An international network working towards social justice, state accountability and decarceration

NEWSLETTER No 08, 2018
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I. **Editorial**

At the British Society of Criminology conference this year, long-time EG member Victoria Canning won the 2018 British Society of Criminology Book Prize for her publication, *Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System*, and was honored for her achievements. We would also like to honor Victoria and her immensely important work on the asylum system, by publishing in this August newsletter Victoria’s accepting speech and excerpts from her book. To give you a sneak peak already her, Victoria describes her work in the following manner:

‘At the heart of this book is an aim to address systemic and structural oppressions which facilitate violence against women, but also which socially hinder the wellbeing of people seeking asylum ... the British asylum system is structurally harmful in that it is built to regulate, control and dehumanise those who pass through its processes and whose lives depend on its policies.”

In less than a week’s time, it is the European Group’s 46th Annual Conference. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in Ljubljana and we are grateful to the organizers for all their work creating what in Norwegian we would call “sommerens vakreste eventyr” (this summer’s most beautiful adventure).

On a personal note, for us this conference in Ljubljana is also somewhat melancholic as we this year hand over our roles as coordinator and secretary to other suitable hands to be elected at the Annual Group Meeting in Ljubljana. We would like to use this opportunity to say thank you for the experience and trusting us with this work.

We wish you all safe travels and see you soon.

In solidarity,
Ida and Per
I. **British Society of Criminology – Book price to Victoria Canning**

Victoria Canning is a Lecturer in Criminology at the Open University, UK (soon to be moving to Bristol University). Her book, *Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System* (2017, Routledge), can be previewed [here](#). In accepting the award Victoria said:

“The current architecture of the British Asylum System is increasingly one of harm, where degradation and denigration have replaced a sense of safety or belonging. Destitution has become common place; access to social justice in the form of refugee status has been diminished by reductions to legal aid; and poverty keeps some women tied to violent partners, dependent on spousal visas or financial income. Whilst the Home Office targets traffickers as criminal gangs, their own actions increasingly mirror the ‘gangs’ that they target: threatening deportations, removing autonomy, and moving individuals and families across countries through dispersal policies.

These are not by-products of a broken system. Almost all of the social problems outlined in *Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System* are the outcomes of socio-political decisions – of carefully orchestrated polices and legislation which work to Other, to deter, to remove. This is structural and institutional violence.

As criminologists, we must question our role in singularly documenting the harms and violences that we see in the lives of people we collaborate with or ‘study’. It is time that we systematically name structural violence when we see it; to use the powers of academia and activism to dismantle violent hierarchies which subjugate those who are most
powerless in society, and hold accountable those who inflict harm – states and corporations included. The problems we see are seldom accidental, thus they are not inevitable: they are designed, and as such we can work to dismantle and redesign them.”

After the presentation, a spontaneous auction was held for a book that Victoria wanted to highlight. Available from News From Nowhere, ‘Migrant Artists Mutual Aid: Strategies for Survival, Recipes for Resistance’ is available for just £7.00 and all proceeds of this book will go toward the Migrant Artists Mutual Aid legal fund, to ensure all women have representation at immigration tribunals, so that no one is forced to face state representatives alone. Make your own small act of support by buying it.
II. Asylum, Gendered Harms and Structural Violence

By Victoria Canning

First published at: www.criminologycollective.nz – 13 July 2017

Resisting the Spiral of Silence

At the heart of this book is an aim to address systemic and structural oppressions which facilitate violence against women, but also which socially hinder the wellbeing of people seeking asylum more generally once they have reached relative safety. Ultimately, I am arguing that the British asylum system is structurally harmful in that it is built to regulate, control and dehumanise those who pass through its processes and whose lives depend on its policies.

There is no one aspect that is singularly harmful – not detention, not destitution – but a culmination of procedures which reduce or eradicate autonomy, produce existential banality, and ultimately cause further emotional, physical and relational harms to survivors of violence and persecution. Importantly, many of these processes mirror or are mirrored in the global arena of securitisation and border controls, and expansion rather than reduction is increasingly the main objective of states and nations across the world.

