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Reimagining Reentry:

A Vision for Transformative Justice Beyond the Carceral State

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ETHN 495

01 May 2020

Throughout the past decade, mass incarceration has emerged as a buzzword within academic scholarship and public policy discourse that seeks to examine the unparalleled expansion of the contemporary carceral state. With 2.2 million Americans imprisoned and over 7 million under various forms of penal control, the United States maintains the highest rate of incarceration in the world. The unprecedented inflation in the nation's incarceration rate is a direct manifestation of the 1970's War on Drugs, which enabled the legislative transformations that permeate modern sentencing policy and procedure. Institutions of policing, surveillance, and incarceration are constitutive features of the carceral system's institutionalized attack on low income communities of color, resulting in the state's disproportionate confinement and control of Black and brown bodies. Studies of the US penal state have produced an abundance of research regarding the transfer of people *into* jails and prisons. However, an examination of mass incarceration is incomplete without an analysis of prisoner reentry, which addresses the transition of incarcerated individuals *out* of correctional supervision and back into the public sphere of social life. In order to transform the emerging Prisoner Reentry Industry (PRI) into a site for meaningful social change, integration programming must perform an ideological shift from individualistic notions of reintegration to structural forms of integration, which actively disrupts conditions of racialized inequality through the promotion of economic, political, and social opportunity. Over 600,000 individuals per year – ninety-five percent of the incarcerated population - must confront the socioeconomic and political realities of returning to neighborhoods that the state has systematically destabilized through the mass removal of community members. Mass incarceration cannot be deduced to a particular historical moment; rather, it must be confronted as a conglomeration of sociohistorical processes of racialized inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. Through a critical analysis of the production of criminal

pathologies and the reproduction of racialized inequality, prisoner reentry policy and programming must confront the greater structural conditions that have established the historic disintegration of individuals from their communities and greater society.

To conduct a proper assessment of the politics of prisoner reentry, it is imperative to first address the politics of the modern carceral apparatus – along with the shifting social and economic conditions of the past half-century – that allowed for the emergence of mass imprisonment in the United States. The political landscape of the 1970's and 1980's marked a significant national movement that embraced conservative and individualistic ideals in response to the social and economic restructuring of the Civil Rights era. The politicization of crime arose as a fundamental element of right-wing political discourse which endorsed an individualistic perspective of crime that rejected structural explanations of criminality. “Tough on crime” ideology directly coincided with the rise of neoliberal capitalism and the elimination of the welfare state. Rather than addressing the pervasive racialized and class-based institutional inequalities that plagued the nation, politicians “used fear and thinly veiled racial rhetoric to push increasingly punitive policies” (Cullen 2). By attributing criminal behavior solely to the individual, members of impoverished and racialized communities are systematically marked as deviant, morally inferior, and dangerous. The racialized pathology of criminality coupled with the direct attack on communities of color through concentrated police surveillance, heightened sentencing, and punitive punishment. The warehouse model of incarceration is “a mechanism for erasing individuals deemed [as] social problems,” by permanently relegating them to a sub-citizen status that obstructs access to fundamental rights and opportunities (Ortiz 2).

The deliberate attempt to confine, exploit, and eliminate Black and Brown communities is deeply ingrained in the history of the United States, and carceral confinement is the

contemporary institution used to facilitate this attack. As mass incarceration continues to prevail, the past decade has witnessed a significant shift in the mechanisms of carceral control. This “carceral devolution” is defined as the “process of shifting carceral authority to the local level” by transferring the oversight of incarcerated populations from federal and state-level institutions towards local initiatives such as parole and probation (Ortiz 4). This shift has resulted in a drastic reduction of prison populations and a simultaneous increase in the discharge of incarcerated persons from prisons and jails. With the release of over 10,000 individuals from institutional confinement per week, prisoner reentry constitutes a critical point to address the trajectory of formerly incarcerated populations and to question the conditions in which justice-involved individuals are expected to integrate.

The racial and economic segregation of the US geopolitical landscape has led to the immense and concentrated disadvantage that has concurrently informed and accelerated mass incarceration. Many of these communities lack institutional support and suffer from inadequate housing, healthcare, education, support services, and opportunities for gainful employment. Furthermore, the hyper-surveillance of the state operates within these communities through an increased presence of law enforcement and the coercive operations of parole and probation authorities. Mass incarceration results in the erosion of social networks; when compounded with the thousands of legal restrictions placed on individuals with felony charges, a prison sentence effectively brands the justice-involved population and relegates them to a position of second-class citizenry.

