

Carceral Migrations: Reframing Race, Space, and Punishment

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ABSTRACT We theorize state governance through population spatial trajectories to capture how seemingly disparate systems of punishment employ the same set of punishment logics and technologies to spatially regulate populations of color, which produces and reifies racial projects. Advancing a theoretical framework called carceral migrations, we argue that governments use legal punishment to force, restrict, and prevent movement as a racializing project of settler empire and anti-Blackness. Carceral migrations extend understandings of mass incarceration beyond confinement and holding by articulating three major points. First, the state's regulation of populations' spatial trajectories is punishment by design. Second, these spatially-oriented punishments operate as race-making and reinforcing technologies by producing punitive and recognizable spatial trajectories (or nontrajectories) for groups of people of color. Third, despite appearing race neutral in language, the development and application of legal codes and policies have disparate impacts on the spatial trajectories of people of color.

This article develops a theory of carceral migrations as a way to understand continuities between mass incarceration, crimmigration, and the war on terror. We define *carceral migrations* as the state's use of legal punishment to force, restrict, or prevent movement. In what follows, we anchor the concept in an analysis of the state that accounts for its settler-colonial origins and structuring, as well as its function as a global empire. Carceral migrations cohere historical and spatial conditions of state-building to understand how punishment and racial formation are essential to governance within the national border, at the border, and beyond the border.

Social Service Review, volume 96, number 2, June 2022.

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Drawing on a collection of news media, legal cases, public mapping projects, and existing scholarship, we provide examples of punishment practices within, at, and beyond the US border. In what follows, we highlight how seemingly distinct state projects of incarceration, crimmigration, and the war on terror in fact rely on shared, relational tactics of forcing, restricting, and preventing movement; we argue for the co-analysis of these projects rather than separation into distinct categories. To illustrate how carceral migrations can occur domestically within national borders, we analyze how boarding schools, foster care, and the child welfare systems historically and contemporarily target Black and Indigenous children. For an example at the border, we begin with the case of a Honduran girl incarcerated by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to show how certain immigrant groups—such as Hondurans—are subject to punishment logics that expose and reify the racialized intersections of xenophobia, anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, and colorism. For an example beyond the border, we explore multiple cases made possible by the war on terror, including the extraordinary rendition of Canadian citizen Maher Arrar and the deployment of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) program, as mechanisms of Muslim racialization through overlapping logics of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Blackness. By employing a carceral migrations framework, we aim to inspire a range of applications, including empirical possibilities for future study across individual narratives and group movement patterns.

SEEING LIKE A SETTLER-EMPIRE STATE: A THEORY OF CARCERAL MIGRATIONS

We develop a theoretical framework of carceral migrations to account for how the state uses legal punishment to force, restrict, and prevent movement. Rather than analyzing these state punishment systems separately and as they are traditionally framed—mass incarceration, crimmigration, and the war on terror—we use carceral migrations to investigate settler empire's punishment power across the spatial articulations of its governing power within the border, at the border, and beyond the border. Carceral migration differs from other examinations of punishment and race-making because (1) it focuses on state action across multiple contexts, (2) it is situated in a framework of settler colonialism and empire, and (3) in doing so, it de-exceptionalizes mass incarceration.

In *Seeing Like a State* (1998), Scott argues that state governance requires transforming unruly, disparate subjects into ordered categories—a process that flattens difference and ascribes a basic measure of likeness to heterogeneous populations to achieve legibility—to govern. Within this context, the law acts as the state’s fundamental mechanism of legibility; it is a technology of ordering institutions, bodies, populations, resources, and behaviors into state-designated categories and conditions of governance. Because the law and the process of categorization—of producing legibility—are shaped by power structures, the categories created and recognized by the state most often reflect the assessments and value systems of white capitalist heteropatriarchy (Crenshaw 1991; Scott 1998; Roberts 1999; Ritchie 2017).

Perceived violation of the law therefore becomes a way in which certain populations become legible to the state as a category of subjects to be governed through punishment. Miller and Stuart (2017, 544) link this process to race by arguing that people who are accused of crimes are made legible to the state through a process they call “translation,” which they contend “rests on the presumption of (black) criminality.” They develop the concept of the carceral citizen to articulate how people accused of crimes become legible to the state and broader populus as criminals through racist ideologies, which in turn serves as the justifying logic for building an alternative legal relationship between the state and so-called carceral citizens. They show how legibility to the state premised on potential violation of the law—citizens belonging to the carceral state rather than the conventional state, under the framework of carceral citizenship—is how the state sees and consequently governs people of color through punishment.

Unlike popular claims about people convicted of crimes as enduring diminished or second-class citizenship, Miller and Stuart specify that carceral citizenship “is a distinct form of political membership experienced by and enacted upon people convicted of a crime . . . the combination of laws, duties and entitlements associated with carceral citizenship provides evidence that people convicted of crimes live in an alternate legal reality” (2017, 533).

This alternate legal reality reflects how carceral citizens are governed through punishment, which has an impact on the relationships that people of color have beyond the state, particularly because carceral citizens are subject to both legal and extralegal punishments in the public and private spheres in employment, housing, relationships, and beyond (Miller and Alexander 2015; Miller and Stuart 2017). Walker (2016) argues that incarcerated people are subject to institutional and microinteractional racial

projects made especially salient by the organizational structure of incarceration. He contends that these conditions reveal how carceral institutions function as race-making institutions iteratively shaped by broader projects of racial formation (Omi and Winant 1986).

However, citizens—conventional or carceral—are not the only populations made legible to and governed by the state through punishment-as-race-making. Loyd (2015, 2) argues that “global apartheid must be understood in relation to the carceral state, which together form a regime of carceral citizenship that is global in scope.” In their work on Central American immigrants in the United States, Menjívar and Abrego (2012) show how structural and symbolic violence produce daily social suffering for those who are not citizens. They argue that conceptualizations of violence must account for “the suffering and pain, through exploitation, exclusion and discriminatory practices, which result from and are made possible through the implementation of the body of laws that delimit and guide targeted individuals lives on a routine basis” (Menjívar 2013, 234) and reference the mutually constitutive conditions of symbolic and structural violence that produces these conditions as “legal violence.” They contend that legal violence naturalizes violence against immigrants by making the law—and immigrants’ resulting suffering—seem like the inevitable product of an unbiased system.

Following this model of examining how states mobilize legal violence as a form of spatial punishment, we anchor our theoretical framework in an analysis of the United States as a settler empire (Rana 2011). Rana extends Wolfe’s (2006) analysis of settler colonialism to illustrate how freedom for white settlers entailed native dispossession, Black subordination, and continued territorial expansion. We use this analysis to understand the role of settlerism, slavery, and empire in shaping contemporary policing and punishment, with particular attention to the role of the law in constructing legalized punishment pathways for people of color. Drawing together an analysis of carceral citizenship, legal violence, and settler empire, we build carceral migrations at the intersection. We expand the category of carceral citizenship to illustrate how populations of color that do not hold conventional US citizenship are forced into legal relationships with the United States.

