



Ursinus College
Digital Commons @ Ursinus College

Charles Rice Post-Graduate Research
Fellowship

Harold C. Smith Program in Christian Studies

2021

Prison Theocracy

Athena Gainey

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/charles_rice_fellowship



Part of the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), [Law Enforcement and Corrections Commons](#),
and the [Social Justice Commons](#)

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)



PRISON THEOCRACY



Abstract

This research hopes to understand justice by inquiring about control over definitions of justice. Further questions also include if and how justice works in America's criminal justice system; who does it define as inclusive/exclusive to society; and how does the system and those who run it choose to protect inclusive members of society? Examples of the Prison Industrial Complex- such as mass incarceration and police brutality- exist as proof that American facilities of law & order lack justice in equity for all its citizen. Both religious and non-religious based grassroots organizations have developed instrumental changes that push to reform and reshape the system to be inclusive with the goal of redefining and actualizing justice. Still, there are more incomprehensible troubles to come in the inevitable gaps of whatever system replaces the current. This framework supplies an avenue for critical analysis for the current criminal justice system and how it impacts its citizens by utilizing current experiences of organizers in the Prison Abolition Movement. Further, this research critically frames organizers' efforts in the Prison Abolition Movement to acknowledge potential how their aims at a new system can affect the future definitions of justice.

Table Of Contents:

- I. Introduction
- II. Methods and Procedures
- III. Discussion
 - a. What is this Project
 - b. Review of Subtopics of Prison Theocracy Framework
 - c. Course Examples
 - i. History of the Carceral State: A Religious Reform Effort
 - ii. 1.1 What is the Prison Industrial Complex
 - iii. 1.2 What is the Prison Abolition Movement
 - iv. 1.3 Acts of Justice: Restorative and Transformative Justice
 - v. Religious influence on the carceral system
 - vi. 2.1 What is Prison Theocracy
- IV. Conclusion
- V. Effects on the Researcher
- VI. Researcher's Journal

Introduction

Social concerns of the American prison system often highlight the police violence enacted against mass incarceration of Black men. In the last decade, Black male faces are the poster example for experiences of criminal injustices in America. Be they lived experiences or media representations of lived experiences, America's ideology traps Black men under the thumb of the law. For the purposes of the research, researchers examine the modern America ideology of law & order through the Prison Industrial Complex[1]. Though essential to understand experiences of the American Prison Industrial Complex, it is important that American ideology include holistic experiences for all identities impacted by practices of law & order. It is imperative to incorporate perspectives of mass incarceration based on sexuality, gender, ability, class, and career, for doing so allows for a closer understanding of how to enact change towards a true justice. This research grants space to understand how experiences of mass incarceration in the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement have impacted American citizens unjustly.

What is justice? A vision: some concrete, elaborated, and inclusive concept of what the nation should do to govern all its citizens with equity and reasonable fairness. This research hopes to understand justice by inquiring about control over definitions of justice. Further questions also include if and how justice works in America's criminal justice system; who does it define as inclusive/exclusive to society; and how does the system and those who run it choose to protect inclusive members of society? Examples of the Prison Industrial Complex- such as mass incarceration and police brutality- exist as proof that American facilities of law & order lack justice in equity for all its citizen. Both religious and non-religious based grassroots organizations have developed instrumental changes that push to reform and reshape the system to be inclusive with the goal of redefining and actualizing justice. Still, there are more incomprehensible troubles to come in the inevitable gaps of whatever system replaces the current. This framework supplies an avenue for critical analysis for the current criminal justice system and how it impacts its citizens by utilizing current experiences of organizers in the Prison Abolition Movement. Further, this research critically frames organizers' efforts in the Prison Abolition Movement to acknowledge potential and elaborate on how their aims at a new system can affect the future definitions of justice.

This research will acknowledge the experiences of identities vulnerable to the injustices of the Prison Industrial Complex. The goal is not simply to incorporate these identities to the list of American folks being treated unfairly, but to utilize authentic experiences to create equitable change. It is imperative that acts of change have time to plan, and consider the consequences to prevent future injustice. As such, this work requires your full attention. This work is not limited to define means to change, nor is it aimed to end the Prison Industrial Complex in America at once. The research introduces a new frame of mind through which Americans examine justice and to critically understand the world reformers and abolitionists hope to create. In the wake of Black Lives Matter Movement and the Prison Abolition Movement alike, it is imperative that this research be conducted now. As it is becoming a controversial concept of concern for citizens, leaders, organizers, and policy makers, readers must consider ways of creating change that were ignored by the occupier's past. As such, it is now that we cease the exclusion of American citizens from questions of who deserves protection, safety, and justice.

This research acts as a space to plan and form the mindset to consider means of creating change that aids all American citizens rather than a niche population. In recognizing that most

Americans hail from various blends of identity, it is important to examine acts of change through the lens of intersectionality. For the length of the project, researcher chose to highlight identities in close conjunction to their own while supplying critical questions that are applicable to various identity groups and intersectional identity experiences. In conversation on Black Women experiences with law, Kimberle Crenshaw explains intersectionality as the unique experiences of identify through race and gender. This framework takes into consideration how other identifiers, such as class and career, ability, and sexuality play a part in unique experiences within the Prison Industrial Complex in America and how it can be expunged to create justice.

This research examines the influences of the Prison Abolition Movement through a theocratic lens. By way of converging identity theory and religious history, researchers compiled a lens through which organizers can examine both the origins of prisons, the reformation of prisons since its origins, and efforts to abolish the system simultaneously. Identity theories direct questions of position of power. Researchers define this lens as a Prison Theocracy framework. The Prison Theocracy framework questions the relationship of American law & order to its religious origins via the criminal justice system. This research utilizes the framework of a Prison Theocracy to examine how the criminal justice system enables avenues of social justice and injustice and the process of reforming and/or abolishing injustice. Prison Theocracy begins by examining American definition(s) of justice while thoroughly examining said definitions' origins by name of who created them and who they affect. The research goes on to indulge American ideologies of law & order by critically examining the faults* of the criminal justice system, narrowly the Prison Industrial Complex and Mass Incarceration. Prison Theocracy examines the religious influences on the Prison Industrial Complex and the ways in which it creates avenues of harming and healing onto its most vulnerable community members. The framework also evaluates who creates resistance against notions of injustice and how these practices take place from a religious base, especially organizers who have enacted change via grassroots organization. Finally, the Prison Theocracy framework creates a historical analysis of its influence in the American criminal justice system, and from a global perspective, who has influenced American law & order ideology over time.

The foundation of America's criminal justice system lies in the expectation of justice by way of punishment for violations of law. Breaking of laws creates disorder and invites avenues for chaos in the lives of American citizenship. The core questions of the framework identify the who, what, where, how and when of religions influence on America's criminal justice system to make inferences about Americans relationship to law and order (Griffith, 2020). Because this research does not assume causality, there is no answer to questions of why Prison Theocracy exists or why it has held in Americans' ideology of law and order, though these would be important questions for further researchers to investigate. Specifically, this research seeks to define a true justice, emphasizing defining true as defines holistic image on the American perspective. As such, the research utilizes various experiences across the criminal justice system- incorporating experiences from academics exploring Prison Abolition, minister and religiously based organizers assisting in efforts towards Prison Abolition, judges, policy makers & analysts, and lawyers- as they exact change within the criminal justice system. Simultaneously, this research compares the identities of influential leaders in the Prison Abolition and their efforts by compiling the experiences of organizers with variation in race, gender, class, and career. The expectation with the evaluation is such that researchers can utilize identity as a dependent variable in answering the question of who defines justice. Furthermore, this research gathers experiences of those behind the criminal justice system to examine research questions of who

justice is utilized to aid and who is the justice system enacted against? In gathering reasonings for citizens to enter prison, this research will make inferences on how those laws are intended to protect and punish. These experiences are data gathered via historical literary review, personal experience collected via interview, and through academic discussion.

Highlighting race and gender as personal identifies as they relate to the researcher, this project utilized Black Womanhood theories both to incorporate the researchers' experiences but also to shed light to a highly affected but underrepresented group of the over-imprisoned population and the leaders organizing to end mass incarceration. The role of the research is to explore the ways in which we can unlearn, reimagine, and take actions to reinvent the assumptions of human interaction that are no longer necessary in American society, especially those against Black women. It calls upon the ideas of history because Movements are never occurring all at once, but over periods of time waiting impatiently for the rest of the society to be ready to form change around a preexisting idea. Researchers call upon the inclusion of prior excluded or presumed absent folk from this discourse of creating social standards. It creates new hegemony through conversations. The conversations we bring from one space to the next that form a viral change in the heart's minds and strides of other individuals, then other groups, then society at large. It is in the hands of people like me willing to do the pre-work and learn and continue to act beyond this moment to build progressive present and a full concept of truth, justice, and social acceptance.

