

From Mass Incarceration to Mass Coercion

MARK JAY

He drops the whip, half from exhaustion, half from disgust, whereupon the beaten man has to pick it up and hand it to him.

– FRANZ KAFKA, “The Conscription of Troops”

From the mid-1960s to the late 2000s, the number of people locked in U.S. prisons and jails, and forced onto parole or probation, increased from less than eight hundred thousand to more than seven million. From the beginning, this explosive growth, known commonly as *mass incarceration*, has been about containing, stigmatizing, and exploiting the poorest sectors of the working class.¹ To this day, the criminal justice system continues to target the most impoverished among us. Consider a recent report from the People’s Policy Project on the composition of today’s carceral population. The report’s author, Nathaniel Lewis, divides the U.S. population into five class quintiles based on people’s “household income during adolescence, their current household income, their education, their current assets, and whether they own a home or not.” Lewis also breaks down the “probability of ever being jailed,” the “probability of being jailed after arrest,” “the probability of being jailed more than a month,” and the “probability of being jailed more than a year.” He concludes that, “for all four incarceration outcomes, being lower class rather than middle or upper class makes a massive difference. Being black rather than white makes a modest difference that is statistically insignificant for all outcomes except one: the probability of being in jail or prison for more than a year. And even in that case, whites in the lowest class group are more likely to be incarcerated than blacks in the second-to-lowest class group.”²

Understanding which groups have been the primary targets of mass incarceration is the first step in understanding what is at stake in the contemporary efforts to reform the criminal justice system. Indeed, in the past decade, mass incarceration has rightfully come under increasing attack. Politicians and organizations from prison abolitionists to the Koch

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Brothers have decried the system's various flaws: its racial injustice, inhumanity, and costliness, among others. After the Great Recession of 2007–09, thirty-three states implemented policies to reduce their prison populations. As a result, prison and jail admissions have decreased around 25 percent from their peak at the end of the opening decade of this century.³

Although many political commentators have characterized this decline as a significant step, there is reason for skepticism. For one, at this rate of decline, it would take another eight decades or so for the prison population to return to where it was when Ronald Reagan became president.⁴ The focus on releasing nonviolent drug offenders is a major limiting factor. In 2015, President Barack Obama claimed that “over the past few decades, we’ve locked up more and more nonviolent drug offenders than ever before, for longer than ever before. And this is the real reason our prison population is so high.” This claim – which demonstrates that a watered-down version of Michelle Alexander’s New Jim Crow thesis has taken hold in some elite policy circles – is misleading. Soon after Obama made his claim, FiveThirtyEight calculated that, even if every prison inmate whose most serious charge is a drug crime were released, the prison population would only decline by 14 percent and the United States would still be the world’s largest warden.⁵

This article focuses on another reason to be suspicious of contemporary prison reform: private forces have attempted to co-opt the reform movement and have implemented and profited from the forms of *mass coercion* proliferating throughout society. Mass coercion reflects the expanding institutional pressures that present poor and working-class people with the following choice: either allow yourself to be exploited by capital, submit to degrading and low-paying jobs, pay onerous user fees, present yourself for observation at an endless array of institutional checkpoints, or face the alternative – getting locked in a cage. In short, prison remains the ultimate so-called stick for those who refuse to submit, but mass coercion signifies all the ways that people are controlled and exploited by the criminal justice system *outside* the penitentiary. What we are seeing with today’s prison reform is not necessarily progress, but rather the emergence of an insidious new form of social control, one with support across the political spectrum.

In their classic *Punishment and Social Structure*, Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer showed that when the modern prison first emerged decades ago, it was initially supported by a diverse range of political actors as a morally and economically superior reform of the system of corporal punishment. Something similar is happening today. An incredibly wide range of social forces, including Black Lives Matter activists, families of former prisoners, civil liberties advocates, abolitionists, libertarians, social democrats, corporate elites, and others have endorsed carceral reform. Some

of their reasons are admirable, like ensuring that a loved one or comrade does not languish in a cage; some of them are sinister, like profiting from the invasive process of electronic monitoring. Though it is still nascent, today's reform movement and the effects it is having on impoverished workers across the country need to be analyzed more closely.⁶