DISPOSSESSION, ENSLAVEMENT, AND EMPIRE

As Glenn (2015) and Ross (1998) demonstrate, settler colonialism, slavery, and empire are structures that shaped and continue to shape race- and

state-making today (Jacobs 2018). As Rana (2011) and Grandin (2019) document, settler dispossession of Indigenous people was among the colonies' motivations for revolt against the British. After independence, the prospect of a federal government assisting states in fighting to dispossess and eliminate Indigenous people served as a key incentive for states like Georgia to consent to ratify the constitution (Ablavsky 2013). These currents presaged federal policy such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which set the stage for the expulsion of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands and violently imposed the mass expulsion and killing of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole tribes during what is now called the Trail of Tears (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Saunt 2020).¹

Similarly, colonial anxieties over the possibility that the British empire would not universally recognize slavery reveals how central the policing of Black mobility was to the colonists even prior to independence. They expected that enslaved people would remain legally so even when moving or transported to other countries. When this understanding was threatened by Lord Mansfield's ruling in the Somerset case (that an enslaved person brought to England would not be legally recognized as so), it lent motivation for settler revolt and independence, now more necessary to preserve the institution of slavery than ever before. Despite independence, however, the possibility of escape to free states in the North persisted as a central threat to the institution of slavery and necessitated not just legal regimes of policing Black mobility but the growth of punitive institutions that operated across state lines to catch and punish those who fought to self-emancipate themselves from being enslaved (Wells 2020).

Finally, as Go (2020) illustrates, the reform era of the early twentieth century transformed police departments in America into far more structured, powerful, and bureaucratic organizations. Go identifies how these reform processes were influenced by American militarism in imperial and colonial contexts in the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and more. Police

1. In the reverse, more contemporary attempts to reclaim territory have been met with similar carceral and even military force, as seen in the occupation of Alcatraz (Johnson 1994), at Standing Rock (Estes 2019), and at Mauna Kea (Maile 2018). State responses to these occupations, particularly when contrasted to the state's response to white-led occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge (Inwood and Bonds 2017), illustrate how the denial of Indigenous or nonwhite control over land remains a priority. In this manner, the relationship between punishment and land functions as a starting point for understanding other processes of domination and exploitation.

reform included borrowing tactics and policies from the military, developed in imperial and colonial contexts and ushered into American usage often by military veterans returning to the United States and importing military tactics with them. Years later, as Schrader (2019) shows, the United States offered police training and technical assistance around the globe as part of counterinsurgency campaigns.

These accounts illustrate two linked points: that the policing of mobility and the mobility of policing were part and parcel of state formation and remain part of state action today and that these variegated practices affect those dispossessed by the nation, those subjugated within the nation, and those subject to the heavy hand of the nation's foreign policy.

A THEORY OF CARCERAL MIGRATIONS

Following this focus on the relationship between punishment and land, we theorize state governance through population spatial trajectories to capture how seemingly disparate systems of punishment—what are traditionally referenced as mass incarceration, crimmigration, and the war on terror—employ legal violence to spatially regulate populations of color in ways that produce and reify racial categories and hierarchies (Loyd 2015). Taking settler empire seriously, we argue, compels us to analyze punishment as expansively as the state deploys it. Carceral migrations account for how the state uses legal punishment to force, restrict, and prevent movement. Rather than analyzing these state punishment systems as they are traditionally framed (mass incarceration, crimmigration, and the war on terror), we use carceral migrations to investigate settler empire's punishment power against the spatial articulations of its governing power: within the border, at the border, and beyond the border. This work builds upon the growing field of carceral geographies, which theorizes the spatial formations of punishment as well as the flows between them (Loyd 2015; Moran 2016; Moran, Turner, and Schliehe 2018; Gill et al. 2018). Here, we contend that carceral migrations reveal how state formation and governance emerge from legal punishment as a converging racial project of settler empire and anti-Blackness (McKittrick 2006; Gilmore 2007; James 2007; Loyd 2015; Ritchie 2017; Lethabo King 2019; Friedman 2020; Rodríguez 2021). We understand carceral migrations not as an attempt to explain all aspects of state power under a category so broad that it loses meaning but rather as an attempt to overcome widely critiqued methodological nationalism that attempts

to fit analytical categories with national boundaries and in so doing misses features of states that extend beyond those borders (Wimmer and Schiller 2002).

Carceral migrations conceptually and materially map white supremacy's legal power as punishment power by exposing racialized patterns in legally mandated mass movement, confinement, and prevented movement. We advance three major conditions revealed by a carceral migrations framework: (1) The state's regulation of populations' spatial trajectories is a form of punishment by design. This illuminates how carceral punishment is not limited to holding and confinement but also includes forcible movement between spaces—such as from home to a jail and then to a prison—as a fundamental feature of legal punishment; (2) these spatially oriented punishments operate as race-making and reinforcing technologies by producing punitive and recognizable spatial trajectories for groups of people of color; and (3) the development and state application of legal codes and policies produce racialized impacts on said spatial trajectories but often are made to appear race-neutral at face value. In summary, carceral migrations illustrate white supremacy's reactivity to the existence and presence of populations that threaten the social and governing conditions that emerge from manifest destiny (Mitchell 2018).

A carceral migrations framework allows us to explain cases in which the state uses its legal power to punish in ways not covered by the mass incarceration framework (Rodríguez 2016, 2021), how borders are weaponized against communities beyond the crimmigration framework, and how domestic carcerality informs practices in the war on terror (and vice versa). For example, whereas contemporary scholarship on mass incarceration insufficiently theorizes how the state uses its punishment capacity to force the movement of people within national borders, carceral migrations account for this vector of state punishment power (also see Friedman 2020 for an analysis of the relationship among race, punishment, mobility, and monetary sanctions). Although mass incarceration has historically been understood as legally distinct from the use of punishment to restrict, deter, and regulate migration, recent scholarship has begun to articulate the state's use of carceral power in the context of immigration as an extension of mass incarceration (e.g., Stumpf 2006; Golash-Boza 2016). Finally, although mass incarceration does not consider punishment in the context of empire and emerges from a reformist framework that discursively elides how “mass incarceration” is actually “‘Black mass incarceration,’ ‘racist mass incarceration,’

and ‘mass (immigrant) detention’” (Rodríguez 2021, 184–185), carceral migrations specifically articulate how the state uses punishment to maintain white supremacy as global hegemony.

Crucial to our analysis, we specifically highlight the term *migration* to connect carceral punishment to racial-chattel slavery, settler colonization, and global conditions of race- and punishment-making (Loyd 2015). Legal scholar Magee (2009) argues that enslavement was foundational to the construction of immigration law. She writes about transatlantic slavery as “forced migration immigration,” noting that “these systems should be noted among the most significant historical antecedents of contemporary immigration law and policy, with legacies that reverberate through immigration law and policy in the United States up to the present day” (2009, 275).

Magee demonstrates how enslaved Black people brought to the Americas were forced to stop practicing their native cultural traditions, stripped of names that marked their heritage, and otherwise served as early subjects of Anglo assimilation efforts. These practices provided the foundation for the state’s treatment of other immigrant groups during later periods in the United States (Magee 2009; Escobar 2016), which demanded that immigrants—particularly those defined as nonwhite—assimilate into the Anglo paradigm (Magee 2009; Escobar 2016). These assimilation practices sought to strip migrants of their native cultures and language while acclimating them to a subjugated position within the US racial hierarchy (Magee 2009). The forced migration was a critical part of the punishment of racial-chattel slavery: legal and embodied subjugation was coupled with the forcible extraction of people from their homes, families, and communities. For generations, enslaved Black people brought to the Americas from the African continent were denied the right to return to their homes, families, and ways of life through corporeal and legal force (Davis 2003; Hartman 2007). This highlights how the white supremacist state converged legal codes, corporeal force, and punitive spatial regulation to normalize anti-Blackness into the nation-making project (Pulido 2000; McKittrick 2006; Escobar 2016; Haley 2016). The theoretical framework of carceral migrations therefore heeds Magee’s (2009) insistence that migration law emerges from the afterlife of slavery and is therefore positioned to build with scholarship that understands racial-chattel slavery and anti-Blackness as foundational to migration and the law.