Can we address aspects of structural violence or harm as state crimes?

Defining state crime is complex in the context of asylum in Britain. Indeed even when the state has been found in contravention of its own laws or policies (such as in the case of asylum welfare) it is difficult – but not impossible, as we will later see – to have changes made. There are two points worth picking up on here: the first is that state crime might be viewed as the ‘Infliction of pain, injury or death in contravention of legal or moral norms’ (Green and Ward, 2009: 116). While Green and Ward refer specifically to states which perpetrate physical and mass scale violence such as war crimes or genocide, a broad reading allows us to look critically at the issues developed in relation to the ‘bystander state’ and the refugee crisis. As Pickering and Cochrane argue, the ‘fatalities of irregular border crossers raise serious questions concerning state obligations, at least in relation to the foreseeability of these deaths, if not also in connection to state culpability in and the legality of border control efforts that directly or indirectly result in deaths’ (Pickering and Cochrane, 2013: 28; see also Weber and Pickering, 2011). It also lets us critically consider what I have called here the deliberate infliction of harm: harms which affect the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of people seeking asylum but that are portrayed as immigration deterrents.
or by-products of border control. As argued, decisions which have been made over the past three decades at least have developed outcomes that were wholly foreseeable and foreseen, and this continues to be the case even despite the increased documentation of harm, and capacity for challenging denial that we now have. These are intentional, and pain, injury and death are subsequently inflicted on varying scales.

The second point draws us closer to key arguments made by Chambliss more than twenty years ago: that ‘state crime’ should incorporate ‘behaviour that violates international agreements and principles established in the courts and treaties of international bodies’ (Chambliss, 1995 in Canning, 2011: 29). Under this wider definition of state crime, it could be argued that in wrongly refusing protection under the Refugee Convention (amongst others), which is clear in some cases as we have seen, then governmental agencies fit this description. As Webber recently argued, the British state increasingly see ‘human rights obligations as optional’ (Webber, 2016). Since ‘crime is not a rigid legal category but a fluid and contested construct’ (Green and Ward, 2013: 28) there is scope to move toward criminal accountability, something which has increasingly been advocated by critical lawyers and other parties who have brought High Court challenges against the Home Office. Drawing from perspectives such as Chambliss and Webber then we can see that although state harms and state power are the most recognisable elements of the points highlighted earlier, there is still scope to address and challenge some harms as crimes.

**Resistance from Within**

As with other social movements, such as anti-violence movements and rape crisis movements, much of this resistance has developed autonomously and from within. In the context of Australian detention for example, Grewcock argues that despite the ‘government’s deliberate strategy of physically isolating refugees… the social isolation is not total and the detainees’ humanity is not completely destroyed’ (2013: 63). Although the spatial isolation of which he speaks is markedly different from the British context, the underlying argument is the same: isolation is not absolute. People seeking asylum who are in or out of detention face multiple layers of isolation and exclusion but autonomous acts of resistance have always played out in and out of the gaze of the public eye, and not only in the recent surge of pro-refugee campaigns. Some have ranged from physical protests, such as multiple hunger strikes, including in 2015 in IRC Harmondsworth which spread to IRC Moreton Hall (see Green, 2015), and periodic strikes in Yarl’s Wood over the past 15 years. Yarl’s Wood has seen many other eras of unrest and resistance, which included being set on fire shortly after opening in protest to the maltreatment of a fellow detainee. Other acts of resistance
include petitions for individuals to be granted asylum or for structural reform, and
the forming of protective barriers between deportees and Border Force or Immigration
Officers. Some have been less public and more sustained, such as campaigning
against conditions in IRCs, and localised campaigns regarding inadequate housing in
parts of Britain (including Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, all
of which are dispersal areas).

Furthermore, and as argued elsewhere in relation to sexual violence in detention:

‘Survivors of sexual violence are often faced with a wall of silence, be it through social
stigma, shame, or fear of reporting. Add to this a perpetrator who has the power to
detain, restrain, search or report you, who can exploit a fear of forced return to the
country you have fled and you have what some women seeking sanctuary have been
made to face’ (Canning, 2014b: 11).

