
Michelle Alexander

THE NEW JIM CROW

THE DRUG WAR AND BLACKS

Douglas Olena • August 16, 2020

ZOOM

**WE WILL PROCEED BY
READING A FEW QUOTES
AND ASKING A QUESTION**

**THE WAR ON DRUGS IS IN
FACT NOT ABOUT DRUGS
AT ALL. IT IS A WAR
AGAINST PEOPLE.**

**“PROHIBITION GOES
BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF
REASON IN THAT IT
ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL A
MAN’S APPETITE BY
LEGISLATION AND MAKES
CRIMES OUT OF THINGS
THAT ARE NOT CRIMES.”**

Abraham Lincoln

<https://amzn.to/3g3OLS6>

**“A PROHIBITION LAW
STRIKES A BLOW AT
THE VERY PRINCIPLES
UPON WHICH OUR
GOVERNMENT WAS
FOUNDED.”**

Abraham Lincoln in [Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed and What We Can Do About It](#) p. 122

<https://amzn.to/3g3OLS6>

**“THE NIXON CAMPAIGN
IN 1968, AND THE
NIXON WHITE HOUSE
AFTER THAT, HAD TWO
ENEMIES: THE
ANTIWAR LEFT AND
BLACK PEOPLE....”**

John Erlichman speaking to Dan Baum • Harpers Magazine • April 26, 2016

<https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/>

**“WE KNEW WE COULDN’T MAKE IT
ILLEGAL TO BE EITHER AGAINST
THE WAR OR BLACK, BUT BY
GETTING THE PUBLIC TO
ASSOCIATE THE HIPPIES WITH
MARIJUANA AND BLACKS WITH
HEROIN, AND THEN
CRIMINALIZING BOTH HEAVILY,
WE COULD DISRUPT THOSE
COMMUNITIES....”**

John Erlichman speaking to Dan Baum • Harpers Magazine • April 26, 2016

<https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/>

**“WE COULD ARREST
THEIR LEADERS, RAID
THEIR HOMES, BREAK
UP THEIR MEETINGS,
AND VILIFY THEM
NIGHT AFTER NIGHT ON
THE EVENING NEWS....”**

John Erlichman speaking to Dan Baum • Harpers Magazine • April 26, 2016

<https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/>

**“DID WE KNOW WE
WERE LYING ABOUT
THE DRUGS? OF
COURSE WE DID.”**

John Erlichman speaking to Dan Baum • Harpers Magazine • April 26, 2016

<https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/>

WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE OPPOSED TO THE WAR ON DRUGS?

The war itself is immoral, and it is waged unethically.

Prohibition is a problem, Lincoln quote p 122 Gray.

Abhumanism. When we declare a group subhuman, we can do anything to them we wish without pangs of conscience.

What are the options? Medicalization, treat individuals with an eye to healing them, decriminalization, legalization, rescheduling or de-scheduling to reflect science/reality...

THE NEW JIM CROW

**Mass Incarceration
in the Age of Colorblindness**

2010

Michelle Alexander



THE NEW JIM CROW

Chapters

Introduction

The Rebirth of Caste

The Lockdown

The Color of Justice

The Cruel Hand

The New Jim Crow

The Fire This Time

Purchase on Amazon: <https://amzn.to/3kKZfJW>

INTRODUCTION

**“SOCIOLOGISTS HAVE FREQUENTLY
OBSERVED THAT GOVERNMENTS
USE PUNISHMENT PRIMARILY AS
A TOOL OF SOCIAL CONTROL,
AND THUS THE EXTENT OR
SEVERITY OF PUNISHMENT IS
OFTEN UNRELATED TO ACTUAL
CRIME PATTERNS.”**

Introduction p 7

“The United States imprisons a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height of apartheid.” p 6

“In Washington, DC ... it is estimated that three out of four black men (and nearly all those in the poorest neighborhoods) can expect to serve time in prison.” p 6-7

“These stark racial disparities cannot be explained by rates of drug crime. Studies show that peoples of all colors *use and sell* illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates.” p

**“LIKE JIM CROW (AND SLAVERY),
MASS INCARCERATION OPERATES
AS A TIGHTLY NETWORKED SYSTEM
OF LAWS, POLICIES, CUSTOMS,
AND INSTITUTIONS THAT OPERATE
COLLECTIVELY TO ENSURE THE
SUBORDINATE STATUS OF A GROUP
DEFINED LARGELY BY RACE.”**

Introduction p 13

“Like an optical illusion ... the new caste system lurks invisibly within a maze of rationalizations we have developed for persistent racial inequality.” p 12

**“RACIAL CASTE
SYSTEMS DO NOT
REQUIRE RACIAL
HOSTILITY OR OVERT
BIGOTRY TO THRIVE.”**

Introduction p 14

“They need only racial indifference, as [MLK] warned more than forty-five years ago.” p 14

“The criminalization and demonization of black men has turned the black community against itself, unraveling community and family relationships, decimating networks of mutual support, and intensifying the shame and self-hate experienced by the current pariah caste.” p 17

**WHY SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE
OPPOSED TO INCARCERATION
AS A MODE OF SOCIAL
CONTROL?**

THE REBIRTH OF CASTE

**RACIAL BRIBE:
“DELIBERATELY AND
STRATEGICALLY, THE
PLANTER CLASS EXTENDED
SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO
POOR WHITES IN AN EFFORT
TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN
THEM AND BLACK SLAVES.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 25

“White settlers were allowed greater access to Native American lands, white servants were allowed to police slaves through slave patrols and militias, and barriers were created so that free labor would not be placed in competition with slave labor.” p 25