As Beydoun (2020) writes, Muslim naturalization in the United States was banned via the 1790 Naturalization Act, which limited naturalization

to “free white persons.” The Naturalization Act ushered in welcoming immigration policies for European whites who could easily be assimilated into the settler population that needed to grow to continue expanding westward. For those deemed not to be free white persons, naturalization was not in the state’s interest. The early legal logic that Arab and Muslim people were unassimilable remained in effect through 1944, only challenged successfully by claimants who could argue that their Christianity made them proximate to whiteness. Beydoun argues that the historical marking of Muslims as unassimilable set the stage for more contemporary policies, from targeted deportations and surveillance through the NSEERS program after 9/11 to the Muslim ban enacted in 2017. As Akbar (2015) argues, these attitudes have shaped national security policy and its domestic expressions through contemporary countering violent extremism programs, which criminalize Muslims in the United States while largely ignoring white nationalist extremism. Aziz argues that these policies racialize Muslims (Selod 2018; Aziz 2021).

CASES

In what follows, we apply our carceral migrations theoretical framing to a collection of public mapping projects, legal statutes, existing scholarship, and news articles. Beginning from traditional categorizations of punishment—domestic punishment, crimmigration, and the war on terror—we analyze cases within these categories using a carceral migrations framework. We show how cases of carceral migrations within, at, and beyond the border are relational projects of racial-spatial governance, and we demonstrate how mapping that forced, confined, and prevented movement as a form of legal punishment is a race-making project of settler empire.

Carceral migration was an inductively developed conceptual framework, and the cases we highlight are demonstrative, rather than representative, of carceral migrations. Beginning with one of the authors’ empirical data focusing on the experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women, the authors mapped where individuals recounted living over their lifetimes, producing a color-coded representation of explicitly carceral (juvenile carceral facilities, jails, prisons, and halfway/transitional homes) and noncarceral destinations and migration pathways. This visual represented how experiences of carceral citizenship (Miller and Stuart 2017) are marked by multiple carceral locales, including multiple locations of arrest,

incarceration, and supervised living over the course of a lifetime. We noted how these patterns of forced movement (e.g., number of moves, time held in confinement, and that one point of carceral contact produced more to follow) shared broad similarities to the movement patterns of immigrants arrested by ICE and Customs and Border Patrol, based on existing policy and activist mapping projects. We began to think about how a theory of domestic punishment might be extended or otherwise conceptualized to include cases that involved regulation of populations that might experience similar carceral citizenship but without previously holding conventional US citizenship. By pushing ourselves to account for other cases with key commonalities with the domestic case, carceral migrations came to incorporate not just domestic mobility through punishment but border and global mobilities of and through punishment.

Our resulting list of possibilities included historical and contemporary events such as the Trail of Tears, the incarceration of Japanese-descended people in concentration camps during World War II, gang injunctions, and the implementation of the pass system under Jim Crow. We then coded these events under the three—though not mutually exclusive—categories of carceral migrations within, at, and beyond the border. To highlight how mapping illustrates the spatial elements of carceral migrations, we then searched for freely accessible virtual, interactive maps online capturing how these events produced forced, restricted, or prevented movements for people or groups that experienced these events. The limited availability of such preexisting maps and data shaped the exemplary cases we highlight. We envision these cases as demonstrative rather than representative but hope that their explication can illustrate a way of thinking about these processes to stimulate more systematic data collection in the future.

Critical to our methodological approach is an abolition feminist orientation (Davis et al. 2022), which “incorporates a dialectic, a relationality, and a form of interruption . . . political work that embraces [a] both/and perspective, moving beyond binary either/or logics and the shallowness of reform” (Davis et al. 2022, 13–15). As a relational framework rooted in Black, queer, feminist organizing and intellectual labor, abolition feminism demands that we approach understanding harm and interventions by considering how state and interpersonal violence are co-constituted and for whom survival and self-defense against violence are criminalized and punished (Richie 2012; Ritchie 2017; Survived & Punished 2018; Davis et al. 2022). To highlight this relational approach and refuse measurements of inclusion that

rank-order degrees of suffering and carceral control, we employ a range of examples across individual and population levels, racialization, national origins, mobility trajectories, and time periods.

DOMESTIC PUNISHMENT: CARCERAL MIGRATIONS WITHIN THE BORDER

A carceral migrations framework highlights the spatial violence of settler attacks on Indigenous sovereignty. Foundational practices of the settler state's ongoing management of Indigenous life demonstrate how the US state employs spatial regulation to create "Indigeneity" as a racial category through the imposition of spatial punishments. Like enslaved Black people and their contemporary descendants, Native populations were also subjugated under racial-chattel slavery (e.g., Campbell 2014; Lethabo King 2019) and continue to be forced into white assimilationist practices and be coercively torn from their families (Campbell-Evans 2008; Lawler et al. 2012). The state's punitive regulation of Indigenous and Black populations therefore operated through racialized forced migration and the regulation of racialized population spatial trajectories.

Indigenous boarding schools in the United States stand as a foundational case of carceral migrations. Beginning in 1860, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a branch of the US government, mandated the attendance of American Indian youth to state-sponsored "boarding schools" as a method of imposing white settler acculturation on Indigenous minors (Adams 1995; Davis 2001). Indigenous youths were forcibly relocated away from their families and communities to these institutions, where administrators and teachers brutally imposed markers of white masculinities on these children by altering their physical appearance and markers of their cultural heritage and making speaking any language other than English a punishable offense. Native children were denied contact with their families and communities, had their daily activities and food consumption punitively regulated, and were treated as criminally deviant by administrators and staff (Adams 1995; Davis 2001; Gray 2011). These institutions were established as multigenerational sites of gross physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, the last of which in the United States did not close until the 1970s. Carr (2009, 112) writes, "Referring to these carceral spaces as 'schools' flattens the particular nature of these institutions by applying a euphemism that often implies salubrity and self-improvement." Decades after the shuttering of these racialized carceral

institutions, survivors and their descendants continue to reap the multigenerational effects of family fracturing, loss of culture, and posttraumatic stress disorder that Indigenous peoples were subjected to in their youth (Gray 2011) in ways that evoke the multigenerational consequences of incarceration. A framework of carceral migrations explicitly identifies how these institutions masquerading as schools operated as sites of racialized carceral violence through both removing Native youths from their families and communities and confining them within concentration and death camps of white patriarchy.

Mapping the movement patterns of Indigenous children incarcerated in boarding and residential “schools” reveals how settler-empire states leverage carceral migrations to spatially produce and reify race and punishment. Using statements provided to the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission and litigation documents from the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) Agreement—the Canadian counterpart to the US system—Vickars produced an interactive map of boarding schools operated by the Canadian government primarily between 1867 and 1996. Vickars (2017) characterizes the mapping project as “aim[ing] to investigate the IRS system visually, beginning with the stories of survivors and transitioning into the narrative of each school and its student demographics, policies, everyday life, and management. What is presented here is a selection of survivor stories gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission between 2008 and 2015.”