This is not simply a project to build a new framework nor is it to be narrowed by the limitations of academic information gathering tactics. It is also a soulful and spiritual journey guided by academic writers, abolitionists, and leaders- religious or otherwise. This text embraces the concepts of spiritual growth as they occur within and beyond the written and explained worlds because it recognizes that books have bindings and therefore must have limits on how much it can train our understanding, behavior, and reasoning. Researchers plan to explore all the ways that they, and others, might have missed a calling to enact justice by focusing too closely or too far away from a particular topic. This research will discuss this as a vice and this project acts as a documentation of the journey of finding authentic experiences of spiritual guidance in all the messy, inappropriate, confusing, and unanswerable ways that is an average 20-something year old Black woman aging and learning in the abyss- the future. As such, it takes into consideration works of non-fiction, poetry, film, television, and art to create a cultural, spiritual, and authentic look at America social justice reform efforts. It will utilize text written by Octavia Butler, Nicki Giovanni, Audrea Lorde, Paulo Coelho, and others as an important information on the researchers' spiritual guidance in understanding how Black Women via solidarity experiences, create their futures in the 2020s or other concepts of the future.

Researchers will look through the lens of actors in these areas to cultivate an understanding of where our current criminal justice is and the potential future that is attainable through the capital in play currently. We address how American idealizes punishment in the criminal justice system and how religion plays a part in criminalizing Black Women. Simultaneously, we give autonomy to women in their struggle for justice in highlighting how Black women organize against lawful oppression using religious practices towards liberation

Methods and Procedures

A1. Method Ideology

Due to the multifaceted nature of the research questions, this project utilizes a variety of methods to reach a consensus on the matter of Prison Theocracy. Namely, this research utilized subjective experiences collected directly via interview, indirectly via literature and archival newspaper, and analysis creative products. All experiences are prerecorded and documented for further use in and beyond this scope of this project. Because this research is to be used to teach, all research is collected with the knowledge of education. As such, methods are informed by education methodology to be explained further in the methods section.

Following the teachings of K. McKittrick, this research also recognizes the needs to non-traditional data collection as a means of gathering truth. Realistically, lived experiences are captured beyond the methods of traditional social science. Additionally, they are capture in song, film, poetry, and other areas of culture that, when consolidated with traditional methods, can be conversed in academic writing such as this framework. It is with these mediums in mind that this framework hopes to define American Ideology on law & order, true justice, and theology. To capture these a-traditional experiences, this project utilized ethnographies to document notable connection to the research topics.

B1. Interview Method of Subject Selection -

This research is conducted as a means of analyzing the experiences of Black Female activists, organizers for prison abolition, and religious leaders participating in social justice activism. As such, data will be collected via interview. Source data collected in this method is decoded and used to inform research results. Research results are concluded in the body of this paper. Researchers hope to honor and take from my activists' predecessors the knowledge needed to become a political activist with divine and spiritual practices held during the process of national and global change from the carceral state the honors the prison industrial complex. As such, data collected from these interviews and used solely for the purpose of research and not monetary gain is expected from this experience. Subjects were selected for this project based on their identity and involvement in social justice towards the goals of prison abolition. Some subjects were also chosen in discourse with these social justice goals in mind to create a frame of American perspective on incarceration, punishment, and justice. The goal in selection of subjects is to create a conversation of potential national perspectives and to guide areas in which education is needed, change is needed, and activists can find their best roots.

Recruitment for the interview portion of the research is via LinkedIn connections, email, and organization website research and phone calls. Organizations such as the Braxton Institute, which have an affiliation with Ursinus College, are contacted directly via email for participation in this study. Programs were investigated on an individual basis and first contact to all leaders takes place over the head researcher's LinkedIn account. Following contact and recruitment will take place via email. Survey's will be sent via email. Interviews will be conducted via zoom. Under permission of the interviewee, the interviews will be recorded, and their messages coded and are utilized to inform research results. Attachments to email, following initial contact and approval to participate in research project, will include the full project description and interview

consent form. Consent form is signed and filled before the interview process begins. Written and verbal consent are filed before interview begins. Potential interview subjects that are unable to respond or do not respond to the first email are sent a follow up email two weeks following the first email. Samples for these emails are written as follows. Attachments for these emails are to be found in Appendix B.

B2. Study Site - State the location(s) where the study will be conducted. Include letters of approval to conduct the study from all **non-Ursinus College** sites.

All Survey data will be collected digitally

B3. Full Description of the Study Design, Methods, and Procedures -

The interview process begins with a review of the project description and verbal consent to record the remainder of the interview. The interview continues with a set of customized questions that are based in the interview subjects experience and expertise. A general baseline for the interview questions are as follows. For most interviews above one hour, all sample interview questions listed below were asked and customized questions were added to this list. For interviews under half-an-hour, the first three questions from this list were prioritized.

Following the interview, the recorded information is stored in a password protected zip file containing the subjects consent form and other connecting documents. These recordings are only used the inter researcher for review purposes only. Another consent for is to be sent out in early January requesting permission to use the same recorded files to be edited for a brief podcast series. This consent form will emphasize that the interview subject will be identified. The subject will be reminded three times before agreeing to these terms.

Discussion

What is This Project:

The Charles Rice Post-Graduate Research Fellowship is the opportunity to express an independent interest or develop spiritual exploration. Its namesake was my mentor and dear friend Dr. Rev. Charles Rice. He was my first year advisor and first acquaintance into higher education. Meetings with my mentor were often operational in Chronos time, and therefore never ran according to schedule. However, they were ever rich in content, knowledge, connection and love. In Rev. Rice's presence it was almost as if whatever it was you were expressing was more valuable than time itself. I cherished my time with my mentor but none more than one of our final conversations. Rev. pulled me aside following one of his philosophy classes, of which I was not a part. We had to discuss my future he mentioned. He handed me a paper that entitled the Duke University Independent research fellowship for Juniors and Seniors for 10-week paid research opportunities and said nothing as I read over the details. When I was finished he simply said 'You are going to be a professor, I feel it in your questions. You're only a freshman so you have a ways to go, but I am going to work with you to build your resume to get into a program like this.'

Unfortunately, due to his untimely passing, we may not have been able to collaborate to build my resume, but the researcher got into the Moore Undergraduate Research Fellowship to study the effects of representation of Black women and their socio-political development. Just two short years following, she was able to make the plan come true and become a professor under none other than his name. It brings tears to her eyes, in this writing, to know that he pointed her in the right direction and stayed with her through.

Researchers created this project because of passionate about the people barely surviving through a system designed to benefit some and do harm unto them. This project continues as a course to honor the late Dr. Reverend Charles Rice's belief in me and to inspire within my students the same passion he inspired. The research shares a brief introduction to the topics discussed in the class. This class was taught as an organized addendum of my research topics. The class was divided into four modules: What is the Prison Industrial Complex and its key terms; What is Prison Theocracy; How does identity inform Incarceration Processes; and Instances of Identity Resistance in Black Women Organization Practices. Each of these works are grand and deserve their own individual papers, however, that is beyond the scope of this research project. The former two of these four topics will be discussed in this paper and a synopsis of the latter two is provided below. To exceed beyond the limits of a one-year project, researchers will take this knowledge beyond this project and pursue the work in graduate school and other forms of higher education. Because this project emphasizes the religious connections to the prison industrial complex, the research will highlight the Prison Theocracy Framework and how the class discussed this framework.

A Brief Review of the subtopics of the research:

How does identity inform Incarceration Processes is a subsection of the prison theocracy research project detailing specific identity experiences and how they relate to the carceral state.

This subsection of research was developed in connection with the Abolition Apostle Series Abolition Everything: Political Education Workshop series. This subsection highlights culturally relevant experiences as they are connected with race, gender, ability status, class status, and sexual orientation.

Instances of Identity Resistance in Black Women Organization Practices was investigated detailing and highlighting race and gender as personal identifies as they relate to the researcher, this project utilized Black Womanhood theories both to incorporate the researchers' experiences but also to shed light to a highly affected but underrepresented group of the over-imprisoned population and the leaders organizing to end mass incarceration. The role of the research is to explore the ways in which we can unlearn, reimagine, and take actions to reinvent the assumptions of human interaction that are no longer necessary in American society, especially those against Black women. It calls upon the ideas of history because Movements are never occurring all at once, but over periods of time waiting impatiently for the rest of the society to be ready to form change around a preexisting idea. Researchers call upon the inclusion of prior excluded or presumed absent folk from this discourse of creating social standards. It creates new hegemony through conversations. The conversations we bring from one space to the next that form a viral change in the heart's minds and strides of other individuals, then other groups, then society at large. It is in the hands of people like me willing to do the pre-work and learn and continue to act beyond this moment to build progressive present and a full concept of truth, justice, and social acceptance.

Coursework 1.1: Mass Incarceration and the Prison Industrial Complex

History of the Carceral State: A Religious Reform Effort

The first formal jail was held in Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia, one of the first jails was built in Philadelphia in 1776 at 12th and Walnut known as the Walnut Street Jail. Later that jail was transformed into a Theater as it remains to this day. William Penn, a major Quaker influence in the creation of several systems related to prison formation, created the first penitentiary, Eastern State Penitentiary, in attempted to reform the extent of mass incarceration. Penn was appalled by the conditions of jail and the overuse of capital punishment and torture under the guise of systematic justice. Instead, he hoped to create a representative reform system that allowed criminals to reconcile with God under silence, private advice.¹ In doing so, Penn and other Quakers of the time created Christian understandings of transformation reform. The Early 1800s ushered in new forms of punishment in hopes to reduce the conditions of jails and pose a form of redemption for convict to reenter society with piety.