Community Cages

As Bernard Harcourt has written, contemporary rates of incarceration match rates of institutionalization for so-called mentally ill people in the 1930s through the '50s. In the 1960s and '70s, largely as a result of shifts in federal funding and the political pressure waged by the antisylum movement, mental hospitals were emptied and patients were shifted to community centers. When Reagan took office, he slashed funds to these centers, rendering many former patients homeless. By 1996, as police departments around the country implemented broken-windows tactics (zero-tolerance policies in response to minor offenses), formerly institutionalized people accounted for as many as 14 percent of new arrestees. At present, half of all people killed by police and 40 percent of all incarcerated people have been diagnosed with a mental illness or cognitive disability. "There is a significant risk," Harcourt concludes, "that any decarceration will simply produce new populations for other institutions, whether homeless shelters, inpatient treatment facilities, or other locked-down facilities. This is certainly what happened last time."⁷

A recent report from the American Friends Service Committee shows that this risk is starting to become a reality. There are four pillars of the community corrections alternatives that local governments are increasingly turning to in lieu of imprisonment, what the American Friends Service Committee calls *community cages*: day reporting centers, intermediate sanctions facilities, residential reentry centers (halfway houses), and electronic monitoring.⁸ In recent years, private prison companies – which hold 18 percent of federal inmates and 75 percent of immigrant detainees, and thus have a huge stake in penal reform – have responded to mounting moral outrage against private imprisonment by investing heavily in all these alternatives. This is especially true of two companies: GEO Group, Inc. and CoreCivic, Inc. These megacorporations manage more than half of the private prison contracts in the United States and, in 2017, had a combined revenue of \$4 billion and a combined debt of \$3.4 billion (mostly held by Wall Street banks), giving them the capital to outcompete smaller service providers for government contracts.⁹

Throughout the past decade, these companies have made significant inroads in the market of alternatives to incarceration. Consider some of GEO Group's recent investments: in 2009, they purchased Just Care, a

medical and mental health service provider; in 2010, they announced a \$685 million merger with Cornell Companies, “a provider of corrections, treatment and educational services”; in 2011, they acquired Behavioral Interventions, “the world’s largest producer of monitoring equipment for people awaiting trial or serving out probation or parole sentences”; and in 2017, they announced the \$360 million acquisition of Community Education Centers, a rehabilitation services provider.¹⁰ As one GEO executive claimed in a recent earnings call: “We believe that the emphasis on offender rehabilitation and community reentry programs as part of criminal justice reform will create growth opportunities for our company.”¹¹

The GEO Group has been particularly successful in co-opting the push for carceral reform. Consider the example of immigrant detention. In recent years, activist groups have drawn attention to the brutality of immigrant detention and pushed for reform. In 2011, forty-one organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, and National Immigrant Justice Center signed a letter claiming that “there are other means – with proven track record of being much less costly yet highly effective – to accomplish [the Department of Homeland Security’s] goals of immigrant detention.”¹² That same year, the GEO Group acquired BI, Inc. for \$415 million. BI is one of the largest electronic monitoring contractors in the United States and, at the time of this acquisition, the *only* provider of monitoring and supervision services for Immigration and Customs Enforcement as part of the Department of Homeland Security’s Alternative to Detention program.¹³ Amid mounting calls for reform, Alternative to Detention funding increased from \$3 million in 2002 to \$112 million in 2013.¹⁴

As part of its own attempt to co-opt the reform movement, Corrections Corporation of America recently renamed itself CoreCivic. The executive director of CIVIC – an organization committed to ending immigrant detention – responded: “It is shocking that CCA [Corrections Corporation of America] would steal our name in what can only be construed as an effort to create undue confusion for immigrants in detention and exploit the goodwill associated with our name.”¹⁵ Aside from changing its name, CoreCivic has diversified its investments in a similar manner as the GEO Group. To name just a few examples, in 2013, CoreCivic acquired Correctional Alternatives, which provides housing and rehabilitation services; in 2015, they purchased Avalon Correctional Services, a “community corrections” company; in 2017, they acquired the residential reentry service provider Time to Change, Inc.; and in recent years, the company has been buying up halfway houses across the United States.¹⁶

GEO Group and CoreCivic also have strong lobbies, spending millions to influence recent electoral campaigns.¹⁷ In 2017, the Federal Bureau

of Prisons defunded sixteen halfway houses across the United States. Unconvinced by the explanation provided by Donald Trump's administration that these facilities were supposedly underutilized, Prison Legal News suggested that "some critics believe the [Bureau of Prisons] is realigning its residential reentry center portfolio to make room for halfway houses operated by private prison firms that made substantial donations to President Trump's election campaign or inauguration fund."¹⁸