The interactive map (see fig. 1) illustrates how an estimated 150,000 Aboriginal children were shipped to 132 different institutions—often thousands of miles—away from their families, communities, reservations, tribes, and bands and forced to attend these carceral institutions. The prevalence of death, starvation, abuse, and other torture tactics, coupled with legally forced movement into these institutions and regulations that prevented students from leaving and families from visiting, reveal how the IRSS functioned as a form of racial-spatial punishment. Among the testimonies that Vickars (2017) highlights is that of Isaac Daniels, who made a statement in 2012 to Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, recalling his legally coerced departure from his family in 1945: “I heard my dad talking to my mom there, and he was kind of crying . . . He said that, ‘It’s either residential school for my boys, or I go to jail.’ He said that in Cree. So, I overheard him. So I said the next morning, we all got up, and I said, ‘Well, I’m going to residential school,’ cause I

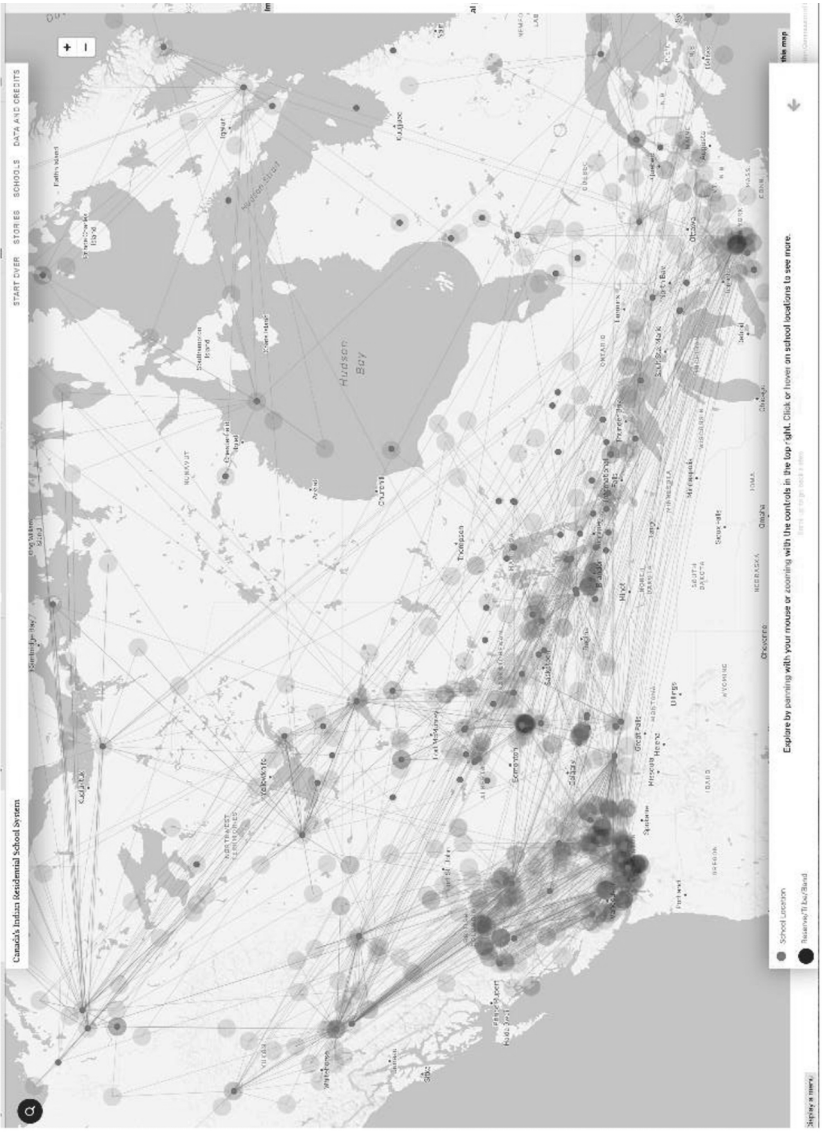


FIGURE 1. Screenshot of map created by Sam Vickars (2017) depicting Indigenous survivors' carceral migrations between their homes and one of Canada's 132 residential schools. See <https://residentialschools.info/#p4/> (Vickars 2017) for interactive map and complete site. A color version of this figure is available online.

didn't want my dad to go to jail" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

Daniels reveals how Canada mobilized the law to enforce carceral migrations as family punishment; either Daniels and his brothers relented to their forced movement to an IRSS institution far from their home and family, or their father would be incarcerated in a formal jail. The Daniels brothers were legally restricted from leaving Prince Albert Indian Residential School, where they were incarcerated—though Isaac Daniels once tried to escape, but he was prevented from making the trek back home (which exceeded 50 miles) by both the fear and practical challenge of proceeding such a distance on foot without food, money, or resources (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015; Vickars 2017).

These conditions of punishment, captured through the frame of carceral migrations, occurred by design in both the United States and Canada; these measures of legal separation, punishment, and orchestrated death facilitated settler claims to land. They also reified the racial construct of "Indian" for white settler nations by collapsing all First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island into a single racial group subject to spatial governance as punishment under the terms of settler legal systems. Though so-called residential and boarding "schools" were explicitly marked as spaces to produce and reify the racial category of "Indian" in both the United States and Canada, they critically offered legal and historical precedence for spatial punishment as a key technology of white supremacy and colonial racialization. Importantly, these events also preceded the period commonly referenced as mass incarceration, though it was also a mass racial-spatial form of punishment through displacement and confinement.

The so-called child welfare system is a legacy of the so-called schooling system that incarcerated Indigenous youth in that it helped to normalize the removal of children of color from their homes under supposed legal rubrics of "care" crafted by white supremacist governments. The child welfare system is also a critical example of carceral migrations because it operates as a racializing system of punishment that is often cast as a race-neutral legal force but is actually race-making and reinforcing because it produces punitive and recognizable spatial trajectories for groups of children of color. For instance, the effects of multigenerational Native trauma coupled with a white settler legal system are linked to the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the child welfare system (Deer

2004; Trocmé, Knoke, and Blackstock 2004), which reproduces the physical, emotional, and sexual abuses experienced by earlier generations of Native peoples who were incarcerated in boarding schools. However, white settler legal systems in both the United States and Canada are most often framed as race-neutral because they do not explicitly call for the overrepresentation of children of color (Roberts 2003). Instead, the state employs racialized proxies for neglect and abuse to justify the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and that simultaneously obscure racial-colonial violence as foundational to their categories of evaluation while also using the disproportionate removal of Indigenous children from their homes as “objective” evidence of Indigenous family dysfunction. The state therefore employs circular logics of white supremacy to punish Indigenous families under claims of care—directly evoking the histories of so-called residential and boarding schools—to further naturalize associations between Indigeneity as subject to racial control through forced movement and confinement and whiteness as a legitimate form of racial governance.

Carceral migration as a technology of the child welfare system in the United States and Canada not only builds from settler colonialism and anti-Indigeneity but also is critically and relationally reliant on anti-Blackness. Evidence of this exists in the dramatic overrepresentation of Black children in state custody. Though this certainly applies to Black youths incarcerated in juvenile facilities, we specifically point to those in the foster care system to demonstrate how it operates as a site of anti-Black punitive practices (Roberts 1999, 2003; Simmons and Danker-Feldman 2010; Gurusami 2019). Black children account for approximately a third of children in foster care in the United States, though they are only 15 percent of the country’s children. Cities like San Francisco and Chicago see even greater disparities, both in the rates of Black children entering the foster care system and the length of time they remain in state care (Roberts 2003; Simmons and Danker-Feldman 2010). These conditions reflect the fundamental anti-Black bias of state institutions against Black mothers in particular, rooted in the criminalization of Black women, state agencies’ racialized conflation of poverty and child neglect, and state agents’ inconsistent logics of parental separation that reflect anti-Black racism (Roberts 2003; Potter 2008). However, over three-quarters of foster care youths describe traumatic experiences during their placement (Riebschleger, Day, and Damashek 2015), and children in foster care are at a significantly greater risk of adverse life events, including abuse (van IJzendoorn et al. 2011; Euser et al. 2016).