William Penn introduced an influential model for imprisonment that gain headway by jailors across the nation. This model of imprisonment was later named the Pennsylvania model. Eastern State Penitentiary in Pennsylvania. The prisons where this model was employed featured 5 corridors that segregated the inmates based in their charge. Each hallway featured cells in which inmates lived one to a cell and remained in the cell for 24 hours a day. Throughout the experience inmates were required to remain in silent repentance for sins and crimes. During its first years, Eastern State faced many suicides from inmates because of the toll of silent solitary confinement.

Competitively, the Pennsylvania model was soon matched with the New York Model employed at Auburn Prison in Buffalo, NY. This model is also known as the Auburn Model named from the penitentiary that utilized it. Auburn Prison opened its door in 1819. The New York model also featured solitary confinement was also met with high suicide rates amongst inmates. In response, owners of the jail allowed communal space during meals, however, inmates were still required to stay silent. This was greeted with a slight decrease in suicide. In addition to the model of silence, repentance, and solidarism, Auburn prison had a model for forced hard labor. Their motto 'Industry, Obedience, and Solitary.'

Though prisons were used for labor in Auburn prisons and other prisons that modeled the New York system, prison being used as an industry was not officially introduced to jailers unveil 1854 in which tax payers became involved. The American citizens, moved by the process of reforming prisoners rather than putting them to death formed the public concept that prison was better a place for criminals to be saved under the law of God and put to use for the people under the law of man. In doing so, the American government made another simple transition in which to collect taxes from citizens to protect them from the dangerous criminals and reformed them into productive, but segregated, members of society. Prison soon following became a booming industry and prison populations began to rise on a mass scale. Under the law, criminality was grounds for forced labor and forms of slave labor. Auburn was one of the first jails in the nation that formed this model that now bolsters the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people and pushes the incentive of the Prison Industrial complex. Prison became the new means of enslaving

¹ [Timeline | Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site](#)

Black and Brown people after the emancipation of slavery in 1865. By this time, prison labor was not a foreign concept and thus it was easy for jailers to transition from slavery to high increases of law enforcement in areas of high person of color populations and funnel these bodies into prison for labor. In doing so, prison became an industry of labor in similar means that slavery was an industry of labor.

Students were then introduced to the prison system as a modern industry, beyond prisoners performing labor. [detail policies that discontinued specific forms of forced labor]. Prisons soon began to branch to segments delegated by who granted power to the jail and where they get their income. The core differences between these systems included federal funded prisons, state funded prisons, and privatized prisons. Federal funded prisons, properly named, are run by the federal government and funded through federal tax collection. The prison managers of federal prisons submit inmate count, conditions, and required maintenance to the federal government. These prisons often require various level of security, ranging from mass to low security. Federal prisons often hold more dangerous prisoners, those felons who have committed violence or sexual crimes. State prisons are state run and funded by state taxes. All reports on the conditions of the prison and its inmates are submitted and regulated by state government. These prisons often require low to mid-security and often hosts criminals of non-violent crime such as drug offenses. These prisons, on a national scale, are more likely to be underfunded and understaffed. Finally, private prisons are independent for-profit businesses owned either by a corporation or an individual. On a national scale, reports on inmate and prison conditions are not subject to the same regulation as federal and state prisons and often hold less accurate data on inmate conditions and maintenance reports. Similar to state prisons, private prisons only hold non-violent prisoners and often have low security.

Presidential Chronology:

Students were briefly introduced to the concepts of embedded prison theocracy that is evident in presidential leaders and how they demonstrated their religious or spiritual beliefs through their policy and other involvements in running the country. Joshua Dubler and Vincent Lloyd featured a chapter dedicated to this demonstration in their book *Break Every Yoke* in which they discuss governs and presidents influence in prison reform or perpetuation efforts. Because the 70s was the height of reform efforts, lecturer focused on the experiences of 1970s presidents. Dwight Eisenhower harbored an open out capacity of Justice to God and believed that his role as president was to shape the law of man towards God's morality (Griffith, 2020). His policy focused on freedom and liberation as God performed, especially freedom from poverty and 'inhibitors of quality of life' such as drug use. During the 1970s we see a public opinion push for the association of Blackness and criminality, possibly in tangent with the growth of the Black Panther Party. Lyndon Johnson (1963-1967) was dedicated to moral freedom and believed that care for the weakest amongst Americans would be Americas rise in righteousness (Dubler & Llyod, 2020). True freedom comes from care of the weakest link in America. Johnson was influences by thinkers such as Thomas Hobbs and the concepts that citizen have entered a contract with the American government in a relationship with which the government acts as God, guiding its citizens towards acts of order and justice, but on separate fronts. (Dubler & Lloyd, 2020). Richard Nixon (1969-1973) was dubbed under secularism rather than a religious affiliation. His ideologies separated moral law from godly law. Government should take a hands off approach, allowing state more power. He steps away from efforts of social reform put in

place by his predecessors. This segment of the discussion was concerning for students, who were curious about how religious affiliation impacted policy. As such this will be featured as an individual lesson later, if time is permitted in the semester.

The 1970s was a key time for prison reform efforts and the national struggle for justice. The *1970s leaflets on Christianity and Incarceration ideology*, for instance, incorporated ideals that Incarceration is bad for people and exists as a means of punishment without taking steps toward justice. Rehabilitation is only a goal when punishment has control for the majority of the experience (Griffith, 2019; Dubler & Lloyd, 2020). In the struggle for Justice: a report on crime and punishment in America in 1971 that suggested an urgent call for methods of prison reform, a means of fixing the criminal justice system and inputted the inquiry into the public consciousness; Does more punishment actually make community safer?

Lecture

The course overall focuses on defining justice and searching through the varying ways justice is enacted. Lecturer introduced various definitions of justice as defined by activism leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X, Cornel West, and James Baldwin, (Appendix E; Lesson Plan Slideshow). Following lecturer introduced definitions of mass incarceration and prison industrial complex that they would later see in the night's reading assignment, had they chosen the New Jim Crow Reading assignment. The Quotes were spoken allowed but were cited as follows. The quotes also expanded in text from *Prison By Any Other Name* to incorporate critical understanding for the prison industrial complex.

What is Mass incarceration:

“In each generation, new tactics have been used for achieving the same goal; goals shared by the Founding Fathers. Denying African Americans citizenship was deemed essential to the formation of the original union”.

“Mass Incarceration in the United States had, in fact, emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow”.

“Mass incarceration is, metaphorically, the New Jim Crow ad that all those who care about social justice should fully commit themselves to dismantling the new racial caste system.”

“Mass incarceration refers not only to the criminal justice system but also to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled criminals both in and out of prison...a hidden underworld of legalized discrimination and permanent social exclusion”.

“The system operates through our criminal justice institutions, but it functions more like a caste system than a system of crime control...the so-called underclass is better understood as an *undercaste*- a lower caste of individuals who are permanently barred by law and customs from mainstream society”.

What is the Prison Industrial Complex?

Includes everything in and beyond the prison system but all the entities that create the industry including history and cultural frames, law and policy, law enforcement, violent policing, mental facilities, and other funnels of the prison industry.

The class this week center conversations of barriers to prison abolition or areas in which society makes prison abolition a non-option. This class is informed mostly by activist Mariam Kaba, supported by her recent New York Times article *We Do This Til We Free Us: Abolitionist organizing and transforming justice*. Researchers also incorporated barrier conversations as introduced by Joshua Dubler and Vincent Lloyd in *Break Every Yoke: Why not prison abolition*.

The class began by listening to the podcast interview on Coffee and Books by Marc Lamont Hill in which he speaks with Mariam Kaba in her recent works. The interview features imperative questions for understanding social definitions of justice in abolitionists efforts. Such questions include “why do we [Americans] value punishment?” To this, Kaba mentions that we as a society- understand that the prison is truly a terrible place because we reserve it for who we deem the worst of the worst and we for whatever reason do not include the group committing the most murder, cops, amongst those we place behind bars.

In conversation for the reasoning justifying abolition, Kaba highlights that the global effort for reform is not helpful to the efforts of justice because it ignores the truth that the system itself is operating as intended. Reform is an ideal that completely ignored American history and several other pieces of PIC (Prison Industrial Complex) that simply is not present in other more homogenous cultures. Abolition, however, is imagining and creating a new world. Kaba argued that we need art and other forms to stimulate the imagined world we hope to create and bring to reality. Researchers implore this idea and emphasize from the works of [] that creative tools act as a means for imagining the future and abolition acts as a stepping stool to reach the goals of justice for all American people. Thus, the researcher explores fiction, poetry, and other art forms in this work to elaborate of the future abolition expects to accomplish (Hill, 2020). In later works of the project, researchers will elaborate on the experiences of Black Women by showing Support with Black women authors such as Octavia butler and activists such as Claudia jones, Ashley farmer, Fannie Lou Hammer and other Black female radicals use abolition organization methods to take steps toward an imagined future that features true justice. These authors inspired the researcher to begin this work, but their work is not directly quoted here.

