



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
DR. DONNA SELMAN



BOOK AWARD
DR. DEENA A. ISOM



CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGIST AWARD
DR. JOSE ATILLES



CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGIST AWARD
DR. BILL MCCLANAHAN



BEST ARTICLE AWARD
DR. ANNA DIRONCO



BEST GRADUATE PAPER
ALYSSA SCHALLENBERGER



BEST GRADUATE PAPER
SOLEIL SMITH

THE CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGIST: SPOTLIGHT



Message from the DCCSJ Executive Board

Dear DCCSJ Members,

It was wonderful to see so many of you at ASC in Washington, D.C. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the DCCSJ-sponsored panels, events, social gathering, and awards ceremony. Your presence and participation are what make this division such a vibrant and engaged intellectual community.

Congratulations to our 2025 DCCSJ award recipients on this well-deserved recognition. We are proud to celebrate your achievements and the meaningful work you do to advance critical criminology and foster solidarity in the ongoing struggle against harm, inequality, and injustice.

Your scholarship, activism, and community engagement reflect the very best of our division.

Again, we are also pleased to announce the results of the 2025 division elections. Over the next two years, the Division will be led by:

Executive Officers

Emily Troshynski (Professor, UNLV), Chair

Edward Green (Associate Professor, Roosevelt University), Vice Chair

Kaitlyn Selman (Assistant Professor, Illinois State University), Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members

Maya Barak (Associate Professor, University of Michigan-Dearborn)

Veronica Gonzalez (Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina)

Sergio Grossi (Assistant Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice)

We are grateful to all who stood for election and to our members for participating in the process. Over the coming term, division leadership will work to strengthen our social media presence, enhance internal communication, develop new community partnership spotlights, and streamline the structure and operations of our awards committees.

We also extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this newsletter. Your insights and engagement help sustain and grow our community.

Please see the note from the Communications Team below for information about following our new social media accounts and sharing announcements, publications, and division-related updates.

Thank you again, and congratulations to our award recipients and newly elected leadership.

In solidarity,
The DCCSJ Executive Board

Message from the Communications Team

Dear DCCSJ Members,

Congratulations to our 2025 DCCSJ award winners on their well-deserved recognition! We are proud to celebrate your achievements and the meaningful work you do to expand our knowledge of critical criminology and provide solidarity in the fight against harm and disparity. We also want to thank everyone who contributed to this newsletter, as your insights and engagement help make this community truly impactful.

We also want to introduce our new Instagram account. Please be sure to follow us [@dcsj_asc](#) for updates, highlights, and announcements.

If you would like to share announcements, promotions, new publications, kudos, job ads, calls for papers, division-related activities or opportunities, as well as what you're currently listening to, watching, or reading, please submit the information to our google form below.

<https://forms.gle/PfJGVeJ46AE6uDic8>

If you have any questions related to sharing announcements with our members, please email us at DCCSJCommsTeam@gmail.com

Thank you again and congratulations to all the awards recipients!

In solidarity,
DCCSJ Communications Team
Jessica Morgan & Victoria Espinoza

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Lifetime Achievement Award: Spotlight



DR. DONNA SELMAN

I have spent several hours writing my response to your questions. But I have decided that my best response and the one that best reflects my thoughts and passion is “FUCK ICE.”

Book of the Year Award: Spotlight



DR. DEENA A. ISOM

1. Please tell us about yourself and background.

I am a Professor and Vice Chair in the Department of African American Studies at the University of South Carolina (USC), where I am also a faculty affiliate in Women's and Gender Studies. I also currently serve as the Editor of *Race and Justice: An International Journal*.

I am a trained Sociologist, earning my PhD from Emory University in 2015, with specializations in Criminology, Social Psychology, and Social Inequalities. Prior to that, I received my undergraduate degrees from the University of Georgia and my MS from Northeastern University. My research brings marginalized voices and lived experiences center to the understandings of the causes and consequences of negative and harmful behaviors and entanglement with the legal system, in the US and international contexts. I achieve this through the advancement of criminological and sociological theory, critical perspectives, and intersectional methodologies. I am a progressive scholar, particularly guided by feminist, Black feminist, and critical race traditions. Motivated by such philosophies, I tend to follow an interdisciplinary, theoretically integrated, and/or intersectional approach. Therefore, I employ various lines of literature to enhance the understanding of the causes and consequences of inequities – in harmful outcomes and beyond.

In recent years, my work has fallen into four distinct, though not mutually exclusive, camps: 1) critical whiteness studies; 2) assessment and expansion of criminological and sociological theory; 3) victimization and victimology; and 4) the critique and investigations of the various impacts on marginalized and oppressed groups by the legal system and other social institutions, such as the media. I have published extensively in a broad range of outlets across these areas of interests expanding the reach of critical and progressive perspectives.

Outside of the academy, I enjoy going to the beach, reading magical mysteries and crime thrillers, working out at Orangetheory, and trying new activities. My teaching wardrobe is made up of social justice t-shirts and funky glasses. I'm an avid college football fan, so in the fall you'll find me cheering on my beloved Georgia Dawgs or the Carolina Gamecocks. (I tell my students I'm a Cockey Dawg). I dedicated the book to my feline familiar, Douglas, who I'd had since starting graduate school. I lost him to cancer over the summer, but we've adopted four kittens that are keeping us busy and warming our hearts. They are even learning how to be helpful desk kitties while I'm writing. I love spending time with my husband and two bonus teens, especially being band parents and supporting artistic ventures. The kids and I took up roller derby in 2025! They play with the Columbia Junior Rollers, and I'm part of Columbia Roller Derby, learning to skate and officiate. My derby persona is Criminaughty! And, my husband is the official league photographer and social media guru, so that is a family affair.

2. What are you currently working on?

I'm honored that in addition to the Jock Young Award, the book also won the 2025 Mid-South Sociological Association Stanford M. Lynn Distinguished Book Award. I'm glad that folks are engaging with it and the theory is making headway in the field.

I have collected two rounds of national surveys – one of white Americans and one an inclusive nationally representative sample – to assess and expand the propositions posed in the book. So, I'm currently working with those data. I will be presenting these findings at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences meeting, the Southern Sociological Society meeting, as well as ASC. Additionally, I'm in the beginning stages of a follow-up book focused on white women as well as an edited volume on critical whiteness criminology.

Beyond my own work, I continue to work closely with students supporting their interests and have several projects in various stages with them.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

My research expands our understanding in the field of critical criminology by advancing new theoretical frameworks that center power, race, and inequality in explanations of crime and criminal legal system outcomes. In particular, my book, *Gratuitous Angst in White America: A Theory of Whiteness and Crime*, makes a significant contribution by explicitly theorizing whiteness as a racialized structure and examining its relationship to criminal behavior and legal system responses. Through the development of the theory of whiteness and crime (TWC), the book challenges longstanding assumptions within mainstream criminological research and expands the theoretical imagination of critical criminology by decentering whiteness as an unmarked norm and instead interrogating its role in shaping both deviance and differential system treatment.

At the core of this work is the argument that white individuals experience uniquely racialized strains – such as status dissonance, habitus angst, and aggrieved entitlement – that can increase the likelihood of criminal or violent behavior, while white privilege simultaneously insulates them from the full weight of the criminal legal system. By integrating critical whiteness studies, intersectional theory, and criminological insights, *Gratuitous Angst* introduces an original and analytically rigorous framework that explains both behavioral patterns and differential criminal legal outcomes. This approach directly confronts traditional theories of crime that have treated whiteness as normative and have disproportionately positioned Blackness and other racialized identities as explanatory problems. In doing so, the book reframes foundational questions about criminality, responsibility, and punishment within a broader socio-historical context of racial hierarchy and white supremacy.

The book also contributes to critical criminology by foregrounding the role of power and unequal social structures in shaping both criminal opportunities and legal protections. By naming and racializing whiteness, the text exposes how the myth of white supremacy and the institutionalization of white privilege produce distinct pathways to crime and to leniency within the criminal legal system. This intervention aligns with the core aims of critical criminology to examine political-economic structures and social control mechanisms that perpetuate inequality, while also opening new avenues for empirical research, theoretical development, and policy analysis.

