

# AMERICAN

**PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY JAIL**



## **DEMAND RELEASE & PROTECTION ACTIONS**

- CHIEF JUDGE EUGENE DOHERT (815) 319-4800
- WINNEBAGO COUNTY JAIL (815) 319-6600
- WINNEBAGO COUNTY SHERIFF GARY CARUANA (815) 319-6005
- WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY MARILYN HITE-ROSS (815) 319-4700

## **TIPS FOR MAKING CALLS**

- BE FIRM BUT POLITE, INSIST ON SPEAKING TO THE PERSON YOU ARE CALLING FOR
- LEAVE A MESSAGE IF NO ONE ANSWERS
- REFUSE TO GIVE ANY INFORMATION THAT YOU MAY BE UNCOMFORTABLE SHARING WITH THE STATE (E.G. FULL LEGAL NAME, ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION, ETC.)

# HOLOCAUST

# AMERICAN

## **Same Shit, Different Day**

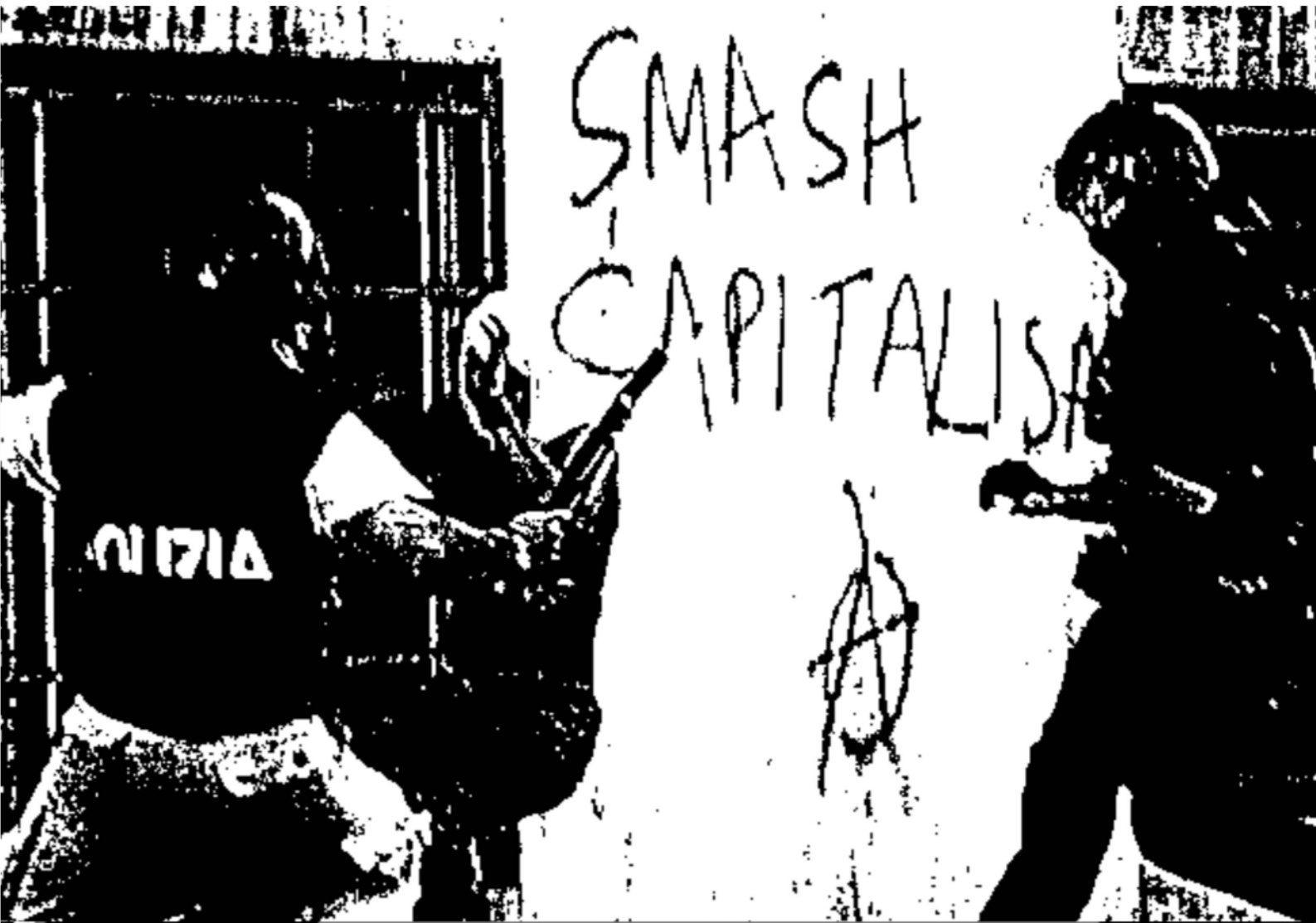
# HOLOCAUST

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We Must Build a Fight Back Movement!



FUCK THE POLICE  
FEED THE PEOPLE  
FIGHT THE POWER  
FEEL THE POWER  
FUCK THE PIPELINES  
FUCK THE PRISONS  
FREE THE PRISONERS  
FUCK THE PILGRIMS  
FUCK THE POLITICIANS  
FUCK THE PROFITS  
FUCK THE PROPAGANDA  
FUCK THE PRESIDENT  
FOR THE PEOPLE

+++

## We Love "Violent Offenders" Too

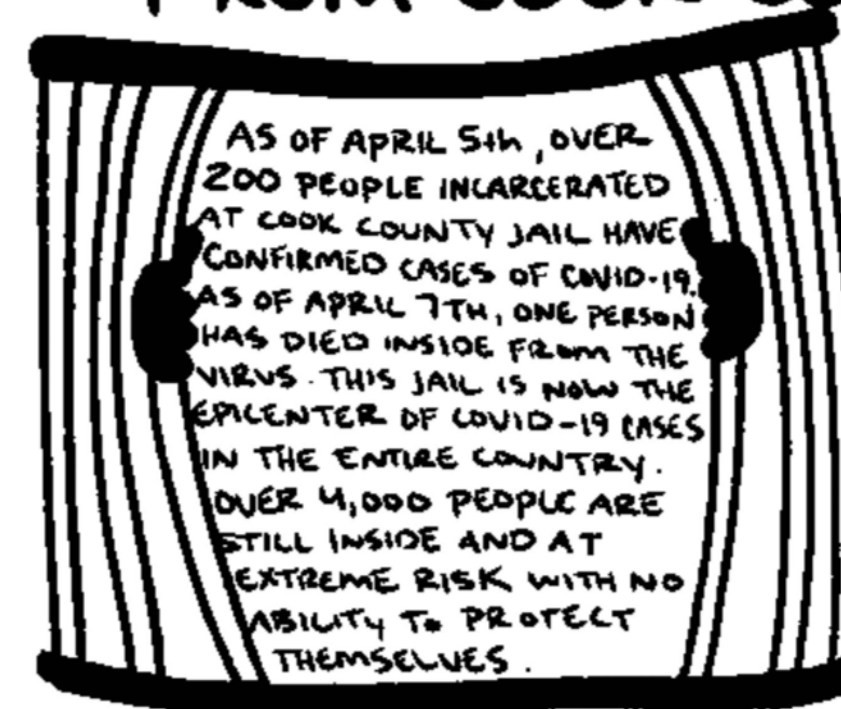


Much love to all those joining in the demand for prisoner release as a public health response. Much appreciation to all the officials working hard to release non-violent offenders. Please also remember that violent offense does not equal violent person. Apart from coerced confession, wrongful conviction, and draconian criminal statutes, please consider trauma, brain development and the complexity of survivorship, especially as it concerns gender violence, inside and outside prisons. Please also consider that no one is merely the sum of their worst acts nor are we the same person our whole lives.



## Same Shit, Different Day

### #MassReleaseNow FROM COOK COUNTY JAIL



**CALL:**

SHERIFF TOM DART  
312-603-6444

CHIEF JUDGE  
TIM EVANS  
312-603-6000

STATE'S ATTORNEY  
KIM FOXX  
312-603-1880

FOR MORE INFO + CALL SCRIPTS:  
[chicagobond.org/call-in](http://chicagobond.org/call-in)

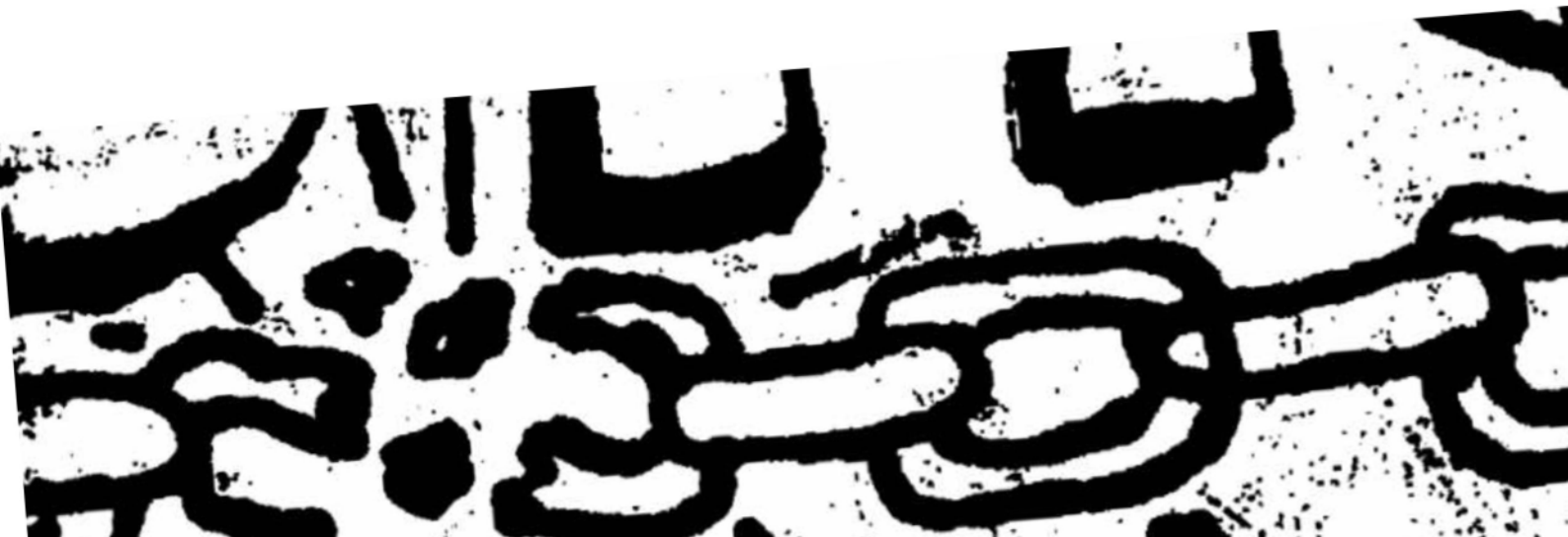


image by m.t.