However, as to any act of progress, there are areas of society that preset as barriers to abolition efforts. Lloyd and Dubler address some of these in their book. In order to understand these barriers, it is imperative to understand what prison abolition efforts include. Authors notate that despite being the necessary step to ending the injustice of Mass Incarceration, prison abolition requites major policy work that is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. Namely, abolition would have to include steps such as releasing non-violent drug charged inmates, releasing wrongfully accused incarcerated people, and reforming New Jim Crow policies. It is also an impossibility for the justice system as it is inseparable from religious ideologies of punishment and as punishment itself is worshipped as a religious deity in America (Dubler & Llyod 2019). The association of torture and religious redemption and connecting forms of punishment as means of edifying one’s impurity before God. Religion & punishment simultaneously became a private sector, though both were considered public affairs connecting to a 'Second Great Awakening' in America. Calvinists, for instance, associating God- ordained suffering in order to receive God's grace. Prior to public executions, lashings, and stoning were the norm new systems of penitentiaries are a reformative effort for more humane and privatization to match the times.

The class discussed areas that buffered abolition efforts including opposing public opinion and how these opinions are formed. Further, Michelle Alexander expresses in *New Jim Crow* that it is in public association that victim healing is tied to perpetrator punishment. Films and literature are focused on reshaping the public's opinion of Prison Abolition, the American Punitive System. As such, the next lesson for the students features a film analysis. Students had an opportunity to vote on the following films to watch with the class and discuss how it establishes a public opinion on police brutality and murder, interactions with the police, incarceration treatment, or connections between slavery and incarceration. The class centered on the concept that the measure of a civilization may be found in how it treats its prisoners...especially Americans' 'land of the free' (Alexander, 2010). The Process of incarceration has become an irrefutable norm in dealing with the 'villain criminal' as demonstrated by the social denotation that understanding the criminal is equivalent to criminal association. Authors and activists alike argue that abolition is necessary because it kills the root of the problem rather than pulling the surface level vegetation. Abolition must also include reshaping education, economy, and wealth, and public opinion, etc. By this they mean that prison must be ablated and other systems (i.e. psychiatric hospitals) reformed to follow. Abolition should be revered as a faith- a process of imagining a horizon with which when reached, the other side reveals peace (Alexander, 2020; Davis, 2011; Kaba, 2020).

When these concepts were taught in a class setting, they modeled the following agenda. Appendix E will display the PowerPoint utilized in this particular course titled Prison Theocracy. Researchers will utilize this class as an example to the course being taught while elaborating on what Prison Theocracy Represented.

Prison Abolition Movement:

Before considering the research, in the years of social acknowledgement of harmful prison effects, the prison abolition process was completely unknown to researchers, much like others in the United States. Upon brief research, prison abolitionists appeared bold and strong, but working towards an impossible mission. It was deemed as such because of the assumptive place of the prison system and criminal justice system in natural society. The criminal justice system as it now has a hegemonic hold on United States citizens' view of crime, punishment, criminal, and justice. However, this research pushes against that hegemony by examining the possibilities for a justice system that creates more harm than healing without over excessive violence; i.e. instances of police brutality evident in 100+ years of Black American history (reference news articles). The prison system enacts any injustices against human rights. Prison abolitionists are those who considered to challenge their ideologies on punishment and justice and sought instead to break apart a system designed to create harm, over punish, end human life, and jeopardize human rights (Davis, 2003). Abolition is a political framework designed to direct this intention. The Prison Abolition Movement is a collective of activists utilizing abolition to guide analysis, agenda setting, and actions necessary to recreate new forms of criminal justice (Ben-Moshe, 2020).

Further, in the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement, organizers attempt to redefine abolition by eliminating the need to include punishment in acts for justice. By looking at both A. the religious influence in creating reform agendas and B. the identities of those enacting these religious practices stand a chance to end the cycle of harm that religious law has played in American criminal justice system. Reinvoicing the spirit of revolution as emphasized by Black Female revolutionaries, such as Claudia Jones. In reinvoicing said energy, the Prison Abolitionist

Movement remains within itself frameworks from diverse speakers that push modern revolutionaries to be global inclusive and considerate in their movements towards liberation. By Combining both Black Women's Revolutionary thought toward liberation and Religious/ Political Leaders thought towards justice, Prison Theocracy modern activists can make change toward True Justice. As such, Prison Theocracy gathers theories and frameworks of Black Women Activists, Thinkers, and Organizers with Black Women Religious leaders, Politicians, and Policy Makers. In this process, Prison Theocracy conglomerates agendas of justice and liberation to fashion new pathways towards peace and equality.

How organizers redefine abolition by eliminating the portion of punishment in necessary but incomplete. Modern laws use religious law as a basis to create our criminal justice system, hence connecting our need for justice to be defined through punishment. In the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement, organizers attempt to redefine abolition by eliminating the need to include punishment in acts for justice. The modern prison system was a reform system, so it is imperative to be critical of how we recreate and form new systems of justice to avoid recreating harmful systems. To critically look at these institutions and their relationship toward a better Law & Order, I [propose a framework that centers how religion contributes to ideologies that inform America's criminal justice systems, particularly the Prison Industrial Complex. In seeing the problems* created by the prison industrial complex to disrupt the cycle of reforming harm in punishment; this research intends looks through the lens of actors in these areas to cultivate an understanding of where our current criminal justice is and the potential future that is attainable through the capital in play currently. By looking at both A. the religious influence in creating reform agendas and b. the identities of those enacting these religious practices we stand a chance to end the cycle of harm that religious law has played in American criminal justice system.

In the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement, organizers attempt to redefine abolition by eliminating the need to include punishment in acts for justice. The modern prison system was a reform system, so it is imperative to be critical of how we recreate and form new systems of justice to avoid recreating harmful systems. To critically look at these institutions and their relationship toward a better Law & Order, I propose a framework that centers how religion contributes to ideologies that inform America's criminal justice systems, particularly the Prison Industrial Complex. In seeing the problems created by the prison industrial complex to disrupt the cycle of reforming harm in punishment, this research intends looks through the lens of actors in these areas to cultivate an understanding of where our current criminal justice is and the potential future that is attainable through the capital in American criminal justice system.

Restorative Justice & Transformative Justice:

Angela Davis's paradigmatic view on Restorative Justice follows the notion that a discourse grew through the development of the incarceration system. Restorative justice fits with abolition as a tool to remove injustice persisting in the system by offering opportunity to reinvent areas of another erred system (Davis, 2003). Generally, restorative justice is defined an inclusive, democratic, honest, humble, inter-connected, reparative, healing, and empowering force of values enacted by the process of all parties with a stake in an offense to find resolve to meet the needs of the victim and create awareness and acknowledging liability, rather than punishment, for the offender. (Marshall, 1999; Boyack et al., 2004) Restorative justice, in the hands of dedicated activists acts as a major step in defining a system of justice that relies on its

people to create healing and change rather than reinforce god-mimicking instances of judgment and punishment that only prove to recreate harm. When enacted by religious individuals and organizations, it looks like providing opportunities for those who have done harm to reconcile with their impact on communities and make amends.

Transformative Justice (TJ) relies heavily on the community to develop strategies that build relationships that transform the need for harm to take place and intervene appropriately without police, prisons, or punishment, to develop healing (Dixon and Lakishmi, 2020). By breaking cultural silences on instances of both visible and invisible abuse and violence, we open the opportunity for the community to take part in removing harm. This is especially true for instances of violence crime, especially sexual violence and domestic abuse violence.

Coursework Lesson 2.2 Religious Practice in the Carceral State

Prison Theology framework: By framing carceral state with religious state, we recognize the problem religion introduced to the state and offer pathways to solve those issues in addition to the problems created in American ideology of punishment over time.

"The evangelical conversion experience so vividly narrated by Colson involved acknowledging a set of divinely ordained laws by human beings necessary to transgress. Jesus Christ offers redemption, but only for those who acknowledge the laws and their own transgression. The figure of law is essential to this narrative, and it easily slips between the religious realm and the political real, between that which is divinely ordained and that which is mandated by the American legal system. Just as the sinner must take responsibility before God, the law-breaker must take responsibility before the legal system" (174)

Lecture

Prison Industrial Complex is defined as the symbolic relationship between public and private interest in imprisonment, policing, surveillance, and inequality. Mass Incarceration, a byproduct of this phenomenon, is defined as the categorization of policing, policy, and law enforcement that incarcerates minority communities at high rates as a direct connection with America's relationship to punishment.

