanism based in ever-varied, ever-transforming lived experience—or what Rogaly and Qureshi deem a people’s history made possible by oral history (Rogaly and Qureshi 2017, 191). Much in the way that defining a place by its physical structures a la environmental determinism ignored social and political agency, forging histories that ignore the interplay of time and space leave questions of social justice in the urban age unanswered. Thus, we must experiment with lived space, as it

reveals the urban questions that fail to meet the eye. To reveal the spatial injustice that has been enacted by the carceral state, we must unveil this layer of the urban experience and allow lived experience to realign our own definitions of space and time. By doing do, we stand to gain an understanding of mass incarceration and criminalization that is undoubtedly urban, and move toward an urbanism that holds justice at its core. This urbanism can not only benefit our collective discussions of the criminal justice system, but also more broadly our conceptualization of crisis, inequity, and violence in the urban age. We can pursue an urbanism, then, that is not only interested in social justice, but also in recognizing our role realizing spatial justice.

Voice, lived space, and prison abolition: hearing resistance

Shelley Trower writes that the “oral was once exclusively local,” and unlike text stayed within the range of a relatively small network of people (Trower 2011, 1). Stories, not to be confused with oral traditions, were (and still are) shared between people with some relationship to one another. This could speak to how, presently, there exists a differentiation between conversations that should be held over text message or email and those that should occur via Skype or phone. The intimacy implied by oral history imparts a sense of locality, familiarity, and perhaps responsibility. In conversation with Doreen Massey, Trower addresses the difficulties imposed onto small places by globalized society. Massey warns that this can inspire a reactionary move toward homogenization to secure a place’s identity—this makes it more readily consumed in the modern market of “places.” Contesting this means viewing the global and local not in opposition to one another, but rather as coeval (Trower 2011, 13-14). Individual community members and the places they make, then, must contend with this dynamic. Trower views oral history as a way of understanding phenomena (using global capitalism as an example)

“from the ground up” much in the way that Andrews et. al. do (Trower 2011, 14). This perspective mirrors my own in crafting an understanding of mass incarceration and criminalization from an urban perspective. While long-range histories like *The New Jim Crow* have allowed mass incarceration to come to public consciousness, it is our responsibility as urbanists to make our conceptualization of urban society respond to these issues. In other words, our urbanism must be attuned to the political and social forces that presently reconfigures urban life. We can also pursue justice in the act of research: in their discussion of oral history after crises, Cave and Sloan emphasize the process’ empathetic capabilities (Cave and Sloan 2014, 1). Oral history enables participants and observers to recreate a place and understand its inherently subjective and multitudinous nature. We can view injustice not as defining spaces or the lives led within them, but instead grant more humanity to those we discuss by refusing to fall into the same trappings of broken windows. Importantly, we can refuse the erasure of the local and personal injustices that can be flattened by neoliberalism. In a time when places appear increasingly homogenous thanks to gentrification and global corporations, urbanists must dig deeper to realize the multiplicities of spaces. As the social and geographic periphery expands, we must ensure that it is not deemed irrelevant, or else we risk marginalizing life in these places in the same way that the economy has. Our practice must mirror our distaste for what neoliberalism presents for cities, and must actively include those most impacted in this resistance.

Oral history provides an outlet for those listening to reimagine themselves as they move through the world, allowing listeners to ask if and how the same social forces affect their communities. In Kanneiser’s exploration of how “voice and space co-create one another,” she emphasizes that voice is the way that people often make contributions to their political and everyday lives (Kanneiser 2012, 336-337). As a mode of performance, expressing through the