Yet even in the face of this, women have still spoken out. Many women speak out against
their own subjections to violence, but also against violence so that their counterparts
might not face sexual or domestic violence elsewhere. Organisations such as Southall
Black Sisters, Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) and Merseyside Refugee and
Asylum Seekers Pre and Post Natal Support Group (MRANG) have spoken,
protested, and written their criticisms of a system which facilitates vulnerability to
exploitation, which curbs women’s capacities to leave violent relationships, and which
undermines the impacts of previous violences that women disproportionately
experience prior to and during migration. In the face of expanding controls, such
levels of grassroot organising probably face more threats – political and financial –
than ever before but they continue, they challenge, they grow and they resist.

…

*Everyday Survival as Resistance*

This brings me then to the forms of resistance which have been the backbone to the
women and organisations I have worked with over the past decade. To echo the
sentiments of Stanley and McCulloch:

‘we argue that it [resistance] should include assertive or creative acts... Resistance can
be about becoming or creating something – it may produce alternatives for harmful
products or processes... it may reinvigorate traditions or reaffirm values, such as
cultural identity, integrity or sense of self; it can invoke a competing claim of
universalism or attempt to set the boundaries of a “viable” or “liveable” life’ (Stanley
and McCulloch, 2013:5).
They are speaking specifically of resistance to state crime, but I argue that the same aspects resonate with resisting harm, power and structural or patriarchal violence. For the duration of this research, I have witnessed incredible acts of solidarity which have supported the wellbeing and survival of women and men seeking asylum. A weekly Muslim women’s group at a Mosque which gave food collections to other women who were awaiting asylum or the outcome of an asylum appeal; daily foodbanks at an asylum support organisation which did everything it could to ensure people were not malnourished; birthing partners amongst refugee and non-refugee women so that single pregnant women did not have to face childbirth alone in an unfamiliar country; a woman giving up her own bed so another could sleep in it with her two daughters when Section Four funds did not come through in time from the Home Office; petitions – some successful, others not – to stop the deportation of friends and fellow activists; group phonecalls on loudspeaker to women in detention so they did not feel isolated or forgotten; cookathons to raise legal funds for a member of a mutual aid group who could not afford to have a report produced to document the prevalence of gendered violence in her country of origin. As with Weber’s arguments around non-compliance amongst custody officers (2005), other forms of support which facilitate survival come from the outside. Health visitors who make sure to prescribe the same standard of vitamins or creams that they would for themselves over cheaper and less effective counterparts; lawyers who spend more and more of their spare time on cases for which they are not paid but that they take on out of a sense of moral obligation – all of these points are creative and facilitate survival.

This is not simply a list of good deeds: it is the recording of acts of solidarity and resistance amongst autonomous groups and in the face of poverty, destitution, and imminent uncertainty on their own behalf. For some, just being here and surviving is an indicator of resistance. As Grewcock said, humanity is not completely destroyed (2013), and nor can it be.

Victoria Canning is a Lecturer in Criminology at the Open University, UK. These excerpts are taken from her new book, Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System (2017, Routledge). You can read a preview here.