## Same Shit, Different Day

*White Pestilence & the Early Military  
Movements of New World Frontier Conquest*

1. *COVID-19 Tips Sheet*
2. *Pestilence and Genocide*
3. *Infection Hot Spot: Watching  
disease spread and kill on slave  
ships*
4. *Forced Passages: The His-  
torical Present of (Prison)  
Slavery*



**Todd Hyung-Rae Tarselli**

32. "Brit Tells Tale of Torture at Guantánamo," *Windsor Star*, March 13, 2004, C4.
33. While there is a significant body of reporting on the Corcoran incidents and the subsequent criminal trials of several guards, the following articles offer a clear overview of the fundamental issues. The comprehensive 2002 California Prison Focus (CPF) report "Corcoran State Prison 2001–2002: Inside California's Brutal Maximum Security Prison," is available online at the CPF website, <http://www.prisons.org>. The following news articles are listed in reverse chronological order: Jerry Bier and Mike Lewis, "Eight Correctional Officers Indicted: Corcoran State Prison Officials Accused of Orchestrating Inmate Fights as Entertainment," *Fresno Bee*, February 27, 1998, home ed., A1; Tom Kertscher, "Controversy at Corcoran Prison Is 10 Years Old: First Inmate Shootings Occurred Nine Months after Facility Opened," *Fresno Bee*, February 27, 1998, home ed., A16; Pamela J. Podger, "Corcoran Whistle-Blower Deals with Consequences Two Years Later: Richard Caruso Is Suing the State Department of Corrections," *Fresno Bee*, November 3, 1996, home ed., A16; Associated Press, "FBI Probes Fatal Shootings of Prison Inmates by Guards: Seven Convicts Killed at Corcoran Facility since 1988," *Fresno Bee*, October 28, 1994, A16.
34. Perkinson, "Shackled Justice."
35. While I have refrained from extensively quoting such texts here for the sake of space, as well as to protect the anonymity of those who have a possibility of obtaining parole release, a significant collection of personal and legal correspondence, as well as untranscribed audio-recorded interviews, has been amassed by CPF in its interviews with people imprisoned in SHU facilities. CPF can be reached at 2940 16th Street B-5, San Francisco, Calif. 94103; phone: (415) 252-9211; email: [info@prisons.org](mailto:info@prisons.org). Similar material is being gathered by the organization Justice Now of Oakland, California, which focuses on the conditions of women's prisons. Justice Now can be contacted at 322 Webster Street, Suite 210, Oakland, Calif. 94612; phone: (510) 839-7654; email: [cshaylor@earthlink.net](mailto:cshaylor@earthlink.net).
36. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," adopted December 10, 1984; emphasis added.

As of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Illinois, United States of America



## COVID-19 Response

### Confirmed Cases

Locations	Staff Confirmed	Staff Recovered	Incarcerated Individuals Confirmed	Incarcerated Individuals Recovered
Crossroads ATC	1	1	3	2
Danville	1	1	0	0
Elgin Treatment Center	3	0	0	0
Fox Valley ATC	7	5	4	3
General Office	1	1	0	0
Graham	1	1	0	0
Hill	2	1	11	3
Jacksonville	1	0	0	0
Joliet Treatment Center	5	1	0	0
Kewanee LSRC	3	2	0	0
Logan	4	3	0	0
Menard	2	2	0	0
North Lawndale ATC	2	2	5	5
Parole	2	1	0	0
Pontiac	5	2	1	1
Sheridan	6	5	12	12
Southwestern IL	1	0	0	0
Stateville	75	64	139	119
Stateville NRC	34	25	1	1
Western IL	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>146</b>

From our friends at:



### *More things to know about the virus*

If you have a runny nose and sputum, you likely have a common cold

If someone sneezes with it, it takes about 10 feet before it drops to the ground and is no longer airborne. Cover your sneezes and coughs! Then wash your hands.

Drinking lots of water is effective for all viruses and generally good advice always.

- 4 Wash your hands frequently as the virus can only live on your hands for a limited time, but a lot can happen then, you can rub your eyes, pick your nose unwittingly and so on.
5. It is difficult to tell COVID-19 symptoms apart from common flu symptoms. Both should be taken seriously but COVID-19 is much more serious.
6. Any one who has diabetes, hypertension, preexisting breathing problems, or who is being treated for cancer is at at heightened risk for COVID-19.
7. People above 60 in age are also at heightened risk for COVID-19.

of the documented slave voyages and are now accessible through the Cambridge University Press Database. They show that on average twelve percent of the enslaved did not survive the ocean crossing, though there was considerable variation from one transport to another. Before 1700, death rates tended to be higher, averaging more than twenty-two percent. They decreased to about ten percent by the end of the eighteenth century, but rose again to nearly twelve percent during the years of illegal trading in the mid-nineteenth century." Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 43-44.

20. Harding, *There Is a River*, 10-11.
21. Equiano, *Equiano's Travels*, 27.
22. Copley, *A History of Slavery and Its Abolition*, 124.
23. Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Carl Pederson, "The Middle Passage Between History and Fiction," in Diedrich et al., *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, 8; emphasis added.
24. Perkinson, "Shackled Justice."
25. Nichol Gomez, "Big Brother Is Watching," *Peacekeeper*, September 2001, 39.
26. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," in Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color*, 215.
27. In addition to Cugoano and Equiano, examples of narratives that articulate an autobiographical or generational memory of the Middle Passage can be found in such collections as Gates and Andrews, *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic*. The narratives of Mary Prince (1831), Old Elizabeth (1863), Mattie J. Jackson (1866), Lucy A. Delaney (1891), Kate Drumgoold (1898), and Annie L. Burton (1909) are similarly compiled in Gates, *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. The narratives of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1772), William Wells Brown (1847), Henry Bibb (1849), Sojourner Truth (1850), William and Ellen Craft (1860), Harriet Ann Jacobs (1861), and Jacob D. Green (1864) are anthologized in *Slave Narratives*. The autobiography and other narratives of Frederick Douglass are gathered in Gates, *Frederick Douglass*.
28. Masters, *Finding Freedom*, 4-5.
29. Yee, *The Melancholy History of Soledad Prison*, 121; emphasis added.
30. Nina Rosenblum, dir., *Through the Wire* (videocassette, New York: New Video Group, 1991); emphasis added.
31. According to a 1994 headline article in the *Progressive*, the opening of California's Security Housing Unit in 1989 at Pelican Bay State Prison led to thirty-six other states' following suit in the subsequent two years. "California Governor George Deukmejian said, in 1989, that Pelican Bay would serve as 'a model for the rest of the nation.' Unfortunately, he was right. At least thirty-six states have already built 'super-maxi' prisons like it, according to a 1991 report by Human Rights Watch": Paige Bierma, "Torture behind Bars: Right Here in the United States of America," *Progressive*, vol. 58, no. 7, July 1994, 21.

10. Holland, *Raising the Dead*, 15.
11. Wilderson, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal."
12. A Federal Prisoner (anonymous), "A Mount Everest of Time," *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Sunday Punch" sec., October 7, 1990, 2.
13. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*.
14. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.
15. Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade." Outlining the historical debate over this figure, David Eltis, David Richardson, and Stephen Behrendt write that the empirical research that followed publication of Curtin's classic text "focused on the two centuries after 1660 when the transatlantic traffic in Africans peaked, [and] has used archival shipping data unavailable to Curtin. Usually interpreted as more reliable than Curtin's, the new findings have nevertheless tended to corroborate rather than challenge Curtin's original estimates of the totals involved." See Eltis et al., "Patterns in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1662-1867," 21. By way of reflection on this debate among historians of the human volume of the transatlantic slave trade, Joseph Inikori and Stanley Engerman wrote in 1992, "Inikori has suggested a global figure of 15.4 million. This figure has been contested by some scholars, and while the process of revision continues, it seems probably that the ultimate figure is unlikely to be less than 12 million or more than 20 million captives exported from Africa in the transatlantic slave trade." See Inikori and Engerman, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 6. Paul Lovejoy, another decade earlier in 1982, arrived at a figure remarkably close to both Curtin's and Eltis's, suggesting 11,698,000 "exported" enslaved Africans between 1450 and 1900, with approximately 9,778,500 surviving the transatlantic transport. See Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade," 477-78.
16. In addition to the books and articles already mentioned, it is worth noting the following texts for the purposes of providing a broad historical overview of the scholarship addressing the trade in enslaved Africans and the Middle Passage: Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*; Blassingame, *The Slave Community*; Carey, *The Slave Trade*; Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*; Diedrich et al., *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*; Eltis and Walvin, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*; Harding, *There Is a River*; Kay, *The Shameful Trade*; Klein, *The Middle Passage*; Lott, *Subjugation and Bondage*; Manning, *Slave Trades, 1500-1800*; Northrup, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*; Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*; Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*.
17. See Behrendt, "Crew Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century," 66; also quoted in Postma, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 47.
18. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 282-83.
19. Postma, whose text culls from the recently available Oxford University CD-ROM database *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (2000) writes: "Because slaves were valuable investment property, ship captains kept careful records in logbooks and mortality lists of the dates and causes of death. . . . These records survive for about one-fifth

8. There are tests for COVID-19 but there is not yet a vaccine or cure.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, WebMD, *flattenthecurve.com*



### DO Wash your hands

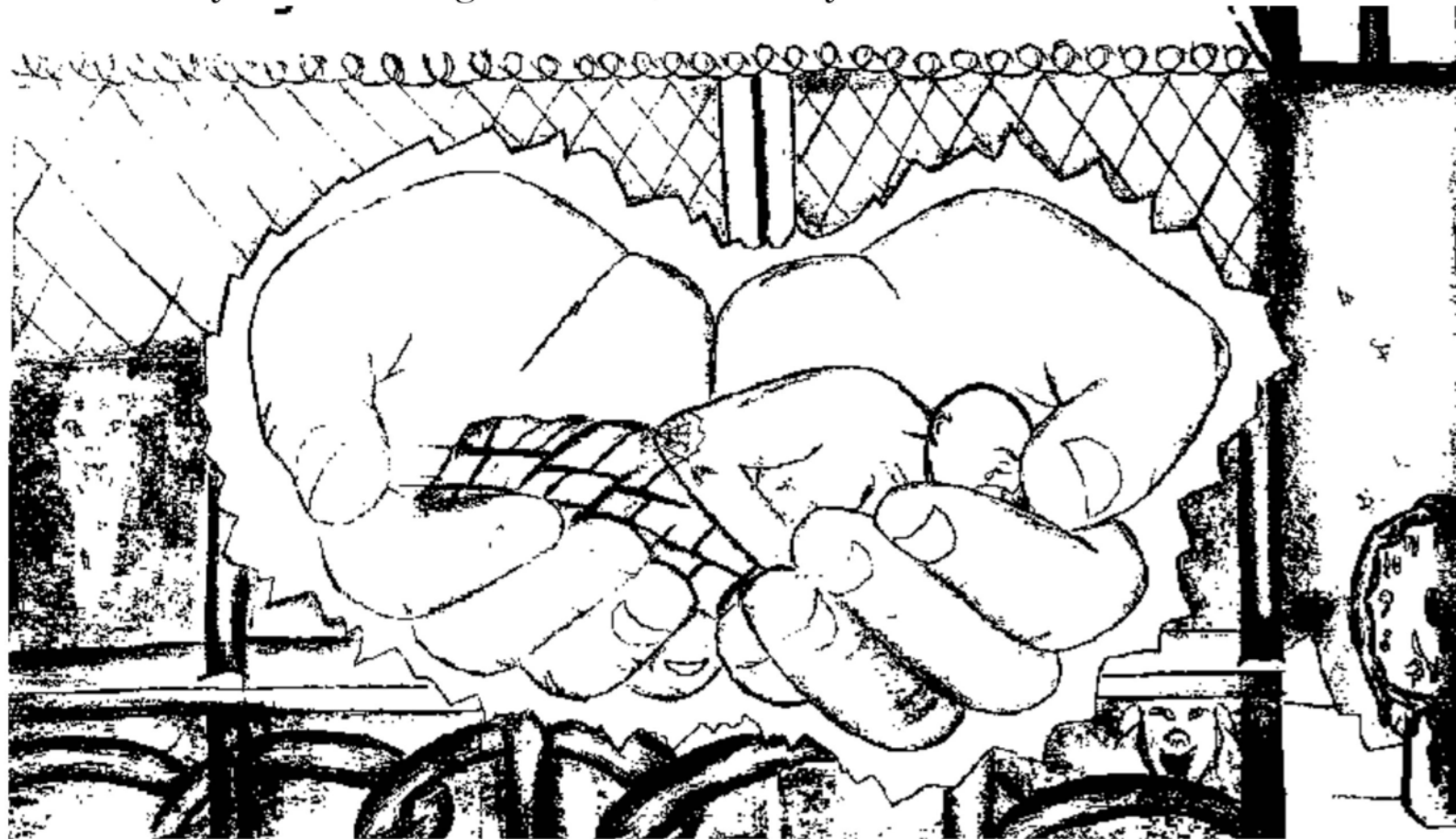
For more than 20 seconds with soap and warm water. Unlike some really stubborn viruses (like polio), viruses in the coronavirus family typically don't survive longer than a few hours on most surfaces hard surfaces; though it can be up to days.

Bleach or ethanol are more effective at decontaminating surfaces than they are disinfecting [human skin](#). So don't

hoard the hand sanitizer, that should be used only when you do not have any access to a soap and water sink.