voice comes naturally. In thinking about globalized urban space, receiving others' voices and sounds can challenge how space "should" function. This is apparent, for example, in Stuart Fowkes' current Protest and Politics project. Through this project, Fowkes has produced a soundmap of protests from around the world in the past decade. In an effort to memorialize the resistance that has occurred in the 21st century, this project captures the pace and emotion of protest. In an article in CityLab, Fowkes commented, "Sound can bring you back to a place or time in an instant in a way that probably only smell can rival" (Boone 2017). For those who were or were not present, a particular time and space may be reimagined, this time with particular emphasis on a political and emotional context. While memory is unstable and highly subjective, it can be used as a tool for continued pressure on and attention to socio-political issues within a space. Sound mirrors the way that we experience the world around us, as seemingly irrelevant sounds enter and affect our consciousness each day. Sounds as jarring as protest chants or as trivial as the whoosh of a passing car create our sense of "here" and "now." Indeed, this allows us to transcend fixed definitions of space as inactive, and embrace it as a critical factor in enacting justice and injustice. As Andrews et. al. find, oral histories highlight the "temporal dimension" of spaces (Andrews et. al. 2006, 170). Thus, one need not have a relationship to the physical spaces discussed to comprehend the local impacts of mass incarceration and how they play on space and time. By hearing how individual lives have been altered by inequality and state violence, listeners must navigate new emotional territory. If a listener has never been afraid of the police, they must imagine what they could feel like. They must then question why they have never felt this way, and why the person speaking has. If a listener has had this experience, they can understand that theirs is not isolated, but rather a product of systemic forces. Because speech is "dialogic," listeners are positioned in an active rather than a passive role, allowing

themselves to be “penetrated by” a new sonic space (Kanngeiser 2012, 337-338, 345). This not only points to the emotional properties of listening, but also to the political potential created through a dialogue that does not demand the speaker’s response, but instead that of the listener. If we can imagine someone else’s lived space by listening to their stories, we see them as an agent—as someone who has affected the listener’s perspective or understanding. Dialogues across vast social difference, in an age of heightening segregation and inequality, is made less possible by our cities, but can be made more possible through media. As participants in urban society, it is indeed our duty to find new ways to understand our situatedness in this society when our built environment does not.

Hannah Arendt asserts that through speech, “speakers identify themselves to others as particular political subjects” (Kanngeiser 2012, 339). The process of becoming a political subject is one that I strive to illuminate through this project, demonstrating how creating and consuming oral history allows for a reversal of the political-spatial processes that have resulted in mass criminalization and mass incarceration. The carceral state is inherently opposed to exchange, preferring instead to divide, confine and constrain space’s productive abilities and heterogeneity through, for example, extreme police presence in segregated communities. Through these conditions, the state has been able to construct vastly different realities based upon where one lives, and obscured the ways in which we are implicated in others’ dispossession. As in the case of prosecutorial elections, because different communities have different experiences with these systems, they contribute to injustice often without knowing—for someone who has never known anyone subjected to a long prison sentence, electing a tough-on-crime candidate is meaningless. Becoming a political subject is an act of challenging the carceral state by deferring to affected people and communities as experts on the issue of mass incarceration and by engaging with their

voices to ultimately view their lived experience. Thus, by imagining others' realities as both personal and systemic problems, listeners can situate themselves within this dynamic and realize their own power and the power of the speakers. For speakers, the act of realizing one's own agency is also a rejection of the carceral state's control of mobility and communication. These imaginative and dialogic qualities are central to the goals of prison abolition, and demonstrate the significance of employing oral history in this larger project.

According to Amy M. Pommerening, *Engaging with the idea of prisons as unquestionable structures in political, legal, social, and physical landscapes asserts that prison abolition is a struggle for liberation for all those implicated in this society. This struggle relies on "the imagination as the impetus for altering our modes of awareness and communication, which allows for radically different possibilities for being in the world"* (Pommerening 2016, 8). Imagination can be both productive and obstructive to enacting a radically different world, and must be explored through a variety of means to unearth its material outcomes. As witnessed in Chapter 2, racialized perceptions and assumptions have been given political and legal power through the criminal justice system. Pommerening reconceptualized imagination, charging that by altering the meaning of imagination, we alter understanding of experience (Pommerening 2016, 81). Put simply for my uses, this means that framing imagination as constructive and politically significant endows experience with a more dynamic and useful meaning. In carceral society, experience is markedly dictated by one's social identities, which increasingly determine whether or not someone is targeted by the criminal justice system's many tentacles. Because the carceral state operates covertly through the language of stigmatized neighborhoods and people, we must insist that those who are most impacted have authority over this discourse. We must, as critical race theorists argue, acknowledge that "social reality is constructed" (Delgado 2014, 72).