More broadly, my research program repositions race, identity, and power as central analytic categories for understanding crime and justice. By challenging the perceived normalcy of whiteness and offering an intersectional theory that accounts for both privilege and marginalization across identities, this work advances critical criminology's commitment to interrogating structures of domination and imagining more equitable social and legal systems. In doing so, it contributes a theoretically innovative and historically grounded framework that

expands how scholars conceptualize the relationships among race, crime, and social control in contemporary society.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of and what are you working toward?

I am proud of my scholarly accomplishments because they reflect both the depth of my scholarly commitment and the impact of my work within critical criminology and allied fields. Being named a full professor just ten years after completing my PhD represents not only a significant professional milestone, but also a testament to the sustained focus, intellectual rigor, and intentionality that have guided my research agenda. It affirms the value of scholarship that challenges dominant paradigms, centers race and power, and pushes the field to grapple more directly with questions of inequality, identity, and justice.

I am also deeply honored to have my work recognized by colleagues and professional organizations whose missions align closely with my own intellectual and social commitments. Receiving the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences' Minorities and Women Section Becky Tatum Excellence in Scholarship Award in 2023 affirmed the significance of my contributions to critical race and feminist scholarship, areas that have long shaped my research and teaching. That same year, being awarded the Coramae Richey Mann Award by the American Society of Criminology's Division on People of Color and Crime was particularly meaningful, as it recognized my ongoing efforts to advance scholarship that interrogates race, ethnicity, crime, and justice in ways that are both theoretically rigorous and socially engaged.

Finally, being named the ASC Division of Feminist Criminology's "Inconvenient Woman of the Year" in 2024 holds special significance for me. This recognition honors scholars and activists who publicly promote ideals of equity and human rights, particularly in relation to gender and justice, and it reflects my commitment to producing scholarship that is not only intellectually innovative but also unapologetically engaged with pressing social issues. Together, these recognitions affirm that my work resonates within the field and contributes to broader efforts to challenge inequities and reimagine more just social and legal systems.

Outside of the academy, the past decade has brought its share of personal and professional challenges. I am proud of the resilience I have cultivated during these difficult periods and of my willingness to step outside of my comfort zone to test my limits. Most recently, I have gone from not being able to stand on roller skates just eight months ago to now being nearly ready to try out for a roller derby team – with the hope of competing by fall – at 42. This journey has reminded me that growth requires risk, vulnerability, and persistence. I strive to model that courage and fortitude for my children, my students, and the many mentees who look to me not only for

academic guidance, but for examples of what it means to keep pushing forward, even in the most tumultuous times.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Here's an essential playlist that sums me up fairly well:

“Tenure, Trauma, and Track Skates – 90’s Chaos Edition”

Alanis Morissette – All I Really Want

Alanis Morissette – You Oughta Know

Rage Against the Machine – Killing in the Name

Nirvana – Smells Like Teen Spirit

DMX – Ruff Ryders’ Anthem

Guns N’ Roses – Welcome to the Jungle

Missy Elliott – Work It

Pearl Jam – Even Flow

Blind Melon – No Rain

Pearl Jam – Black

Soundgarden – Black Hole Sun

Hootie & the Blowfish – Let Her Cry

Outkast – Rosa Parks

Beastie Boys – Sabotage

No Doubt – Just a Girl

Hootie & the Blowfish – Hold My Hand

Alanis Morissette – Hand in My Pocket

Bush – Machinehead

Silverchair – Tomorrow

Guns N’ Roses – Sweet Child O’ Mine

Outkast – Hey Ya

Critical Criminologists of the Year Award: Spotlight



DR. JOSE ATILES

1. Please tell us about yourself and your background.

I am an Associate Professor of Criminology, Law, and Society in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, with a courtesy appointment in the College of Law. I hold PhDs in Sociology and Philosophy from the University of Coimbra (Portugal) and the University of the Basque Country, respectively, an MA in Sociology of Law from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law in Oñati, and a BA in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez.

My sociolegal and criminological research focuses on Puerto Rico and its colonial relationship with the United States. In particular, I examine how US colonial governance has produced the conditions for criminogenic and socially harmful practices. My work analyzes the role of law, emergency powers, and state and corporate crime during periods of crisis, situating these processes within broader structures of colonialism and political economy. As a result, my scholarship sits at the intersection of critical criminology, law and society, and political economy, with sustained attention to corruption, state violence, and colonial legality. I am especially

interested in how legal frameworks normalize inequality and organize harm under the guise of legality and economic development.

2. What are you currently working on?

I am currently developing two major book projects. The first, *Islands of Exception: Law, Empire, and Offshore Finance in the Caribbean* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2026), traces the colonial and legal history of offshore financial centers in the Caribbean. The book shows how these jurisdictions are not peripheral to global capitalism but central to its legal organization, facilitating capital mobility while externalizing social and environmental harm.

My second project, tentatively titled *Open for Business: Law, Shadow Banking, and International Financial Services in Puerto Rico*, examines Puerto Rico's contemporary transformation into an offshore financial center. This project analyzes legislation and policies designed to attract international banks, financial institutions, and crypto-entrepreneurs, as well as the mobilizations aimed at "abolishing the paradise." Drawing on interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, the book explores regulatory capture, state-corporate symbiosis, and the blurred boundaries between legality, regulations, and crime in the pursuit of capital accumulation.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

My research contributes to critical criminology by centering colonialism, empire, and law as foundational sources of social harm. Rather than treating corruption, financial crime, or emergency governance as deviations from the norm, I show how these practices are structurally embedded within colonial legal orders and regimes of crisis governance. A central aim of my work is to deepen and expand the crimes of the powerful tradition within critical criminology.

By focusing on crimes of the powerful, state-corporate crime, and social harm, my research pushes critical criminology to examine the routinization and normalization of harm within governmental and legal practices. In doing so, I demonstrate how legality itself can be criminogenic. I also seek to expand the field both geographically and theoretically by foregrounding Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, challenging Euro-American assumptions about sovereignty, regulation, and justice.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of, and what are you working toward?

I am especially honored to have received the **Critical Criminologist of the Year Award (2025)**, which I see as recognition of both my scholarly contributions and my commitment to critical, engaged research. I am also honored to have received the **Critical Criminology Journal Article of the Year Award (2023)** for my 2022 article, *Punitive Governance and the Criminalization of Socioenvironmental, Anti-Austerity, and Anticorruption Mobilizations in Puerto Rico*, published in *Critical Criminology* (30: 961–981).

In addition, I am particularly proud of my book *Crisis by Design: Emergency Powers and Colonial Legality in Puerto Rico* (Stanford University Press, 2024), which brings together sociolegal analysis, criminology, and political history to demonstrate how crises in Puerto Rico are produced through colonial governance rather than emerging as isolated events.

Beyond publications, I value my editorial and service work, including serving as Associate Editor for the *Journal of White Collar and Corporate Crime*, participating on editorial boards, and serving on the Board of Trustees of the Law and Society Association. Looking ahead, I aim to continue building research that connects critical criminology, empirical work, and public engagement, particularly around international finance, colonial governance, and state-organized harm.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

I see my work as part of a broader collective project within critical criminology and law and society, one that seeks to name harm, challenge power, and remain accountable to communities most affected by inequality and violence. I am deeply grateful for the intellectual community of scholars, students, activists, and collaborators who have shaped my thinking over the years, particularly within the Division on Critical Criminology and Social Justice. I also remain committed to mentorship, interdisciplinary dialogue, and engaged scholarship that bridges academia and public debate.

Critical Criminologists of the Year Award: Spotlight



DR. BILL MCCLANAHAN

1. Please tell us about yourself and background.

My name is Bill McClanahan, and I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee and a co-editor of *Crime, Media, Culture*. In my work, I am interested in the intersections of police power and the conceptual and material figure of “nature” and how those intersections appear in sensory and visual cultures. When I’m not working, I like fishing for wild trout in the Smoky Mountains and traveling with my wife.

2. What are you currently working on?

I am continuing to work on a project on police power with Tyler Wall, some of which has been published in familiar outlets recently, and we hope to have more of that material published soon. I’ve also spent the last 5 years or so thinking a lot about police power and food and nutrition and am now starting to (finally) develop some writing around that interest.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

I don’t know that my research or writing does expand anyone’s understanding! I do, though, hope that it enlivens the thinking of anyone who happens to encounter it. I have only ever really

thought of myself as a writer, not a researcher; I'm always more interested in the humanities than the social sciences, and so if there's anything I want my writing to do for criminology it is to push it toward the arts and away from the sciences.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of, and what are you working toward?