Vigorous hand-washing with soap really is vital to reduce transmission.

If you do nothing else at all, do wash your hands.



### DO Stay connected

but avoid crowds. It is best to stand at a distance from people. 6 feet or more is safest from infectious droplet spread. The higher your underlying risk factors (age, recent major surgery, cancer, immuno-compromised, asthma, diabetes, etc), the more you should avoid crowds.

is, in the case of Jackson's inaugural imprisonment, Rosenberg's High Security Unit, Tate's fatal SHU yard, and Dortch's Klan Bath, intrinsic to the biopolitical technology of the "torture" itself—that is, the isolation, social liquidation, and immobilization of human beings on scales of flexible magnitude.

The organizing logic of the prison-industrial complex writ large is echoed and embodied in the *vernacular of death* spoken by radical captives such as Jackson and Rosenberg. Both, among countless of their (currently and formerly) imprisoned cohorts, invoke a conception of the prison within a continuum of dying, or "being dead," that crucially expands the historical scope of the prison regime's genealogical linkages to other forms of human domination and massively structured bodily violence.

The prison has become, akin to the Middle Passage, more than simply a means to an end. It is, in objective and in fact, an end in itself. The logic of imprisonment in the age of the prison-industrial complex involves a particular kind of social extermination that fundamentally alters the network of relationships (affective, economic, and otherwise) in civil society. The prison, in the lineage of the slave vessel, has become essential to the production of a new social formation: The technologies of social reproduction, juridically formalized civil death, and mass-based social death converge and collapse as the durable *geographic* (spatial) production of this regime. In turn, this spatialized intersection of oppressive technologies "places" and signifies the bloodwork of white ("multicultural") life and subjectivity, as it is insistently and fatally *lived* against black and Third World death and ontological subjection.

### Notes

1. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 31; emphasis added.
2. *Ibid.*, 37.
3. *Ibid.*, 29.
4. Michel Foucault, "14 January 1976," in "*Society Must Be Defended*," 27–28; emphasis added.
5. MedTerms Online Medical Dictionary, s.v., "Capillary," available online at <http://www.medterms.com>.
6. Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor*, 188–89.
7. Davis, "From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison," 75–76; emphasis added.
8. *Ibid.*, 75.
9. See Garland, "The Rationalization of Punishment"; Rotman, "The Failure of Reform."



shackled and gagged to the infirmary where six guards pressed him into a steel tub of scalding hot water for several minutes. Dortch, who is African American, told "60 Minutes" that the guards promised to give him a "Klan bath" and scrubbed him with a bristle brush until his skin started to peel away. "Looks like we're going to have a white boy before this is through," one of the assailants joked.<sup>34</sup>

Similar incidents are reconstructed in mind-numbing fashion throughout the memoirs, testimonials, and correspondence of people imprisoned in SHU and super-max facilities under U.S. sanction.<sup>35</sup> The sheer mass and repetition of such accounts render implausible the claims, frequently voiced by official and lay defendants of these punitive regimens, that such scenarios amount to a collection of isolated and exceptional episodes. In fact, it is clear that the Pelican Bay "Klan Bath" represents an allegory of both the disavowed regularity and racialized logic of the direct bodily disarticulation that forms the primary material expression of the prison regime's immediate dominion, at the spatial site of the captive's body.

Even the terms of "torture" may be insufficient nomenclature for this technology of immobilization, however. Conventional definitions consider the inflicting of bodily violence to be the means to some end, whether it is extracting information, coercing confessions, terrorizing populations, or otherwise. The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, by way of prominent example, states:

The term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person *for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person*, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.<sup>36</sup>

There is, however, no structuring *exterior* or *ulterior* motive to the state's technology of violence and domination in the super-max prison or within the broader production of the prison regime. The structurally manifest political desire of the prison regime's technology of immobilizing (and deadly) violence

### **Do NOT shake hands**

get creative with zero-contact greetings. One awesome side benefit is that contactless greetings don't even need to be agreed-upon in advance. Unlike handshakes, hugs, kisses, etc, there is no need to have an understood protocol. Do what works for you.

### **Do NOT touch your face**

That is the most common way the virus enters the body. It is really hard to avoid; this is also why we advise staying home and avoiding crowds. It is also why top-down measures (event cancellation and imposed quarantine etc) work. The average person, even ones with baseline good hygiene, touch their faces constantly already without thinking about it. Especially with allergy season coming up, please keep this in mind.

### **Do NOT touch public surfaces**

with your fingers; get creative. Where possible, use knuckles rather than finger tips (e.g., for elevator buttons, light switches, etc.). Open doors with your hips rather than your hands.

You may use your elbows to open door handles, if it's an option. Use a sleeve to open a doorknob if needed.

### **COVID-19 Hot-line**

We have created a hot-line for incarcerated or detained people to call when they have COVID-19 symptoms, when there is an outbreak in their unit, or when they are being denied adequate

sanitation and/or medical care for COVID-19. Our aim is to be an ear and a voice for the unheard. We want to know where and when there is an outbreak so that we can help mobilize support networks and media to lift up the demands of people on the inside. Number to call: 410-449-7140.

and Homeland Security and immigrant detention centers in the past decades has been accompanied by a proliferation of conditions easily likened to both traditional and revised definitions of solitary and mass-based torture. Jamal al-Harath, in the aftermath of his release from the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in March 2004, concisely surmised the logic of his detention on flimsy suspicion of connection to Afghanistan's Taliban and the al-Qaeda network: "The whole point of Guantánamo was to get to you psychologically. . . . The beatings were not as nearly as bad as the psychological torture. Bruises heal after a week, but the other stuff stays with you."<sup>32</sup> Echoing Jackson's meditation on captivity as an approximation of death, and surfacing the indelible marks that "existing in a cage" permanently inscribes on body, soul, and psyche, al-Harath illuminates a form of subjection that exceeds the formal temporal and spatial boundaries of imprisonment. The Guantánamo detention, he says, will always stay with him, even as he reassumes the formal status of the free person in his homeland of Britain.

The notorious routines characterizing the rise of California's Security Housing Unit (SHU) prisons further extrapolates the particular white-supremacist logic that persists within the spectacle of the tortured imprisoned body. The videotaped 1994 murder of the black prisoner Preston Tate at the Corcoran State Prison SHU by correctional officers—one of whom prefaced the fatal shooting by announcing, "It's going to be duck-hunting season"—obtained national attention in the mid- to late 1990s, accompanied by widespread reporting of the Corcoran guards' amused coercion of SHU prisoners into gladiator-style prison-yard fights (shooting many of them under the auspices of "trying to protect another inmate or guard").<sup>33</sup> Perkinson, however, brings attention to the site of SHU's unseen, where regulated regimes of bodily violence are partnered with the "application of sophisticated technology to control prisoners' routines, movements, and even thoughts more than ever before." His investigation of the SHU/super-max prison's normative practices of psychological torture and bodily punishment illustrates a structuring—and, perhaps, paradigmatic—narrative for the regime's legitimated and lawful disintegration of particular racialized captive bodies:

On April 22, 1992, for example, Vaughn Dortch was stripped naked and pulled out of his cell by a Pelican Bay SORT [Special Operations Response Team] squad. According to court records, prison guards then carried Dortch



the production of the prison regime while invoking the captivity of the Middle Passage as living and lived memory. To absorb the geographical breadth and technological depth of the prison regime's elaboration is to come face to face with the unprecedented levels of autonomy granted to—and extracted by—the prison to shape the social (and carceral) worlds. It is also to find an insurgent critique of imprisonment that moves from the sometimes eloquent, though consistently displaced, theoretical languages articulated by captive radicals and revolutionaries.

Interviewed in 1970 about his first experience under state captivity, the venerated imprisoned liberationist George Jackson recounted:

The very first time, *it was like dying*. . . . Just to exist at all in the cage calls for some heavy psychic readjustments. . . . I never adjusted. I haven't adjusted even yet, with half my life already spent in prison. . . . *Capture, imprisonment, is the closest to being dead that one is likely to experience in his life.*<sup>29</sup>

Speaking from the experimental "High Security Unit" in Lexington, Kentucky, some twenty years later, the political prisoner Susan Rosenberg echoed Jackson's language in a manner that reveals an essential—though rarely elaborated—facet of the prison regime. Testifying in the award-winning 1989 documentary *Through the Wire*, Rosenberg said:

[The High Security Unit is] a prison within a prison. . . . *The High Security Unit is living death*. . . . I believe that this is an experiment being conducted by the Justice Department to try and destroy political prisoners and to justify the most vile abuse of us as women and as human beings, and [to] justify it because we are political.<sup>30</sup>

Since the time of Rosenberg's testimony, the technology of the Lexington High Security Unit has circulated and metamorphosed, virus-like, through state and federal prisons across the country. On any given day, tens of thousands are held captive in these "super-max" prisons, while more than 2 million are incarcerated under the rule of Jackson's "cage"—that is, the venerable jail/prison/detention center. These various carceral forms have astronomically increased the numbers of both social and political prisoners held captive in conditions of low-intensity physical and psychological torture, as well as those subjected to high-intensity punishment and state-sanctioned mental or emotional disordering.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, the expansion of youth prisons, mental-health facilities,

# JAIL+COVID

# =

# DEATH SENTENCE



# *Pestilence and Genocide*

*Excerpts from the book:*

## AMERICAN HOLOCAUST

The Conquest of the New World

DAVID E. STANNARD

**T**HE SPAIN THAT Christopher Columbus and his crews left behind just before dawn on August 3, 1492, as they sailed forth from Palos and out into the Atlantic, was for most of its people a land of violence, squalor, treachery, and intolerance. In this respect Spain was no different from the rest of Europe.

Epidemic outbreaks of plague and smallpox, along with routine attacks of measles, influenza, diphtheria, typhus, typhoid fever, and more, frequently swept European cities and towns clean of 10 to 20 percent of their populations at a single stroke. As late as the mid-seventeenth century more than 80,000 Londoners—one out of every six residents in the city—died from plague in a matter of months. And again and again, as with its companion diseases, the pestilence they called the Black Death returned. Like most of the other urban centers in Europe, says one historian who has specialized in the subject, “every twenty-five or thirty years—sometimes more frequently—the city was convulsed by a great epidemic.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, for centuries an individual’s life chances in Europe’s pesthouse cities were so poor that the natural populations of the towns were in perpetual decline that was offset only by in-migration from the countryside—in-migration, says one historian, that was “vital if [the cities] were to be preserved from extinction.”<sup>2</sup>

Famine, too, was common. What J. H. Elliott has said of sixteenth-century Spain had held true throughout the Continent for generations beyond memory: “The rich ate, and ate to excess, watched by a thousand hungry eyes as they consumed their gargantuan meals. The rest of the population starved.”<sup>3</sup> This was in normal times. The slightest fluctuation in food prices could cause the sudden deaths of additional tens of thou-

bodily movements and gestures into a computerized grid of obedience and disobedience, submission and violation. Such innovations effect a re-spatialization of the prison itself, marking the extension and veritable omnipresence of the state’s capacity to practice a violent domination over its “inmates.”

While such advanced technologies of imprisonment are an epochal leap from the carceral practices of the Middle Passage, as a production of power and dominion they are constituted by an analogous—and, in some places, materially similar—social logic and historical trajectory. Located within an extended current genealogy of the slave vessel, there is a resurfaced familiarity in the prison’s discursive emphasis and material production of effective mass capture, immobilization, and bodily disintegration. It is worth invoking Hortense Spillers’s meditation on the captivity of the Middle Passage as a manner of illustrating a central genealogical linkage between apparently discrete and epochally distant carceral forms: “On any given day, we might imagine, the captive personality did not know where s/he was, we could say that they were culturally ‘unmade,’ thrown in the midst of a figurative darkness that exposed their destinies to an unknown course.”<sup>26</sup> Echoing and recontextualizing Spillers, Jarvis Jay Masters’s account of his initial entombment in San Quentin’s death-row prison resonates a spatial and bodily encounter with the prison’s more common modes of isolation and circumscription. His narrative echoes those of imprisoned African survivors of the transatlantic transfer (such as Cugoano, Equiano, and others) while supplementing the CCPOA’s rosy tribute to the onset of the high-technology prison.<sup>27</sup>

I will never forget when the steel cell door slammed behind me. I stood in the darkness trying to fix my eyes and readjust the thoughts that were telling me that this was not home—that this tiny space would not, could not be where I would spend more than a decade of my life. . . .