Placing ourselves in one's lived experience for just a few minutes rejects any notion that there can exist a standard experience with a systemic problem. By destabilizing the idea that the law and the state operate in a color-blind or universal manner, oral history can unravel these myths of equity and assume a new level of critical engagement with the carceral state. Imagination is a powerful tool for undoing these assumptions, and is empowered by oral history's emphasis on personal stories. Power and humanity arise as key goals of oral history as not merely a research method, but of a critical engagement with political questions. By constructing an oral history project centered on experiences with the carceral state, I am able to experiment with these propositions and assess how, going forward, urbanists can bring these conversations out into the world with us.

Regardless of where we are, we are constantly engaging in the politics and lives of other places, especially when we monitor injustice carried out broadly by the criminal justice system. As places are more intricately connected than ever before, how must we adapt our political engagements? If, as Wacquant argues, the prison moves from a system to a life-world through the city, how may we observe this (Wacquant 1997, 207)? I find that these questions are deeply tied to our conception of events, especially violent ones, occurring in space. As I prepare to discuss my own oral history project, I present this exploration of oral history with two goals in mind: 1) to promote the use of oral history into the urban epistemology and 2) to link the practice of storytelling to the imperatives of prison abolition. Here, I am able to put critical race theory and critical geography into conversation with one another to produce an approach to oral history that deconstructs hegemonic imaginaries of the criminal justice system and mass criminalization while it strives to expose the "life-world" thereby created. In urban society, I suggest, we must be open to engaging conversations of injustice and the voices of those most profoundly

impacted. If not, we only reproduce the widening social chasms that maintain inequality—we accept that, if we are not physically near those who experience the world differently, their experiences are irrelevant. As I seek to craft an oral history project that challenges the powers that necessitate this thesis in the first place, I seek out where metanarratives meet personal narratives, where prison touches the city, and where the state meets the home.

Chapter 4.

Mapping Resilience and Resistance in Poughkeepsie, New York through Storytelling

On a warm day in the middle of September, my boyfriend and I took an Uber to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (UU) a few miles from the Vassar campus. Our driver was amiable, and, more to my surprise, drove us in a pickup truck. She remarked that she got married at the UU, just like my own parents, and was happy to see Vassar students attending the Fellowship's events. I had planned on going to this event for several weeks, after seeing it suggested for me on Facebook. The main gathering room was packed. To my surprise, most of the attendees were older, probably a decade older than my parents. We came together that evening to watch a film on women who were incarcerated for retaliating against violent male partners, and to hear from the ten or so activists from Alliance of Families for Justice who were marching from Harlem to Albany in broad demonstration against the injustices of the criminal justice system. As I watched the film, I held in my hand a blue pamphlet for the Coming Home program, a mentorship program for re-entering people held at the UU. When the discussion ended, a woman, Lisa, made an announcement about the Coming Home program that would be restarting soon for the next twelve weeks. I helped put away chairs, partly stalling until my anxiety subsided. After our short conversation, Lisa invited me to the upcoming Coming Home meeting. I showed up by myself the next week, nervously mingling with whoever was willing to talk to me. Lisa and I spoke at length about the dearth of re-entry resources in the community, especially for women, despite the growing number of people re-entering each month. Sitting at a table with a checkered tablecloth, I eventually settled in and casually learned about my tablemates' experiences being mentored in the program, some even repeating the program

because they gained so much from it. Standing in the back at the end of the evening, I met an older man who had re-entered and become a van driver for different church programs like this one. He asked me, “Are you here to do the program? Are you coming home?” “No,” I replied, “I’m a student just trying to meet people for a project. I helped my mother re-enter two years ago, though, so I’m really happy to see everybody here.” He lit up, a reaction that I would never anticipate. This is not a detail I like to share, and that is an understatement. But in that community room, with the paper decorations and tears of joy and gratitude drying on the ground, there was no pang in my heart or stomach or eyes. I felt, above all, comfortable in the presence of a complete stranger in a room of even more strangers. For the first time, it felt entirely normal to say that—if anything, it made me feel like I belonged in that space even though I was not contributing to the program (if anything, I was eating their food).