These and other ideologies we address make up the concepts that birthed the Prison Nation concept; forces that remove people from their communities and destroy community resources. Justice as defined by scholars such as Cornel West takes a public spin by allowing society to ally itself, via laws and policy, how to create moral safety for all. Carceral Justice Now, carceral activists seek to redefine justice. Restorative Justice, for instance, refers to justice that is enacted by restoring areas in which the prison nation and other systematically harmful entities. This is more often aligned with efforts towards prison reformation. (Dixon, 2020). Comparatively, Transformative Justice looks to change the way justice is enacted entirely. This form of justice is often more aligned with efforts or prison abolition. In *Beyond Survival*

Globally speaking. International concepts of Justice; Norway, Nations in West Africa, etc. But where did we learn these topics. This next section highlights a critical review of theocracy

ideology on reform/ abolitionist programs as they follow guidelines for restorative and transformative justice. We also highlight *Prison by Any Other Name: Why is it important to be critical of the theories and practices that shape the prison system?* (Schenwar, M. & Law, V. 2020).

Prison Theology framework understands that by framing carceral state with religious state, we recognize the problem religion introduced to the state and offer pathways to solve those issues in addition to the problems created in American ideology of punishment over time.

Moral Majority: wielding political control in the White House and engulfed civil religion. A sight of rehabilitation became a litigation hell for white Americans to damn those deemed sinners; sociocultural parable of Ham. New face of prison religion Charles Colson *Born Again*

"The evangelical conversion experience so vividly narrated by Colson involved acknowledging a set of divinely ordained laws by human beings necessary transgress. Jesus Christ offers redemption, but only for those who acknowledge the laws and their own transgression. The figure of law is essential to this narrative, and it easily slips between the religious realm and the political real, between that which is divinely ordained and that which is mandated by the American legal system. Just as the sinner must take responsibility before God, the law-breaker must take responsibility before the legal system" (Griffith, 174)

Prison Theocracy

This research draws upon ideologies of academic abolitionists and advocates against the prison industrial complex. Drawing from K. McKitterlin and pairing it with Victoria Law and Maya Schewar and Joshua Dubler and Vincent Lloyd, we harken a framework that is built to understand religions' juxtaposition to American criminal justice system and its religious foundations, formations, and growth to abolish Prison Industrial Complex. America is handed the 'greatest commodity export' from Africa and via Proposition 1, America launches a global neoliberal attack for human containment- a global judgment and sentencing acting as a dominate world power, as God. Patriotic political powers, mostly demographic; White Men, ushered a new era of America Globalization and created a living hell in which they act as both God and the Devil to damn the World's 'irredeemable.' In discussing this with authors, Aaron Griffith, I discussed my framework to explain ways in which the criminal justice system acts as a mean for humans to create a system that allows themselves to act as God- to act as divine rulers. []

In using these avenues, this framework utilizes cultural experience as cited works to understand prison culture as it is projected to the American people. By way of these cultural experiences researchers aim to create a hegemony of cultural collectives that describe the American ideology around punishment and crime and suggests ways to abate its harmful products. By looking at cultural experiences, especial those read as mass consumables (such as streaming and film) we understand how society creates a category around criminals in and beyond American while examining how creatives who develop media content reflect their understanding of the prison industrial complex. At thorough interactions and the potential of

Americans' obsession with the Prison Industrial Complex, we are further able to understand what the Abolition Movement calls for and why. These practices are supported firmly by authors of *Beyond Survival* through which we find practical ways community finds methods to develop police-less justice. Dixon and Lakshmi define transformative justice (TJ) as the means of producing safety methods that address violence without relying on police or prisoner. Beyond preventing violence, these methods are intended and succeed to intervene when harm is being enacted and transform individuals and society to build communities. They are strategies for healthy community building without the harmful impact of police (Dixon & Lakshmi, 2020; Ritchie, 2020).

We take this a step further to consider how do interdisciplinary methods allow a comprehensive view of the American carceral systems and the organizations/organizers using to combat the errors of the system? How does identity play a role in engagement with the carceral state? Are specific communities vulnerable to overexposure of the harmful interactions and effects of the Prison Industrial Complex? By tailoring this research to specific identity experiences, researchers find that utilizing methods catered to specific identity experiences may pose a frame for various groups effected. How are Black women a unique consort for the experience of Liberation from the injustice of the American carceral system? Organization created by and for BW interview with Marianne Kaba.

We utilize class systems to determine our undesirables. When we consider American demographics by class system and expand the comparison to a global perspective, we recognize that America is not a system of oppressors only to its own people but much worse a world dominating God of Chaos, Profit, and Nationalism. Who else dare honors its oblation of culture and make it holiday. These considerations draw us to question class and social order's role in further developing a prison nation. How do class systems (caste systems) allow for America to impose religiously and politically over the world)? How do the ways America imprisons its citizens differ or abide by ways America imprisons other countries' citizens? Abolition Everything was a 15-week introductory education workshop hosted by Abolition Apostles, a religious organization dedicated to offering moral and spiritual support to members of the community who are incarcerated, and contribute to the destruction of the prison-industrial complex through solidarity, prophetic witness, and community organizing inside and outside of prison. There is a Christian ministry, but it is not necessary to be a Christian in order to participate. This workshop lead to the development of the identity portion of this project by highlighting instances of disability justice, race justice, feminism theology and practices of feminist based abolition and more. In the group Abolition Everything, proponents discussed isolating poverty and making it a piece separate from average experiences justifies over policing and hyper criminalization.

In critically examining these institutions and their relationship toward a better Law & Order researchers propose a framework that centers religion's contribution to ideologies that inform America's criminal justice systems. Looking throughout the religious themes throughout the core of our current criminal justice system, our research will find ways to disrupt the cycle of reforming harm in punishment. Researcher will look through the lens of actors in these areas to cultivate an understanding of where our current criminal justice is and the potential future that is attainable through the capital in play currently.

The development of the framework was, in part, created by tying together ideologies based in criminal justice, critical identity theory, and religious insight. It does so to use examples of culturally creative experiences in literature and media to draw authentic connections to the framework. [Introduce the concepts: Ties together the key concepts and definitions into a comprehensive description of the projects combining ideas. It draws from questions such as; What is America's Ideology of Criminal Justice and what avenues of culture allow citizens to understand the Government position in Law & Order?] [connect all your final points together into one final background theory conglomerate] [define prison theocracy].

Next steps should include real experienced interviews from people from inside the prison system directly and discuss means of healing direct trauma and abolition from the inside. By creating more spaces for organizers to vocalize their actions and plans, we open opportunities to share news that will assist those who need it.

Socratic Circle

When introducing my class to this topic, I encouraged a discussion rather than a forward lecture. As a group we reviewed the mission and policies addressed by one of the following programs. In reviewing the problem areas for last week and utilizing the frameworks from this week, lets address how these programs aim to change a problem in the prison system. Questions include, how do these programs act to change the American theology of incarceration, crime and punishment, and aid in creating a new definition of justice?

Further, we expanded this experience on a global scale and made a global comparison between American legislature and global experiences of prison reform and prison abolition. The Questions that address this comparative discussion included how would you advocate to American legislature to make a change in support for your countries criminal justice system? How do religious experiences in prisons bring American towards change, Abolition or Reform, to better the experiences of all American citizens? The example countries for the following experience included, Norway, Philippines, South Africa to create a brief but globally inclusive map of global prison experiences.

Conclusion:

During this scholastic research year, researchers examined they ways in which the carceral system enacted harm on specific members of society while vowing to protect its entirety. Instances of the Prison Industrial Complex such as mass incarceration, harmful policing tactics, ravaged communities, and enacted instances of harm where it meant to heal them. As the prison system itself is a reform effort from capital punishment, activists and community organizers recognize that religious based reform efforts will cause harm as they inevitably have. Instead, religious organizations put fourth effort to create change through redefining instances of justice into terms such as restorative justice and transformative justices. By reviewing the means through which religious efforts were used to form and reform the Prison Industrial Complex,

Prison Theocracy proposes a framework through which to recognize work towards abolishing the prison systems entirely.

Research Effects and Finding Peace and Purpose:

It burdened me often to consistently read of the trials and tribulations of people superimposed by a system that was meant to protect them. I chose to relate as closely to the topic I could by inserting concepts of identity and connecting it to experiences of Black women with the same or similar aims as me, but further in their journey. In doing so I learned much of what could be in store for me as I continued the work of transformative justice and what that may mean if I continue understanding the world, religion, and myself as I do currently.

In these processes, I also learned just how deeply the systems around me directly, my family, my friends, my class, and experiences have protected me, but how narrow that wall of protection truly was. As such, in times of identity crisis, of emotional exhaustion and work fatigue I turned to authors, directors, and poets who have stabled me in the past. I found that they are concentrated in the stage of intensive research and interviewing. I found that this process of writing brought spiritual healing while keeping me on track and grounded. As research does, this research has reshaped and grew from its origins to its finalization, as such the topics discussed may be lacking from the final works, but their relevance to informing the knowledge gathered here, to the person I am through creating this work births their relevance to this project. I wrote brief journal articles in response to how they reconnected me to my sense of self and my sense of purpose in this research. Here are those journals.