I spread my arms and found that the palms of my hands touched the walls with ease. I pushed against them with all my might, until I realized how silly it was to think that these thick concrete walls would somehow budge. . . . The bed was bolted into the wall like a shelf. It was only two and a half feet wide by six feet long, and only several feet above the gray concrete floor.<sup>28</sup>

Old and new technologies of incarceration have collaborated in the emergence of the contemporary prison. Masters’s description of the San Quentin cell reveals the constitutive logic that unifies “low” and “high” carceral technologies in

of insanity by its very architecture. Modern electronics allow constant surveillance and supervision while prisoners themselves remain physically invisible, locked away from any direct human view or contact in compartments of solid steel.<sup>24</sup>

Extrapolating the immobilizing logic of the Florence ADX (Administrative Maximum Prison), the September 2001 issue of *Peacekeeper*, the official publication of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), offers a propaganda piece valorizing the super-max prison's evolution into more sophisticated carceral techniques:

Imagine the ultimate Big Brother of the prison system—tracking inmates twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. Well, guess what? It exists. Big Brother has arrived at Calipatria State Prison. . . .

Every inmate wears a wrist-worn transmitter called PASS unit, which stands for Personal Activated Security Sensor. When an inmate arrives at the facility, he or she is enrolled into the system database by the system operator. The information typically entered consists of the inmates name, inmate identification number, housing/bed assignment and meal type. . . .

The transmitter is installed on the inmate's non-dominant wrist. It is secured with screws that are tightened with a special torque screwdriver. The clips can only be removed by breaking them. . . .

Officer A. Felty . . . believes the system is a great deterrent. "The inmates realize they are being constantly monitored and supervised, even when the officer's eyes are not on them. . . . Basically, he knows that escape is not an option, the removal of the bracelet is not an option because he is being constantly monitored—whether the officer is watching him or not."<sup>25</sup>

The totalizing spatial logic of Calipatria's "Big Brother" conveys a peculiar convergence between high technologies of panoptic discipline and the banal normalization of ritualized and immanent physical violence. Disciplinary biopolitical state power rearticulates through the state's self-justifying monopoly on legitimate forms of coercive bodily disintegration: This is to argue that, far from simply inscribing a more invasive and comprehensive form of discipline over its captive civically dead subjects, Big Brother represents a multiplication of the potential sites and scenarios of subjection and physical punishment. This high technology re-maps prisoners' bodies onto a virtual terrain, abstracting their

sands who lived on the margins of perpetual hunger. So precarious was the existence of these multitudes in France that as late as the seventeenth century each "average" increase in the price of wheat or millet directly killed a proportion of the French population equal to nearly twice the percentage of Americans who died in the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

That was the seventeenth century, when times were getting better. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prices fluctuated constantly, leading people to complain as a Spanish agriculturalist did in 1513 that "today a pound of mutton costs as much as a whole sheep used to, a loaf as much as a *fanega* [a bushel and a half] of wheat, a pound of wax or oil as much as an *arroba* [25 Spanish pounds]."<sup>5</sup> The result of this, as one French historian has observed, was that "the epidemic that raged in Paris in 1482 fits the classic pattern: famine in the countryside, flight of the poor to the city in search of help, then outbreak of disease in the city following upon the malnutrition."<sup>6</sup> And in Spain the threat of famine in the countryside was especially omnipresent. Areas such as Castile and Andalusia were wracked with harvest failures that brought on mass death repeatedly during the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> But since both causes of death, disease and famine, were so common throughout Europe, many surviving records did not bother (or were unable) to make distinctions between them. Consequently, even today historians find it difficult or impossible to distinguish between those of the citizenry who died of disease and those who merely starved to death.<sup>8</sup>

Roadside ditches, filled with stagnant water, served as public latrines in the cities of the fifteenth century, and they would continue to do so for centuries to follow. So too would other noxious habits and public health hazards of the time persist on into the future—from the practice of leaving the decomposing offal of butchered animals to fester in the streets, to London's "special problem," as historian Lawrence Stone puts it, of "poor's holes." These were "large, deep, open pits in which were laid the bodies of the poor, side by side, row upon row. Only when the pit was filled with bodies was it finally covered over with earth." As one contemporary, quoted by Stone, delicately observed: "How noisome the stench is that arises from these holes so stowed with dead bodies, especially in sultry seasons and after rain."<sup>9</sup>

Along with the stench and repulsive appearance of the openly displayed dead, human and animal alike, a modern visitor to a European city in this era would be repelled by the appearance and the vile aromas given off by the living as well. Most people never bathed, not once in an entire lifetime. Almost everyone had his or her brush with smallpox and other deforming diseases that left survivors partially blinded, pock-marked, or crippled, while it was the norm for men and women to have "bad breath from the rotting teeth and constant stomach disorders which can be documented from many sources, while suppurating ulcers, eczema, scabs, run-

ning sores and other nauseating skin diseases were extremely common, and often lasted for years."<sup>10</sup>

Street crime in most cities lurked around every corner. One especially popular technique for robbing someone was to drop a heavy rock or chunk of masonry on his head from an upper-story window and then to rifle the body for jewelry and money. This was a time, observes Norbert Elias, when "it was one of the festive pleasures of Midsummer Day to burn alive one or two dozen cats," and when, as Johan Huizinga once put it, "the continuous disruption of town and country by every kind of dangerous rabble [and] the permanent threat of harsh and unreliable law enforcement . . . nourished a feeling of universal uncertainty."<sup>11</sup> With neither culturally developed systems of social obligation and restraint in place, nor effective police forces in their stead, the cities of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were little more than chaotic population agglomerates with entire sections serving as the residential turf of thieves and brigands, and where the wealthy were forced to hire torch-bearing bodyguards to accompany them out at night. In times of famine, cities and towns became the setting for food riots. And the largest riot of all, of course—though the word hardly does it justice—was the Peasants' War, which broke out in 1524 following a series of local revolts that had been occurring repeatedly since the previous century. The Peasants' War killed over 100,000 people.

tion of the transatlantic slave trade that can assist in complicating our temporal and spatial conception of the contemporary regime of imprisonment: "The Middle Passage . . . emerges not as a clean break between past and present but as a *spatial continuum* between Africa and the Americas, the ship's deck and the hold, the Great House and the slave quarters, the town and the outlying regions."<sup>23</sup> A genealogy of the contemporary prison regime awakens both the historical memory and sociopolitical logic of the Middle Passage. The prison has come to form a hauntingly similar spatial and temporal continuum between social and biological notions of life and death, banal liberal civic freedom and totalizing unfreedom, community and alienation, agency and liquidation, the "human" and the sub- and nonhuman. In a reconstruction of the Middle Passage's constitutive logic, the reinvented prison regime is openly articulating and self-valorizing a commitment to efficient and effective bodily immobilization within the mass-based ontological subjection of human beings.

#### Torture's Excess: "It Was Like Dying"

The contemporary prison, working within the genealogical lineage of the Middle Passage, constantly prototypes technologies premised on a re-spatialization of bodies and coercive re-embodiment of spaces. Robert Perkinson's description of the internal geography of the Florence, Colorado "control-unit" prison, among the first federal super-maximum prisons to be introduced in the early 1990s, invokes and refracts the historical image and imaginary of the slave ship's cargo hold:

Each cell contains a three-foot-wide cement bed slab, a concrete stool and desk, a steel sink and toilet, and a three-by-three shower stall. A fluorescent light panel glares from the wall, illuminating other amenities like an electric cigarette lighter, an inmate duress switch (since the cells are essentially soundproof), an air grate, and, in some cells, a small television. Double doors shrink the cells by another three feet, trapping unreachable space between bars and the outer door. Only two window slits allow external light into the cage, one on the steel door staring into the empty hallway and another body-length sliver facing an empty courtyard. The shower, along with food slots in the door, allow for total isolation.

Thus, the Florence ADX's very layout determines that it can be nothing but a chamber of sensory deprivation, designed to press inmates to the brink

**DON'T LET THESE PIGS TOUCH US**  
**NYPD**  **NYPD**  
**EVER AGAIN!!!**





the Inquisition was raging in Spain. Here, and elsewhere in Europe, those out of favor with the powerful—particularly those who were believed to be un-Christian—were tortured and killed in the most ingenious of fashions: on the gallows, at the stake, on the rack—while others were crushed, beheaded, flayed alive, or drawn and quartered.

On the very day that Columbus finally set forth on his journey that would shake the world, the port of the city he sailed from was filled with ships that were deporting Jews from Spain. By the time the expulsion was complete between 120,000 and 150,000 Jews had been driven from their homes (their valuables, often meager, having first been confiscated) and then they were cast out to sea. As one contemporary described the scene:

It was pitiful to see their sufferings. Many were consumed by hunger, especially nursing mothers and their babies. Half-dead mothers held dying children in their arms. . . . I can hardly say how cruelly and greedily they were treated by those who transported them. Many were drowned by the avarice of the sailors, and those who were unable to pay their passage sold their children.<sup>24</sup>

This was the world an ex-trader of African slaves named Christopher Columbus and his shipmates left behind as they sailed from the city of Palos in August of 1492. It was a world wracked by disease—disease that killed in massive numbers, but, importantly, that also tended to immunize survivors. A world in which all but the wealthy often could not feed themselves, and in which the wealthy themselves hungered after gold.<sup>25</sup> It was a world, as well, of cruel violence and certainty of holy truth. Little wonder, then, that the first report back from that Atlantic voyage, purportedly to the Orient, caused such sensations across the length and breadth of Europe.

reflects the peculiar technology of domination and violence that conceived and persistently refigured the Middle Passage as a primary, long-term labor for the emergent transatlantic European and Euro-American civilization. Establishing an epochal precursor to the carceral technologies of the landlocked U.S. prison, the Middle Passage simultaneously (1) re-mapped enslaved black bodies; (2) prototyped a conception of the imprisoned/slave as the categorical embodiment of the sub- or nonhuman; and (3) reconfigured multiple scales of geography, constituting new conceptions of the continental (Europe/Africa/"New World") and (transatlantic) oceanic, while inventing new localities in the slave ship and plantation. Thus, the apparent commitment to preserving slave life on board the ships was more than an economic decision. Rather, keeping enslaved captives alive was integral to the production of the Middle Passage as a productive and socially constitutive modality of mass-based imprisonment that collapsed ontological violence into a regime of profound bodily punishment.

Elaborating the slave ship as precisely such a capillary site of power, Vincent Harding's incisive analysis of the Middle Passage further elaborates the symbiosis between the incipient white-supremacist racial formation of the transatlantic conquest and settlement and the ontological relation that characterized the capture, enslavement, and transfer of Africans:

The ships were even more than prisons. Ultimately they provided black people with an introduction to the Euro-American state, for they were mini-states with their own polity, their own laws and government; the common sailors were the ships' own indigenous oppressed class. . . . At the core of the mini-states, prisons, and kennels it was always possible to discover the social, economic, and political scourges arising out of Europe: racism, capitalism, and the deep human fears they engender. The tie of the ships to European capitalism was evident in the decision to call them "slavers," and in their relationship to the slave "factories," and to the industrial factories at home which made the goods that they brought to trade for humans. To maximize profits, the ships had to herd as many Africans aboard as possible, and to exploit their own white crews.<sup>20</sup>

Harding brings attention to the technologies of human containment that were invented and refined at the site of the slave vessel. This portable and moving confinement, he tells us, was invested with an intensive and sophisticated—and profoundly brutal—technology of incarceration. Olaudah Equiano, predating

## THE CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD



The manner in which the Middle Passage allegorized and materialized this unique destruction of human community, particularly its displacement and interruption of indigenous African tribal and communal subjectivities, illuminates how the construction of this seaborne mass incarceration entailed a production of power and domination that pivoted on significantly more than the logistical or economic pragmatics of a live commodity transport. While the human cargo certainly held a lucrative potential profit for slavers incumbent on their ability to bring their stock physically to market, there was far more at stake in the three-centuries-long institutionalization of this itinerant transatlantic "prison."