I'm very proud of my role as co-editor of *Crime, Media, Culture*, which has always felt to me like a rare outlet for the sort of writing that interests me, and it's very affirmative and humbling to be in a role that was previously filled by a lot of people I really admire. I'm also proud of the work I've done alongside my colleagues Michelle Brown, Lo Presser, Tyler Wall, and Stephen Wulff to support the criminology concentration in the Department of Sociology at Tennessee. And, of course, I'm proud to be recognized by the Division on Critical Criminology and Social Justice with this award; the DCCSJ has been hugely supportive and has, obviously, played a crucial role in ensuring critical criminology's development.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

I'm really grateful to the DCCSJ for this recognition and to the people doing all of the backstage labor that makes the DCCSJ run, and to the friends who supported my nomination.

Best Article Award: Spotlight



DR. ANNA DIRONCO

1. Please tell us about yourself and background.

I am Italian (although I like to describe myself as European). I was born at the very border between Italy and Austria, not far from the border with Slovenia, in a small village in the Italian Alps. Like most people living in the area, I often crossed the border for short daily trips to Austria, had Austrian schoolmates, and have no recollection of border checks between the two countries (which were in place until 1997, but I was too young at the time to notice them). As a result of being born and raised in such a context, I am not only an excellent skier, like many people in the area, but also a natural supporter of freedom of movement, within the EU and well beyond it.

I studied law in Italy at the University of Trento. After completing my master's degree, I moved to Belgium, where I obtained a PhD in criminology at Ghent University. Following my PhD, I was fortunate to be appointed to the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex (UK), where I worked for approximately eight years. A year ago, I moved back to Italy and joined the Department of Legal Studies at the University of Bologna, where I currently work.

Since my PhD, my research has focused on how urban space is regulated and on how regulations, enforcement tactics, and punitive discourses often result in the exclusion of groups deemed a “nuisance” from spaces of shopping, leisure, and business for the middle classes. My research, based on European case studies and largely on qualitative work, has documented how access to ‘key’ public spaces—namely spaces that are valuable to the local neoliberal economy—is conditional upon adherence to the neoliberal project. In other words, individuals tend to be welcomed into these spaces insofar as they contribute to the local economy through consumption

and do not disrupt, through their presence (which may be perceived as aesthetically displeasing) or through disorderly behaviour, the consumption experiences of others.

Within this framework, my work has focused in particular on street-based sex workers, who are often repressed in urban spaces of consumption because of their appearance and the moral judgements they provoke; night-time economy participants, who may be excluded when they are perceived as a nuisance or disturbance to others; and street protesters, who can be excluded from public spaces when protest events are considered harmful to the local economy. I have concentrated specifically on street protesters in my 2023 book with Bristol University Press, which examines the policing of environmental protest during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. The ethnographic research informing the book shows how environmental activists are frequently only permitted to stage protests away from city centres, in order to avoid disrupting the local economy, thereby rendering their grievances less visible to the public eye.

My work has not been limited to cities and their regulation. I have also examined rural contexts through research on environmental movements opposing critical infrastructures, as well as conflicts involving humans and other animals (such as brown bears). For example, I have long been interested in, and supportive of, the NOTAP movement, which emerged in the southeastern Italian region of Puglia in opposition to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (also known as TAP) and has been subject to severe repression and criminalisation. Activists' experiences of criminalisation informed the article that received the 2025 DCCSJ Best Article Award and have also inspired my broader work on the criminalisation of dissent. To date, this includes an article published in *Crime & Justice* and an edited volume with Palgrave, which brings together empirical research on the criminalisation of dissent in both the Global North and the Global South, highlighting some of the most striking similarities across contexts.

2. What are you currently working on?

My current work further develops the research lines I have just mentioned. For example, I am currently studying urban communities affected by the problem of 'overtourism'. This phenomenon has become a major issue in Italian cities and beyond, leading to, among others, the rise in the cost of living, the unavailability of affordable housing and therefore the exclusion of long-time and even potential new residents who cannot afford living in the city. Through the case study of Venice, I aim to highlight the harms of a neoliberal economy which values profit over city liveability, and which is transforming the city into an empty showcase for tourist consumption, largely devoid of a resident population. At the same time, I aim to foreground the concerns of the remaining (and ever decreasing) residents and grassroot associations, who suffer from the sensory overload caused by the presence of too many tourists in Venice's narrow alleys. Residents are also deeply concerned about the impacts of overtourism on the conservation of the city, which—at least in the case of Venice—is literally sinking, as well as on the fragile natural

environment of the lagoon in which it is located. This ongoing research is revealing the importance of the senses in urban living and of a healthy environment, which is understood as an integral part of the city itself. Both these findings are of relevance to critical criminological scholarship and will, hopefully, help to further invigorate two perspectives that are rooted within it: sensory and green criminologies.

Other research projects involve the study of right-wing vigilantes enacting security in their cities while also having a distinctive online presence through carefully curated social media accounts; and the criminalisation of activists through both criminal law proper and preventive police measures, which produce subtler yet pernicious effects in activists' lives and mobilising.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

My research contributes to critical criminological scholarship on control and criminalisation in neoliberal contexts and their effects on activists and a range of other groups across urban and rural settings. Importantly, it does so through empirically grounded work that is theoretically informed and multidisciplinary. While grounded in critical criminology, my work also draws on perspectives that are rooted in the field yet extend beyond it through their multidisciplinary connections and orientations—particularly those of cultural and green criminology.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of, and what are you working toward?

I am most proud of my students, especially those who develop a passion for criminology and its critical perspectives and who are actively engaged in their communities through service in relevant NGOs, third-sector associations, and mobilisations. Some of these students have decided to pursue a PhD under my supervision, and I feel deeply proud and honoured by that.

I am also very happy with my research on the NOTAP movement, which—so I am told—has given some visibility to the criminalisation and suffering that many activists have endured since the beginning of their opposition to the TAP pipeline. I feel profoundly privileged to have been able to listen to their stories and to share them. During fieldwork and beyond, I received many messages of thanks from activists who were grateful that my work would continue to draw attention to the movement and its plight, even after its disbandment, which followed the pipeline's completion and the chilling effects of criminalisation.

Ultimately, I am immensely grateful to the NOTAP movement not only for their generosity in sharing their experiences with me, but also for inspiring me through their love and care for their

home—the beautiful countryside dotted with century-old olive trees, and the blue sea standing out against the white shores—despite the suffering they have endured in defending it.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Just to thank you for the opportunity to briefly present my research and for recognising my study on the effects of criminalisation on activists through the 2025 DCCSJ Best Article Award.

2025 Graduate Student Paper Awards: Spotlight



ALYSSA SCHALLENBERGER

1. Please tell us about yourself and background.

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Texas State University and hold a J.D. from South Texas College of Law and a MS in Criminal Justice from Texas State. My research spans macro, feminist, and critical criminology. Rather than centering on a single project, my work is organized around a core set of questions about how institutions produce and manage harm. I study institutional imbalance, domination, and crisis—specifically how law, markets, gender, culture, and political power shape what becomes criminalized, normalized, or rendered invisible.

Some of my work examines war, atrocity, and state violence; other projects focus on gender, reproduction, and the criminalization of abortion; others analyze punishment, poverty, and social control in the United States. Across these areas, I am interested in how institutions both generate violence and claim to manage it. Additionally, a significant portion of my work is rooted in theory testing and building around complex causality. As well, I am not a methodological loyalist; I move between qualitative interviewing, comparative case analysis, legal and textual analysis, and statistical modeling to study how configurations of institutional forces combine to produce harm across time and place.

2. What are you currently working on?

My first directive is finishing my dissertation! I am using Qualitative Comparative Analysis to test a core proposition presented in Braithwaite's *Macrocriminology and Freedom*: the claim that

wars must be prevented before they cascade into violence, domination, and anomie. I examine region–time intervals across Yugoslav successor states from 1985 to 2005, focusing on how configurations of legal cynicism, gender domination, and anomie combine to produce atrocity and large-scale violence. Rather than treating these as independent predictors, the dissertation asks how specific institutional combinations enable violence to cascade across time and space. I am in the final analytic phase now, with completion expected later this semester (knock on wood)!