Prisoner reentry scholarship has defined the myriad legal obstructions as the “collateral consequence” of incarceration, “[encompassing] a wide array of sanctions that together deny ex-offenders fundamental social, economic and political privileges and rights that most Americans

view as integral elements of citizenship” (Nixon 6). Restrictions on employment opportunities, admittance to academic institutions, and access to public housing permanently follow individuals after release, rendering the formerly incarcerated to a state of “civic death” that allows for the nation’s staggering rate of recidivism to flourish. Projections reveal that over sixty-six percent of state prisoners are predicted to be rearrested within the first three years of release, with some charged for a new crime but the majority for minor parole or probation violations (Weissman 1). The cyclical nature of incarceration, reentry, and recidivism fails to address the underlying inequalities that permeate the nation’s social fabric; thus, “ex-offenders are often recycled back into the prison system to continue the cycle of socioeconomic segregation that led many of them into criminal activity in the first place” (Nixon 17).

Prisoner reentry emerged in the first decade of the 21st century, as policymakers were urged to address an abundance of empirical evidence questioning the efficacy of the penal system. With over thirty-five percent of annual prison sentences attributed to parole infractions, it became evident that “carceral devolution” merely altered the location of the state’s coercive arm of penal control, without reducing the scope of its grasp (Lyles-Chockley 4). Academic scholarship began to explore alternative approaches to reduce recidivism, and in 2005, Jeremy Travis’ publication, *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, spearheaded this movement in penal policy. Travis defines prisoner reentry as a community-based approach that “involves new entities such as intermediaries or courts in reentry management, and explicitly uses social service agencies as boundary-spanning institutions that reach behind the prison walls and work together to ease the difficulties of the transition to community” (Weissman 4). By placing the responsibility of integration efforts primarily on non-profit organizations (NGOs) and social workers, early prisoner reentry models leave “the basic

structure of the US criminal justice system intact, doing little, if anything, to challenge the punitive crime control policies that push people into prisons in the first place” (Weismann 4). The original schematics of prisoner reentry mark a shift towards acknowledging and addressing the atrocities of mass incarceration; however, “the racial structures informing mass incarceration remain unnamed and untouched by virtually the entire gamut of reentry reforms, models, and proposals” (Nixon 2). The emphasis on community intervention in preliminary reentry strategy provides a grave limitation to macro-level restructuring, as it eliminates any consideration of the state-sanctioned structural violence that has “[abandoned] rehabilitation and root causes of crime,” thereby creating “a revolving door” that reproduces the conditions for mass-imprisonment from the outset (Ortiz 2).

In the past decade, scholars and policymakers have critically questioned prisoner reentry models through a praxis of prison abolition. Humboldt State University professor Dr. Renee Byrd published *Punishment's Twin: Theorizing Prisoner Reentry for a Politics of Abolition*, which argues that “the lives of an increasing number of returning prisoners [have] become a site for governmental intervention in unprecedented ways” (Byrd 2). Dr. Byrd asserts that the Prisoner Reentry Industry relies on the heightened presence of parole and probation officers effectively operates as a mechanism to extend disciplinary control and state surveillance beyond the walls of the prison and into the nation’s communities of concentrated and racialized disadvantage. NGOs are often perceived as a progressive alternative to redirect prisoner reentry programming into the hands of community members; however, inadequate funding forces local agencies to rely on grants from federal sources. The involvement of the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice in grant allocations presents an avenue to sustain state oversight through the rigid regulations embedded within federal funds. Regardless of an organization’s

intentions, the state's rigorous monitoring and management of local efforts binds NGOs into narrow confines set by the government, thereby limiting the potential for grassroots efforts to establish reentry as a site of structural change.