Strange Bedfellows

In the dominant national discourse, the critique of mass incarceration usually centers on moral outrage about the brutality and racist nature of the penal system, and on the costly nature of imprisonment. Campaigns like the California Endowment's #DoTheMath campaign, which suggests that it is cheaper to fund rehabilitation and counseling programs rather than prisons, are becoming increasingly common.¹⁹ *The New York Times*' article "Why Mass Incarceration Doesn't Pay" takes a similar approach, claiming that a "cost-benefit analysis" of mass incarceration reveals that rehabilitation programs would be more cost-effective.²⁰ *The Economist* argues that, "for a fraction of the cost of locking [offenders] up, they could be fitted with GPS-enabled ankle bracelets that monitor where they are and whether they are taking drugs."²¹ For their part, *Forbes* has written that "community-based alternatives" cost as little as 7 percent of imprisonment and that "most inmates could be released early and watched round the clock with webcams, drug and alcohol testing, and electronic ankle bracelets via GPS."²² As Dan Berger and Kay Whitlock have noted, both Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren depict the criminal justice system as a racist drain on public resources and propose to help undo the deleterious effects of mass incarceration by "procedural policing tweaks, new 'evidence-based' strategies, the expansion of surveillance and control via multiple forms of 'e-carceration,' fines and fees, and a host of [other] reforms.... Such reforms expand the system rather than permanently shrink it."²³

As Carl Takei has pointed out, conservatives have increasingly become "strange bedfellows" of supposedly progressive reform advocates, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union, which in recent years have shifted their "criminal justice messaging to focus on cost savings, efficiency, and other ideas that appeal to conservatives."²⁴ A danger in framing carceral reform this way is that it could open the door for private service providers to swoop in and offer cheaper solutions. This is nothing new. With an eye toward cutting costs and increasing opportunities for corporate profit, political elites have privatized one public service after another in recent decades.

This is precisely what Right on Crime is after. Right on Crime is a campaign of the conservative think tank the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and it has the support of other think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute. The campaign – led by conservatives like the Koch Brothers, Newt Gingrich, and Grover Norquist – is set up, in part, to help private companies dominate the prison-alternatives market. To be sure, right-wing support for carceral reform can be seen in part as a ploy to display their moral accolades, hence Charles Koch’s ludicrous claim that his support for criminal justice reform should be compared to the civil rights movement.²⁵ But by following the money, it becomes clear that conservative think tanks are paving the way for politicians to funnel public money into the hands of private prison corporations. For example, all of Right on Crime’s recommendations for reform suggest services provided by private companies like GEO Group and CoreCivic. Many Right on Crime politicians have rejected federal Medicaid funding for their jurisdiction, forfeiting billions in federal funds that could support alternatives to prison by funding public housing, substance abuse programs, and mental health centers. But Right on Crime *do* support private alternatives. One Right on Crime statement reads:

For those instances when prisons are necessary, explore private prison options...private prisons offer cost savings of 10 to 15 percent compared to state-operated facilities. By including an incentive in private corrections contracts for lowering recidivism and the flexibility to innovate, private facilities could potentially not just save money but also compete to develop the most cost-effective recidivism reduction programming.²⁶

A Basis for Systemic Profitability

Corporations profit from the shift to mass coercion in three main ways.

First, private contractors who receive government contracts cut operation costs to the bone and claim the rest of the taxpayers’ money as profit. Private prison companies have slashed funds for inmate care; reduced food costs and subjected prisoners to unhealthy and often disgusting meals; relied on overcrowded, unsafe, and unsanitary facilities; combated unions, slashed wages and benefits; and so on. These companies have been on the receiving end of dozens of lawsuits for the “cruel, inhuman, and degrading” conditions to which they subject inmates.²⁷ Dire conditions in private prisons have also sparked a number of prison uprisings, such as the 2016 rebellion that broke out in a Mississippi facility run by CoreCivic, which inmates described as “primarily the result of conditions they felt had become increasingly dangerous and intolerable, including medical neglect, excessive use of segregation, spoiled food, a lack of interpreters, and mistreatment of staff.”²⁸ As private companies have brought this callous business model with them into the

business of rehabilitation, there have been vociferous complaints about conditions and treatment in their facilities. One CoreCivic subsidiary, for instance, was sued six hundred times in a five-year period for the neglect and poor treatment of mentally ill people.²⁹ None of this is to romanticize state-run prisons or public programs for rehabilitation, which are generally underfunded and harrowing in their own right. Rather, it is to highlight the disastrous effects of giving for-profit companies with a strong track record of human rights abuses the ability to profit not only from people's imprisonment, but also from their rehabilitation and supervised release.