I also have a couple of pieces in-press for two forthcoming special issues co-authored with Dr. Scott Bowman. The first utilizes Lauderdale’s framework of political deviance to examine how the state has reconstructed reproductive healthcare as a criminal act. Through in-depth interviews, we explore the tension between these new legal labels and the lived realities of women and gender-expansive individuals. By highlighting these narratives, the paper illustrates how the political construction of deviance is felt and resisted by those whose bodies have become the site of legislative conflict—echoing the *Dobbs* dissent’s warning regarding the millions of individuals now coming of age with fewer fundamental rights than their mothers and grandmothers.

The second piece utilizes institutional anomie theory (IAT) to critique the structural contradictions of the contemporary academy. We argue that the university has become an institution where expressive values, like justice and equity, are subordinated to instrumental goals of prestige and market competitiveness. We contend that feminist scholar-activism is an act of institutional transgression, a refusal to accept the artificial separation between disembodied research and justice-oriented action. By rejecting the publish or perish metrics that reward quantity over transformative impact, this project asserts that scholar-activism is a necessary refusal to internalize the academy’s anomic logic, insisting instead on a praxis that centers lived experience and radical accountability to the communities we study.

Finally, I am waiting on IRB approval to start an experimental test of Ghost Criminology. This project investigates the eerie agency of body cam footage of police brutality, testing whether raw footage creates a hauntological trace that refuses to be resolved" by the state's official narrative.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

In *No One Mourns the Wickard*, I extend the field by introducing hauntological legal analysis as a methodological framework for examining the spectral logics of constitutional authority. My work engages directly with the “hard” doctrinal mechanisms of the law, reading precedent as an active technology of legitimation. My methodology involves a systematic reading of Commerce Clause jurisprudence to reveal a profound ideological double standard. I trace the migration of the anticipatory logic institutionalized in *Wickard v. Filburn* (1942), where the potential for future disruption justifies present intervention. The Court eagerly embraces this speculation to

expand the carceral state through federal drug wars and preventive detention yet ritualistically disavows that same logic when it is invoked to protect the vulnerable. Through subsequent cases like *Lopez* and *Morrison*, the Court performs a calculated act of abandonment. It declares that gun violence and gender violence are noneconomic and beyond federal reach, despite exhaustive evidence of their systemic, economic harm. This is not neutral restraint, but a deliberate contraction of protection that insulates structural violence from intervention. By reading these shifts as hauntological, I clarify how the law naturalizes inequality by rendering specific victims invisible. This reframes constitutional law as an engine of institutional harm fueled by a selective disavowal of the lives the state deems unworthy of protection.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of, and what are you working toward?

At the risk of sounding contrived, I am truly proud of receiving this award because of the specific intellectual validation it represents. Recently, while preparing for the job market, a senior faculty member suggested I might not want to label myself a critical criminologist yet, as I may not have gone “far enough” to claim this self-designation. While I took that as an invitation to keep sharpening my analysis, it also surfaced a brief period of self-doubt. This award became an antidote to both impulses at once, affirming that my work is legible as critical while holding me accountable to the depth the tradition demands.

More broadly, I am proud of cultivating a research agenda unified by a consistent analytic concern. This trajectory is a significant accomplishment because it was not merely a byproduct of the institutional infrastructure. Much, if not all, of my exposure to critical traditions was self-directed, requiring me to build the intellectual scaffolding for this work through deliberate reading and the risk of stepping outside traditional curricular boundaries. To have that independent path recognized by the Division is deeply meaningful, as it validates the rigor of the scaffolding I have spent years seeking and building.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

I am truly indebted to my mentors, Dr. Mark Stafford and Dr. Scott Bowman. Throughout my educational journey, both have emboldened, or rather, in the words of Dr. Bowman, liberated, me to take on “big” ideas. Under their tutelage, the only limitations I have felt is that of my own imposition or that of my own creativity. I think that this is not only evidenced in my submission for the graduate student paper competition, but also across my burgeoning body of work. It is hard to fully capture how valuable this is as a Ph.D. student—this independence is not just a skill set; it is a kind of permission to think at full scale that I am grateful to benefit from.

Additionally, within the current climate, I have felt the need to more urgently think about my role as a scholar, activist, and community member. Both have helped me ponder and evolve my thinking and maturation in this regard. In a moment where academia feels particularly out of joint, I am grateful for mentorship that did not ask me to make my work smaller to fit the moment.

2025 Graduate Student Paper Awards: Spotlight



SOLEIL SMITH

1. Please tell us about yourself and background.

I am a 4th year Sociology PhD student from Aurora, Colorado, currently studying at the University of Illinois Chicago. My work primarily concerns the state and its powers in repressing environmental social movements. I am also interested in addressing the role that state conservation and environmental restoration play in advancing capitalist and settler projects. In my free time, I create eco-Marxist walking tours of Chicago and go birding with friends when I'm not protesting or union organizing.

2. What are you currently working on?

Currently, I am in the final stages of editing my paper, "Democracy is Alive and Well in Atlanta," for submission to journals! Additionally, I am beginning work on my dissertation proposal which will focus on the interlocking and often contradictory relationship between the sovereign and biopolitical power of the state when it comes to war-making and state-making projects. I will particularly be focusing on the way these forces have structured and continue to structure the landscape of Colorado, my home state.

3. How does your research expand our understanding in the field of critical criminology?

I am hopeful that my research helps build on the recent pulls in criminology and related fields towards a perspective that rejects a disjointed or incidentally legitimating understanding of criminalization. As an abolitionist, such an approach limits our understanding of criminality and its purposes, the state, and the justice system. It can make us hold tight to stark distinctions between “unjust” criminalization of movement actors and “just” criminalization of our neighbors or communities—despite the two being intimately linked. There is an implicit move—in movement spaces and otherwise—to challenge criminalization of movement actors on the basis that it targets the “wrong” people. I want to help us do away with that distinction and instead call into question why we have an institution with so much sway over who is deserving of punishment, for how long, and in what conditions—no matter who it targets.

4. What accomplishments are you most proud of, and what are you working toward?

I am the first person in my family to pursue a PhD, so I’m very proud that I am here and have fought for my ability to be in this space! I am also proud of the work I get to do every day teaching students who look like me and have also struggled to access academia. I am also certainly proud that my first solo-authored paper has already received an award and am glad that my work is resonating with other scholars.

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Thank you very much for considering me for the DCCSJ Graduate Paper Award! I really appreciate the opportunity to get my work in front of more people and am honored to have been chosen as a co-recipient. I look forward to making more connections between Sociology and Criminology in the future.

Reflections on ASC 2025

January 6, Now and Then

A Radical Criminologist Faces Off with a Rogue Criminologist

Gregg Barak

Emeritus Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Eastern Michigan University

At the 80th Annual Meetings of the ASC held this past November in the Marriott Marquis in DC, the 2025 theme was *Criminology, Law, and the Democratic Ideal*. Aptly, there were many organized sessions and a few dozen papers that revolved around Donald Trump and both of his presidencies in relation to their direct and indirect effects on law, power, and the administration of criminal and civil justice.

As a Trumpian biographer who is presently completing a third book on this despicable human being,¹ I was pleased to learn from the online program that many colleagues were also focusing their attention on the Outlaw-in-Chief, especially after his triumphant return to the Oval Office. As someone who has been rather obsessed with the “life course” and political trajectory of this counterfeit organism from the Queen’s borough of NYC, I listened to 18 papers from a variety of perspectives, vantage points, and analytical lenses, including one from a rogue criminologist who happened to be a J6 criminal defense attorney.

On the first day of the convention, I was there to present the paper, “Donald Trump as the Houdini of State-Organized Crime: A Snapshot of an Unconstitutional President” and to chair another session, Crime, Law, Justice and the Trump Administration: Regulatory Rollbacks and Environmental Threats.

On the second day, thinking that my formal work for the meetings was behind me, I found myself in an impromptu debate with Roger Roots. One week ahead of the conference I had copied and pasted into my own self-made schedule of sessions to attend, the name of Robert Roots.

¹ *Criminology on Trump* (2022), *Indicting the 45th President: Boss Trump, the GOP and What We Can Do About the Threat to American Democracy* (2024), and the forthcoming *Regime Change, Authoritarian Treason, and the Outlaw-in-Chief: Donald Trump’s Struggle to Kill U.S. Democracy & Realign American Global Power* (2027), all published by Routledge (Taylor & Francis).