Reentry facilitators that wish to mitigate their dependence on federal grants find an alternative channel to acquire funds through the private sector. The capitalistic language that permeates this arena characterizes reentry as a commodity and funding as an expenditure; thus, organizations are required to present reentry services as a "marketable opportunity" for investors to propel their neoliberal vision. This orientation rests upon ideals of capitalism and individualism as its driving forces, with employment and job training as the primary services offered to obtain the overarching objective of personal transformation. Through employment-centered reentry strategies, successful reintegration is virtually synonymous with an individual's ability to exhibit their economic utility in the former labor market. Prison abolitionists define this model as one of "neoliberal neglect," where criminal conviction histories systematically restrict the justice-involved population from gainful employment (De Giorgi 26). When compounded with the structural impediments of concentrated disadvantage, this system establishes the formerly incarcerated as a supply of cheap and disposable labor to stimulate the economy while neglecting the individual's ability to sustain a livable wage. Neoliberal values of individualism and personal responsibility construct reintegration as a "personal issue rather than a collective and political one" (Nixon 12). This systematic dismissal of collective responsibility strategically operates to undermine and disregard "the structural dynamics of class and racial oppression that [constrain] life opportunities," thus institutionalizing and further propelling "legacies of racism, segregation, disenfranchisement, [and] ghettoization" through the prison industrial complex (De Giorgi 29, Nixon 12).

The immense expense of incarceration and the stagnation in recidivism rates have forced policymakers and politicians to reconsider the efficacy of the nation's correctional system. Propositions for "cost-effective management of a slightly leaner correctional system" have received bipartisan support from state and local propositions for alternate approaches to formal incarceration (De Giorgi 31). In 2014, the US Sentencing Commission (USSC) unanimously voted for the reduced sentencing of federal drug convictions through Amendment 782, and within a year over 6,000 individuals were eligible for immediate release (Weissman 2). That same year, President Obama's Clemency Initiative granted sentence commutations to 1,900 individuals who were "convicted for a nonviolent crime, had a limited prior criminal history, demonstrated good conduct in prison, and had served at least 10 years in prison" (Weissman 2). It may appear as though the US penal system is undergoing a considerable restructuring to mitigate the tough on crime "pathological reliance on incarceration," however, Amendment 782 and the Clemency Initiative exemplify the nature of reformist visions that adhere to the blueprint of modern day liberalism through a facade of progress that tweaks the operations of the institution, while the structure and function remain unscathed (Weissman 1).

Though sentence reductions and reentry initiatives are promoted through seemingly well-intentioned progressivism, the execution of these ideals has resulted in the "[expansion of] the prison beyond prison walls and [the resuscitation of the system's] legitimacy by appearing to bring rehabilitation back," while continuing to keep the foundational structure of the institution completely intact (Byrd 13). The ideals held in dominant reentry discourse promote a perpetual reliance on state surveillance, an emphasis on personal transformation, and an adherence to neoliberal economic structures. Absent of a structural critique of state violence, the current state of reentry initiatives is merely "remaking the carceral landscape and expanding the punishment

system, even as it is deployed in such a way as to mimic a critique of mass imprisonment” (Byrd 17). Critics of the current reentry movement argue that “as long as conditions of life for [the formerly incarcerated] are characterized by chronic poverty, civic and political disenfranchisement, and pervasive marginality, the prison—even a reformed one—will maintain its role as a tool for the punitive governance of the racialized poor” (De Giorgi 32). The current state of reentry relies on a sterilized fabrication of progressivism that systematically upholds and extends the power of the carceral apparatus from the jail cell into the nation’s most disadvantaged communities. However, with a reorientation from reformation to transformation, the field of prisoner reentry serves as a critical point to address the trajectory of the criminal justice system in its entirety and to mobilize a movement towards the liberation and empowerment of the US’ formerly incarcerated population.

Prison abolitionist scholars and activists challenge reentry efforts to undergo an ideological reconfiguration towards “the redistribution of political and economic resources, the development of leadership, and the enabling of self-autonomous organizing among those who have been in prison and are living with criminal convictions,” as the foundational elements needed to transform reentry into a site for meaningful systemic change (Nixon 13). Prisoner reentry policy and programming must uplift the voices, experiences, and needs of formerly-incarcerated individuals, and this movement must be “led by the populations that have been the main targets of the American penal experiment—the poor, the unemployed, and stigmatized urban minorities—to take up the unfinished struggle against neoliberal neglect and the carceral state” (De Giorgi 33). Moreover, transformative reentry must be grounded in a critique of national discourses of mass imprisonment, where the structural barriers to societal (re)integration are addressed through both policy and practice.