References


### III. European Group Conference in Ljubljana

#### 22-25 August 2018

**Program**

*Conference venue:* Poljanski nasip 2

**Wednesday, 22.8.2018**

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<td>Panel: Social harm in a digitalized global world: Technologies of power and normalized practices of contemporary society (Avi Boukli, Paddy Hillyard, Steve Tombs)</td>
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<td>Crimes of the powerful: Eco crime and the Politics of mining (Reece Walters)</td>
<td>Prison, punishment and detention: Managing the crises: Psychological disorders, prison and the “psychiatric issue” (Luca Sterchele)</td>
<td>Social harm: Grenfell Tower and its aftermaths as social harm (Steve Tombs)</td>
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<td>The Volkswagen »Dieselgate« scandal: a criminological analysis (Toine Spapens)</td>
<td>Death and the (In)security Estate- Carceral Systems as Death Zones (Lisa White)</td>
<td>Understanding “Cultural Harm” - are we part of the problem? (Lynne Copson)</td>
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<td>The politics of fighting economic fraud in neoliberal Uganda (Jorg Wiegratz)</td>
<td>No longer free to be deaf: an exploration of the pervasiveness of the medical model of disability in prison (Laura Margaret Kelly)</td>
<td>Fast fashion, social harm and the irrational (Katja Simončič)</td>
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<td><strong>Social harm:</strong> Data flows beyond the prison walls (Diana Miranda)</td>
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<td>Police infiltration of political activism: recent exposures of ‘spycops’ in Britain and the harms of intrusive surveillance (Raphael Schlembach)</td>
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<td>Who will control the internet censorship machine? (Matija Damjan)</td>
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<td>Navigating online risk and harm experienced by vulnerable children in a coastal resort (Sarah Tickle and Sarah Greenhow)</td>
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<td><strong>Fear and looting in the periphery:</strong></td>
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<td>Reorienting the criminological compass: finding the core and the periphery in the cardinal points (Dieter, Vitor Stegemann and Dieter, Mauricio Stegemann)</td>
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<td>Presences of the predator and the prey or realities and illusions in the immigrant Criminology of Clarice Lispector (Wayne Morrison)</td>
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<td>Bare Life and the Carceral Archipelago in postcolonial Australia (Harry Blagg)</td>
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<td>Corporate power and resistances: Rights of Nature as a dispute and disputed tool (Marco Aparicio Wilhelmi)</td>
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<td><strong>Panel:</strong> Issues concerning asylum seekers: views from Slovenia and the Balkan route.</td>
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<td>Participating: Jerneja Turin (Amnesty International Slovenia), Katarina Bervar Sternad (PIC), Franci Zlatar (Slovene Philanthropy)</td>
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<td><strong>Social harm:</strong> Harm and targeted advertising (Avi Boukli)</td>
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<td>“Automated Justice”: Implications for human rights (Aleš Završnik)</td>
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<td>Different types of algorithms require the creation of different legal rules: the impact of algorithm’s foreseeability. (Tjaša Zapušek)</td>
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<td><strong>Prison, punishment and detention:</strong></td>
<td>Miha Hafner</td>
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<td>“Calling the police” as part of informal social control inside families (Sarah van Praet)</td>
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<td>Violent disciplining by parents- the structural preconditions for its invisibility in criminology (Riikka Kotanen)</td>
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<td>“Lessons learned?” Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2010-2015 (Katie Tucker)</td>
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<td><strong>Crimmigration (PPD):</strong> Against Expansionism: Avoiding the “Prison reform” path in immigration incarceration (Victoria Canning)</td>
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<td>Immigration detention in the EU periphery: control, deterrence and fundamental rights (Neža Kogovšek Šalamon)</td>
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<td>Rejected Syrians: Violations of the Principle of Non-Refoulement in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon (Vasja Badalić)</td>
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**Thursday, 23.8.2018**