Researcher's Journals:

Why I Chose Christianity and Buddhism as topics for Religion

Monday, March 1, 2021

3:24 PM

I was intrigued by bell hooks idea of surrounding love between co-existing of religion. I wanted to understand what Buddhist practices had to offer as a way to understand Christian ideologies. Using both the bible and renditions of the

This isn't the type of academic project that needs to follow a specific framework or be narrowed by the limitations of academic information gathering tactics. It is instead and soulful and spiritual journey guided by academic writers, abolitionists, and leaders- religious or otherwise. This text embraces the concepts of spiritual growth as they occur within and beyond the written and explained worlds because it recognizes that these books, we read have bindings and therefore must have bindings on how much it can train our understanding, behavior and reasoning. I suppose you could say that I have unorthodox beliefs about the reality of the concepts taught during my bible Sunday lessons. I plan to explore all the ways that I might have missed a calling from the world by focusing too closely or too far away from a particular topic. I will discuss this as a vice and this project acts as a documentation of the journey of finding authentic experiences of spiritual guidance in all the messy, inappropriate, confusing, and unanswerable way that is an average 20-something year old Black women aging and learning in the abyss (The future) of the world lived by Lauren Olymina- of the truth of Octavia Butler's predicted post-apocalyptic reality. I will utilize this and other novels such as Other Text written by Octavia Butler, Nicki Giovanni, The Alchemist, other writings by Paulo Coelho as an important text on my spiritual guidance in understanding how Black Women, who I view like me saw, their futures in the 2020s or other concepts of the future.

The Alchemist Influence

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

3:59 PM

A personal spiritual journey. A text reread every year. How does this research connect topic act as a journey towards the Alchemist's concept of a 'Personal Legions.' How do I understand my role in prison abolition work? How has it changed over the course of the project? What are my next steps and goals?

Octavia Butler Influence

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

3:59 PM

Understanding temporality as it related to human interaction with its institutions (in this case the prison industry). How has American past influenced the modern prison system? How does the

modern activism against the prison system influence how the future of punishment is determined? What do these temporalities mean for imprisoned identities (blacks, women, LGBT and Trans, the disabled, etc.)?

Placing ideas influenced by Octavia Butler in Conversation with *Prison by Any Other Name* to take a critical analysis of how abolition efforts impact change in the prison industry.

Black Women go beyond to protect their own, their family, their property, and their peace and rights. This extends beyond the rights of the law and has persisted the case for centuries in America. This research intends to examine the length of Black Women's protection of their own, both within and outside the constructs of American law and politics. The researcher looks to understand why women committee crimes, what women do to aid women before, in, and after prison, and the health of women in and out of prison through non-contact communication (community burn-out systems, and letter and mailing, and community grassroots organizing). Within the realm of health, this research assessed the well-being of women's spirits, moral, motivation, and religious faith. We will explore the mental and social entities that plague Black Women's well-being.

I Am Legend & The Alchemist

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

12:34 AM

Notes from Religious Adjacent Texts/Films/Movies/Ideas:

A personal Legend. I am legend. The butterfly effect.

Honestly, it is the most terrifying thing in the world to recon with The Reality instead of what we find that would reality should be. We shape reality, reality shapes us, but we cannot contort or force reality to be more than what it is and what is must be. To act against this is often necessary for our survival, and God knows and plans for this. It would not be reality if He did not. However, to remain opposition of It is a pathway to insanity, damnation, revenge, and suicide that we deny ourselves the quiet guidance of God. We become the devils and villains of stories- both ours and others- in opposition to God. But Where do we find God, how do we listen to him and in what capacity to we know who God is, know his voice. How do we trust we can follow it? God anticipates these questions in answers forms. God sees us as we are created our inherent curiosity, and our inherent confusion. We hear Him as he exists in places beyond 'himself,' for there is not selfhood of God. We often find him in music, because to inject music and love is to cure hatred-the antithesis of God. We often find Him in moments of hope she share with our children, for they have had the most recent connection with God in the Great Before. Their souls are recently new and have communed with God more closely with less 'maturity' they are our Jesus. In maturity I find we must extort ourselves, contort ourselves to devils for survival. God sees us. He forgives us, for in defeating Ones enemy, One must understand one's enemy, and in doing so One also loves One's enemy. That is the nature of charity. We often find Him in signs of the world and in communion with the world in the language of the world. The nature of all things exists in harmony with God and as living creatures we must be still to notice the movement of the world as it tells us that the fork in the road Is not an impasse, but a space where our passions and our desires meet our reckoning with the harshest modes of reality, we see and know truth, love. God Exists in the space between hoping for a change, and patiently

expecting it to arrive. We enact love in public and we create justice. The alchemist learned this not by seeking to become an alchemist, but by seeking to follow a dream whispered to him by God. Dr. Robert Neville becomes a savior only when he stops seeking to become a savior, and instead becoming a protector. That is the butterfly effect.

The Alchemist inspires that ideology that finding God requires one to explore the worlds rather than to limit yourself to a book. God is an experience and a being that exists around, through and with us as we go through life. Throughout the year I find that I am more grateful for my Christian upbringing both in its discipline and in its leniency. It is the combination of structure and lacks that I am open to explore religion in areas that one would not typically think to search for God. In doing so I am able to consider all the ways that God exists even in experiences outside of my own. In areas of social justice this is imperative because there are some experiences that I am adjacent to but have not personally experienced, and circumstances that I could not fathom going through and can only exist and listen to understand.

Be a Blessing

Monday, April 12, 2021

9:03 PM

! A Class Review Video for Mod 2. Prison Theocracy

Dr. Maya Angelou: "Be a Rainbow in Someone Else's Cloud" | Oprah's Master Class | OWN



"What does it mean to be a rainbow in another's cloud"

Judge not the way I learn, nor the knowledge I have, but the bravery in my heart to face the things that frighten me.

Bibliography

Alexander, M. (2010) *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York: New Press. Ohio St. J Crim. L.

(2021) *Crippling Abolition*. The Abolition and Disability Justice Coalition. [Crippling Abolition – The Abolition and Disability Justice Coalition](#)

Chesney-Lind, M. (1997). *The Female Offender; Girls Women, and Crime*. Sage Publications.

This book would not be helpful as a course read, but it is informative on the nature of women's crimes in the US and keeps qualitative information on women's crimes in the 1990's. This book is a great reference in answering the question about the experience of women behind bars. Notably, this book draws conclusions that the nature of women's crimes are often non-violent theft and possibly in the name of survival of either the social or economic state of the country. These findings are supported in other works. Most notable is the graph on page 102 and the subsequent descriptions highlighting causes of crime and how crimes of this nature are handled in policy at the time.

Davis, A. Y. (2011). *Are Prisons Obsolete? 'The Prison Industrial Complex'*, Seven Stories Press.

Dubler, J. & Lloyd, V. W. (2020). *Break Every Yoke: Religion, Justice, And the Abolition of Prisons*. Oxford University Press.

This is a book I would mostly be using for my course in Religion and the Prison Abolitionist Movement. This book gives a deep history of the religious involvement in creating the prison system as it is understood now in the first two chapters. These details include the ways Quaker efforts for reform from capital punishment helped create our understanding of prisons and solitary confinement. I would use these chapters to ask students to question the nature of reform and to compare its intentionality to its results. The following chapters continue to highlight political involvement beginning with a chronological history of American Presidents, their political ideology, their religious affiliation and how it effects policy related to prisoners. This will be an excellent book to pair with some more questioning themes in Prison By Any Other Name.

Griffith, A. (2020). *God's Law and Order*. Harvard University Press.

Gross, K. N. (2006). *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love*. Duke University Press Book.

This is a book I would like to use for my course in Religion and the Prison Abolition Movement. The book gives an amazing history of the women who committed crimes in Philadelphia between 1880 and 1910. It gives an informative insight on the experiences of these women, why they committed the crimes they did, and how audiences were told (by print media or otherwise) to perceive their crimes. All of these are central to the final

portion of my research questions, exploring the female prisoner and most especially the actions that draw them to and the nature of their crimes. Because the book explores history in Philadelphia, it will be a great book to inform a local site and potentially be a site for field visits.

Kaba, M. (2020) *Yes, We mean literally abolish the police: Because reform won't happen*. New York Times. doi: [Opinion | Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/14/opinion/yes-we-mean-literally-abolish-the-police.html)

Hill, M. L. (2020). *Coffee & Books*. 'Marc and Mariame Kaba discuss Mariame's book: We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice.'

Karanikolas, A. (2020). Liat Ben-Moshe, Decarcerating disability: Deinstitutionalization and prison abolition. doi.10.1177/0004865820973404.

Ritchie, A. (2017). *Invisible no more: Police violence against Black Women and Women of color*. Beacon Press.

Schenwar, M. & Law, V. (2020). *Prison By Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms*. The New Press.