Structural approaches to transformative reentry require a critical analysis of “the inequality, maldistribution of resources, and sheer exploitation that have been part cause and effect of mass incarceration” (Nixon 8). The criminal justice system as an institution is embedded in greater structures of neoliberal capitalism and legacies of racism that continue to obstruct upward social mobility for the nation’s racialized poor. This condition is further exacerbated by the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction that systematically bans the formerly incarcerated population from access to gainful employment, housing, education, healthcare, and social services. A holistic approach to reentry calls for the establishment of “comprehensive policies, procedures, practices, and programming designed to acknowledge the entire racial and socioeconomic situation of individual ex-offenders,” as a means to dismantle the state-sanctioned disenfranchisement of prisoners following release (Lyles-Chockley 31).

Policymakers can facilitate structural transformation by enacting legislation that allows for the expungement of criminal records and the pardon of ex-offenders. Through state-mandated initiatives, legislative actors must advocate for the elimination of legal restrictions that permanently obstruct formerly incarcerated persons from the full rights of citizenry following their release. As of 2019, California, Utah, and Pennsylvania have enacted legislation for “clean slate record relief,” which enables the automatic expungement or sealing of criminal records for various convictions (CCRC 1). Efforts to eliminate the institutional discrimination associated with a felony record must become common practice nationwide as a means to grant justice-involved individuals their fundamental rights as citizens of the nation and as members of their communities.

Although progressive post-incarceration policy is a critical element in the political struggle of transformative reentry, practices must extend beyond the desks of legislators and into

the hands of the formerly incarcerated. Abolitionist approaches to reentry do not rely upon the state for the construction of socioeconomic security. Rather, this framework mobilizes power from within the justice-involved community as a means to “ground abolitionist visions in the concrete everyday struggles of those most affected by mass imprisonment” (Byrd 17). While acknowledging the state’s role in the construction of infrastructure, public assistance, and academic funding, an abolitionist praxis seeks to mitigate institutionalized disparities through community-based, collaborative alternatives.

Access to education is an essential component to address conditions of concentrated disadvantage. Academic opportunity holds the potential to reduce recidivism and to mitigate criminal justice involvement from the outset. In the absence of equitable public education, transformative reentry turns to community members and organizations to implement curriculum-based learning programs derived from lived experience. By allowing formerly-incarcerated individuals to ground their story in a larger history of political struggle against systematic racial and class oppression, community organizing serves as a vehicle for the “self-determined participation” of the justice-involved persons “in research, planning, and programming for social change, especially in relationship to the racism of mass incarceration” (Nixon 19).

Efforts to fuse grassroots solidarity building and reentry programming is exemplified through the work of Paving Great Futures (PGF), a non-profit organization created *by* and *for* the justice-involved community of Southeast San Diego. Through the Leadership and Civic Engagement Development (LACED) course, PGF offers a curriculum that trains and educates participants to form a collective voice and “to advocate for local decision making that addresses current social and economic challenges” of San Diego’s formerly incarcerated population (“Programs”). According to PGF co-founder Armand King, LACED participants have had “a

direct impact on policies, procedures, and [the] allocation of resources which benefits marginalized San Diego communities,” through their involvement with voter registration, census tracking, and lobbying for post-incarceration legal action at California’s state capitol (King). The encouragement of leadership and promotion of civic participation for the formerly incarcerated “allows those who have been in prison to recognize the political struggle that [they] are subject to and must become subject of,” and thereby transforming this community from one that is “studied, assessed, evaluated, and managed,” into one that “will be listened to, followed, and promoted” (Nixon 19). Autonomous self-organization allows communities impacted by mass incarceration to assert their agency and to establish transformative power without reliance on the state. Through a collective voice and struggle, reentry serves to mobilize, organize, and effect sociopolitical change.

While recent reformist measures attempt to construct an image of progressive penal policy and illusionary change, the modern carceral apparatus continues to operate as a system of state-sanctioned structural and racialized violence. The penal landscape of the United States perpetuates ongoing legacies of subjugation, elimination, and exploitation through a deliberate attack on the fundamental rights of the nation’s racialized and impoverished populations. The past decade has revealed a shift in the mechanisms of state control, as carceral authority has ascended out of the formal prison structure and into local neighborhoods and communities. The rapid release of formerly incarcerated individuals out of institutional confinement highlights an urgent call to action for legislators, organizers, scholars, and activists to assert a transformative vision for the future of prisoner reentry. In order to combat the destabilizing effects of policing, surveillance, and containment, reentry advocates must promote a vision of integration centered upon the voices, experiences, and demands of the justice-involved as autonomous agents. With a

radical ideological reconfiguration that abandons notions of reformation and adopts a politic of transformation, prisoner reentry stands as a critical site in the political struggle towards the eradication of institutionalized violence, and the construction of social opportunity, political empowerment, and structural change.