“As James Madison put it, the nation ought to be constituted ‘to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority.’ Consequently the Constitution was designed so the federal government would be weak, not only in its relationship to private property, but also in relationship to the rights of states to conduct their own affairs.” p 25

“The document [Constitution] was built upon a compromise regarding the prevailing racial caste system. Federalism ... was the device employed to protect the institution of slavery and the political power of slaveholding states.” p 26

**IN JIM CROW “YOU ARE KEPT APART
THAT YOU MAY BE SEPARATELY
FLEEDED OF YOUR EARNINGS. YOU
ARE MADE TO HATE EACH OTHER
BECAUSE UPON THAT HATRED IS
RESTED THE KEYSTONE OF THE
ARCH OF FINANCIAL DESPOTISM
THAT ENSLAVES YOU BOTH.”**

Tom Watson in *The Rebirth of Caste* p 33

“You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system that beggars you both.” p 33

**“SEGREGATION LAWS WERE
PROPOSED AS PART OF A
DELIBERATE EFFORT TO
DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN
POOR WHITES AND
AFRICAN AMERICANS.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 34

A populist agriculture alliance of blacks and poor whites that unified them temporarily was decimated by conservatives who would have lost their only lever to keep blacks down. p 34

“The public symbols and constant reminders of black subjugation were supported by whites across the political spectrum, though the plight of poor whites remained largely unchanged. For them the **racial bribe** was primarily psychological.” p 35

**SHOULD OUR FOCUS BE ON
THE REASONS FOR THE
RACIAL BRIBE RATHER THAN
THE BRIBE ITSELF?**

**WITH THE DEATH OF JIM
CROW, "CONSERVATIVE
WHITES BEGAN ... TO SEARCH
FOR A NEW RACIAL ORDER
THAT WOULD CONFORM TO
THE NEEDS AND
CONSTRAINTS OF THE TIME."**

The Rebirth of Caste p 40

mid '50s to late '60s

**“CONSERVATIVES SYSTEMATICALLY
AND STRATEGICALLY LINKED
OPPOSITION TO CIVIL RIGHTS
LEGISLATION TO CALLS FOR
LAW AND ORDER.**

...

**CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE [OF MLK WAS
REINSCRIPTED AS] A LEADING
CAUSE OF CRIME.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 40-41

“Civil rights activists who argued that the uprisings were directly related to widespread police harassment and abuse were dismissed by conservatives out of hand.” p 42

“Some black activists began to join the the calls for ‘law and order.’ ... Black activists in Harlem, alarmed by rising crime rates, actively campaigned for what would become the notorious Rockefeller drug laws as well as other harsh sentencing measures.” p 42

**“PITTING OF WHITES AND BLACKS
... AGAINST EACH OTHER INTENSIFIED
THE VIEW AMONG MANY WHITES THAT
THE CONDITION OF LIFE FOR THE
DISADVANTAGED—PARTICULARLY ...
BLACKS—IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF
THOSE AFFLICTED, AND NOT THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LARGER
SOCIETY.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 47

**ARE MODERN CALLS FOR LAW
AND ORDER DIFFERENT FROM
THOSE OF THE '60S AND '70S?**

**“REAGAN MASTERED
‘THE EXCISION OF THE
LANGUAGE OF RACE
FROM CONSERVATIVE
PUBLIC DISCOURSE’”.**

The Rebirth of Caste p 48

“... and thus built on the success of earlier conservatives who developed a strategy of exploiting racial hostility or resentment for political gain without making explicit reference to race.” p 48

“Reagan’s appeal derived primarily from the ideological fervor of the right wing of the Republican Party and the ‘emotional distress of those who fear or resent the Negro.’” p 48

During Reagan’s presidency, “the Justice Department announced its intention to cut in half the number of specialists assigned to identify and prosecute white-collar criminals and to shift its attention to street crime, especially drug-law enforcement.” p 49

Reagan began his Drug War in 1982. p 49

**“NUMEROUS PATHS WERE
AVAILABLE TO US, AS A
NATION, IN THE WAKE OF THE
CRACK CRISIS, YET FOR
REASONS TRACEABLE LARGELY
TO RACIAL POLITICS AND FEAR
MONGERING WE CHOSE WAR.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 52

“Crack was a godsend to the right. ... It could not have appeared at a more politically opportune moment.” p 53

“If we blame crime on crack, our politicians are off the hook. Forgotten are the failed schools, the malign welfare programs, the desolate neighborhoods, the wasted years. Only crack is to blame. One is tempted to think that if crack did not exist, someone somewhere would have received a Federal grant to develop it.” p 53.

reference: 88 p 269 (Doris Marie Provine, *Unequal Under the Law: Race in the War on Drugs*)

**“THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC CONCERN
ABOUT CRIME AND DRUGS WAS
ONLY WEAKLY CORRELATED
WITH ACTUAL CRIME RATES, BUT
HIGHLY CORRELATED WITH
POLITICAL INITIATIVES,
CAMPAIGNS, AND PARTISAN
APPEALS.”**

The Rebirth of Caste p 55

“The shift to a general attitude of ‘toughness’ toward problems associated with communities of color began in the 1960s, when the gains and goals of the Civil Rights Movement began to require real sacrifices on the part of white Americans, and conservative politicians found they could mobilize white racial resentment by vowing to crack down on crime.” p 55

**IS IT TIME NOW TO REEVALUATE
THE REASONS FOR THE WAR ON
DRUGS AND ABANDON IT WITH
ALL ITS SYSTEMS?**

“Despite the jaw-dropping impact of the ‘get-tough’ movement on the African American community, neither Democrats nor Republicans revealed any inclination to slow down the pace of incarceration.” p 56