At this point, I was not sure how I was going to incorporate my exploration of the criminal justice activist/support/reform community in Poughkeepsie, a small, deindustrialized city on the Hudson River. A fortuitous weekend at Skidmore College’s events around storytelling and mass incarceration led me to my interest in oral history as a way to capture and share what I felt at Coming Home.²⁷ In this chapter, I describe the oral history-making process with three of my participants. I do not believe in transcribing an oral history, as I find that its power lies in its aural qualities and its penetrative, surrounding qualities previously discussed. Therefore, I instead walk through my experience of, as discussed in the previous chapter, constructing an urban praxis that actively exposes and contests the carceral state. Throughout, I reflect on how these histories challenge, question, and expand my propositions in the last three chapters. This, my final component in constructing a carceral urbanism, uplifts the lifeworlds of

²⁷ My trip to Skidmore College was graciously funded by the Academic Enrichment Fund through the Dean of Studies Office at Vassar College.

participants taking action in a single city. The cumulative effect of these histories, I hope, is that readers are able to imagine a place they may or may not be familiar with through the lense of carceral urbanism, thereby putting into practice this new way of examining urban society from the community level. This is why I do not provide a history of Poughkeepsie itself—not unlike its Rust Belt cousins, it has struggled over the past century to secure a consistent and productive industry, been ravaged by urban renewal, and welcomed a sizeable immigrant population from Mexico and Central America (Flad and Griffin 2009). I am most interested in drawing readers into a view of a small corner of urban society that, through subjective experience, has the power to demonstrate the capaciousness of the carceral state and how people react, organize, and discuss in its wake. Thus, although oral histories are meant to be heard, I include my story of this disjointed journey in order to both highlight what the histories revealed as well as provide a template for praxis that critically engages the role of the researcher. As a rarely-traversed practice for geographers, but one that is increasingly popular, I take this opportunity to make legible, and perhaps demystify, the utility of oral history in illuminating how social and political phenomena denote lived space.

Giancarlo

At a Wednesday night meeting the the End the New Jim Crow Action Network (ENJAN) in Poughkeepsie, I approached a new member who stated that she was a part of the Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance (DCPAA)'s criminal justice committee. Hoping to potentially expand my histories to other small, deindustrialized cities like Poughkeepsie, I asked if she could connect me with anyone in her organization. The next night, I had a message on my phone from a woman, one of the co-founders of the DCPAA, who was eager to share the names of some friends who she thought would be a great fit for my project. Within no more than three

e-mails, I was planning to meet with Giancarlo, a county legislator who teaches at the Dutchess County Jail in Poughkeepsie. In my penultimate e-mail, I noted that he could meet me in Vassar's Main Building, and that if he needed directions, he could call my cell phone. Given the disengagement between Vassar and the Poughkeepsie community, I felt worried that, although he was a county legislator, he may not have a knowledge of the campus' geography. He quickly responded that he was familiar, as his mother worked at Vassar. I felt both embarrassed and relieved—the former because I insisted that he would not know, and the latter because I find it shameful that a student of geography is terrible at giving simple directions.

Because I had been introduced to him first because of his work teaching in Dutchess County Jail rather than his position as county legislator, I decided it would be apt to begin our conversation from that point. I asked him what motivated him to teach in the jail, and what that experience meant to him. As a GED teacher, he is tasked with teaching subjects from reading comprehension to math. He chose to focus on his approach to math instruction. Because many men are in the jail for drug charges, he uses this opportunity to “put educational definitions to what they did outside on the street” in hopes of inspiring his students to apply their skills to new occupations. As a 27-year-old Poughkeepsie native with his own experience in the criminal justice system, he finds that students at the jail trust him because “he’s been there.” He describes discovering a friend dead of a drug overdose—“I never thought that could happen in Poughkeepsie. It’s five miles long! Then you realize how quickly things can spread...I thought this was normal when people die everyday in your hood. I can take one or two deaths. But now I’ve lost 25. Even my mother was asking why I was going to all these funerals.” At the time, even he could not answer that question. In the absence of his friends, Giancarlo began consulting the mothers whose sons had been shot or incarcerated. These conversations revealed a pattern:

make of his peers had been stopped by police and arrested for something as harmless as a broken tail light. They fit a profile, he commented. He witnessed friends—most, if not all of them—being held in the jail for 40 or 50 days, some of whom had yet to appear before a judge by that time. For Giancarlo, the jail is not so much the problem as was the issue of bail—with bail regularly set at \$5,000, it could easily exceed half of someone’s income. He sees this as exploitation: “People of color from disenfranchised communities are getting the short end of the stick. This predates to slavery. If you wanted to fill up a jail, where is it easier to do that? It’s not around here [Vassar and the predominantly white, middle class Town of Poughkeepsie] It’s in places like the city of Poughkeepsie.”

