

CHAMP PÉNAL/PENAL FIELD

Appel à contributions/Call for papers

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The State of Abolitionism Today

A special issue edited by Nicolas Carrier and Justin Piché

Numerous analysts of the penal field have criticized the intensification of punishment experienced in most liberal democracies in the western world. Dubbed the ‘punitive turn’ by some, contemporary penal policies and practices are contrasted to those of a supposed less punitive past characterized by an ethic of care for the criminalized. Recent discussions on the topic have led some scholars, notably in Anglophone debates, to call for a ‘public criminology’ or the advancement of more robust ‘public’ critiques of penal intensification with the goal of making penal politics more effective, useful, rational and humane. What is the place of abolitionist thought and action in this context? What arguments and actors support such work? In what ways is abolitionism relevant, if at all? This special issue of *Champ pénal/Penal Field* sets out to assess the state of abolitionism today.

The many targets of abolitionism

Analysts of the penal field tend to identify three targets of abolitionism: the prison and the industrial complex in which it operates, the penal system, and the diffusion of carceral controls in society more generally. Abolitionist thought and action also focuses on specific issues such as the criminalization of certain drugs, sex work, migration and political dissent against the State. Contributions to this special issue can address any of the multiple issues addressed in abolitionist work and could also explore the implications of the presence of multiple targets for activism, research and intellectual work.

Drivers of and motives for action

This special issue aims to showcase diverse perspectives on how ‘justice’ is conceptualized and experienced, and how these inform contemporary abolitionist work. Why abolitionism? Because imprisonment, being subjected to carceral control, and punishment is unjust? In what ways? Is it sufficient to document the effects of institutionalized responses to problematized situations as many have done in regards to the prison? Is it necessary that facts inform our conception of justice? Is this possible and/or desirable? Are the drivers of and motives for taking an abolitionist stance stable in time and space, anchored in long-established traditions of thinking and acting, or is renewal underway?

Strategies and alternatives

What alternative ways of conceptualizing and responding to criminalized conflicts and harms characterize abolitionist work today? On what grounds do we oppose a penal system that claims to be in the business of justice? What lessons can be learned from past abolitionist efforts? How does abolitionism position itself vis-à-vis less radical approaches such as penal minimalism? How do abolitionists respond to the critique that there will always be a ‘dangerous few’ who need to be controlled and imprisoned? Does engaging in the ‘de-ontologization’ of dangerousness suffice? What are the similarities and differences between abolitionism, restorative justice, transformative justice and social justice? Does abolitionism imply anarchism or can it be envisioned within State sovereignty?

How is a world without punishment imagined or practiced? Are the kinds of social relations required to involve those most impacted when addressing conflicts and harms promoted by abolitionists possible in a globalized context characterized by social distance? What is an abolitionist response to ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’? Is abolitionism, like criminology, a domestically driven endeavour? In the context of a global lockdown and expanding surveillance in western democracies, abolitionist arguments have been characterized as utopian – is this the case? And if so, is this a problem?

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Bilingualism

Proposed contributions can be submitted in English or in French. To reach as broad of a readership as possible, we are striving towards a bilingual collection and authors whose works are accepted for publication are encouraged, but not obligated, to translate their papers.

Submission guidelines

The word count for papers is between 8,000 and 15,000 words. The articles must also conform (!) with the submission guidelines of the journal, which can be found at <http://champpenal.revues.org/7625>

Article submissions

An abstract outlining your proposed contribution must be submitted no later than February 1, 2013. The submission deadline for completed papers is September 1, 2014. In both cases, please send your correspondence to the following addresses:

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Another invitation ...

We invite those interested in contributing to this special issue to present a preliminary version of their papers at the *Fourth Conference – Critical Perspectives: Criminology and Social Justice* to be held June 11 and 12, 2014 at Carleton University or at the *Fifteenth International Conference on Penal Abolition* to be held June 13 to 15, 2014 at the University of Ottawa. Both universities are located on Algonquin Territory / in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. For more information, please visit <http://www.actionicopa.org> or write to Justin or Nicolas.

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