Foster care and the child welfare systems therefore operate as carceral migrations in multiple ways. This reveals how white supremacist assumptions that Black and Indigenous parents are “unfit” are encoded in the law, and it normalizes state intervention in Black and Indigenous family life as benevolent state care. These conditions naturalize white supremacist narratives of Black and Indigenous families as dysfunctional while positioning the state as a more natural and caring parent for the children it forcibly moves into its “care” (e.g., Roberts 2003; Gurusami and Kurwa 2021). Although the policies of the child welfare system are presented by the state and widely regarded as racially and legally neutral—given that there are no contemporary explicit references to removing Black and Native children from their homes under more expansive conditions—the disproportionate removal of Black and Indigenous children from their homes reveals the race-making nature of these policies and institutions. Such practices emerge from and must be contextualized within a historical legacy rooting from settler colonialism and racial-chattel slavery, in which legal precedence exists to normalize the removal of Black and Indigenous children from their parents as a form of punishment—especially to generate parental compliance under conditions of resistance or revolt and to try to break bonds between Black and Indigenous parents and their children (e.g., Davis 1972; Roberts 1999, 2003; Jones 2009; Gray 2011).

CRIMMIGRATION: CARCERAL MIGRATIONS AT THE BORDER

The use of legal punishment to prevent and regulate migration is exemplified by the case of crimmigration. Whereas immigration detention is nominally considered a form of civil confinement in that immigrants are not charged with crimes or being punished—rather, they are held pending administrative proceedings—in reality, immigration detention is increasingly understood as a form of punishment and incarceration (Hernández 2014). Numerous scholars have traced the rise in immigration detention through the twentieth century and situate it in the broader criminalization and policing of immigration (Hernández 2013, 2019; Ewing, Martinez, and Rumbaut 2015; Macías-Rojas 2016; Vázquez 2016; Armenta 2017; Goodman 2020). However, within immigration detention itself, we see the rise of practices associated with the most severe elements of the carceral state. Carceral migration as a legalized punishment race-making practice is exemplified by the incarceration of children in immigration detention centers. We draw on a specific case covered in popular news media to demonstrate.

Aura Bogado, an investigative journalist, covered a story about a girl from Honduras who had been “disappeared into the bowel of the Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] . . . the federal agency charged with the care and reunification of unaccompanied minors” (2020) despite having relatives in the United States who followed all the required procedures and paperwork to try to find her and bring her to live with them in North Carolina. Bogado (2020; Bogado and Lewis 2020) reported that the girl had been in the system for 6 years, 7 months, and 2 days—from the age of 10 to 17—and shuffled between refugee shelters, a residential treatment center legally documented as engaging in horrific scales of child abuse, and foster care all over the country during that time (Bogado 2020). An animated map created by Mirk (see fig. 2) shows six transfers from 2013 to 2020 while she was in ORR custody. Her family was unable to contact her or find any news of her for 5 of the 6 years she was in ORR custody (Bogado 2020). When Bogado was able to find the girl and put her family in touch with her, she had already requested voluntary departure—on account of years of isolation and torture in ORR custody—and was being deported to Honduras. She was held in a children’s shelter when she first arrived in Honduras because of COVID-19 quarantine procedures, and she continues to struggle

A girl’s journey over six years in U.S. custody

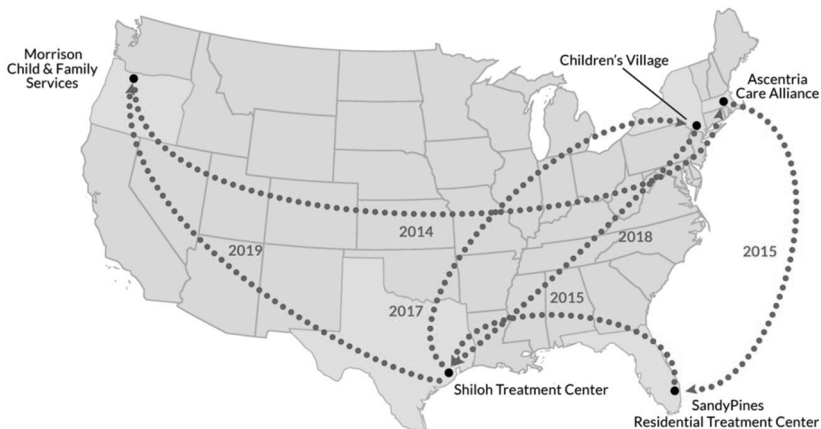


FIGURE 2. Screenshot of map depicting anonymous Honduran girl’s carceral migrations from 2013 to 2020, published by Reveal (Bogado 2020; Mirk 2020). See <https://revealnews.org/article/the-disappeared/> (Bogado 2020). For Mirk’s (2020) animated map, see <https://io.wp.com/revealnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/thedisappearedgif.gif?resize=1200%2C735&ssl=1>. A color version of this figure is available online.

with the trauma of her past and current survival needs. Her experience of carceral migrations was also one of family punishment; her relatives commented on the trauma of not knowing where she was for years at a time and learning that she was subject to horrific practices of abuse (Bogado 2020; Bogado and Lewis 2020). Carceral migrations at the border—whether targeted at children or adults—constitute family punishment, including the impacts of separation, trauma in detention, and considerable uncertainty about the future (e.g., Macías-Rojas 2016; Ritchie 2017).

Menjívar and colleagues (2018) show that Honduran migrants are more at risk for deportation than Mexican and other Central American migrants and that the deportation of Honduran migrants is disproportionate to their population size. Gutiérrez Rivera (2018) argues that the historical and contemporary deployment of US racial-colonial power on Central America shapes the hostile migration context for women from Honduras, both in the conditions that produce their forced migration to the United States to flee gendered violence and in racial-colonial representations of people from Honduras that make it nearly impossible for women to successfully claim asylum due to gender-based violence. She contextualizes the global racialization of Honduran immigrants as poor and criminal as a direct result of US political interference and destabilization of Central American countries and further links these conditions to controlling images that shape US reception of Honduran immigrants; she argues that Hondurans are especially read by US immigration legal actors as criminal and consequentially cast as undesirable immigrants. Gutiérrez Rivera further articulates, “Honduran asylum seekers are more likely to be discriminated against at immigration hearings because of their skin colour or colourism,” raising the point that Indigenous and Black Hondurans are especially subject to carceral punishments through the immigration system (2018, 53).