Justice for people in “the hood,” he emphasizes, differs greatly than that for those in a “nice area.” He gives the example of a girl who was run over on Church Street in 2013 and the perpetrator was never found; meanwhile, the daughter of a sheriff in a local suburb was kidnapped and found in three days. To him, this is indicative of the unfair treatment of Poughkeepsie residents by the criminal justice system. “I’m the son of immigrants, and I’m also a son of a city that’s disenfranchised. All my life, I had to be careful of what I did and who I did it with, and also be careful if somebody thought I was illegal. I’ve seen that on TV, but you never think it will happen to you. It’s the scariest thing to see ‘oh shit, it’s happening here.’ That’s when I decided to get into politics, to find answers to my questions and why things like this are going on.” Giancarlo’s foray into local politics is largely in honor of the friends he has lost. He decidedly calls himself a public servant rather than a politician—when told by local politicians that he did not “look political” because of his long hair, earrings, and tattoos, he responded, “I’m not here to be political. I got a lot more friends in the hood and I don’t need yours. Then they started getting it. I’m not intimidated by anyone in politics. I’ve seen scarier things.” For him, his

position gives him a way to turn his friends and community members' concerns into real change as he "keeps the pulse" by playing basketball with kids and helping formerly gang-affiliated friends transition to "civilian" life. In response to the proposed expansion of the Dutchess County Jail, a local polemic, he sees no use in fighting it—"it's happening," he remarks. His answer is, instead, to build an Educational Opportunity Center in the Family Partnership Center, a hub for social services in the center of the city of Poughkeepsie, to replace the recently shuttered technical school. Creating a centrally-located, state-funded opportunity for job training is, for him, not only a solution for his city, but for the larger region:

"I feel that Poughkeepsie is really the Manhattan of Dutchess County. If we can't fix Poughkeepsie, nothing else in Dutchess County is going to work...I think that people have just accepted what Poughkeepsie is and what it's going to be. I refuse that...I see what my home is and I don't like what my home is...We can allocate funds to create this Educational Opportunity Center and fund it right here in Poughkeepsie, and then it serves Dutchess County in its entirety."

Thus, for Giancarlo, representing Poughkeepsie has consequences for the rest of the county, which is predominantly rural. The influence that taking action in the city is so great that, he argues, positive change starts there. By refusing to accept the city as failed, dangerous, or irrelevant, he plans to instead use Poughkeepsie's regional centrality to set a precedent for educational and career opportunity at a time when his opponents are set to allocate public funds to a new, expanded criminal justice complex.

Tree

Tree is unquestionably one of the most prominent members of the Poughkeepsie community. As the CEO of a local after school program, he is responsible for the care and out-of-school education of hundreds of youth, and prides himself on having had generations of families attend his program. I met Tree when I volunteered at his organization as part of a Community-Engaged Learning course in Anthropology a year prior. As someone whose incarceration is central to the story he tells about why youth education became his life's work, I thought it would be appropriate to ask him to describe mass incarceration as it relates to Poughkeepsie. When I posed this question to him in his office, which is normally crowded with students but on that day was empty, he immediately responded, "That's real, I'm a product of that. It's not just this city, it's a country. If you read Michelle Alexander's book, then you know it's just being titled now. It's always existed...It has always been about "lock us back up...People put words to it now, but it's always been a feeling. It's what we've always known." When I was in Tree's office the year before, I remember talking with him about the HBO show *The Get Down*, and how he loved that it reminded him of when he was a young man in the Bronx at the time that it was "burning" in the late 1970s. Looking around at his various paintings of Black intellectuals and icons, it is clear that Tree takes pride in knowing his history. The curriculum of the program reflects this—I read many a book about Civil Rights activists to second graders during my time there. In talking about the times his students are living in, he finds that "government control" is more visible now than it was when he was young. He says that while he's been "complaining" about the constant "judicial engagement" of the Black community for years, if not decades, others are more apt to agree with him today.