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“Employment-Focused Programs for Ex-Prisoners: What Have We Learned, What Are We Learning, and Where Should We Go from Here?” *MDRC*, MDRC, 1 July 2006.

This article examines eight studies of employment centric reentry models for formerly incarcerated persons. From an analysis and discussion of post release programs, it becomes apparent that the highest success in reducing recidivism is derived from integrated programs that offer support prior to and following release. Furthermore, incentive-based programs are noted as a promising alternative to conventional models. The article reveals the limited data and empirical research conducted within the field, thus highlighting a call to action to conduct future analyses of various re-entry program models in order to ensure positive outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons and for the surrounding community.

Byrd, Renée M. “‘Punishment’s Twin’: Theorizing Prisoner Reentry for a Politics of Abolition.” *Social Justice*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2016.

Punishment’s Twin mobilizes a praxis of prison abolition as a means of navigating the realm of prisoner reentry practices. Byrd argues that if poorly implemented, reentry services may actually bolster the lucrative penal system and the associated oppressions rather than alleviate them. Furthermore, the article examines the relationship between the expanding carceral state and the implementation of an increasing space for governmental control and oversight in marginalized communities through parole and probation which operates through a system of hyper surveillance. With over 95% of the prison population facing release annually, prisoner reentry stands at a crucial intersection of either advancing the control of the penal state, or; with the implementation of a prison abolition rhetoric, as a site for radical and revolutionary social change.

De Giorgi, Alessandro. “Back to Nothing: Prisoner Reentry and Neoliberal Neglect.” *Social Justice*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2017.

Alessandro De Giorgi analyzes prisoner reentry through a “racialized paradigm of punitive governance of the poor in a neoliberal society increasingly fractured along lines of racial and class inequality” (2). De Giorgi poignantly confronts the realities of systemic race and class oppression, that not only surfaces from mass incarceration, but rather serves as the primary root of it. This article critically questions the role of prisoner reintegration, as the surrounding environments within low income communities of color highlight the conditions of disintegration that have been facilitated through capitalistic corruption and exploitation, or what De Giorgi refers to as *Neoliberal Neglect*. Many reentry services center employment and market based initiatives as a measure of an individual’s success following reentry, which in turn works to cycle formerly incarcerated persons into a capitalistic system that has served as the basis to racialized and class based inequality that destabilizes living conditions and leads to criminality. If prisoner reentry services do not implement a class-conscious framework, the practices only serve the bourgeois class that feeds off of the labor of the working poor. Without

regard to the “human rights to health, education, housing, and adequate living standards for all” (31), prison reentry services may merely serve as a cyclical method of “replenishing the ranks of the (post-)industrial reserve army of labor” through mass incarceration (3).

Lyles-Chockley, Adrienne. “Transitions to Justice: Prisoner Reentry as an Opportunity to Confront and Counteract Racism.” *Hastings Race and Poverty Law Journal*, vol. 6, July 2009, p. 259.

This article highlights the inextricable link between race, socioeconomic status, and mass incarceration, thus exposing the imminent need for an anti-racist paradigm shift in prisoner reentry programming. According to the Department of Justice, 650,000 individuals are released from incarceration annually, and the majority are released into communities that are already disproportionately impacted by inadequate housing, unemployment, and access to social services. In order to decrease recidivism and to effect productive and meaningful change, a structural approach must be facilitated to ensure tangible and material results in individual lives and communities. This article provides an insightful discussion of anti-racist practice; however, it is only discussed in a hypothetical sense without empirical results or examples of successful programming, which could be expanded upon in future research and academic inquiry.

Moran, Dominique. “Prisoner Reintegration and the Stigma of Prison Time Inscribed on the Body.” *Punishment & Society*, vol. 14, no. 5, Dec. 2012, pp. 564–583, doi:[10.1177/1462474512464008](https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474512464008).

Dominique Moran delves into the psychological trauma and experience faced by formerly incarcerated women, as she conceptualizes the ongoing internal struggle of navigating the stigma that continues to influence individuals following their release. Moran explores this theory through the framework of a carceral prison that alters a person’s perception of the self, as this perspective is influenced by the societal gaze through a pathologized criminality. This article makes a strong argument regarding the perpetual state of disadvantage faced by formerly incarcerated persons through the internalization of stigmatization whether explicitly present or implicitly perceived. Moran’s case study examines the psychological impact of the carceral state throughout Russia, and while similarities are present to the US prison system, further research is needed to examine the lived experiences of individuals throughout various regions in order to adequately apply Moran’s work to this project.