Before starting his powerpoint presentation Roots introduced himself as Roger and not Robert while also informing us that his affiliation in the program, Lysander Spooner University, was not an academic institution but the name of his personal website.

Before attending this session like most people reading this first-person article, I had never heard of anybody by the name of Roots – Robert or Roger – in relation to Donald Trump or his role as a J6 criminal conspiracy defense attorney. As the full abstract shared below reveals the author is ambiguous because it was written in both the first and third persons. So from the online program it was not clear whether the presenter would be an actual J6 defense attorneys or by another third-party person.

What I am suggesting is that this was not some kind of misspelling or typo but rather a deliberate first name substitution and session set up by Roger and not Robert Roots. So he would be the only presenter and not limited to the typically allotted 15 minutes where there are usually three other presenters and a chair or discussant. Ergo, this ASC session permitted Roots to put on a full MAGA performance videotaped from beginning to end by his assistant that lasted about 45 minutes that interestingly only chased away one person that I am aware of.

Roger Roots

Roots had been one of the many J6 criminal defense lawyers who also belongs to a much smaller group of Trumpian attorneys that can be labeled as belonging to the president's Orwellian legal team of strategists. These lawyers specialize in spinning fictionally defying legal narratives by way of doublespeak. Among Root's bonafide, *Politico* has called him the "hidden hand" in Stewart Rhodes' attempt to derail his Jan. 6 criminal conspiracy trial.²

Roots was also the lead defense counsel for New York Proud Boy Dominic Pezzol v. the United States alleging government wrongdoing and motioning for a mistrial. Wherein part of the evidence presented during the trial was based on Tucker Carlson's airing of security footage from the Jan. 6 insurrection.³

Roots is a graduate of Roger Williams University School of Law. He appears to be an expert on the 4th Amendment where he has published several articles including The Originalist Case for the Fourth Amendment Exclusionary Rule.⁴ He is also the author of these interesting titles, Grand Juries Gone Wrong; When Lawyers Were Serial Killers: Nineteenth Century Visions of Good Moral Character; and A Muckraker's Aftermath: The Jungle of Meat-packing Regulation after a Century.

² <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/14/oath-keepers-jan-6-trial-stewart-rhodes-roger-roots-00056707>.

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/09/politics/tucker-carlson-january-6-court-cases-us-capitol>.

⁴ <https://blogs.gonzaga.edu/gulawreview/files/2011/01/45-Gonz-L-Rev-1.pdf>.

Roots also has a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, awarded in 2004, where he wrote his dissertation on, *Capitalism and violence: A test and critique of the alienation proposition*.⁵

According to legal documents, Roots' earlier background includes a couple of felony convictions.⁶ One was where he was sentenced to 51 weeks in jail for resisting arrest and violating his probation in Florida. And the other where Roots was sentenced to 20 months in federal prison for possession of unregistered firearms, including two rifles and a pistol kept in his dorm room at Northwest Community College.

In 2014, Roots, who at the time was an assistant professor of criminology and sociology at Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas took a short leave to campaign back in his home state of Montana as a Libertarian candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Roots told the *Sidney Herald* that despite his checkered past that he was hoping to expand the Libertarian vote. He also acknowledged at the time, "I used to be an extreme right winger, and I used to read Adolf Hitler and all kinds of racist materials."⁷ Roots failed to mention that he had also been the Billings, Montana's Ku Klux Klan chief organizer or that as a "former" racist and Holocaust denier that his anti-Semitic views had cost him a teaching position at Macon College, Georgia in 2004.⁸

In 2016, Roots was also the Montana man with the "controversial past" who had established himself as a "volunteer paralegal" for Ryan Bundy, "one of 23 defendants indicted on a federal conspiracy charge stemming from the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge."⁹ The judge allowed Roots to confer confidentially with Bundy in jail and to sit beside him at the defense table during court hearings. Roots was not permitted to address the court because Bundy was an indigent defendant who did not have a constitutional right to an attorney of his choice. It is also worth underscoring that Ryan and his brother Ammon Bundy were among those acquitted of criminal conspiracy charges in the Oregon militia standoff.¹⁰

It is also worth noting that after Ammon Bundy became a right-wing icon, now has this to say about the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, it is "sickening" and he also acknowledged in

⁵ <https://oasis.library.unlv.edu/rtds/2597/>.

⁶ <https://www.wfmynews2.com/article/news/felony-convictions-extremist-past-haunt-macon-state-professor/83-402221554>.

⁷ One week after I published a much shorter version (1000 words) of this article in *Raw Story*, <https://www.rawstory.com/raw-investigates/how-to-make-a-j6-lawyer-admit-trumps-own-prosecutions-are-selective-and-vindictive>, the hyperlink to the *Sidney Herald* article had disappeared with an error message.

⁸ <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/us/59148339add7b049344a3781>.

⁹ https://www.oregonlive.com/oregon-standoff/2016/08/montana_man_roger_roots_to_ser.html.

¹⁰ <https://www.eenews.net/articles/bundys-acquitted-in-huge-setback-for-the-government/>.

an interview with *The Atlantic*, that “when it comes to the more humanitarian side...I think the left has it much more correct than the nationalist right.”¹¹

A few more salient facts about the antagonist in this faceoff. At Eastern Montana College, Roots had been a member and former president of the Young Republicans. He was also the subject of numerous articles in the college’s newspaper where he was, among other things, known for participating in Montana militia meetings.

Lastly, Roots is also the author of the booklet, available online, *Whites & Blacks: 100 FACTS (and one Lie)*. He begins this booklet by quoting from a 1947 warning by Mississippi U.S. Senator Theodore G. Bilbo that reads: “If the blood of our White race should become corrupted and mingled with the blood of Africa, then the present greatness of the United States of America would be destroyed and all hope for civilization would be as impossible for a Negroid America as would redemption and restoration of the Whiteman’s blood which had been mixed with that of the Negro.”

This is followed by: “In the pages of this booklet are found 100 facts, the vast majority of which can be easily verified in any set of encyclopedias, almanacs, psychology texts, and other reference materials commonly found in any public library.” Roots also provides 41 popularly cited sources for his diatribe of racist garbage. At the same time, he never gets around to identifying the “one lie” in the booklet because it’s really a bait and switch of sorts as the actual number of racist facts listed was 101. Turns out, the one “missing” lie in the booklet was the lie used in the last paragraph before the “facts” begin as a come-on to readers:

Cleverly hidden within these hundred facts, for added incentive to read onward, is one lie, not a lie of statistical or grammatical error, but a ludicrous falsehood at once so absurd as to strike the reader as an insult to human intelligence, and yet so deadly evil that if allowed to go unanswered its final cost would be incalculable. I sincerely pledge that my motivations are not of insult or hatred, but of the deepest love for mankind and the truest concern for its future generations. My purpose is not to deceive but to enlighten, and I hope this work will help you reflect and reexamine your views on race.

Roots’ ASC Abstract and Our Second Exchange After His Session had Ended

In the midst of dozens of other sessions occurring simultaneously here is the full title and abstract from the online program that got my attention and more than 20 other persons who showed up to attend Roots’ gaslighting performance about the protestors and their “terribly unjust and unprecedented prosecutions” following Jan. 6:

¹¹ Jacob Stern. February 1, 2026. Ammon Bundy Is All Alone: The anti-government militia leader can’t make sense of his allies’ support for ICE violence. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/2026/02/ammon-bundy-trump-ice/685849/>.

Did Trump's Pardon of the J6ers "End a grave national injustice"? A J6 Defense Lawyer Speaks

Thu, Nov 13, 2:00 to 3:20pm, 2, Magnolia - Second Floor

Abstract:

President Donald Trump pardoned more than 1,500 "January 6" defendants on his first day in office in 2025. Trump's proclamation stated, "This proclamation ends a grave national injustice that has been perpetrated upon the American people over the last four years and begins a process of national reconciliation."

Trump's mass pardon of "J6ers" was met by condemnation from throughout news media, academia, and the legal system. Many voices denounced the pardons as an attempt by Trump to whitewash or falsify the narrative of January 6. But was there something to Trump's assessment that the J6 prosecutions were a grave national injustice?