The Middle Passage was essentially a pedagogical and punitive practice that deployed strategies of unprecedented violence to "teach" captive Africans and coerce them into the methods of an incipient global ordering. Evidentiary fragments of this complex practice are reflected in the gathered historical data, which reveal that rates of survival for the enslaved during the era of the Middle Passage generally equaled or surpassed the survival rates of the European slave-ship crews. While the precise overall mortality rate of enslaved Africans during the transatlantic voyage remains a contested figure, Stephen Behrendt contends that, since "the primary aim of merchants was to minimize slave deaths in the middle passage to ensure a profitable voyage," the mortality rates for European crews were consistently higher than those of their captives, at times doubling or tripling their relative death counts. For the merchant slave traders, "minimizing crew mortality was a secondary consideration" to that of preserving their human chattel.<sup>17</sup> Curtin's focus on the mid- to late eighteenth century similarly reveals that "the death rate per voyage among the crew was uniformly higher than the death rate among slaves in transit at the same period." He argues in regard to this discrepancy in mortality rates that "the data are so consistent and regular . . . that this can be taken as a normal circumstance of the eighteenth-century slave trade."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps what is exceedingly horrific about the carceral technology of the Middle Passage is that it led to the death of breathtaking raw numbers of enslaved people while relatively successfully preserving slave life for the sake of auction and fungible bodily circulation.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the planned survival of enslaved Africans was symbiotic to—rather than a logical contradiction of—their mass incarceration in vessel cargo holds. This structure of planned bodily preservation and mass bodily immobilization

Columbus's second voyage was the true beginning of the invasion of the Americas. The royal instructions authorizing the expedition had directed that the finest ships in Andalusia be outfitted for the trip and that they be commanded by the most expert pilots and navigators in the realm. Seventeen ships made the voyage and aboard those ships were more than 1200 soldiers, sailors, and colonists—including a cavalry troop of lancers and half a dozen priests. Along the way, at the Canary Islands, some other passengers were boarded: goats and sheep and cattle, and eight pigs, were placed on deck and in the holds below.

In early January of 1494 the fleet arrived at the place on the northern coast of Hispaniola that Columbus had chosen to build his New World

capital, his town of Isabela. No sooner were the ships unloaded, however, than sickness broke out among the crews. It quickly spread among the natives, who had come to greet the ships with gifts of fish and fruits, "as if we had been their brothers," recalled one of the men on board.<sup>38</sup> Within a few days, the Admiral's surgeon reported, a third of the Spaniards had fallen ill, while natives everywhere were dead. Columbus directed groups of the healthy among his crews to explore the island's inland regions and find the fabulous gold mines they all were sure existed. But many of those men returned to the ships, having come down with the mysterious illness along the way.

For years historians have speculated as to what the epidemic was that laid low so many Spaniards and killed so many native people. Carl Sauer thought it might have been some sort of intestinal infection, while Samuel Eliot Morison diagnosed it as either malaria or something caused by "drinking well water and eating strange fish." Most recently, Kirkpatrick Sale has opted for bacillic dysentery—although he too lists malaria or even syphilis as among the likely culprits.<sup>39</sup> Others have thought it everything from smallpox to yellow fever. While it is possible (even probable) that more than one disease was causing the afflictions, the reported symptoms had nothing of the signs of syphilis, and malaria was not then present in the Indies or the Americas, nor would it be for many years to come.<sup>40</sup> For the same reasons, it could not have been yellow fever or smallpox that was wreaking all this havoc, and it certainly did not derive from something the Spanish ate or drank, because it spread like wildfire not only among the Spanish, but with particular virulence among the Indian people all across the island.<sup>41</sup> No, the most recent and original medically informed hypoth-

esis—and the one that goes the furthest in explaining reported symptoms, including high mortality, and the extraordinary contagiousness—identifies influenza as the cause, influenza carried by those Canary Islands pigs.<sup>42</sup>

If, as the Spanish physician and medical historian Francisco Guerra now contends, the epidemic that ravaged Hispaniola in 1494 was swine influenza, it would have been a pestilence of devastating proportions. For it now appears that it was swine flu that swept the world in 1918, killing off at least 20,000,000 people before it finally dissipated. Like other people in the Americas, and unlike the Spanish, the natives of Hispaniola had no previous exposure to the virus—nor to the numerous other diseases that historically, in other parts of the world, had spread from domesticated animal hosts. Other than small dogs in some locations and llamas in the Andes, few animals were domesticated anywhere in the hemisphere. And of the many plagues that in time would overwhelm the Americas' native peoples, influenza—of various types, from both humans and non-human vectors—was second only to smallpox and maybe measles as the most rapid epidemic killer of them all.<sup>43</sup>

Whatever it was, in any case, the imported pathogen moved among the native people with a relentlessness that nothing ever had in all their history. “So many Indians died that they could not be counted,” wrote Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, adding that “all through the land the Indians lay dead everywhere. The stench was very great and pestiferous.”<sup>44</sup> And in the wake of the plague they had introduced, the Spanish soldiers followed, seeking gold from the natives, or information as to where to find it. They were troubled by the illness, and numbers of them died from it. But unlike the island natives the European invaders and their forebears had lived with epidemic pestilence for ages. Their lungs were damaged from it, their faces scarred with pocks, but accumulations of disease exposure allowed them now to weather much. So they carried infections with them everywhere they went—burdensome, but rarely fatal, except to the natives that they met.

Following the Admiral's orders, reconnaissance parties were sent out across the island and off to Cuba, Jamaica, and to other nearby lands. The Spanish plagues raced on ahead. Still, the natives, as Columbus had observed during his first voyage, continued to be kind and generous to their guests, and so innocent in the use of dangerous weapons that when Columbus “showed them swords,” he said, “they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance.”<sup>45</sup>

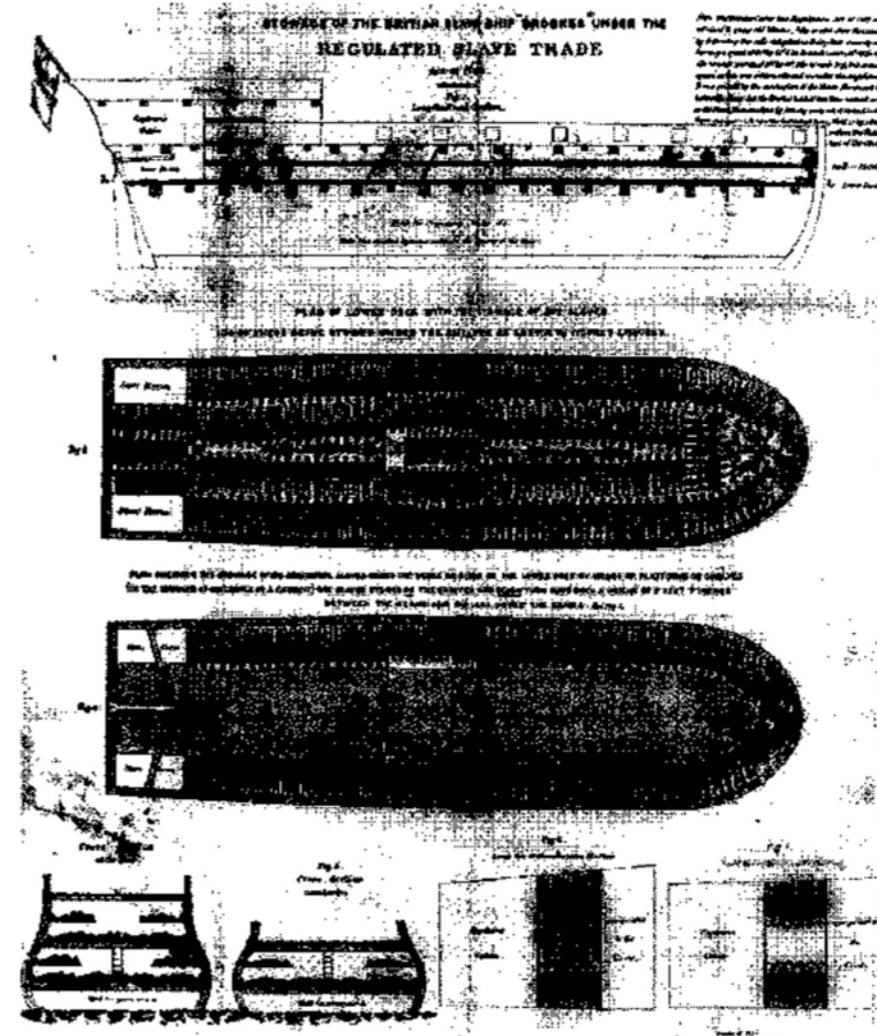


Figure 2 “Stowage of the British Slave Ship Brookes,” circa 1790. Broadside, Rare Book Room, Library of Congress, Portfolio 282–43.

of existence unto itself. Confined to vessels floating in the Atlantic, enslaved Africans were, for their captors, precious live chattel investments in a limbo state between colonial conquest, enslavement (simultaneously commodity and labor value), and physical extermination. The Middle Passage was, at its spatial core, a site of profound subjective and communal disruption for captive Africans: Manifesting an epochal rupture from familiar networks of kinship, livelihood, and social reproduction, the voyage was the threshold of geographic, subjective, and bodily displacement for the transatlantic imprisoned. This African “New World” diaspora, fundamentally constituted and mobilized through conquest, genocide, and enslavement, was and is defined by a structure of imminent alienation from the material and psychic contexts that made operational indigenous African sociocultural forms and made their unique renditions of human community intelligible and consistent.

*Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1969), a loose consensus among historians has been attained since the 1999 release of the Cambridge University Press Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database. David Eltis, drawing from a rigorous review of previous literature and elaborating from the Cambridge University data set, suggests a figure of about 11 million “exports of slaves from Africa” between the years 1519 and 1867.<sup>15</sup> Eltis, Curtin, Herbert S. Klein, Paul Lovejoy, David Richardson, Joseph Inikori, Stanley Engerman, and others have further estimated that between 12 percent and 20 percent of the enslaved perished during the transatlantic transfer, with a total of between 10 million and 15 million of the enslaved eventually reaching the Americas. It is important to note, for the genealogical relation I am examining here, that the vast majority of the seaborne deaths were the result of conditions endemic to the abhorrent living conditions of the slave vessels (the effects of contractible disease and malnutrition, for example, were exacerbated by the conditions of mass incarceration). Many others committed suicide and infanticide in an attempt to defeat the logic of their gendered biological expropriation and bodily commodification, while unknown numbers were killed in the process of attempting to overthrow their captors. The scale of biological death during the Middle Passage was astronomical and clearly genocidal.

Further, this process underwrote the innovation of a distinctive maritime architecture—literally, a seaborne and ship-bound geography devoted to the accumulation, storage, and biological preservation of an enslaved human “cargo.” This technology of incarceration, famously portrayed by late-eighteenth-century British abolitionists in their lithograph “Stowage of the British Slave Ship *Brookes*” (see figure below), rendered a profoundly graphic conception of the racialized sub- and nonhuman as the spatial and existential underside of an expansive European New World millennium. Yet this mass-scale, transcontinental kidnapping must be examined in the context of the coerced transition that it induced by fiat.<sup>16</sup>

The Middle Passage constituted a liminal spatial and temporal site, a moment of commodity transfer between European business partners, as well as a profound site of transformation for the human beings mass incarcerated in the cargo holds of ships. It encompassed a moment of transition between discrete conditions of subjection and domination (from the upheavals of colonial conquest to the settlement localities of enslavement) as well as formed a condition

Wherever the marauding, diseased, and heavily armed Spanish forces went out on patrol, accompanied by ferocious armored dogs that had been trained to kill and disembowel, they preyed on the local communities—already plague-enfeebled—forcing them to supply food and women and slaves, and whatever else the soldiers might desire. At virtually every previous landing on this trip Columbus’s troops had gone ashore and killed indiscriminately, as though for sport, whatever animals and birds and natives they encountered, “looting and destroying all they found,” as the Admiral’s son Fernando blithely put it.<sup>46</sup> Once on Hispaniola, however, Columbus fell ill—whether from the flu or, more likely, from some other malady—and what little restraint he had maintained over his men disappeared as he went through a lengthy period of recuperation. The troops went wild, stealing, killing, raping, and torturing natives, trying to force them to divulge the whereabouts of the imagined treasure-houses of gold.