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<td><strong>Social harm:</strong> Sexual Violence on Campus: An exploration of institutional responses (Kym Atkinson)</td>
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<td>Political prisoner: an Irish republican in the British Penal system (Mark Hayes)</td>
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<td>Crimes of the powerful:</td>
<td>Resisting the punitive state: Theory, Practice, Struggle and Action</td>
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<td>(Emily Louise Hart, Joe Greener, Rich Moth)</td>
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<td>Dealing with massive victimization by corporations in the Global South: The</td>
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<td>role of social movements in the struggle for compensation, truth and memory</td>
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<td>Resisting capitalist violence, terror, stupidity and crime: The case of</td>
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<td>Slovenia (Zoran Kanduć)</td>
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<td>Crimes of the powerful: The offshore world and tax payers in a small Alpine</td>
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<td>Albania (Shahrzad Fouladvand and Tony Ward)</td>
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<td>Responding to Systematic Corporate wrongdoing through negotiated justice</td>
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<td>No prison (Livio Ferrari)</td>
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<td>A case for prison abolition: Gender Justice and Incarcerated women (Emma</td>
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<td>Fiction, war and Criminology (Vincenzo Ruggiero)</td>
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<td>The issue of crime and law and the need for a solution after the October</td>
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<td>Revolution: The case of Pashunakis (Stratos Georgoulas)</td>
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<td>Nietzsche, Abolitionism and Technologies of Power: Reflections on</td>
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<td>Sophie Treadwel’s Machinal (Mohammed Q. Al-Darwish and Tony Ward)</td>
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<td>Chair: Simone Santorso</td>
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<td>Introduction: Livio Ferrari - The No Prison Project</td>
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<td>• Johannes Feest/Sebastian Scheerer - Against</td>
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<td>penitentiaries: can we do without prisons as punishment?</td>
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<td>• Hedda Giertsen (via Skype) - Prison And Welfare In</td>
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<td>Historical stream: The art of body worn cameras: Policing, power, aesthetics (Murray Lee)</td>
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<td>Post-fascism in Spain: The last chapter of a never-ending transition (Ignasi Bernat Molina)</td>
<td>The Criminological Capitalist Realism of Robocop (Paul McGuiness)</td>
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<td>Beyond neoliberal punishment: on structural and institutional sovereign violence in Spain (Daniel Jimenez Franco)</td>
<td>Fucking “Frigid Farrah”, “Young Yoko” and co. - critical reflections on the imploding “uncanny valley” and its implications (Andrea Beckmann)</td>
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<td>Chair: Stratos Georgoulas</td>
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<td>Coffee break</td>
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<td>12h-13:30</td>
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<td>Pre-crime and crimmigration law in Germany (Christine M. Graebsch)</td>
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<td>The family must be defended: Analysing the family plot in migration control (Alexandra Konig)</td>
<td>Chair: Mojca Plesničar</td>
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<td>Reece Walters</td>
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<td>Vicky Canning</td>
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<td>Lynne Copson</td>
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<td>Avi Boukli.</td>
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<td>16:30h-16:45h</td>
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<td>16:45-18:15h</td>
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Friday, 24.8.2018

**Norway: Implications For Prison Policy?**
- Vincenzo Ruggiero - No Prison: old and new challenges
- Gwenola Ricordeau (via Skype) - No abolitionist movement without us! Manifesto for prisoners’ relatives and friends
- Giuseppe Mosconi - Abolitionism: without and beyond Penal Law
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<td>19:15h</td>
<td>drinks and finger food at kavarna SEM</td>
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VI. Call for Papers – Handbook of Penal Abolitionism

Introduction
The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism will provide the leading ‘one stop global abolitionist textbook’ for the 21st century that will both reflect key abolitionist thought and also help set the agenda for local and global abolitionist ideas and interventions over the coming decade. It will consist of 35-40 chapters (5,000-6,000 words each) working toward the systemic and systematic dismantling of penal structures and processes, and toward social living that is grounded in relationships that take into account the needs of all. The editors of this global-centered project seek contributions from all around the world (east, north, south, and west), and from scholars, non-academics, activists, and people in (or formerly in) prison. We seek work that (a) engages and furthers abolitionist practice, study, politics and theory, (b) examines abolition empirically, theoretically, historically, culturally, spatially, or rhetorically, and (c) is situated within or at the interstices of critiques of ableism, capitalism, hetero-normativity, militarism, patriarchy, state power, racism, settler colonialism, and xenophobia.

Call for Papers
Shaped by an unequivocal commitment to social justice, abolitionist social movements have emerged as the most innovative reaction to penality and punishment. Abolitionists challenge not only the imperialist colonialism, patriarchy and racial capitalism of carceral logic and penal practice (law, police, courts, prisons), but also work to establish and support networks of solidarity with the primary targets of penality - such as communities of colour and people who are socially and economically excluded - and to provide a platform for voices of resistance.