In this paper, a J6 defense lawyer who tried 14 J6 cases and argued four J6 appeals before the DC Circuit addresses all sides of this issue. The author concludes that January 6 prosecutions were indeed a grave injustice that merited Trump's clemency. The cases produced inordinately high conviction rates, and produced the harshest average sentences ever associated with political rioting in American history. Federal prosecutors relied on novel theories of the law and utilized federal statutes in ways never before seen. The author will answer questions and criticisms.

Robert Roots, Lysander Spooner University

I would imagine that hundreds of criminologists at the meetings had read this abstract and were saying to themselves, "Why should I waste my time listening to some full throated and ethically challenged Trumpster when I can listen to so many other worthwhile papers?" I know that was my initial reaction, too, before curiosity got the best of me and I wanted to know how Roots had arrived at those conclusions.

Before addressing some of the key content of Roots' highly emoting delivery as though we, the audience in attendance, were the jury witnessing his concluding statement, I want to share part of the exchange that Roots and I had immediately after his session was over. This conversation followed our civil exchanges during his presentation. A presentation that no one present, least of all Roots, expected would be impeded by a radical criminologist.

When Roots was literally exiting the room and coming through the door – keep in mind that he had no idea whom he had been dialoging with or why his day had just been “fucked up” big time – I extended my hand out to him and he reached out in kind. As we shook hands, I did not let go immediately as I looked him in the eyes and began by saying:

“Roger, you know you weren’t speaking to the local YMCA or to the Kiwanis Club, but to folks like yourself who know how systems of law enforcement and criminal justice work. Did you really think you could get over with this audience or that anyone of us would actually fall for any of your legal gibberish about procedural injustices?”

There were four other criminologists who were standing around us as we spoke for a good three minutes. Among other things, I told Roots that I was the author of two books on Trump and was working on a third. I told him that I had come to hear him because “I really wanted to know how you had reached your conclusions and whether I might need to alter my J6 analyses in some way.”

Finally, before Roots zeroed in on my name tag and walked away, I told him that I had also been publicly calling for the use of RICO against Trump and his co-conspirators one full year before Prosecutor Fani Willis indicted Trump and 18 others in Fulton County, Georgia.¹²

I did not mention that back when I was writing my first but not last commentary advocating for the use of RICO to go after Trump and the fake elector scheme, that a handful of lawyers that I know including one who as of 2022 was still taking John Roberts’ phone calls whenever the Chief Justice needed this person’s assistance, had each been asking me, “Are you serious about RICO charges?” My responses were always the same, “Tell me why I shouldn’t be.”

Although the Georgia election intervention case against Trump and others was dropped the day before Thanksgiving, 2025,¹³ four of the defendants had already plead guilty in the fall of 2023. Those defendants included Scott Hall (9/29/23), Sidney Powell (10/19/23), Kenneth Chesebro (10/20/23), and Jenna Ellis (10/24/23). With the exception of Hall who was a bails bondman the other three were among Trump’s voluminous team of unscrupulous attorneys.

Overview of Roots’ Gaslighting Narrative of January 6

I will now provide a synopsis of Roots’ presentation and our exchange as a result of my interruptions or persistent “cross examinations” of his arguments. Although none of the other “jurors” present in the room were buying his “smoke and mirrors” slick presentation as evidenced by the complete silence – not even a golf clap – when Roots’ rested his legal case presentation. This was not really surprising to Roots who during the after-lecture Q & A, with his Cheshire Cat like smile twice made the point of thanking us all for our non-applause.

¹² <https://www.salon.com/2022/09/27/prosecuting-boss-trump-build-a-rico-case-against-his-entire-criminal-empire/>.

¹³ [Georgia election intervention case against Trump and others.](#)

Roots began his talk by referencing Trump's executive order pardoning some 1560 convicted J6ers on day one of the second administration. He informed us that the president had not provided Americans with any reasons whatsoever for his pardons and clemencies. He also told us that "Trump should have allowed me to write the executive order for him; I could have laid it all out."

Roots' lecture was based on a combination of facts, fictions, and distorted legal interactions about the J6 prosecutions in relation to the historical non-prosecutions of peaceful demonstrators from four not so well known non-comparable historical U.S. protests. Without offering any details about the substance of those other events, Roots' powerpoint displayed photos of the following:

- Socialist leader Eugene Debs' arrest in 1918 and his sentencing in 1919 for anti-war first amendment rhetoric.
- The 1932 Bonus Army Incident, in which around 20,000 World War I veterans who had been occupying vacant federal buildings in DC to demand payment of promised bonuses were forcefully removed.
- The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- The events of May 2, 1967, when some two-dozen armed members of the Black Panthers Party for Self-Defense, led by Bobby Seale, entered the California State Capitol in Sacramento to protest the pending Mulford Act, a gun control law.

Roots' argued that the legal treatments of violent J6ers were more harmful, severe and unprecedented than anything that had occurred with respect to his four examples. He was also trying to make the case that Trump and the J6ers were all victims of "selective and vindictive" prosecution.

Roots' claims were easily shot down. Mostly because he had omitted from his presentation the fact that none of his examples were about protestor-police interactions, let alone instances of political violence. With the one exception of the Bonus Army example where fighting did eventually breakout. However, that violence had been preceded by 10 days of peaceful protest before the armed troops extricated the veterans from the occupied federal buildings.

Five minutes or so into Roots' presentation, I decided that somebody had to check this gaslighting troll – and since no one else was likely to have the nerve to rudely do so – that that person would have to be me.

I decided that I would try to throw Roots off his game. As the saying goes, "I'm not a lawyer but I have played one on TV." I have also played one on radio, on podcasts and on YouTube. So I decided that since Roots was playing the role of himself as a J6 defense attorney, I would play the missing roles of judge and prosecutor. I did so by interrupting Roots whenever I felt that his *ad hominem* assault on due process and the rule of law needed some kind of "push back."

Much of Roots' presentation was about the supposed "injustices" of the criminal prosecutions of J6 insurrectionists who tried to overturn the 2020 election. Whenever I wanted to intervene, I usually said something like: "Counselor, there is nothing unusual here, that is simply the way our criminal justice system works." By the end of his presentation, Roots had agreed with me on virtually every objection that I had made, which to say the least had spoiled his day and critically undermined any misinformation that he was hoping to disseminate.

When he finished and asked for questions and comments, I waited until everyone who wished to speak had done so. Then, as Roots was preparing to leave, I popped back in: "Not so fast, Counselor." It was time to circle back and address Trump's plethora of selective and vindictive prosecutions.¹⁴

After a few minutes of back and forth, I finally stated, "Tell me, yes or no, are the prosecutions of ex-FBI Director Jim Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James, selective and vindictive?"

To which Roots replied: "Yes, I guess they are. We just don't have a very fair system of law in this country."

I had one final question: "Would you not agree that as bad as our 'rigged' system of justice might be, it is far worse today than it has ever been under the direction of Trump, AG Pam Bondi, and the anti-constitutional MAGA Supreme Court?" Roots had nothing more to say and neither did I.

A Gaslighting and Whitewashing Narrative of the J6 Insurrection at the WH Website

On January 6, 2026, the White House launched a new website detailing its version of the timeline leading up to Jan. 6, 2021.¹⁵ Check it out for yourself. There's a lot of horse manure to sludge through; nevertheless, propaganda can be both absurd and self-incriminating at the same time especially when flagrantly fraudulent. Or, when hundreds of millions of Americans, not to mention the Insurrectionist-in-Chief himself, know that the new website is nothing more than a dystopian nightmarish inversion of J6 fabricated by a bunch of sycophantic lunatics.

My intent here is to simply convey a bit of the similarity in the language and meanings used by Roots in his abstract and presentation at the ASC with that of the intent and same old house of lies by the White House with its posted website about the January 6 assault on the Capitol.

¹⁴ <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/retaliatory-action-tracker/>.

¹⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/j6/>.

It begins by claiming that back on January 20, 2025, “President Trump took decisive action to pardon January 6 defendants who were unfairly targeted, overcharged, and used as political examples. They were not protected by the leaders who failed them. They were punished to cover incompetence.” The pardons were executed to end or undue “years of harsh solitary confinement, denied due process, and family separation for exercising their First Amendment rights.”