The Indians tried to retaliate by launching ineffective ambushes of stray Spaniards. But the combined killing force of Spanish diseases and Spanish military might was far greater than anything the natives could ever have imagined. Finally, they decided the best response was flight. Crops were left to rot in the fields as the Indians attempted to escape the frenzy of the conquistadors’ attacks. Starvation then added its contribution, along with pestilence and mass murder, to the native peoples’ woes.

Some desperate Hispaniola natives fled to other islands. One of these, a *cacique* named Hatuey, brought with him to Cuba as many of his surviving people as he could—and what little gold that they possessed. Once



FREE OUR ELDERS!

there, in a place called Punta Maisi, he assembled his followers together and displayed for them the treasures that they had, explaining that this was what the Spanish troops were after, that these apparently were objects of worship to the murderous invaders. Whereupon, to protect his people from the greed and savagery of these vile strangers, he threw the gold to the bottom of a nearby river.

It didn't work. The Spanish found Hatuey and his people, killed most of them, enslaved the others, and condemned their leader to be burned alive. Reportedly, as they were tying him to the stake, a Franciscan friar urged him to take Jesus to his heart so that his soul might go to heaven, rather than descend into hell. Hatuey replied that if heaven was where the Christians went, he would rather go to hell.<sup>47</sup>

The massacres continued. Columbus remained ill for months while his soldiers wandered freely. More than 50,000 natives were reported dead from these encounters by the time the Admiral had recovered from his sickness.<sup>48</sup> And when at last his health and strength had been restored, Columbus's response to his men's unorganized depredations was to organize them. In March of 1495 he massed together several hundred armored troops, cavalry, and a score or more of trained attack dogs. They set forth across the countryside, tearing into assembled masses of sick and unarmed native people, slaughtering them by the thousands. The pattern set by these raids would be the model the Spanish would follow for the next decade and beyond. As Bartolomé de Las Casas, the most famous of the accompanying Spanish missionaries from that trip recalled:

Once the Indians were in the woods, the next step was to form squadrons and pursue them, and whenever the Spaniards found them, they pitilessly slaughtered everyone like sheep in a corral. It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel; not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all. So they would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin and they would send him on saying "Go now, spread the news to your chiefs." They would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or the cutting of bodies in half with one blow. They burned or hanged captured chiefs.<sup>49</sup>

At least one chief, the man considered by Columbus to be Hispaniola's ranking native leader, was not burned or hanged, however. He was captured, put in chains, and sent off by ship for public display and imprisonment in Spain. Like most of the Indians who had been forced to make that voyage, though, he never made it to Seville: he died en route.

tence of institutional measures that pivot on the presumption and projection of the "inmate's" embodiment of disobedience, resistance, and insurrection) that it generates a philosophy of the captive body that *precedes* the logic of enslavement. Thus, the regime's logic of power reaches into the arsenal of a historical apparatus that was an essential element of the global formation of racial chattel slavery while simultaneously structuring its own particular technology of violence and bodily domination. What, then, is the materiality of the archetypal imprisoned body (and subject) through which the contemporary prison regime has proliferated its diverse and hierarchically organized apparatuses of racialized and gendered violence, most especially its technologies of immobilization and bodily disintegration?

I am arguing that a radical genealogy of the prison regime must engage in historical conversation with the massive human departure of the transatlantic Middle Passage, an apparatus and regime of capture and forced movement that outlined its own epochal conception of the non- and subhuman, the prototyping of normative black punishment in a white new world, and the blueprinting of the abject (*and durably captive*) black presence under the rule of Euro-American modernity. The Middle Passage foreshadows the prison as it routes and enacts chattel slavery, constituting both a passage into the temporality and geography of enslavement (crystallized by Patterson's conception of slavery as "natal alienation" and "social death"<sup>13</sup>) and a condition of existence unto itself—in particular, a spatially specified pedagogical production of black slave ontology.

I am especially concerned with the capacity of historically situated white-supremacist regimes to prototype novel technologies of violence and domination on black bodies—articulating in this instance through what Eric Williams considers the overarching "economic" logic of a transcontinental trafficking in enslaved Africans<sup>14</sup>—which in turn may yield technologies of power that become available to, and constitutive of, larger social and carceral formations, even centuries later. Thus, while the contemporary prison regime captures and immobilizes the descendants of slaves and non-slaves alike, I consider its technology of violence to be inseparable from a genealogy of transatlantic black/African captivity and punishment.

While the human volume of the Middle Passage has been a subject of empirical and methodological debate since the publication of Philip Curtin's *The*

gestures of "inclusion" (which is to say that ultimately it really cannot assimilate blackness at all), the actual "transmutation" has been from the white social imagination of the slave to that of the (black) prisoner, or what Frank Wilderson theorized in the previous chapter as the new black "prison slave."<sup>11</sup>

The status of the enslaved-imprisoned black subject forms the template through which white Americana constructs a communion of historical interest, mobilizations of political force, and, more specifically, the production and proliferation of a regime of mass-based human immobilization. Thus, my theoretical centering of black unfreedom here is not intended to minimize or understate the empirical presence of "non-black" Third World, indigenous, or even white bodies in these current sites of state captivity but, rather, to argue that the technology of the prison regime—and the varieties of violence it wages against those it holds captive—is premised on a particular white-supremacist module or prototype that is in fact rooted in the history of slavery and the social and racial crisis that it has forwarded into the present.

The contemporary regime of the prison encompasses the weaponry of an institutionalized dehumanization. It also, and necessarily, generates a material rendition of the *non- and sub-human* that structurally antagonizes and de-centers the immediate capacity of the imprisoned subject to simply *self-identify*. Publishing in 1990 under the anonymous byline "A Federal Prisoner," one imprisoned writer offered a schematic view of this complex process, which is guided by the logic of a totalizing disempowerment and social disaffection:

The first thing a convict feels when he receives an inconceivably long sentence is shock. The shock usually wears off after about two years, when all his appeals have been denied. He then enters a period of self-hatred because of what he's done to himself and his family.

If he survives that emotion—and some don't—he begins to swim the rapids of rage, frustration and alienation. When he passes through the rapids, he finds himself in the calm waters of impotence, futility and resignation. It's not a life one can look forward to living. The future is totally devoid of hope.<sup>12</sup>

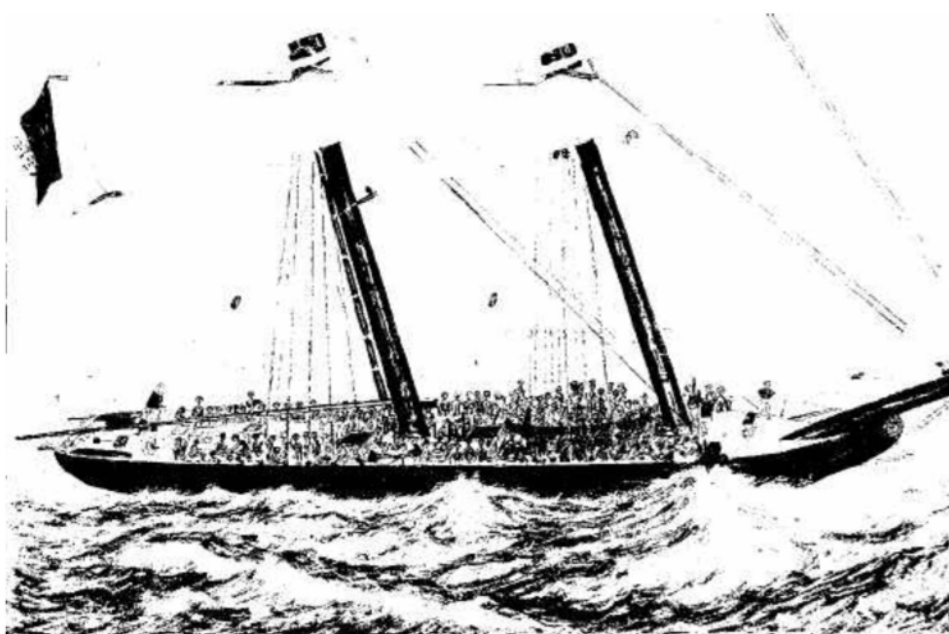
The structured violence of self-alienation, which drastically compounds the effect of formal social alienation, is at the heart of the regime's punitive-carceral logic. Yet it is precisely because the reproduction of the regime relies on its own incapacity to decisively "dehumanize" its captives en masse (hence, the persis-



# Infection Hot Spot

Watching disease spread and kill on slave ships.

By Manuel Barcia



*The Portuguese Slaver Diligenté captured by H.M. Sloop Pearl with 600 Slaves on Board, Taken in Charge to Nassau, by Lieutenant Henry Samuel Hawker, 1838. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.*

On May 5, 1825, the crew of the French brig *Le Jeune Louis* gathered together shortly after their surgeon, Denis Béjaud, died of dysentery, the same disease that had killed the ship owners' representative on board, Jean-Baptiste Ménard, less than two weeks before. Probably sitting around a table in the captain's cabin, they set out to write and sign a short

declaration in which they explained the despairing situation they found themselves in. As they sailed in the vicinity of Ascension Island heading for Cuba with a human cargo in their hold, they lamented the ravages that dysentery and ophthalmia had caused both to themselves and to the slaves. Affected by these two diseases—and probably also by others they

(vis-à-vis the production of white supremacist hegemony through black bodily immobilization and punishment) and modernist expansiveness (as the prison replaced the “irrational” horrors of chattel slavery with the juridical “rationality” of the prison).

I am interested in stretching both the historical reach and conceptual boundaries of this genealogical tracing, however. While there are always and necessarily forms of *passage into* the temporalities and geographies of death, such as those of the slave plantation and post-emancipation prison, the contemporary case of the prison regime constitutes a site and condition of death *that is itself a form of passage*. This is to say that the prison is less a “destination” point for “the duly convicted” than it is a point of *massive human departure*—from civil society, the free world, and the mesh of affective social bonds and relations that produce varieties of “human” family and community. Hence, labor exploitation, the construction of unfree labor (what some have called a “new slavery”), and the mass confinement of a reserve labor pool are not the constitutive logics of the new prison regime, although these are certainly factors that shape the prison's institutional structure. Whereas forced labor (formal prison slavery) was at one time conceived as the primary institutional tool for rehabilitating imprisoned white men,<sup>9</sup> the proliferation of mass incarceration in the current era has reinscribed a logic of extermination.