This book will, in part, be used as a central conceptual placeholder for the course. This book's purpose is to inform the audiences of the ways reform is not a straightforward path by highlighting the ways in which reform has failed or made worse the problems the movement sought to assist. The authors hoped to guide future reformists' insight and movement by asking them to assess the consequences of reforms. It asks audiences to think critically before rallying behind a cause. This mindset of open-eyed critique is a quality I would like my students to build while in this course. I expect that this book will inform some ways that they can become more critical thinkers. I will likely have a presentation assignment that asks them to critique a

Selman, K. J. (2020) *Beyond Survival: Strategies and stories from the transformative justice movement*: edited by Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepezna-Samarasinha, (Chico, CA) AK Press.



Prison Theocracy:

Examining religion's role in forming, reforming,
and abolishing the American prison System

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study because you are leader in the efforts for prison reform or prison abolition. Before signing this form, please ask any questions you have.

What is this study about?

This study honors the role that religious leaders and religious based academics play in a movement towards prison freedom. The study hopes to gather information on how religion at large impacts the formation, reformation, and abolition of the American prison system.

What will I do in this study?

After you agree to participate, you should sign this form. Then you will fill out a demographic form, with your age, gender, and role, be that a scholar or religious leader. You will also schedule a time best suitable to conduct an interview about your involvement in the prison reformation movement.

Are there alternatives to participating in this study?

No

What are the risks and benefits of completing this study?

Potential risks to the study only include the risk of everyday life but may extend to include psychosocial harm in conversing on experiences of incarceration, loss, death by incarceration, death by death row, and other forms of loss related to incarceration and other experiences in working with inmates.

Will I be compensated for completing this study?

There is no direct compensation for participating in this study.

Are there any potential costs for participating in this study?

There are no known potential costs for participating in this study, beyond a dedication of your time.

Is participating in this study voluntary?

This study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate in the entire study. Similarly, you can choose not to complete parts of the study. Your decision to not participate will not affect your current or future relations with the research team.

Are my responses confidential?

Your responses will remain private. You will not be identified in any presentation or publication of the results of this study. Your responses will be kept on a password-protected computer or locked file-cabinet.

Will my clinically relevant results be made available to me?

No clinical results are being measured in this study.

Could my data be used for future research studies? *(NOTE: select one of the statements to include)*

Identifiers may be removed and your data may then be used in future studies.

OR

Any data collected will not be used for future research studies.

Is this study a registered clinical trial? (<https://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>) *(NOTE: select one of the statements to include)*

This study is not a registered clinical trial.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Taleah Gainey is the researcher conducting this study. If you have any questions about the details of this study, please contact by email at athgainey@gmail.com or by phone at (215) 796-8802. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact the Ursinus College Institutional Review Board by email at irbadmin@ursinus.edu or by phone at (610) 409-3740.

You will receive a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B – Recruitment Messages

Introduction Email:

Good Afternoon,

My name is Taleah Gainey I am a current research fellow of Ursinus College investigating the role of activist, authors, leaders, and religious people in the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement. I am particularly interested in the efforts of female leaders in this front, though the research project is all inclusive. For the sake of brevity, I attached to the email a detailed description of the project and its goals for your reference. I hope this will give more clear information than I am able to provide in an email, but if you have any questions, I am available to discuss the research content further. I came across the works of the (XXX) in my research and in connection with (XXX). I was hoping to have a chance to speak with (XXX) or anyone who is able and knowledgeable on the mechanism of the organization. If you are interest, I would hope to have the opportunity to interview you on your work with (XXX). Feel free to contact me back at this email or by phone at (215)796-8802.

Best Wishes,

Taleah Gainey

Follow Up Email:

Good Afternoon,

I am sending along a follow-up email to the letter I sent last week. To briefly reiterate I am creating a project in prison abolition and the role of various identities in activism, policy, and programing in the wake of the Prison Abolition Movement. I was interested in interviewing with you to learn more about the programming (XXX) If you are available, please feel free to contact me via email; athgainey@gmail.com or phone (215) 796-8802.

Best Wishes,

Taleah Gainey

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. What is the name and mission of your organization?
2. How long has your organization existed?
3. Who does your organization hope to assist?
4. In what way do you hope participants leave your program?
5. How many participants does your program see on a monthly basis?
6. Do you find religion to offer a unique support to your participants? How?
7. What is your organization's affiliation related to prison reform or abolition?
8. In the movement for reform/ abolition, how does your organization take steps toward that goal?
9. How are your organizations goals motivated by the affiliated religion?
10. What are the motivating factors that drive the organization to its mission?
11. In your book (XXX), you discuss (XXX) about prison reform and/or abolition. Can you discuss this with us further? *
12. In your book (XXX), you tell your audience (XXX), what action would you suggest for those wishing to participate in the prison reform movement.
13. In your experiences in the American prison in (XXX) capacity, what are the experiences of inmates in religious practices?
 - a. Following, what limits are there to the access of religious involvement for inmates?
14. What does religious experiences provide for inmates? To What extent are these experiences genuine or a selfish desire to lessen sentencing?
15. As a woman in this movement, how are your efforts unique to the experiences in assisting inmates, female or otherwise.
 - a. In regard to female inmates, how are their experiences unique to those of their male counterparts.

Appendix D - Course Syllabus

IDS- 000 Prison Theocracy

Instructor: Professor Athena Gainey

Course Location: Olin 201

Course Overview: This course emerges students in the experiences of prison abolitionist and the experiences of imprisoned people to understand the role religion plays in forming, reforming, and abolishing the prison industrial complex in America. Students will engage various forms of resources; film, television, novels, spoken interviews and more to get a holistic grasp of how Mass incarceration affects American society and the actions taken to abolish the injustices of the system.

This course takes a theological approach to understanding abolition experiences while engaging with spirituality as it related to personal growth for those imprisoned and beyond.

Agenda and Assignments:

I. Key Terms and Concepts:

9/2 Mass incarceration- as defined by M. Alexander in *The New Jim Crow*

Assignment: Choose one of three articles to review key concepts for the semester & review article on Mariam Kaba for class review tomorrow & Vote for this month's Movie

9/9 Chronology of the American Prison system & Abolitionism

Assignment: Complete public evaluation survey and watch the first Episode of *Orange is the New Black* to answer film review questions

9/13 *Redrawing Democracy event 7PM

9/16 Impacts on Prison Policy: Problem areas of the prison system: policy creation, analysis, and citizen repeal

Assignment:

1. Complete Pen Pal Sign-Up Sheet
2. Listen to the full podcast from today's class review

Friday Field trip to Eastern State Penitentiary

9/23 ! Religion and Abolition: What is the role that religious institutions have in modern understanding of the American prison system? What are the objectives of religious Abolitionists?

9/30 Begin September Film: Voted on.... []

II. Prison Theocracy: intersectionality of religion and the prison industrial complex

10/7 ! Reiterating the history of religious institutions in creating the modern understanding of the prison abolition movement

Assignment: Review interviews with today's authors and consider review questions. Write a one-page review on the answers.

Fall Break

Abolitionist Actions: programs and community involvement created by religious leaders

10/21 Globalization: Religion as a practice VS. Religion as an Institution

Assignment: Choose two countries to review and complete global comparison assignment

10/28 ! What is Prison Theocracy and how do abolition programs create pathways for justice?

Assignment: Review PA Programs mission plans and write a review on how they create a buffer for the effects of prison industrial complex and mass incarceration

III. **Carceral Identity:** Who are the most vulnerable communities affected by the injustice of mass incarceration

11/4 Imprisoned by Race: Black and Native American Arrests

Assignment: Review articles and two of the six instances of black resistance and make a bulleted list of your thoughts on the reading questions

11/ 11 Imprisoned with Disabilities

Assignment: Read chapter 2: Locked down in Treatment in *Prison By Any Other Name* & Chapter 4: Policing Disabilities in *Invisible No More: Policing violence against Black women and Women of color*

11/18 Imprisoned by Sexuality and Gender

Assignment: Review concepts in Kimberle Crenshaw Intersectionality & Queering Prison Abolition" to write a one-page description about the connections

of identity and imprisonment. Describe how members of your chosen community could benefit from Crenshaw manifesto

IV. Female Criminology:

12/2 Why Women have committed crime through the ages

- Women's experience in the carceral system

Assignment: Choose one or more of the alternative media sources and write brief answers to the questions answers we discussed in class.

12/9 Female Abolition: Women of/by/for women in the prison justice system

Women of the Cloth: Modern religious efforts in the intersectionality of religious work and abolition

Assignment: Turn in any final course work and volunteer logs

Class Attendance:

This course meets on Thursday at 7PM in Olin 201. In the event of an emergency, I will email students and class will be held virtually. Under which circumstance there is no reason for students to be absent from class.

In the event of an emergency, if you email me within 24 hours, I will permit an excused absence. Any unexcused absence will put students for risk of failing. However, all absences can be made-up to maintain a passing grade by participating in on-campus course related events and other designated events throughout the semester.

Grades

This course is a 'pass-fail' course and there will be no letter grade assigned for course completion. At the completion of this course you will receive one credit for participation in the class. Participation will be broken up into several parts.