The second way that corporations profit from mass coercion is by charging user fees. Paying these fees is generally a condition of staying out of prison, leading many to decry a return of modern-day debtors' prisons. Consider electronic monitoring, a form of punitive control that has increased 70 percent in the past two decades and become a \$6 billion industry. Electronic monitoring is widely marketed as an inexpensive alternative to incarceration, but less noted is that it is not inexpensive for the people often charged for their own shackles. These fees are often "cripplingly high; for example, one private, for-profit GPS monitoring company reportedly charges supervisees \$300 per month, plus a \$179.50 setup fee, for their court-ordered GPS monitoring. Supervisees who fail to pay the fees are sent back to jail." This is all part of the user-funded criminal justice system: by 2014, forty-three states allowed defendants to be charged for a public defender, forty-one states let inmates be charged room and board, and forty-four states permit people to be billed for their probation and parole supervision.³⁰

Robin D. G. Kelley has coined the term *revenue by primitive accumulation* to describe the myriad ways in which cash-strapped governments make up for budgetary shortfalls by using the criminal justice system to shift costs onto the poor. To give just one example, Kelley notes that in the year prior to the 2014 uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri, "Ferguson's municipal court issued 33,000 arrest warrants to a population just over 21,000, generating about \$2.6 million dollars in income for the municipality."³¹ Nine thousand warrants stemmed from minor violations such as housing code violations and parking and traffic tickets.³² The policies in Ferguson are common across poor communities in the United States: people are charged fees for minor violations and, when they cannot pay, they are put on payment plans, often with interest (12 percent on felonies in Washington state), and when they fall behind on payments, they often go back to jail.³³

The third way that capitalists profit is more indirect but still vitally important: mass coercion compels poor people to accept low-wage, degrading, and flexible jobs. Karl Marx suggested that, absent a united proletarian resistance, the "silent compulsion of economic relations" would tend to force people to

work on capital's terms. And indeed, in the contemporary United States, where 46 percent of Americans do not have enough money to cover a \$400 emergency expense, sheer poverty certainly does a lot to compel people to work jobs they do not want.³⁴ But the criminal justice system has worked as a significant additional form of *extraeconomic force*. As Nikhil Pal Singh and Joshua Clover note, throughout the era of mass incarceration, racist state violence has been “a material method through which wages for all workers can be driven down. It is thus a basis for systematic profitability. If state violence, expressed most obviously by the police, goes to great lengths to ensure that black lives matter less, one necessary outcome is that black people can be (and are) paid less – which means that other people can be pushed to take lower pay in turn, with a ready-made hierarchy of disposability in place for further disciplining labor.”³⁵

But this logic is not only contained to racist policing. It has also been reproduced throughout society due to increasing work requirements associated with prison alternatives and government services more broadly. As the economy has shifted toward what David Harvey has termed *flexible accumulation*, more flexible forms of control have emerged to discipline workers accordingly.³⁶ Nowhere is this clearer than in the day-labor industry, which has “spread like wildfire” in recent decades and has become “a ubiquitous presence in poor, predominantly urban communities across the country.” As Gretchen Purser has noted in her incisive ethnographic work, day-labor companies heavily recruit formerly incarcerated workers and give them one-day labor contracts: “jobs without a tomorrow.” Often, these companies partner directly with parole officers, as well as so-called reentry and social service organizations. “Just as the day labor agency offers parole officers a centralized site wherein they can, if necessary, monitor and manage their charges, so, too, does it offer parolees an opportunity to acquire the documentation of gainful employment that is stipulated as a condition of parole and that thereby functions as a form of extra-economic coercion in the workplace.” Purser concludes that the seventy million or so U.S. workers who have some kind of criminal record are not merely excluded from the economy, but rather relegated to “its bottom-most segments in what has recently been referred to as the ‘gloves-off economy,’ where jobs are precarious, working conditions are perilous, violations of labor laws are pervasive, and wages are paltry.”³⁷

The use of coercive mechanisms that track offenders' movements and compel them to take whatever jobs are on offer must be seen in the context of a broader conservative-driven initiative to expand the notion of workfare to all corners of society. Bill Clinton implemented workfare on a national scale with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity

Reconciliation Act in 1996, which not only slashed welfare dramatically, but also stipulated that in order for people to become eligible for their reduced cash assistance, they had to be able to prove they were actively seeking a job. At the time, Marian Kramer of the National Welfare Rights Union (and formerly of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers), argued that “mandatory work legislation has in effect restored slavery in this country, regardless of race.”³⁸

Trump recently lauded Clinton’s welfare bill and implemented plans to expand work requirements for a broader array of social programs including food stamps, housing, and Medicaid. As Tracie McMillan has reported, “the combined budgets of the public programs currently targeted for work requirements—food assistance, health care, and housing—total \$704 billion.”³⁹ In this era of austerity, these policies are generally supported by governments eager to save costs by removing poor people who become rendered ineligible due to new requirements. But they also have the same tripartite effect identified above: they force poor people into low-wage positions, undermining working people’s capacity to struggle for better paying and more humanizing jobs, and they allow private companies to make massive profits by cutting operational costs and charging user fees. The private company Maximus, for instance, made \$2.5 billion in revenue in 2017 working in forty-one states to “churn people through the system,” deeming who is and who is not eligible for social benefits like health care.⁴⁰

When the Prison Is Everywhere

In his classic 1975 work *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault claimed that mechanisms for social control were becoming more diffuse, with the result that the “widespread, badly integrated confinement of the classical age” was coming to an end and “the specificity of the role of the prison and its role as link are losing something of their purpose.”⁴¹ Writing as he was at the beginning of the largest prison boom in world history, Foucault clearly missed the mark in many key respects. But it is becoming more and more apparent that he was nonetheless onto something significant. In 1992, Gilles Deleuze updated Foucault’s work in a short essay titled “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” which heralded “the progressive and dispersed installation of a new system of domination,” one pervaded by “ultrarapid forms of flee-floating control.”⁴² Foucault and Deleuze generally theorized power as a tautology—systems of power aimed at reproducing and enhancing their own power. But what we are seeing is not merely the diffusion of social control for its own sake. By taking Foucault and Deleuze’s insights and putting them

into a Marxist framework, it becomes clear that *elites are using mechanisms of mass coercion to control and exploit working people.*

On the one hand, the growing number of workers who have been rendered superfluous due to automation, monopolization, and globalization must be contained and kept away from areas where wealthier people live and do commerce. So, as Cedric Johnson has written, aggressive policing and other forms of control have become “central to urban real estate development and the tourism-entertainment sector growth, both of which serve as central economic drivers in the contemporary landscape.”⁴³ On the other hand, capital accumulation is increasingly dependent on the value extracted from the process of control itself. As William Robinson has argued, “there is an increasing convergence around global capitalism’s need for social control and repression and its economic need to perpetuate accumulation in the face of overaccumulation and stagnation.”⁴⁴ The system of mass coercion must be situated within this nexus.

Consider the First Step Act, signed into law by Trump in 2018. This bill – backed by an array of liberal and conservative groups, including the GEO Group, CoreCivic, and Right on Crime – was immediately praised in the corporate media due to the fact that it offered minor reductions in sentences for some federal prisoners (though undocumented immigrants and so-called high-level offenders are excluded). Generally ignored outside of leftist circles is that the Act authorized “a \$375 million expansion of post-prison services for inmates transitioning back into society.”⁴⁵

Moreover, as James Kilgore has noted, this and other recent reform bills “precipitate a much wider use of e-carceration – the deprivation of liberty by means of technologies such as ankle monitors.”⁴⁶ Around two hundred thousand people are shackled with and asked to pay for these invasive devices – and that number is growing each year. The Moratorium on Deportations Campaign has warned that increased reliance on GPS monitoring does not signal progress; rather, it heralds the widening of the carceral dragnet. “ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] only targets for ATD [Alternative to Detention] those immigrants ‘whose detention is not required by statute, who present a low risk of flight, and who pose no danger to the community.’ Thus, those pushed into ATD would not have otherwise been detained.”⁴⁷ Indeed, according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement reports, more than half of all immigrants under supervision *have not been convicted of a crime.*⁴⁸ With this in mind, the Moratorium on Deportations Campaign notes that GPS monitoring is linked “to a much broader process of expanding, informationalizing, and generalizing the prison.... When the prison is everywhere, it is also invisible as the new form of social reality.”⁴⁹