Carceral migrations therefore operate in the case of children like the anonymous girl from Honduras (Bogado 2020; Bogado and Lewis 2020) and the forced separation of families at the border (e.g., Falcón 2006) as a form of legal racial-spatial punishment even prior to arrival at the border in that US imperialism shapes families’ need to migrate and the carceral context for their reception. At the border, the anonymous Honduran girl experienced punishment by being physically separated from her family and consumed in the depths of a legal system that actively worked against her welfare. Her repeated forced movement and subsequent confinement, coupled with 6 years of being prevented from moving to her family in either the United States or Honduras, illustrate how racial-spatial trajectories of

punishment are mapped onto the lives of children of color. Such conditions echo those of Black and Indigenous children profiled in the domestic cases of carceral migration through boarding “schools” and the child welfare systems; although white children also experience foster care and violence from carceral systems, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx children experience forced separation from their families as racially defining group experiences. This illustrates how carceral migrations operate as race-making and -reifying spatial trajectories, even as the law does not explicitly state or require that children of color be subject to repeated state (dis)placements. In addition, the overrepresentation of Hondurans among those who are formally punished through deportations also reveals how racial and ethnic difference is legally and spatially manufactured, even between Central American and Latin American migrants who are collectively subjected to the terms of criminalized migration.

A theory of carceral migrations exposes how anti-Blackness shapes immigration law and praxis as well as the race-making process and punishments that it makes possible (Magee 2009; Escobar 2016; García Peña 2017). Legal scholar Palmer (2017) notes that 11 percent of the Black immigrant population in the United States identifies as Afro-Latinx, and 16 percent of Black immigrants self-identify as undocumented or out of status; in 2013, 22.9 percent of refugees identified as Black. Anti-Black racism also shapes Black immigrants’ vulnerabilities to legal punishment from immigration enforcement, local law enforcement, and cooperation between traditional policing agencies and immigration policing agencies (Golash-Boza 2016; Palmer 2017; Ritchie 2017). However, mainstream narratives about the particular, heightened vulnerabilities of Black immigrants to policing within and at the border are often erased or underemphasized, with the carceral migrations experiences of Central American and Mexican immigrants most often represented across immigration research, policy, and popular media (Palmer 2017). Through mapping multiple, overlapping, and distinct carceral migrations of populations policed within and at the border—and beyond the border, in the case of deportations—the both relational and differentially experienced racial dimensions of immigration policing experiences become more apparent.

WAR ON TERROR: CARCERAL MIGRATIONS BEYOND THE BORDER

Finally, we explore an example of the US global war on terror within a carceral migrations framework by examining practices of offshore punishment. The

US government used the global program of rendition and torture to apply illegal punishment practices to individuals while reducing constitutional oversight by US courts and Congress (Satterthwaite 2007). In some cases, the government used offshore “black sites” to conduct interrogations outside of public, congressional, or legal scrutiny. In other cases, the government created a category of “foreign fighters” and worked to capture and render them to third-party countries whose governments would then engage in interrogation, torture, or disappearance. Through these practices, the state managed to enact a regime of imprisonment and torture policies outside of US territory without constitutional oversight because much of the actual torture and imprisonment was being carried out by third-party states such as Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The Rendition Project, a collaborative initiative between UK academics and the NGO Reprieve, built an interactive map (see fig. 3) to show confirmed and suspected flights from a database of over 11,000 flights that were part of the CIA’s extraordinary rendition project between 2001 and 2006 (The Rendition Project, Reprieve, and Craig Bloodworth n.d.). One publicized example of this was the case of Maher Arrar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen who was detained by the US government during a stopover at JFK airport on suspicion of terrorism. Arrar was then forcibly moved to Jordan by immigration officers and turned over to the Syrian government. He was imprisoned and tortured for over a year in Syria before being returned to Canada in 2003. The Rendition Project illustrates part of his journey (see fig. 4). Although Arrar later received an official apology from Canada, the United States continues to assert its claim that he is a suspected terrorist. Arrar’s case is an example of how Muslims—even those who are not citizens of or living in the United States—experience carceral migration well beyond the recognized land boundaries of the United States.

As Li argues, there is a race-making logic underlying this practice: “the glossing of armed, transnational, non-state Islamist groups as ‘foreign’ results in broader efforts to police transnational Muslim mobility, or ‘Muslims out of place’” (Li 2010, 358). Li demonstrates that these policies place Muslims beneath the law and those carrying out the global war on terror above it, and they do so in the service of protecting not just the United States itself but also a broader state order that, in the view of US administrations, justified practices that otherwise would be unlawful.

The subjection of Muslims to carceral migrations has been critical to their racialization in the United States and global contexts. This became

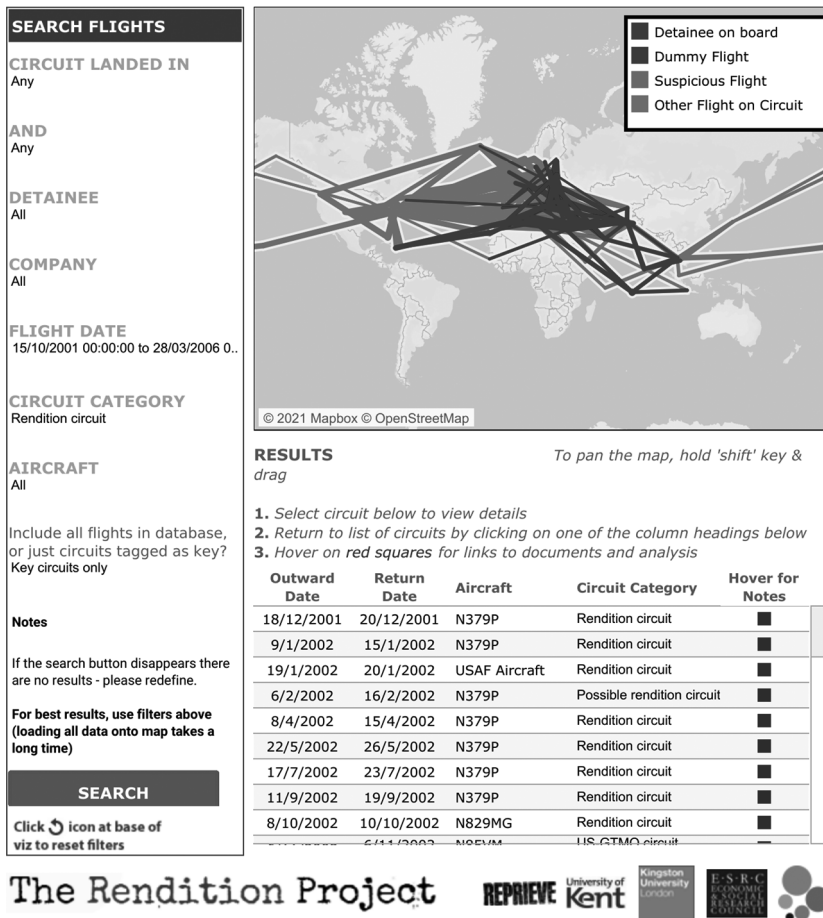


FIGURE 3. Screenshot of the Rendition Project's (2018) flight database interactive map. See <https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/flights/flight-database.html/>. A color version of this figure is available online.

especially salient in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (Welch 2003; Aradau and Van Munster 2009; Selod 2018). NSEERS, also known as “special registration,” was designed by the Bush administration’s Department of Justice as a means of identifying people within the United States who trace their backgrounds to countries with significant Muslim populations (Penn State Law Immigrants’ Rights Clinic and Rights Working Group 2012). The program compelled men over the age of 16 from 25 such countries to register with the government, allowing them to be tracked, interrogated, jailed, and deported. More than 80,000 Arab, Middle Eastern,



FIGURE 4. Maher Arar rendition flight, sourced from the Rendition Project (2018). See <https://www.therenditionproject.org.uk/flights/flight-database.html> for an interactive database and map. A color version of this figure is available online.