He then transitions to talking about Poughkeepsie. Poverty is so concentrated because it's such a small city: "two ounces of it make a gallon." Citing a highschool dropout rate of over 50

percent, he questions what is holding the city back. Local leaders like himself and his co-leader are from New York City. He concludes that what is holding Poughkeepsie back is that so much of its history is hidden from its people.

“This was the capital of slavery. That’s why there ain’t no grocery stores on Market Street. I wonder what they were selling on Market Street. The Heritage Center has signs of all the anti-slavery spots [that were here]. I’m gonna get that, gonna make them put poles on them. Harriet Tubman was here. People were being freed and sold in this town, isn’t that fucking amazing? I wanna open that up and teach to every kid...when they cross one of those places, they should know what that was. Not just the bridge, not just the Walkway²⁸...[there could be] plaques, like a badge. And it would say this was a spot that was anti-slavery. You know you could change the whole temperament of this community: look where we come from, look where we’re at! This town is so devastated...People are proud they graduated from middle school.”

Tree, like Giancarlo, sees education as the critical point in Poughkeepsie’s potential betterment. Importantly, he sees that the people of Poughkeepsie need to have access to their local histories, especially local Black history. That my initial question about mass incarceration led to his expression of this dream for the city hearkens back to his initial point regarding the newness of the terminology for this phenomenon. Tree situates his understanding of the present funneling of poor Black Americans into the criminal justice system as another continuation of slavery, also like Giancarlo, and believes that making this history public would liberate and empower city residents. Evidently, for Tree, the lack of educational opportunity in Poughkeepsie is what deprives it of community leadership and ultimately its ability to improve. Although when I asked

²⁸ The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Bridge and the Walkway Over the Hudson are popular heritage tourism sites in Poughkeepsie.

to record his history he would give me the “robotic bullshit,” his story represents quite the opposite, as it is forthcoming of his assessment of the city’s needs in the face of racial inequity.

Geri

I first met Geri at ENJAN, where she is an active member and also represents the UU’s Social Justice Committee. A working-class Italian-American woman from Brooklyn, New York, she is outspoken and incredibly active in various spheres of public life in the Poughkeepsie area; notably, she often writes to the Poughkeepsie Journal about the activism she and others are involved in. I was curious about Geri’s interest in criminal justice issues, especially her passion for racial inequality. An avid court monitor, she comes to every bi-weekly meeting with extensive notes on how defendants are treated in the courtroom. I asked Geri to meet with me and tell me her history as an activist and how it led her to this work. While her history is extensive and detailed—she is, after all, trained as a journalist—I highlight here the moment that she identifies as forever changing her perspective of the criminal justice system.

Geri was an undergraduate in New York in the 1960s. Heavily involved in the anti-war movement, she founded the first chapter of Students for a Democratic Society at Hunter College. An avid organizer and writer, she built student coalitions across the city, and was especially involved in her neighborhood in the Upper West Side. In her search for a feminist group to join, she became a member of WITCH, the Women’s International Terrorist Committee from Hell, which she describes as “ACT UP feminists.” Her first action with the group, she recalls, was going to the Miss America pageant and throwing bras and other symbolic materials into a trash can: “Everyone says we burnt our bras, but we didn’t—we would have been arrested.” Indeed, they were tacit activists and made a point to avoid arrest. Later, a friend and fellow journalist in

WITCH who worked for a leftist publishing house discovered that the company was making much of its profits from pornography. When the friend spoke out against her colleagues, she was fired. Naturally, they planned an occupation of the headquarters, demanding that the company give over its profits to women sex workers. To their surprise, given that the publishers were fellow leftists, they were arrested.

Her memory is what she calls her “introduction to incarceration and the kind of exploitation that happens, especially to women, when you’re arrested and incarcerated.” Despite the fact that they were just trespassers, Geri and her co-organizers were shackled in the paddy wagon and proceeded to be purposefully injured by the police officers.