The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism aims to reflect on the global emergence of penal abolition and to highlight its vibrancy and dynamism around the
world today. There are, of course, cultural and geographic variations of meaning to ‘penal abolitionism’. Viewing their work as curatorial, the editors seek to reflect this plurality of meanings, and understand the term as operating on at least four levels: (a) as a social movement directly engaged in resisting and contesting penal logic, policies and practices, (b) as an intellectual project that provides a way of understanding the world (a theoretical perspective), (c) as a coherent set of ethical and political values shaping daily lives and interactions with other people (including the handling of conflicts and harms), and (d) as a form of strategic engagement with existing power relations (such as white supremacy), promoting both a critique of the present but also a vision of a better and more just future. As such, penal abolitionism is inevitably tied to praxis and challenging the language, culture and taken-for-granted assumptions about the very existence of law, policing, courts and prisons.

The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism emerges in the current context of the global consolidation of neo-liberalism, the seemingly relentless growth and reach of the penal machinery of the state that especially targets people of colour and the socially and economically excluded, the globalisation of a profit orientated prison industrial complex, and the intensification of the devastating collateral damage wreaked by penal practices upon individuals, families and communities. In an age of a globally entrenched penal logic, we invite a comprehensive and wide ranging collection of papers that will provide a platform for the further promotion of the ideas of penal abolitionism and a site for sharing the abolitionist work of people working in diverse arenas and geographies.

Penal abolitionism is not just about pulling down walls and deconstructing penal logic. It is also about building a more just world. Toward that endeavour, the editors welcome chapters which will empirically or theoretically discuss a variety of themes, such as:

1. Voices from the inside (prisoners) and hyper-surveilled communities: words from the caged, silenced, and marginalized.
2. Social movements and organising for abolition (voice of grass roots and non-academic abolitionists): abolitionist priorities now.
3. Critique and resistance to the penal nation-state (including punishment outside of legal processes): setting the parameters of abolition, i.e. what is to be abolished and why.
4. Critique pseudo-abolitionist alternatives, such as carceral feminism and revenge-oriented “restorative” justice schemes (e.g., Gacaca, Rwanda).
5. Rehabilitation of traditional justice mechanisms (e.g. cultural rites vs. the procedural rights of the abstract individual) in the post-colony realities of imperial forces and control (e.g., USA military bases, military-industrial complex, economic mining, etc.).
6. Theoretical and political perspectives: the diversity of abolitionist thought and tradition.
7. Geographical horizons (abolitionism around the globe): contributions from six continents on the history and current state of local abolitionism.

Abstracts: DUE OCTOBER 1, 2018 to: Abolition.Handbook@gmail.com
Abstracts should be in the range of 400-500 words and must be accompanied by a brief biography¹. Early submissions are welcome. We encourage submissions from people who are/have been in prison (or punitively victimized), community organizers, graduate students, activist-scholars as well as junior and senior academics. Invitations to submit a chapter will be based on a review of the abstracts received by the due date. As editors we welcome a rich diversity of abstracts and promise further labour to ensure all abstracts that meet the submission criteria and cannot be included in this volume are helped to reach a publication outlet.

Papers: DUE JUNE 1, 2019 to: Abolition.Handbook@gmail.com
Papers must contain original and unpublished work, and be in the range of 5,000-6,000 words. Written to appeal to activists, community organisers, practitioners, students and scholars across a wide range of disciplines, papers should be straightforward, user-friendly, jargon free, and prepared in accord with Routledge guidelines for authors, i.e. they must follow the manuscript preparation, editorial style, and conventions (references, bibliography, etc.) per the publisher: https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/tandfbis/rt-files/docs/Author+Guidelines+2017.pdf

All Inquiries and Communication to: Abolition.Handbook@gmail.com
Please send all inquiries regarding The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism directly to the editors at Abolition.Handbook@gmail.com (and NOT to their personal email addresses).

Thank you.

¹ The editors ask for a Curriculum Vita (resume) or a brief description of the author’s background to ensure the volume represents a diversity of voices and experiences.
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