Muslim, and South Asian men registered with the government under the program, and nearly 14,000 were deported. The program was effectively halted in 2011 when the Department of Homeland Security removed all 25 countries from the program, which did not end the program but made its rules apply to no one. NSEERS exemplifies the carceral migrations framework because it used the law enforcement power of the state to compel the registration, surveillance, interrogation, incarceration, and deportation of thousands of people based on them fitting a racialized category of threat. Although NSEERS was halted, its underlying logic—of laundering a de-facto racialized policy through national origin—was resurrected in the 2017 Muslim ban (Executive Order 13769) authored by the Trump administration. Despite Trump’s clear statements outlining the discriminatory intent of the policy, the logic of the executive order used the same formula as NSEERS to prevent rather than expel people based on their racial and religious backgrounds. In attempting to target Muslims without explicitly doing so, the Muslim ban, like NSEERS before it,

identified Muslim majority nations rather than Muslims specifically for bans and other heightened scrutiny. In so doing, the government attempted to see Muslims as racialized and separate from other racial and ethnic identities. Because this is not actually possible, it covered several majority Black countries that also happen to be majority Muslim. Intersections of anti-Muslim and anti-Black currents also extend to the detention of individuals racialized as both Muslim and Black in Guantanamo Bay (Li 2021).

Another program begun shortly after the 9/11 attacks was the mapping and surveilling of Muslims by the New York Police Department (NYPD) Intelligence Division's Demographics Unit (Shamas and Arastu 2013). Like special registration, the program generally used national background as a proxy for Muslim religious identity, though it also included Black Muslims of US origin in the demographic to be surveilled (Wasserman 2015). NYPD's Muslim-mapping program included agents surveilling prayer habits, media consumption, and business practices of Muslim college students, shopkeepers, restaurateurs, and others. The surveillance, tracking, and use of informants to learn about these communities by the NYPD extended outside New York, into states along the eastern seaboard. The Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition, in partnership with the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility program at the City University of New York and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, documented the effects of this surveillance on Arab and Muslim people throughout the New York area. For example, community members wary of constant surveillance attempted to stop looking Muslim, stopped engaging in Muslim religious practices, and ceased attending community and religious functions. The program is legible within a carceral migrations framework because of its role in spatially tracking and monitoring a racialized group. Once word of the program grew, members of the group also ceased being able to move freely throughout the city without fear of surveillance and harassment.

ENGAGING CARCERAL MIGRATIONS IN THE AFTERLIFE OF MASS INCARCERATION

Mass incarceration remains a powerful and nearly ubiquitous marker in social science discussions of race and punishment. Notable sociological, legal, and political science texts invoke the term to make plain how carceral punishment in the United States warehouses Black, Indigenous, and people of color families and communities, often with a particular

focus on the disproportionate legal punishment burden borne by Black men (Wacquant 2002; Alexander 2010; Miller 2021). Studies of women's incarceration—and increasingly that of women of color—often point to the dramatic rise in women's incarceration rates as indicators of the need to include women as largely hidden victims of mass incarceration (Carson et al. 2015; Sentencing Project 2015; Garcia-Hallett 2017).

Carceral migration advances inquiries into the realm of mass incarceration in three ways. First, it provides new ways to understand carceral history; second, it emphasizes relationships between punishment and space that can extend beyond borders; and, third, its implications suggest different types of responses than are typically implied by the mass incarceration framework.

Taking carceral migration's historical contribution to mass incarceration first, studies of mass incarceration make varying connections to and protestations against racial-chattel slavery and Jim Crow as foundational to the logics and procedures that inform mass incarceration (Davis 2003; Alexander 2010; Richie 2012; Escobar 2016; Gottschalk 2016; Ben-Moshe 2018). Common among these inquiries is often the ubiquitous use of the term mass incarceration to describe the rise in carceral punishment experienced overwhelmingly by Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and people of color populations. Scholars such as Murakawa (2014) and Hernández (2017) identify the roots of mass incarceration's major features as existing decades before the common public understanding of its start. Moreover, scholars of race and carceral punishment theorize varying degrees of connection among mass incarceration, racial-chattel slavery (Rodríguez 2006; Hartman 2007), and Jim Crow (Alexander 2010) to establish the racializing foundations of carceral punishment in its present formation (Gilmore 2007; Ritchie 2017; Ben-Moshe 2018).

Key works identify the role of settler colonization as operating simultaneously in constructing historical and ongoing gender-racialized carceral punishment (Ross 1998; Rodríguez 2006; Hernández 2017; Ritchie 2017). Carceral migrations add to a historical analysis of contemporary punishment. Returning to our example of colonial imperatives to prevent the mobility of enslaved people, these dynamics extend into slavery-era practices of southern states to bar free Black northerners from entry, northern states' refusal to guarantee freedom or safety to Black southerners escaping slavery (e.g., The Illinois Black Law of 1853), and those states' efforts to bar Black residents from entry at all (Semuels 2016). We can further trace this legal administration of violence through the spread of sundown laws across the country after reconstruction. The laws barred Black presence after

sundown and were enforced by the threat of state or communal violence (Loewen 2018). As Black southerners migrated to the North to escape Jim Crow and seek better social and economic conditions, northern cities such as Chicago met them with carcerality, increasing both their use of policing targeted at racial minorities and their spending on prisons (Muller 2012; Sankofa 2016; Derenoncourt 2022).

Second, carceral migration pushes theorizing on carceral punishment beyond national borders. The framework of mass incarceration stops at the border despite the tools and techniques of mass incarceration being used to police the border and bodies beyond it and the return of international policing and militarism upon domestic subjects. US policing has moved across national borders (Schrader 2019) but has also rebounded inward. That rebounding is seen in the decades of torture carried out by Vietnam veteran Jon Burge (Conroy 2005) and the provision of military equipment from military sources to domestic police departments (Delehanty et al. 2017). Illustrating the melding of domestic and international policing and military projects, Akbar (2015) identifies how post-9/11 national security policing has come to rely on tactics of community policing and broken windows logics to scrutinize Muslims in the United States.

Third, building on critiques offered by Rodríguez, we consider the ways that carceral migration shifts the responses that may arise to counter carcerality. Rodríguez (2016, 2021) identifies how the term mass incarceration is rooted in a historically reformist, white liberal multiculturalist agenda that names the scale and administrative mechanics of carceral punishment as the problem. This framing most commonly leads to calls of carceral reduction and refining rather than the abolition of global white supremacy and the racial-colonial militarized carceral order that it requires (James 2007; Rodríguez 2021). Rodríguez further traces the history of the phrase mass incarceration, articulating how it is a “discursive production rather than a sociological or criminological matter of fact.” Without reproducing the entirety of his argument here (see Rodríguez 2021, 176–22 for a full account), we follow his prompting to question what the frame of mass incarceration obscures in both our historical and contemporary understanding of white supremacy’s global organization and modes of power.

We suggest that by using a carceral migrations framework, we can see different limitations of mass incarceration. That it shapes and is shaped by carcerality at and beyond the national border means that an analysis of mass incarceration or domestic carceral punishment that stops at those

borders will inevitably fall short of understanding or proposing ways of overcoming mass incarceration. We suggest a theorizing of mass incarceration not as an exceptional form of racial state violence but instead as contextualized within a pattern of state violence. How might this recast the historical relationships to race and punishment, and what might an alternative framework reveal about the relationship between legal punishment and race?