“On the way to the jail, one cop said to the other ‘Let’s give them a ride they’ll never forget.’ They went over cobblestone streets downtown. Everybody was black and blue, it was a horror. When we got there, I just got this feeling, this knowledge, this awareness, that when you’re in jail, the people that are holding you hold your life in their hands.

They could do anything to you.”

While in the jail, the women were relocated unbeknownst to their lawyer, causing confusion and a lengthening of their time in jail. When told they would be strip searched, the women decided that one would resist while the rest submitted. The woman who refused to strip was shackled to the front of the cell while a guard ripped her clothes off. They were held for the legal limit of 24 hours, which Geri notes is short compared to the current situation in the Dutchess County Jail. Their case was dismissed by a judge who was similarly opposed to pornography, and used this experience to bring media attention to the treatment of women in jails and prisons.

Later on, Geri developed an interest in working with people involved in the criminal justice system, and spent some time working in jails and prisons facilitating self-help programs.

This presently inspires her indignation toward the proposed Dutchess County Jail expansion—in her research, she has found that the reasoning behind the proposed expansion is not because they are currently at capacity, but because officials are interested in extending contracts to ICE and housing detained immigrants. This instance of “transinstitutionalization” has also been evident in her research on the expansion of jails as area prisons close. Interestingly, Geri’s sustained interest in the criminal justice system grew out of her radical feminism—a group of activists that is often criticized for neglecting racial issues. It also grows out of her work as a journalist and a teacher, and her identification with her working-class upbringing. Her visions for the future involve decarceration, especially through the provision of job training similar to Giancarlo’s. She described to me an op-ed she wrote in 2016 proposing a “New Beginnings Center” that would train re-entering people in agricultural work, utilizing student volunteers from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park and potential funding from the federal Second Chance Act. By reconstructing abandoned buildings into hydroponic facilities, she believes that a more restorative approach could benefit the county on the whole by using existing resources in new ways that hold re-entering people at the forefront. Not unlike Giancarlo and Tree, she sees Poughkeepsie as the potential site of social transformation for the entire county, as the hub not only for social services but also for educational and employment opportunities.

Reflection

While only three of my five participants are featured here, it is clear that the process of oral history draws out notions of a given place that are perhaps lesser known, and certainly highlight the lived experience of those who acknowledge the violence of the carceral state. We can view through these histories the mental pathways that a short question about how mass

incarceration has impacted Poughkeepsie engender. As we see here, they are neither linear nor perfectly sourced—Tree estimates the Poughkeepsie dropout rate to be over 10% higher than it actually is—but they are based in lived experience and personal histories. They show us how our understanding of a city can be very different if we choose to look through the carceral lens: like Tree said, the attitude of the community could change if only youth walked down the street and were confronted with the history of their own liberation, rather than tourist attractions. Similarly, the built environment is implicated in Giancarlo and Geri’s proposals for greater resources and opportunity. Here, we can witness a push against the mobilization of the city as a carceral apparatus, and instead see it as an agent of rehabilitation. This is reflective of my focus on space as productive—by asking people to think through mass incarceration in their city, it is clear that this holds true for liberatory projects.

As the researcher or, more appropriately, the facilitator of these histories, I chose to keep my question brief to allow for this cognitive journey. Notably, I give participants the choice whether or not to talk about their own experience with the criminal justice system. Some took this opportunity, like Geri, while others chose to speak more broadly about their communities. This is also reflected when participants connect, like Tree and another participant, Mike, did, their observations in Poughkeepsie to the larger question of systemic racism or to Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow*, which is a testament to a growing popular discourse on mass incarceration. This connection to larger issues signifies the confluence of systemic racism and urban society—for participants, a story of their city does not exist outside of this greater context. In considering the power of this practice of oral history, I find that the experiencing of listening, both physically and to the recordings, allows me to reflect on Poughkeepsie differently than I normally do. A place that I know better than some, I often forget about the jail or many vacant

buildings. When asked about the issue of mass incarceration, these stories situate these sites as sites of potential and contestation. This is the ultimate goal of a carceral urbanism—to view the city as it is recast by the carceral state. Whether one had a direct encounter with police or a jail recently or fifty years ago, the presence of these institutions are constantly available for those who regularly engage with their communities and take action to transform them. With this, the city can represent both immense opportunity and insurmountable, intergenerational oppression. A focus on lived space through oral history is capable of bringing this multiplicity to the forefront of our conversation on justice in the city. By embracing this, we as urbanists can draw community members into our work and share their voices with local and academic communities, transcending spatial divides. We can accomplish our responsibility to the city by allowing its greatest dissonances and disconnects to be heard through audible maps of people’s embodied experiences of (in)justice, more commonly known as stories.