Echoing this point, Kilgore writes that,

Electronic monitors form the point of convergence between mass incarceration and the surveillance state.... The tracking data from GPS monitors blends in with all the other databases that profile and punish the criminalized sectors of the population.... Devices in the near future could record far more data and information than I could ever have dreamed of nine years ago when they first put the shackle around my ankle. Even now, some devices can give you a robocall if you move out of your permitted zones of travel, can send you a reminder of your appointment with your parole officer or keep track of all your digital communications and your online friends from Facebook and other platforms. The ankle bands are slowly disappearing, to be replaced by a techno hybrid of the smartphone and the Fitbit. The result will likely be a powerful piece of personalized spyware that could one day morph into a chip implant.⁵⁰

In China, multibillion-dollar surveillance companies have already begun collaborating with Chinese police departments to implement facial recognition technology to detect criminals and dissidents in real time as they move through public spaces.⁵¹ Detroit has implemented its own secret facial-recognition program, Project Green Light, which “enables police to identify and track residents captured on hundreds of private and public high-definition cameras installed at parks, schools, immigration centers, gas stations, churches, abortion clinics, hotels, apartments, fast-food restaurants, and addiction treatment centers. Police can identify people at any time using databases containing hundreds of thousands of photos, including mug shots, driver’s licenses, and images scraped from social media.” At a public meeting on July 11, 2019, after this Project Green Light finally came to light, Detroit’s publicly elected police commissioner Willie Burton criticized the clandestine project and called for a public ballot initiative to vote on the surveillance system. As a result, *Burton was arrested on the spot*.⁵²

This is one ominous sign of the direction we may be heading. But before we lose ourselves in Orwellian fantasies, it is worth stressing that, at present, there is a more straightforward, practical logic at work: governments are interested in mass coercion for the potential savings they offer; politicians are interested because they help cut costs and lessen political pressure from prison rights groups; capitalists are interested in social control initiatives that eliminate obstacles to wealth accumulation; and correctional companies are interested purely in profit and, as sociologist David Feldman puts it, in using people as “raw materials in the production process.”⁵³ This helps us understand why, rather than Foucault’s nightmare of a silently functioning panopticon, what we are actually seeing is an underfunded and malfunctioning corporate disaster. For the criminalized population, the reality is much more mundane than a Philip

K. Dick novel. People are forced into dirty, overcrowded halfway houses where underpaid and overworked employees are woefully inept at facilitating people's entry back into society. They wait around in day-reporting centers or sit around in the lobbies of day-labor companies, hoping for a few hours of work. Or they struggle with the defunct electronic monitoring equipment that companies cheaply produce in order to increase profits. According to one 2007 study from Arizona, 70 percent of alerts that electronic collars sent to supervisors notifying them that the offender was violating parole were *false alerts*.⁵⁴ Another report from Tennessee found that more than 80 percent of these alerts were simply due to technological failures such as battery issues, GPS failure, and ghost signals.⁵⁵

"Accumulate, accumulate! This is Moses and the Prophets!" With multibillionaire Trump sitting in the Oval Office, Marx's dictum applies more than ever to the workings of the criminal justice system. Profit is king, but it is also worth remembering that mass incarceration began in part to crush radical working-class groups in the 1960s and '70s. This is the domestic origin of things like stop and frisk, SWAT raids, and supermax prisons. And as activists organize to combat emerging forms of capitalist control, we would be foolish not to expect elites to use all weapons at their disposal against us.⁵⁶

Notes

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MONTHLY REVIEW *Fifty Years Ago*

The old woman bent over and waved her hand to fan the fire. With her hunched back and flabby neck ringed with wrinkles she looked like an ancient black tortoise. But that poor ragged dress certainly did not protect her like a shell, and in fact she was so slow only on account of her years. Behind her, also crooked, her hovel of wood and tin cans; and beyond, other similar hovels in the same suburb of São Paulo; in front of her, in a charcoal-colored pot, the water for coffee was boiling. She raised a little can to her lips; before drinking, she shook her head and closed her eyes. She said: "Brazil is ours."

In the center of the same city, and at the same moment, the executive director of Union Carbide thought exactly the same thing, but in another language, as he raised a crystal glass to celebrate the capture of another Brazilian plastics factory by his firm.

One of the two was mistaken.

— EDUARDO GALEANO, "The De-Nationalization of Brazilian Industry,"
Monthly Review, December 1969