1. Participation in Class: All lessons planned are student engaging and thus I expect that all students will participate at least once in class. Lectures are held silently, and I will ask for questions during and following the lecture, however, participation is graded based on participation during discussion sections of class and completion of assignments. All at home assignments are to be completed in less than one hour, so I expect full completion.
2. Participation in Events: This class will also include some field research trips to Philadelphia. These trips are intended to help deepen the understanding of the course material and I expect all students to be present for these events. Events held on campus will be offered for extra credit IF a student is on track for failing the course.
3. Participation in volunteering: This course offers several opportunities for volunteering in relation to course material- i.e., community engagement, political education, etc. As the name suggests, this is a volunteer opportunity and does not count towards your grade. However, these opportunities will count towards your (IIE) for graduation requirements.

They will also be very fun and I hope to see you there! Time spent volunteering will be set up with an activity log

ACADEMIC HONESTY/DISHONESTY

Statement on Academic Honesty Ursinus College is a small community that functions by a social contract among students, faculty, administration and alumni. In order for the spirit of community to endure and thrive, this agreement, based upon shared values and responsibilities and a sense of mutual respect, trust and cooperation, must be preserved. Students have an obligation to act ethically concerning academic matters and the faculty has a responsibility to require academic honesty from students and to be vigilant in order to discourage dishonesty. 52 Lying, cheating, stealing, other forms of academic dishonesty, and plagiarism violate this spirit of mutual respect and collaboration and corrode the atmosphere of openness and free inquiry upon which the educational process is based. Such activities are demeaning and potentially damaging to those who undertake them. Moreover, academic dishonesty is damaging to the student body as a whole, in that it cheapens the achievement of other students and subverts the integrity of the institution. Students should be aware that there are many legitimate sources of help available on campus. Resources for supplemental academic assistance include the Ursinus Institute for Student Success, the Center for Writing and Speaking, and Myrin Library. This help is provided for academic assistance and is designed to enhance the learning process rather than circumventing it which occurs in cases of academic dishonesty. The student body, the faculty, and the administration of Ursinus College therefore unanimously condemn academic dishonesty in all its forms and affirm that it is the responsibility of all members of the college community to prevent such activity.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words--written or spoken--or the ideas of someone else and presenting them as one's own. Students commit plagiarism if they copy exactly a statement by another and fail to identify the source; take notes from a book, an article or a lecture, express those materials in their own words, and present the result as their work without identifying the source; copy part or all of a paper written by a friend, another student, or a writing service and offer it as their own work; or take material verbatim from a source (even though the source is acknowledged) without identifying it as quoted material by means of quotation marks. Plagiarism is easy to avoid by using common sense and following the advice and direction for acknowledging sources. Such forms and methods are available from instructors and from style sheets provided by departments. In order to avoid unintended plagiarism students should never take notes verbatim or in their own words without using appropriate quotation marks and noting exact sources, including page numbers of the material. It is the policy of Ursinus College to reject and to punish the act of plagiarism. (The above has been adapted from Millward, Handbook for Writers, pp. 354-355.) Definition of Cheating Students are cheating if, for example, they do the following: • Copy answers or use information from a fellow student's paper

during a test, quiz, or examination. • Divulge answers or information, or otherwise give improper aid to another student during a test, quiz, or examination; or accept such aid. • Relay or receive any improperly obtained or confidential information concerning test, quiz, or examination before, during, or after such test. (Example: if they see the test 53 before it is to be given and transmit information concerning its contents or whereabouts to other students.) • Use or refer to any unauthorized notes, books, calculators, or problem-solving aids during a test, quiz, or examination. • Collaborate improperly with another student on an open-book or take-home test, quiz or examination. • As a proctor or student assistant, divulge confidential information or aid any student in an improper manner during a laboratory exercise, test, quiz, or examination. • Commit any act of plagiarism (intentional or unintentional). • Borrow under false pretense, steal, or otherwise improperly obtain lecture or research notes, laboratory data, or any information gathered by another student and present it as their work (examples: term papers; laboratory reports or experimental yields; computer programs or assignments; English composition themes), or knowingly collaborate with another student by making such material available to them, or falsify laboratory data, notes, results or research data of any type in any course and present it as their own work. • Steal or intentionally damage or destroy notes, research data, laboratory projects, library materials, computer software (including the intentional passing of a computer virus) or any other work of another student (or faculty member), out of malice, or for the purpose of sabotaging that person's work and thereby gaining an unfair advantage to themselves. • Knowingly and willingly violate any special rules concerning research procedures, group assignments, or inter-student collaboration which may be established by an instructor in any course. • Submit the same work including oral presentations for different courses without the permission of the instructors involved. Since it is expected that different courses offer different learning experiences, students are depriving themselves of an educational opportunity by submitting the same or similar work for more than one course. Examples include, but are not limited to, submitting a partial or complete paper previously handed into another class, superficially reworking one assignment for submission to another class. • Misrepresent themselves to an instructor or an administrator for the purpose of gaining special favors or extensions for academic work missed. Examples include, but are not limited to, lying about health or the health of a relative, or forging doctor's notes. • Forge signatures on forms, documents or letters pertinent to College business. This may include, but is not limited to, course of study sheets, drop/add forms, or doctor's notes. • Students are an accessory to cheating if they do the following: witness or have direct knowledge of any person involved in the aforementioned forms of cheating and fail to inform an authorized person (faculty member, administrator, proctor, or student assistant); bring unauthorized materials into a testing area and fail to or refuse to remove them when instructed to do so; fail to or refuse to comply with admonitions from a faculty member or authorized proctor to cease any activity which might aid other students in cheating. Penalties may be applied. Procedures for cases of suspected academic honesty violations • Should a faculty member suspect a student of having committed an academic honesty violation of any kind, he/she should confront the student with the evidence. 54 • If the student admits guilt, the faculty member should inform the Dean of the College of the violation and the student's confession. After consultation with the Dean of the College, the faculty member

will impose a penalty of either a zero (0) on the work in which the student was dishonest or a failure (F) in the course in which the dishonesty took place. If the student has previously been found guilty of a violation of academic honesty of any kind, the Dean of the College will impose additional penalties. o Normally, for a second offense, the student will be suspended, be asked to withdraw from the College, or be permanently dismissed. o If it is a third offense, the student will be permanently dismissed. • If the student maintains innocence, or if the faculty member or the Dean of the College request it, the case will be immediately referred to the Committee on Academic Standards and Discipline. The Subcommittee on Academic Discipline from the Committee on Academic Standards and Discipline will amass evidence and hear testimony regarding the case. This committee will then hear the evidence in the case. The faculty member will present his/her evidence to the committee in the presence of the student and then the student may present his/her defense in the presence of the faculty member. The hearing will be closed, but the student may have a campus friend with him/her during the proceedings. Members of the committee may question any parties involved in the case. • The committee will then deliberate and judge guilt or innocence in the case. • In the event of a verdict of guilty, the faculty member will impose a penalty of either a zero (0) on the work in which the student was dishonest or a failure (F) in the course in which the dishonesty took place. If the student has previously been found guilty of a violation of academic honesty of any kind, the Dean of the College will impose additional penalties. Normally, for a second offense, the student will be suspended, be asked to withdraw from the College, or be permanently dismissed. If it is a third offense, the student will be permanently dismissed. • Decisions of the Committee on Academic Standards and Discipline or the Dean of the College may be appealed to the President. The President's decision is final.

Procedures for Record-keeping in Cases of Academic Honesty Violations • The Dean of the College will keep a record of all cases of academic dishonesty reported by individual faculty members and of all cases, regardless of their outcomes, which are adjudicated by the regular three-person committee process. • These records will not be kept in the regular academic files of the students involved, but in a special records section. Accused students may view their records at any time. • Records are to be preserved until such time as students named therein are graduated or leave the College for other reasons. At such time, these records are to be destroyed, unless the individual student has been dismissed for disciplinary reasons relating to academic dishonesty or has withdrawn from the College while the circumstances of a charge of academic dishonesty against the student are still under investigation. If a student voluntarily withdraws from the College after the conclusion of a case involving a charge of academic dishonesty against that student, the record will be expunged.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND DISABILITIES SERVICES:

Students with a disability who are requesting accommodations must self-identify to the Disability Services offices within the Ursinus Institute for Student Success, provide the appropriate documentation, and complete the accommodation process.

The Director of Disability Services, will review the accommodation requests and documentation, meet with the student and approve reasonable academic accommodations. Disability Services

will send the Accommodation Approval Letter via email and it will also be available on the **Bear Accessibility Portal**

If you are concerned you have not received an Accommodation Approval Letter for one of your students, please contact **disabilityservices@ursinus.edu**.

Students must approve and request their accommodations each semester. Once requested and approved by the student, The Director of Disability Services will provide information about appropriate accommodations and discuss possible reasonable accommodations.

A student's diagnosis/disability will not be disclosed. The student has a right to confidentiality and Disability Services will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the individual's diagnosis. The Director will share functional impacts that the student is dealing with in order to best support the student.

Appendix E: Course Power Points

(These are unable to be submitted in word and will be available upon request)