Conclusion

Viewing the city through its most challenging aspects—poverty, disenfranchisement, discrimination—can seem pessimistic. It can seem as though these are so deeply ingrained into our present reality that we will never see a better city or a better world. However, in writing this, I felt very opposite. I felt like by opening the carceral state up from its most vulnerable point, its life on the outside, it is possible to make clear an imperative to retaliate at that very point. The ways in which we conduct and perceive individual and collective life are powerful, and have led to transformative movements as well as tremendous state violence. Our willingness to challenge the latter hinges on our perspective. As I have explored throughout my work in these pages and in the world, our connectedness can be mobilized to disrupt and upend a state that operates on the subjugation, displacement, and ghettoization of entire communities. As shown throughout this thesis, oppression can operate through the very spaces we live in and love by creating differential realities. By obscuring the existence of systemic racism, cissexism, homophobia, and economic inequality, our spaces are used against us. These are all implicated by the carceral state, and can be differentially apparent across time and space. How, then, to contend with this?

The stories I engaged with in Poughkeepsie profoundly transformed my own concept of how we collectively see injustice. Individual narratives proved key to extracting the everyday obstacles to coalition and political agency and translating them into real, tangible experience. They showed how one's history is a part of their community's history, regardless of where their beginnings took place. This is why seeing through space is useful—it relieves us of our duties to time, instead leaving us with more important schemas, like who we know and where we see challenges and opportunities arising. One need not be an activist or an academic to do this. Anyone can decide whether or not they have seen their community be criminalized and gauge

how they feel about this. Anyone can talk about why they think that is the case, and how they want to contribute to or change their present reality. By pursuing basic questions of our current situation, we can uncover the long, winding paths that have led us there. We can see that it does not take an activist or a politician to demonstrate the differences and similarities that exist across spatial boundaries. There, I believe, exists the opportunity to expand our understandings of community, and acknowledge that that in itself is fluid. By seeing that fluidity through dialogue, it becomes possible to stake out spaces for improvement and action.

Speaking more specifically, I am inspired by my role as a listener to pursue listening as an act of resilience and resistance. Prisons and their counterparts present a constant cacophony of danger, stigma, alienation, and fear, bringing each of us into their grasp if not physically, then emotionally. If some are able to ignore the police on the street or the jail on the way to work or the grocery store, these same individuals and communities experience something very different when listening to a story. A story remaps these spaces, turning what might be one person's daily route into another's place to avoid at all costs. While it is true that our world is increasingly connected thanks to the urbanization and globalization of communication, capital, and culture, these overarching and often hegemonic engagements do not disrupt social and political difference. In many ways, they only exacerbate them, placing individuals and communities in competition with regional and global participants in markets for jobs and resources. Listening, the half of dialogue that can be so challenging under these conditions, becomes easier when we do so with purpose. If we understand our experiences as subjective and constructed, the lives and movements of others become more important to us. As I listened to a variety of conflicting, intersecting, and overlapping histories of one city, I realized just how limited my own experiences are. This, again, is not cause for pessimism, but of renewed enthusiasm, compassion,

and empathy towards others. An urban society does not have to be engulfed by competition and consumption. Our growing interconnectivity can push us ever closer to one another, rather than institutions, if we reinvest ourselves in public life. If an analysis of carceral urbanism teaches us anything, it is that our proximity to others should not be taken for granted. Disrupting these dynamics of isolation and punitivity are, unquestionably, an urban problem. The pursuit of an urbanism that creates spaces for revelations, connections, and emotions to be shared and reflected upon is absolutely central to the search for a just urban society.

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