Bottom line: “The Democrats masterfully reversed reality after January 6, branding peaceful patriotic protesters as 'insurrectionists' and framing the event as a violent coup attempt orchestrated by Trump—despite no evidence of armed rebellion or intent to overthrow the government. In truth, it was the Democrats who staged the real insurrection” by certifying the “fraud-ridden” 2020 election and by “weaponing federal agencies to hunt down dissenters.”

Now let me quote from a very different juxtaposed message that Trump delivered from the White House back on January 7, 2021:

- I would like to begin by addressing the heinous attack on the United States Capitol. Like all Americans, I am outraged by the violence, lawlessness, and mayhem.
- America is, and must always be, a nation of law and order. The demonstrators who infiltrated the Capitol have defied the seat of American democracy.
- To those who engaged in the acts of violence and destruction, you do not represent our country.
- And to those who broke the law, you will pay.
- My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly, and seamless transition of power. The moment calls for healing and reconciliation.¹⁶

At the time, this was Trump throwing his MAGA base under the proverbial bus and trying to distance himself from the conspiracy to overturn the 2020 election as he was thinking to himself, “no way am I not going to be impeached” like the time before when he made that “perfect call” to the newly elected President Zelensky trying to extort him to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, his eventual presidential challenger in 2020.

Once again, instead, we have more evidence of the Trumpian “pot calling the kettle black” and of the deep pathos of the GOP that to this day is still unable to disassociate itself from their very demented and sociopathic leader Donald J. Trump.

¹⁶ <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-7-2021-message-after-pro-trump-mob-overruns-us-capitol>.

A Sidebar on the J6ers, Stewart Rhodes, and the Oath Keepers

Meanwhile: “For Many Jan. 6 Rioters, a Pardon From Trump Wasn’t Enough.”¹⁷ One year after Trump’s executive proclamation cleared the way for what he labeled “a process of national reconciliation,” many of those J6ers who received clemencies are still dealing with their demons while others “remain consumed by conspiracy theories, [or] angry at the Trump administration for not validating their insistence that the Capitol attack was a deep-state set up.”¹⁸

Many of them also want to know why their prosecutors have not been arrested, convicted and imprisoned. And, if they were “martyrs for a righteous cause” as both the president and his allies have repeatedly claimed, then why have they not received financial reparations for their pain and suffering? As Cynthia Hughes, founder of the Patriot Freedom Project and prominent advocate for the J6ers, recently posted on X: “Being pardoned doesn’t make these families whole. Many are barely holding on mentally, emotionally, and financially. To pretend otherwise is a lie.”¹⁹

Finally, in case you missed it. The deceased Oath Keepers are coming back to a “theater of war” near you.²⁰ This past November Elmer Stewart Rhodes III, a Yale Law School graduate from 2004, a disbarred member of Montana by its state supreme court on December 8, 2015, who had practiced criminal law, and founder of the Oath Keepers announced that the group was presently reconstituting itself. This organized militia had disbanded back in 2023 following Stewart’s criminal conspiracy conviction and sentencing to 18 years in federal prison.

As we all know, on January 20, 2025, Rhodes’ sentence was commuted to time served by Trump. For the record, it is a curiosity to point out that the Outlaw-in-Chief did not grant him a full pardon or clemency like those 1500 plus other J6ers. So Rhodes’ criminal conviction has never been officially washed away.

As for Rhodes’s relaunching of the Oath Keepers, he plans to include both current and former military veterans like himself as well as law enforcement officers with a Trumpian orientation. Their “cell-like” and anti-hierarchical organizational structure is designed to outlive Rhodes. Once upon a time, this far-right militia “group” claimed to have as many as 40,000 members. Their recent agenda intends to beef up security protection for its membership and to make it more difficult for law enforcement (other than Trump’s DOJ) to investigate them.

¹⁷ Alex Feuer and Dan Barry. January 5, 2026. For Many Jan. 6 Rioters, a Pardon From Trump Wasn’t Enough. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/05/us/politics/trump-jan-6-pardons-rioters.html>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <https://x.com/realpfp/status/1990907804861813163>.

²⁰ Alexander Lowie. December 30, 2025. The Oath Keepers are coming back. *Salon*. https://www.salon.com/2025/12/30/the-oath-keepers-are-coming-back_partner.

“Beyond that they are going to try to own their IT, which includes hosting their websites and using trusted online revenue generators.”²¹ Whether or not the “new and improved” or “born again” Oath Keepers conduct their future affairs in crypto or dollars, it remains to be seen. Although I am confident that Teflon Don and his mafia crew would prefer crypto, I am also sure that either way they were quite pleased to learn of this right-wing development in America’s so-called Patriot movement.

As Linda Ellerbee, a news anchor and journalist who hosted the NBC News Overnight (1982-1983) for a mere 17 episodes, used to say when ending her broadcasts with the phrase, “And so it goes,” a reference to Kurt Vonnegut’s graphic novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

²¹ Ibid.

What We Are Reading/Watching/Listening To

Book Review of *For the Children?* By Erica R. Meiners

Written by Brenna Jones

Master's Student, Department of Criminal Justice Sciences
Illinois State University

In *For the Children? Protecting Innocence in the Carceral State*, Erica R. Meiners interrogates the figure of the “child” and innocence, arguing they are not stable or neutral categories but shifting social constructs routinely used to expand the carceral state. Captives of the carceral state “refers not only to those held in prison but also to the population under formal supervision” such as those under probation or parole (Meiners, 2016, p. 83). It also encompasses governmental practices shaped by punitive logics, such as healthcare and education. By tracing how “protecting children” becomes a rationale for punishment, surveillance, and exclusion, Meiners shows how such appeals naturalize carceral responses as common-sense approaches to safety. Her central claim is that these invocations of child innocence ultimately mask and legitimize carceral expansion, narrowing public conversations about harm while obscuring deeper questions about how safety is defined and for whom.

The Construction of Childhood and Innocence

Her broader argument unfolds across three key themes, starting with how notions of childhood and innocence are created, maintained, and used to reify carceral logics. In the introduction, Meiners shows that “childhood,” though treated as a neutral category, is socio-historically produced, emerging alongside democratic ideals requiring a distinction between consenting adults and dependent nonconsenting children. By presenting childhood as race-

neutral developmental stages, it reproduces racialized and heterogendered conceptions of innocence. The criminal justice system plays a central role in defining the boundary between childhood and adulthood, framing youth as developing, less culpable, more capable of rehabilitation, and symbolically tied to the future of citizenship. As Meiners demonstrates, not all young people are afforded the same protections or privileges of “childhood.” Black youth, in particular, were routinely denied the presumption of innocence and disproportionately charged and punished as adults. If childhood is connected to future citizenship, exclusion from it positions these youth outside the imagined political community. The juvenile justice system helps perpetuate second-class citizenship through its racialized construction of the child.

This concept appears in recent scholarship as well. In *America on Fire*, Hinton (2021) shows how Black youth involved in the Black rebellions were frequently portrayed as adults to diminish their innocence. After one police killing during a rebellion, both police and press labeled the victims as adults, “making the use of deadly force against a child seem less brutal, and more justified” (Hinton, 2021, p. 111). As Meiners writes, “the artifact of the child also houses, redefines, and racializes the concept of innocence and simultaneously protects this concept from scrutiny” (2016, p. 26). As Hinton’s example supports, the figure of the child can be revoked as a neutral way of signaling the lack of innocence in ways that justify state violence.

Meiners also shows how childhood, or being “child-like,” restricts the rights of minors and other marginalized groups by framing them as dependent and lacking full capacity for consent or reason. This paternalistic logic underpins many criminal offenses, including runaway, truancy, curfew violations, and “promiscuity.” This rationale has historically extended to enslaved people and individuals with mental/physical disabilities, who were constructed as “child-like” to legitimize surveillance and denial of rights. As Meiners notes, “not being an adult

renders a person not fully free, not a full citizen,” (2016, p. 33) enabling the state to curtail rights such as privacy and consent for those who are “childlike.”