Sharon Patricia Holland's meditations on the entanglement—in fact, the veritable inseparability—of death and black subjectivity indicts the very formation of a white Americana and its accompanying social imaginary vis-à-vis the never-ending presence (and imminence) of racial chattel slavery:

It is possible to make at least two broad contentions here: a) that the (white) culture's dependence on the nonhuman status of its black subjects was never measured by the ability of whites to produce a “social heritage”; instead, it rested on the status of the black as a nonentity; and b) that the transmutation from enslaved to freed subject never quite occurred at the level of the imagination.<sup>10</sup>

Extrapolating Holland's central theses, I would add that, indeed, what *has* occurred is an inscription of the black nonhuman “nonentity” through the category of the imprisoned—hence illegal/extralegal/convict—subject. This is to argue that while the white social imagination has been unable to assimilate the notion of a “freed (black) subject” in its midst beyond cynical or piecemeal

oping a more . . . "progressive" economy. Thus, from Reconstruction through the Progressive Era the various uses of convict labor coincided with changes in the political economy of southern capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

By way of contrast Davis, in an extended examination of Frederick Douglass's historical understanding of the post-emancipation criminalization of black communities, offers a theorization of how "the prison system established its authority as a major institution of discipline and control for black communities during the last two decades of the nineteenth century," yielding a lineage of "carceral regulation" that arrived at "crisis proportions" a century later. Most important is Davis's foregrounding of the seamless linkage between the formal abolition of extant forms of racial chattel slavery in 1865 and the somewhat unheralded (albeit simultaneous) recodification and moral legitimization of a revised institution of enslavement, which would occur through the auspices of criminal conviction and imprisonment:

When the Thirteenth Amendment was passed in 1865, thus legally abolishing the slave economy, it also contained a provision that was universally celebrated as a declaration of the unconstitutionality of peonage. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted*, shall exist within the United States, or anyplace subject to their jurisdiction." That exception would render penal servitude constitutional—from 1865 to the present day.<sup>7</sup>

Tracing the contemporary prison regime's points of origin to the juridical and material developments of the post-Civil War South—in particular, to its twinned and mutually constituting crises of economic modernization and managing/controlling a suddenly nominally "free" black population—is essential for a radical genealogy of the U.S. prison. To the extent that "the post-Civil War southern system of convict lease . . . transferred symbolically significant numbers of black people from the prison of slavery to the slavery of prison,"<sup>8</sup> the formation of the U.S. prison must be seen as inseparable from the relation of white freedom and black unfreedom, white ownership and black fungibility, that produced the nation's foundational property relation as well an essential component (with Native American displacement and genocide) of its racial ordering. In fact, the prison can be understood through this genealogy as one of the primary *productive* components of the U.S. nation-state's internal coherence

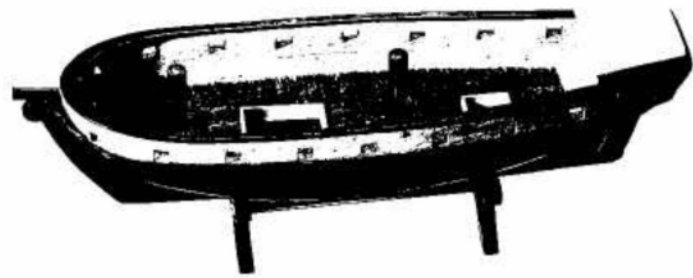
did not mention—they attempted a head count of the remaining Africans, noting that out of the 344 they had embarked near Cape Formosa in the Bight of Biafra, 304 remained alive, but were all suffering from one or more diseases. At sea, far from their desired destination, and being "unable of caring for the cargo, and hardly able to maneuver the vessel" due to the blindness caused by the ophthalmia, they probably thought that all was lost, as each of them signed his name on the small sheet of paper.

By mid-June, however, 229 Africans and a handful of sailors, including the captain François Demouy, had made it alive to Havana, where the French consul, Jacques Marie Angelucci, and the cosignatories of the vessel took care of restoring their health and of justifying the voyage before the Spanish and French authorities, after producing many documents, which included the death certificates of a number of Africans.

Before too long they also expedited the loading of the vessel, sending it back to Europe less than two months later with a cargo of sugar boxes belonging to Cuban planter and prominent slave trader Gabriel Lombillo.

Perhaps better than any other, the case of *Le Jeune Louis* encapsulates the dangers associated with slave-trading expeditions to the coast of Africa during the illegal period that followed the signing of bilateral treaties between Britain and a number of slave-trading nations and states. Not only were the crew and the slaves exposed to fatal, debilitating, and incapacitating diseases, but within days of departing from the African coast they were left without the man responsible for the hundreds of slaves they had on board and, more significant, without their only health practitioner. In addition to all these tribulations, *Le Jeune Louis* had been previously stopped and searched at least twice by anti-slave-trade patrols since departing from Bordeaux,

and had been forced to remain in the Bight of Biafra for approximately four months, sailing back and forth to the island of Principe, until a full human cargo was finally procured.



*Folk art model of a slave ship. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.*

Slave ships like *Le Jeune Louis* turned into shared spaces where disease struck the overwhelming majority of those who were on board during the Middle Passage. That dysentery, ophthalmia, and fever attacked and claimed the lives of French slavers and enslaved African alike reveals the precariousness of human

life and the limitations of medical treatment to combat these diseases.

In particular, for the crew of *Le Jeune Louis*, spending four months in the Bight of Biafra seems to have become a death sentence for many: a long exposure to slave-trading contact zones, where diseases—tropical and otherwise—were exchanged on a regular basis took a large human toll, both among them and among the Africans they crammed in the bowels of the vessel.

Slave ships were archetypical contact zones. On them, African slaves and their captors lived in a common, reduced space for weeks or months at a time, sharing air and fluids. As a result, a diverse variety of viruses and bacteria were also exchanged. By the time the slave trade was declared illegal in the early nineteenth century, health practitioners throughout the Atlantic knew this all too well. They were aware of the dangers associated with sharing such

manner in which power circulates, materializing through the form and movement of its outermost points. Capillaries, in the medical definition, are “the tiny blood vessels that connect the arterioles (the smallest divisions of the arteries) and the venules (the smallest divisions of the veins).” These blood vessels form crucial sites of passage for the transfer of the body’s life-sustaining nutrients as well as for the spread of disease, infection, and impurities. “Although minute, the capillaries are a site where much action takes place in the circulatory system.”<sup>5</sup>

The prison, as a capillary site for the production and movement of power, exerts a dominion that reaches significantly beyond its localized setting. This is to argue that the emergence of a reformed and reconceived prison regime as “a site where much action takes place in the circulatory system” of power and domination, has become central to constituting the political logic as well as the material reproduction of the United States’ social formation. The prison regime, in other words, generates a technology of power that extends beyond and outside the institutional formality of the Prison. Similarly, a radical genealogy of this regime must think significantly beyond and behind the current historical moment to comprehend fully the logic of its formation and sustenance.

Scholars such as Angela Y. Davis, Alex Lichtenstein, David Oshinsky, and others have closely examined the material continuities between U.S. racial-chattel plantation slavery and the emergence of the modern American penal system. These studies bring crucial attention to the centrality of white-supremacist juridical, policing, and paramilitary regimes in the production of a carceral apparatus during the late nineteenth century that essentially replicated—and, arguably, exacerbated—the constitutive logic of the supposedly defunct slave plantation. Lichtenstein, for example, argues convincingly that the transition from chattel slave to black prison labor in the post-Civil War South exemplified the “continual correspondence between the forces of modernization and the perpetuation of bound labor.” He writes,

In the postbellum South, at each stage of the region’s development, convict labor was concentrated in some of the most significant and rapidly growing sectors of the economy. Initially Southern prisoners worked on the railroads. . . . This decisive shift from private to public exploitation of forced black labor marked the triumph of the modern state’s version of the social and economic benefits to be reaped from bound labor, in the name of devel-



The prison regime, in the process of attempting control over the symbolic, works through the *mediating material of the prisoner* as an embodied subject (to be distinguished from notions of the prisoner as “object” or objectified body). A persistent, guiding tension for the prison regime is therefore that between the power of *dominium* (absolute ownership, a power that is oblivious to consensus from “other areas of culture”) and the regime’s gestures toward “authority” as a production of respectability, common sense, and consent around the apparatus of its rule.<sup>3</sup>

This working conceptualization of the prison regime resonates with Michel Foucault’s theorization of the displacement of the unitary sovereign power in modern and postmodern social formations. Foucault is famously concerned with the production of regimes of power through situated apparatuses and institutions (e.g., the asylum, the clinic, the prison, the military). In his lecture of January 14, 1976, Foucault contended:

Our object is not to analyze rule-governed and legitimate forms of power which have a single center, or to look at what their general mechanisms or its overall effects might be. *Our object is, on the contrary, to understand power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the points where it becomes capillary; in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions, and especially at the points where this power transgresses the rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques and acquires the material means to intervene, sometimes in violent ways.*<sup>4</sup>

The prison’s operative “capillary” sites, where it exceeds official directive and juridical norm, are nowhere better excavated, documented, theorized, and centered than in the body of praxis generated by imprisoned radical intellectuals. Here, the theoretically conservative notion of “the Prison” as a formal state institution, defined by centralized protocols and rules, is displaced by a conception of the “prison regime” as a technology of power that works *through* the bodies of designated agents (guards, doctors, wardens, prison educators) and performs and materializes *on* the bodies of an immobilized subject population.

Foucault’s “capillary power” may be recontextualized here as a literal designation for the materiality of the prison regime’s method of violence as it manifests on the imprisoned subject’s *bodily capillaries*, that is her or his viscosity—blood, skin, nervous system, organs. It is also a metaphoric designation for the

spaces at sea, far from any other medical facilities, and they often discussed them in their work.

The reality was that the slave ship’s environment was just as lethal as the geographical ecosystems where the diseases carried on board had originated. This was especially the case after the slave trade was banned by most of the Atlantic states from the mid-1810s onward. The resulting modifications in the shipping and accommodation of Africans on slave vessels as a result of the work of anti-slave-trade patrols led to hurried processes of loading the ships, often overlooking such thorough health inspections of enslaved men, women, and children as had taken place in the previous decades.

These changes were widely discussed at the time by anti-slave-trade cruisers, by diplomatic officers, and even by slave dealers across the Atlantic. Although slave vessels’ sizes, speed, and conditions on board changed at times dramatically over the years,

the existing historical evidence points to an overall worsening of the conditions during the Middle Passage after the slave trade became illegal. Regardless of their respective sizes, overcrowding became a main feature of the slave trade during this period. Practically every one of the documented voyages for these years reveals ghastly conditions on board. Reduced and dirty spaces for human habitation, lacking clean air; spoiled water and food; punishment, tortures, and rapes; ever longer journeys; slave revolts; encounters with privateers, pirates, and anti-slave-trade patrols; and particularly the ravages of disease—all combined to create some of the most desperate conditions ever experienced by human beings in the modern world.

Slave dealers were not impervious to some of these episodes and maladies, either. The instructions they were almost always given at the start of their transatlantic voyages suggest that investors and

owners of slave-trading expeditions were keen to avoid risks, particularly those concerning the possible spread of harmful diseases among their human cargo.

In 1839 the captain of the Brazilian vessel *Especulador*, Francisco Jozé de Abranxes, was prompted to carry out a slave-trading voyage to Anha, in Mozambique, making sure that the slaves he transported would arrive in the best possible conditions, as the ship owner, Jozé Joaquim Teixeira, confessed to be tired of suffering setbacks in his slave-trading expeditions. Almost at the same time, in Havana, Pedro Martínez recommended slave-ship captain Andrés Jiménez—later on the main slave dealer at the Gallinas River—“to treat the *bul-tos* [slaves] as well as he could,” since his job would be judged according to the conditions in which they would arrive. Jiménez was also strongly encouraged to use his experience in order to avoid any possible slave revolts during the Middle Passage.

*The Slave Ship*, by J.M.W. Turner. Photograph © Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0).