Mulmat, Darlanne, et al. “Addressing Offender Reentry: Lessons Learned From Senate Bill 618 San Diego Prisoner Reentry Program.” *Corrections Today*, vol. 75, no. 4, Sept. 2013, pp. 24–27.

This article discusses Senate Bill (SB) 618, otherwise known as the San Diego Prisoner Reentry Program as a case study for state efforts to provide alternatives to formal incarceration. This program was facilitated from 2006 through 2012 as a means to provide parolees with effective community-based solutions to combat the detrimental individual and communal ramifications of mass incarceration. Through needs assessment

and individual case planning, motivational techniques, and the implementation of social supports, SB618 provided empirical support for the efficacy of alternative approaches to incarceration. Despite data that reveals reduced recidivism rates of SB618 participants and a net savings for the state, the program was repealed in 2012 due to “budgetary constraints.” This article provokes a necessity for further research into public policy and may be stronger when examined in conjunction with other state initiatives to corroborate the arguments provided.

Nhan, Johnny, et al. “The Reentry Labyrinth: The Anatomy of a Reentry Services Network.” *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1–19, doi:10.1080/10509674.2016.1257533.

The Reentry Labyrinth examines the “reentry landscape” that formerly incarcerated persons must navigate when interacting with the network of social services and supports aimed towards offender reintegration programming. Through an analysis of resources provided in Fort Worth, Texas, Nhan reveals that the web of reentry agencies and services often results in an unorganized and inaccessible system that limits the utilization of these resources, and thus undermines the potential efficacy of prisoner reentry programs. This study reveals the presence of cultural and social conflict among stakeholders within the field that result in divergent goals and conflicting ideologies which ultimately harm the communities most in need of these resources. In order to mitigate the convoluted nature of prisoner reentry programs and policy, Nhan calls for heightened collaboration and partnerships among organizations in order to ensure equitable results for the individuals that reentry programs seek to support.

Nixon, Vivian, et al. “Life Capacity beyond Reentry: A Critical Examination of Racism and Prisoner Reentry Reform in the U.S.” *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2008, pp. 21–43. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25594997. Accessed 25 Feb. 2020.

Through *Life Capacity Beyond Reentry*, Vivian Nixon challenges the “self transformation” ideologies that prevail within modern prisoner reentry policy and practice, by arguing that the prevalence of this individualistic rhetoric limits the examination of greater racialized structures of exploitation, exclusion, and social control. Nixon further expresses concern within the institutionalization of prisoner reentry programming, as the hyper surveillance of the carceral state is able to extend into communities and thereby reproduce the destabilization that leads to heightened crime through state sanctioned barriers towards upward social mobility. This article is particularly strong, as it places an explicit emphasis on the systemic implementation of an anti-racist praxis within prisoner reentry models. Through an exploration of the racialized and class oriented systemic structures of exclusion, Nixon challenges the credibility of “reintegration” ideology, by presenting the argument that the communities that are most impacted by mass incarceration have never been integrated into the social fabric of the US since the nation’s conception; therefore, the experiences of individuals following incarceration must be analyzed as not just a social position, but rather as a political struggle.

Weissman, Marsha, and Norman Brown. "Half Stepping Criminal Justice Reform." *Beyond Mass Incarceration: New Horizons of Liberation and Freedom*, vol. 5, no. 2, 19 Feb. 2019.

This paper provides an analysis of federal criminal justice reforms with an emphasis on the DOJ's Clemency Initiative and the "Drugs Minus Two" sentencing reductions that were enacted towards the end of the Obama Administration. Weissman and Brown highlight the narrow scope of reform measures as they fail to address the macro level conditions that have led to the racialized structure of mass incarceration that is embedded within the greater structure of global capitalism. This article presents recent policy reforms as a mere bandage to remedy the punitive practices of the carceral state, while still leaving the root of the institution completely intact, and thus limiting effective change. Weissman and Brown assert that full citizenry must be allotted to formerly incarcerated persons as a means to address the effects of incarceration, while simultaneously gearing efforts towards the active disruption of the inequitable conditions that lead to disproportionate criminal justice involvement in the first place.

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