Meiners persuasively argues, this construction of the “child” and, thus innocence, expands carceral logics and regimes by redefining who is understood as dependent, dangerous, or in need of state control. Even anti-prison movements invoke the figure of the child to argue that certain populations deserve leniency due to presumed innocence and limited culpability. Meiners situates this critique within a broader abolitionist conversation. Scholars such as Gottschalk (2015) show that seemingly benevolent reforms often reinforce carceral logics. For example, efforts to reduce sentences for only people labeled “nonviolent,” deepen punitive approaches for those classified as “violent” or “serious.” Gilmore (2015) similarly notes that “such advocacy adds to the legitimation of mass incarceration and ignores how police and district attorneys produce serious and violent felony charges, indictments, and convictions [...] their use is part of a racial apparatus for determining ‘dangerousness’” (para. 13). Together, these scholars reveal terms like innocence have connotations of whiteness that can reinforce the very carceral logics that reformers aim to dismantle.

Definitions of Public Safety and Harms

The second theme is Meiners’ critique of how dominant constructions of childhood and innocence shape our understandings of safety and harm in ways that reinforce the carceral state. She argues that the category of the “child” reorganizes public concerns about danger in ways that defaults policing, surveillance, and punishment. By centering the “harmed child”, whether real or imagined, policymakers and advocates justify expansions of criminalization that do little to address the structural conditions that exacerbate or produce violence. Our

definitions of safety and harm masks how interpersonal violence is precipitated and shaped by state violence.

Meiners extends this critique to schools, reframing them not through the “school-to-prison pipeline” but as part of a broader school/prison nexus that actively reproduces carceral logics (Meiners, 2016). She highlights anti-bullying legislation, zero-tolerance policies, and the proliferation of school-based policing as defining safety as removing or controlling students, often youth of color, rather than transforming inequitable conditions (2016, chap. 2). This work has inspired further critiques, such as Stovall’s (2018) work on ‘School’ abolition, where he writes, “we should understand that space [schools] as an operative prison [...] as a corrosive, deadening place intended to dislodge people of color from social fabrics that affirm and protect their existence” (p. 56). The protection of certain youth, upheld as innocent and therefore in need of safeguarding, often justifies expanding harm against others, specifically youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth.

Meiners also uses the enforcement of sex offender registries as an example of how the figure of the “child” defines safety in ways that justify expanding the carceral state. As she explains, fear of sexual predators, particularly child sexual predators, has driven mass surveillance over those deemed “dangerous.” Policing and surveillance are presented as *the* solution to ensure child sexual safety, even though they often create precarity, perpetuate violence, and block more constructive conversations about the structural conditions that facilitate harm. Protection of children has been used to construct “stranger danger” as society’s primary concern, enforced through criminalization and restricting rights for “others.” However, as Meiners notes, “if violence to children is represented as the stranger, the nuclear and patriarchal family is preserved as natural and safe institutions”, despite evidence that children

are more likely to be abused by someone they know rather than a stranger (2016, p. 165). These constructions justify extreme surveillance and criminalization of individuals on sex offender registries, limiting their privacy, housing, employment, and other aspects of life. Additionally, ideas of consent are heterogendered, disproportionately criminalizing LGBTQ+ youth and denying them the protections of childhood through narrow definitions of “harm.” Meiners reveals that this construction of childhood often results in those supposedly in need of protection being simultaneously subjected to criminalization.

This narrow conception of safety also shapes reentry policies, community placement restrictions, and NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) responses, rooted in a skewed fear of “potential harm to children.” Meiners shows how these reactions ignore structural policies, cultural contexts, and institutions that create and perpetuate harm, including state violence within reentry programs. For instance, NIMBY opposition to reentry programs for those with mental illnesses interprets any harms committed through punitive frameworks, overlooking how “punishing landscapes of white supremacy alter bodies and coerce individuals to exhibit symptoms... interpreted as hallucinations or paranoia” (Meiners, 2016, p. 138). Laws defining who, where, and what is “safe” – especially for populations supposedly under protection, like women and children – thus expand the carceral state, intensifying surveillance and control over both the “protected” and the “condemned,” while failing to address the structural sources of harm.

“Liberation under oppression is unthinkable by design”: How Reforms Build up the Carceral State

Lastly, Meiners demonstrates how well-intentioned, reformist reforms can actually expand the carceral state. Platt (2019), in *Beyond These Walls*, explored how reforms are often

closely tied to strategies of social control, with child-saving movements serving as a prime example. Using the language of maternalism and care, these reforms frequently reinforce, rather than dismantle carceral logics, legitimizing state power and pacifying critics. Meiners situates her work within this critique, noting that many reforms and movements focus on identifying problems within the prison system without redistributing power or resources. Meiners places her analysis of childhood, innocence, and harm firmly within an abolitionist tradition. As abolitionist scholar Selman (2024), writes, “abolitionists recognize that not everything that is legally defined as a crime is harmful, and not everything that is harmful is legally defined, policed, or processed as a crime” (p. 294). Selman describes how the socially constructed category of “crime” is used to maintain the status quo to benefit the powerful few. Meiners uses this framework, showing how constructions of childhood and innocence contribute to social harms and expand the carceral state, even in movements that claim to challenge it.

Another significant strength is Meiners’ call to critically examine systems of harm, even without immediate solutions. Meiners’ inclusion of Povinelli’s (2011) perspective of “Not This” is remarkably ambiguous, offering a productive path for readers seeking ways to critique systems of oppression. Meiners argues, “Not This” encourages imagining alternative approaches to safety and harm, including redefining these concepts through these new perspectives. Importantly, Meiners clarifies that abolition doesn’t necessarily envision a world free from violence, rather, it seeks to dismantle the carceral state and surveillance, while recognizing and addressing underlying conditions that generate and perpetuate violence and deprivation within communities. In a society where punitive measures are often the only tools of accountability,

she asks readers to imagine holistic, community-based solutions, learning from successful initiatives across the country, and approach solutions with creativity and care.

Conclusion

Meiners' book thrives in its deliberate ambiguity, embracing the practice of asking difficult questions without ready answers, and showing this process can be productive for keeping movements aligned with their principles. By examining the construction of childhood, she exposes how dominant narratives of innocence mask systemic harms and reinforce the carceral state.

Meiners demonstrates how the category of childhood can anchor multiple analytical paths, making the book's insights widely applicable for scholars, movement builders, and anyone interested in critiquing systems of oppression. For readers engaging with this text, it is worth spending time with each section, as the book is not meant to be consumed quickly. Sitting with the arguments allows readers to see how each part connects, understand the nuances of each chapter, and fully grasp the implications of Meiners' insights. In many ways, the book serves as a table of contents, or a sampler, of abolitionist scholarship that has flourished in the decade since its publication. Although some topics are discussed only briefly, the book provides a strong foundation and alternative frameworks, but supplemental materials may be needed for readers new to abolitionist work.

This work is especially valuable for movement builders, as Meiners demonstrates the ubiquitous ways reformist logics and movement rhetoric can be co-opted to uphold the very carceral structures activists seek to challenge. She reveals how the criminal justice system continually reconfigures and adapts when challenged, in order to maintain the status quo. As Lee (2024) writes, "we must be aware of the potential for new configurations of institutional

practices of racial domination to replace those that have been eradicated” (p. 239). By highlighting these tensions, Meiners encourages critical reflection on how slogans, policies, and strategies, no matter how well-intentioned, can inadvertently reproduce systems of control.

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Call for Papers and New Publications

Call for Papers:

The International Journal on Responsibility (IJR) is seeking papers on the topic of "Responsibility in the Face of Violence" as detailed below. IJR is an open access and peer-reviewed journal published by JMU (James Madison University) Libraries. It is listed in Ulrich's Periodicals directory and the Directory of Open Access Journals. *Link included:* <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/ijr/policies.html>

Responsibility in the Face of Violence:

Ongoing violent conflicts foster adverse social, political, economic, and environmental consequences and raise the question of how responsibility in the face of violence may manifest. Specifically, how do notions of responsibility affect state intervention in violent conflict? This special issue will address this question. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, responsibility for transforming war-prone sociopolitical systems, historic crimes, and support for victims of violence.

Proposed titles and abstracts should be emailed to the forthcoming Editor, Dr. Taimi Castle, prior to May 31, 2026. Full manuscripts should be submitted to the IJR submission site and adhere to the formatting requirements of the journal, as detailed in the author guidelines. All submissions will undergo a peer review process and must not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Manuscript submissions will be considered on a rolling basis until December 31, 2026.

New Publication:

Vishniac, M. (2025). Access to Menstrual Products in US State and Federal Women's Prisons: A National Review of Official Rules. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 1-18.
10.1080/23293691.2025.2593858

Included Link:

[The Prison Flow Project](#)