CONCLUSION

In all three of these cases, territoriality is essential to advancing racialized projects of punishment. Through the framework of carceral migrations, we attempt to take a view of state punishment as broad as the state's own. As the cases we describe suggest, there is a significant overlap between seemingly disparate sites and techniques of state punishment. Using a carceral migrations framework reveals these areas of overlap. Furthermore, it allows us to see them as not exceptional but as predictable outcomes of a system that uses punishment to exercise power within, at, and beyond the border.

For example, we might consider where the domestic prison regime and crimmigration overlap, such as in the spread of solitary confinement into immigration detention centers (Patler, Sacha, and Branick 2018). We might also consider where crimmigration and the war on terror overlap, such as in administration policies like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Muslim ban, the use of Guantanamo as an immigration detention center, and the calls to build a wall at the southern border to stop "terrorists" from entering the country. We might also consider where the war on terror and prison regime overlap, not just through solitary confinement in overseas detention but in the use of torture by the Chicago Police Department at its Homan Square detention center and the role former Chicago Police Detective Richard Zuley played in both torture domestically and at Guantanamo (Li 2021). We envision this article as a starting point to illustrate how carceral migrations occur in the United States and US practices that extend globally, but we imagine others may investigate how US-driven carceral migrations occur in other global contexts, in addition to evaluating how other countries around the world engage in similar practices.

The rise of public mapping projects articulating state, carceral, and racial violence poises carceral migrations as an analytical frame emergent from an urgent need to more expansively understand the contours of white

supremacy. In addition to the public mapping projects featured in the case section, activist organizations and scholars are increasingly analyzing and illustrating state violence through spatial means and making their findings available to the public in real time. Examples of such critical projects include Mapping Police Violence (Sinyangwe et al. 2021) and Mapping US Immigrant Detention (Freedom for Immigrants 2018). Carceral migrations scholarship might relationally analyze such projects or develop new questions, datasets, and visualizations under this theoretical framework. Critically, although much of the process of inequality relies on disappearing affected people (compare the wealth of eviction data to the dearth of data on where evicted peoples go), a carceral migrations analysis depends on understanding movement compelled by instances of state punishment. Alternatively, data collection could also take the form of process tracing, with a focus on the state itself. Accessing public records data on government activities to trace the similarities in punishment among sectors of government action would allow a better understanding of the spread of carceral practices across sites and contexts. Finally, measurement would suggest that movement could be a unit of analysis—whether that be the movement of bodies or the movement of state practices to control bodies. In short, a carceral migrations analysis compels us to measure and understand the stakes and impacts of carceral punishment differently. For instance, what if we measured punishment not simply through the frame of time but also through number of moves, distance traveled, or public transit stops away from home or loved ones? Not all measures of carceral migrations should be reduced to such quantitative measures, but the framework of carceral migrations generally compels us to develop more expansive ways to articulate the scale and scope of white supremacy.

Critical to our line of reasoning is the centrality of an abolition feminism/feminist abolition orientation (Davis et al. 2022), which provides a different kind of urgency than what emerges from frameworks of mass incarceration. Rather than considering how we might minimize harm, we are pressed by Escobar's (2016, 15) characterization of feminist abolition: "Central to these efforts is the refusal to leave anyone behind. In this sense, it is a refusal to engage in the politics of human valuing. Instead, a structural analysis of power is emphasized." If we take this tenet—the refusal to leave anyone behind—as one driving our inquiries, it opens up new questions and methods of inquiry (Ben-Moshe 2018). We can see the ways that this expansion of resistance is, at present, already transcending contexts. Calls for the

abolition of ICE demonstrate how communities are applying lessons from resistance to the prison regime to the crimmigration context and the abolition of domestic and imperial military violence. However, we are also pressed to hear the demands of Indigenous movements and sovereignty and consider how engaging in prison abolition without advancing decolonization as land repatriation is ultimately a reformist project (Tuck and Yang 2012) rather than one rooted in radical freedoms. Furthermore, analyses of policing and carcerality often exclude terrorism and the war on terror, Arabs, Black Muslims, Afro-Latinx and Black Latinx populations, and other groups often regarded as marginal to carceral practices (e.g., Zamora 2016; Palmer 2017; Selod 2018). Carceral migrations mark such cases not simply as important to study but as critical to understanding the racialization of carceral punishment and its impacts on mobility trajectories. Whereas social justice projects may be contradictory in their aims or outcomes, a carceral migrations framework from a position of feminist abolition or abolition feminism (Davis et al. 2022) presses us to consider bold new approaches to our social worlds and explicitly consider whom we are leaving behind—or, rather, how we all might travel together toward achieving radical freedom.

A carceral migrations framework is also useful because it moves beyond wondering whether people's crimes deserve punishment—the dominating approach among carceral reform scholarship and work—and instead reveals how state punishment is racially and spatially patterned. Such an approach does not require constructing those subject to carceral migrations as sympathetic figures or rely on binary frames that construct good people as caught up in a bad system. Carceral migration instead maps state violence and carceral technologies by looking at how people's spatial trajectories are shaped by state punishment, thereby revealing a structural analysis of power rather than an analysis of un/deservingness. In moving beyond the binary of good or bad people, we can visualize how the state territoriality orchestrates its racial projects. A framework of carceral migration therefore advances beyond the realm of reform and shows the generative theoretical and empirical insights that are made possible by taking the abolitionist project seriously.

The value of carceral migration is that although it identifies white supremacist state violence in the regulation of spatial trajectories, migration compels different ways to understand resistance and rebellion. Migrations identify movement as a unit of analysis, which also prompts us to trace people's spatial trajectories and identify how people resist forcible state

movement through escape, marronage, refusal to leave, or crossing borders in express violation of the law (e.g., Roberts 2015; Brennan 2018; Sankofa forthcoming). If carceral migrations is a method to understand how the state seeks to punish people of color by denying them the right to establish homes—the bare minimum for social and cultural reproduction—then an investigation of resistance to carceral migrations would also press us to consider how people of color imagine, make, and remake their homes through political struggle and community-building (Isoke 2013).

Like carceral citizens, the subjects of carceral migrations are constructed by the state as either in violation or potential violation of the law. However, extending beyond the parameters of carceral citizenship, the subjects of carceral migrations do not need to be formally accused of a crime to trigger translation; instead, the state constructs these populations as racially illegitimate or undesirable subjects. The nation-state forces political membership onto the subjects of carceral migrations by legally dictating their spatial trajectories—as forced, restricted, or prevented movement—in ways that produce social suffering while creating and reifying racial categories and hierarchies. In other words, carceral migration exposes how settler empire requires relational tactics of global governance. This occurs through settler empire legal control of population movements over land—within, at, and beyond the formal boundaries of a nation-state—in ways that produce and reproduce racial meaning, in part by marking certain populations legally subject to punitive spatial regulation.

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The authors would like to thank a long list of interlocutors for providing critical feedback on the ideas in this article. This list includes Diya Bose, Rocío R. García, Ranita Ray, Melissa Guzman, Patrick Lopez-Aguado, Ariana Valle, Terrell Winder, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Adam Goodman, Gema Santamaría, Patrisia Macías-Rojas, Julian Thompson, Dave Stovall, Reuben J. Miller, Mae Miller, Carla Shedd, Cecilia Menjívar, Duke Sociology Colloquium participants, Newberry Library Borders/Borderlands Seminar participants, and members of the

Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice at University of Illinois Chicago. Thank you to the University of Illinois Chicago Institute for the Humanities and University of Illinois Chicago Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy for generously funding this work. All errors are our own.

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