*A rat leaving a ship via the mooring rope, thus spreading the plague*, by A.L. Tarter, c. 1940. Wellcome Collection.

tion of a discrete territory controlled by a ruling order/state, as well as its etymological meaning derived from the Latin root term *dominium*, a conception of power that posits “absolute dominion in tangible things.” The specificity of imprisonment as a regime of power is its *racial chattel logic*, or structure of non-humanization: To the extent that the (black) prisoner or “inmate” is conceived as the fungible property of the state (according to the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the “convict” is ready-made for actual “involuntary servitude,” or enslavement), the captive is both the state’s abstracted legal property/obligation and intimate bodily possession. Orlando Patterson’s explication of the roots of slavery offers a useful framework through which to comprehend the root structure of this carceral-punitive regime:

The Romans invented the legal fiction of dominium or absolute ownership, a fiction that highlights their practical genius. . . . By emphasizing the categories of persona (owner) and res (thing) and by rigidly distinguishing between corporeal and incorporeal things, the Romans created a new legal paradigm. . . . An object could only be a tangible thing. More important . . . property was no longer a relation between persons *but a relation between persons and things*. And this fiction fitted perfectly its purpose, to define one of the most rapidly expanding sources of wealth, namely slaves.<sup>1</sup>

Foregrounding the notion of *dominium* as the exercise of “inner power over a thing,” Patterson’s discussion provides a dynamic backdrop against which to sustain a theorization of “prison” and “imprisonment” as *processes, rituals, confrontations, struggles, productions*. The prison regime constitutes an essential figure in the articulation of the state’s *intelligibility* to its presumed audiences (including and beyond the formal polity) as well as to itself. Thus, to conceive a radical genealogy of the prison regime is to suggest that imprisonment, or captivity, encompasses a range of state and state-sanctioned practices, from the stridently ritualized to the arbitrary and informal, that manifest an otherwise abstracted sense and structure of “authority.” Patterson continues,

Those who exercise power, if they are able to transform it into a “right,” a norm, a usual part of the order of things, must first control (or at least be in a position to manipulate) appropriate symbolic instruments. They may do so by exploiting already existing symbols, or they may create new ones relevant to their needs.<sup>2</sup>

## Forced Passages

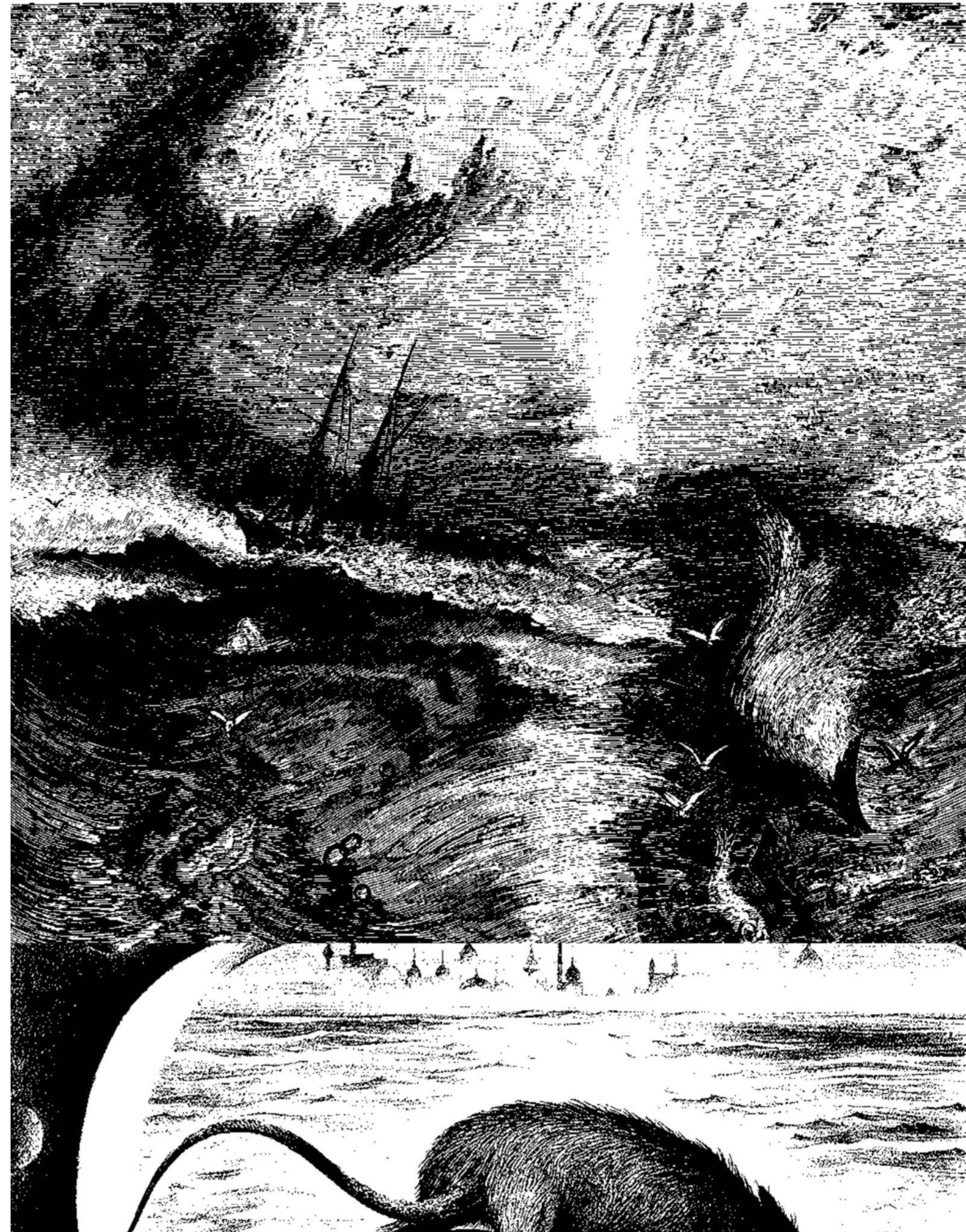
Dylan Rodríguez

This essay considers the prison as a center for the reproduction of the American “Homeland” as a global locality, regimenting antisociality and mass-based civic and social death. I make two central arguments. First, I contend that the epoch of white-supremacist chattel slavery and its constitutive transatlantic articulation—the Middle Passage—elaborates the social and political logic of the current carceral formation that has been named and theorized as a qualitative “prison-industrial complex.” There is a material and historical kinship between the prison as a contemporary regime of violence and the structures of racialized mass incarceration and disintegration prototyped in the chattel punishment and bodily disarticulation of enslaved Africans. Second, I argue that a foregrounding of the lineage of radical intellectuals imprisoned in the United States articulates a *theoretical vernacular of death*, one that disrupts hegemonic and “progressive” counterhegemonic public policy, academic and activist discourses, and their alleged critiques of prisons, policing, and the prison-industrial complex.

### The Prison Regime as Middle Passage

In deploying the term “prison regime,” I am differentiating both the *scale* and *object(s)* of analysis from the more typical macro-scale categories of “the prison,” “the prison system,” and, most recently, “the prison-industrial complex.” The conceptual scope of this term similarly exceeds the analytical scope of prison policy and “the prison (or prisoner’s) experience,” categories that most often take textual form through discrete case studies, institutional reform initiatives, prison/prisoner ethnographies, and individualized biographical and autobiographical narratives. Rather, my working conception of the prison regime invokes a “meso” (middle, or mediating) dimension of processes, structures, and vernaculars that compose the state’s modalities of self-articulation and “rule”—that is, its arrangement of official juridical as well as spatial *dominion* at the localized site of the prison.

I consider the terms of dominion to include both the conventional defini-



In spite of the occasional efforts to take care of human beings who were unavoidably crammed within small, filthy, hot spaces, diseases were a main feature of the Middle Passage. Health practitioners often shipped on slave vessels to look after both the human cargo and the crew. In some cases, these practitioners were Westerners who had received medical education in Europe or the Americas. On the *Voladora*, in 1829, the surgeon was one “Doctor Juan Hidalgo,” a native of Rota, near Cádiz, who was said to be “unmarried and a professor of medicine and surgery.” Likewise, when in 1854 the ship *La Luisa* was captured off the mouth of the Manatí River near Trinidad in southern Cuba, the vessel’s surgeon, Joaquim Cordeiro Feijóo, was said to be a member of the Society of Medical Sciences in Lisbon and an experienced surgeon who had been attached to the Portuguese troops in Luanda in previous years.

In most cases, however, health practitioners seemed to have come from more humble backgrounds, and some ship officers, boatswains, or cooks doubled as surgeons on board of slave vessels. African-born and Creole practitioners, called *sangradores*, were the norm for many expeditions during the period. For example, in 1821 Alexander Cunningham and Henry Hayne, British Mixed Commission court judges in Rio de Janeiro, had the opportunity to interrogate a man named José Joaquim de Moraes, who was described as a free black or *preto forro* “of Gêge nation,” who confessed to be a “schooner’s sangrador,” a profession for which he was officially registered at Rio de Janeiro. Manoel Francisco Silva, also an African-born free man of Gêge nation, worked as a sangrador on board the brig *Bom Caminho* two years later, while Estanislao Ysidro, a Creole born in Brazil, was recorded as the sangrador of the schooner *Bela Eliza* in 1824.



image above  
courtesy of  
Just Seeds  
Collective,  
2020



Sangrados were usually African-born or African-descended health practitioners who had applied and attained official licenses from the Brazilian authorities to exercise their bloodletting knowledge on land and at sea. According to historian Tânia Salgado Pimenta, sangrados were at times “the only therapeutic recourse for those who were sick” on board ships, thus becoming essential for the success of Portuguese and Brazilian slave-trade expeditions to Africa after 1820. The daily work of sangrados, surgeons, and other health practitioners was a harrowing one, fraught with deadly hazards and meager rewards. Slave-trading crews and the slaves they embarked were often the victims of endemic and epidemic diseases difficult to diagnose and treat, even when medical supplies were available. A number of narratives and documents, including correspondence, left by slave traders illustrate the environment to which health practitioners and

their patients were exposed. References were common to sick and dead captains and crew members—including health practitioners.

African slaves fared much worse. The private letters written by some of the slave-ship captains of the period to their employers and partners shed light on the morbidity and mortality that often affected those men, women, and children they carried against their will across the ocean. The captain of the Brazilian schoonerbrig *Aracaty*, Joaquim Antônio Lima, in a letter sent to his partner Joaquim Pereira de Mendonça in early 1842, described in detail the loss of several hundred slaves on his previous slaving expedition to Africa, and reported losing a number of slaves on his present voyage before being detained by a British man-of-war after departing for Rio de Janeiro. In a similar incident, the crew of the *Vigilante*, a Spanish slave vessel that had been attempting to get a human cargo

near Cape Lopez in 1838, sailed at once for Santiago de Cuba after the captain concluded that there was no point in remaining any longer off the coast of Africa, as the slaves they had bought were dying faster than they were able to replace them.

The cases of other equally full and lethal slave ships filled the reports of Mixed Commission and Vice-Admiralty courts, often leading to renewed calls for the abolition of the slave trade. Rarely, however, did the Africans have the opportunity to describe their own traumatic experiences in the Middle Passage. One of the few exceptions was the case of Antonio and Dominga, two young Africans—about eleven or twelve years old—who had been sold and embarked at the port of Boma on the Congo River sometime in late 1857 or early 1858. Antonio and Dominga, whose real names were Bata and Manyeré Curo, recounted their difficult time before Spanish colonial officers in

Havana weeks after their arrival. They testified that during the Middle Passage they were given only one cracker per day, and “that they were all very hungry, that they would ask for something to eat, and they would get nothing.” They also recounted that as many as fifty of their companions had died of disease and hunger, and that their bodies had all been invariably “thrown to the sea.”

The testimonies taken from Africans aboard the schooner *Arrogante* in 1838 were even more striking, as some of them accused the ship’s sailors of murdering one of the Africans, and of subsequently cooking his flesh and serving it with rice to the rest of the slaves.

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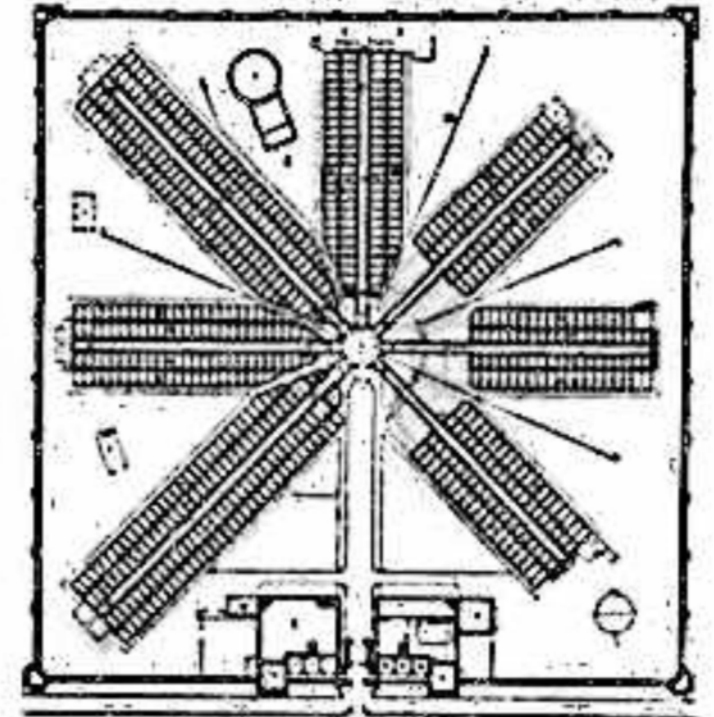
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