

The Future of Convict Criminology

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Both the content and authorship in this special edition provide us with a glimpse of a new era of Convict Criminology, what I refer to as Convict Criminology 3.0. In its infancy, Convict Criminology reflected the exclusionary practices that are endemic in academia. This early era reflects what I consider Convict Criminology 1.0 (1997-2008). Early membership was comprised largely of white men who had access to higher education, which reflected academia's status as a predominately white male institution. While the informal Convict Criminology that emerged in the 1990s sought to amplify the voices and lived experiences of formerly incarcerated persons (Ross & Vianello, 2021), the membership did not reflect the reality that incarceration disproportionately impacts lower-income individuals from communities of color. Moreover, the female voice was nearly non-existent within the subfield's existing literature (Cox & Malkin, 2023). After 'the first dime' (Jones et al., 2009), Convict Criminology expanded internationally and increased its presence within criminology, culminating in the establishment of a formal American Society of Criminology (ASC) division. I refer to this era as Convict Criminology 2.0 (2009 to 2019). The first 25 years of Convict Criminology was an era of reflection and growth. Today, Convict Criminology has entered a period of rebirth.

This special edition marks a departure from the historical exclusivity that existed within the first 25 years of Convict Criminology. While the narratives of men who served prison sentences dominated the first 25 years, the next 25 years have the opportunity to provide a more intersectional and progressive view of life experiences within the criminal injustice system. Most notably, this special edition does not merely include one or two articles by women, the voices of system-impacted women dominate this edition. Moreover, the authors include people with direct experience and familial experiences with incarceration, which offers a more complex view of the impact of the criminal injustice system. The articles in this special edition also offer a wide range of topics, provide both theoretical and empirical arguments and utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods. This special edition should be viewed as the first step towards a Convict Criminology for the future.

The progress reflected in this special edition is indicative of larger shifts within Convict Criminology. The formal Division of Convict Criminology (DCC) is comprised of scholars from diverse backgrounds, experiences, genders, ages, and races. Our membership consists of individuals who

served time in prison *and* jail, individuals with criminal records who have never served time, individuals with incarcerated family members, and allies determined to fight back against an unjust system. Convict Criminology also continues to expand its international reach, which has helped highlight the lived experiences of system-impacted persons around the world. This diversity of perspectives is reflected in the recently published edited volume *Convict Criminology for the Future* (Ross & Vianello, 2021). Moreover, Convict Criminology has begun making great strides towards increasing our presence within the field, implementing more inclusive practices and moving towards a more activism-centered focus. In 2022, the DCC launched an Early Career Travel Scholarship and a Mentorship Program, both aimed at uplifting the voices of system-impacted scholars within the historically conservative field of criminology and criminal justice. We have come a long way and we have much further to go.

My vision for a Convict Criminology 3.0 centers on increasing our presence to create a more inclusive space for convict and system-impacted scholars. We owe it to every person currently sitting in a cell or courtroom to advocate for change within the historically racist, sexist, classist institutions in which we exist, including the American Society of Criminology and the broader academic community. The DCC must be unapologetic in its demands for equity, including the elimination of financial barriers to inclusion at conferences and universities. The DCC must engage in activism that challenges academia and the broader society's ongoing role in the oppression of scholars like us (see Ortiz, this issue). As we continue to grow in membership, we must begin to harness our collective power for change.

The most important way we can utilize our power is to work to uplift early career scholars who are formerly incarcerated, have records, and who have family members affected by the criminal injustice system. Our scholarship and mentorship programs are the first step towards that goal. Our membership will continue to work collectively to ensure that our scholars are admitted to programs, hired at universities, are published, and obtain tenure. We know that these efforts will be difficult and I have no illusions regarding how much we can accomplish, but Convict Criminology is more powerful than anyone gives us credit for. Through our use of collective activism, we will continue to use our voices to fight for all of the men, women, and gender non-conforming individuals who remain trapped within the clutches of an unjust system.

The current special edition helps move this vision forward. However, it cannot be the only step we take. We must continue to strive to move our research from the margins of a field determined to ignore us, to center stage where scholars must engage with us. The voices of those directly impacted by the criminal injustice system are vital to dismantling the oppressive and dehumanizing aspects of our field. By continuing to develop spaces to highlight our work, expanding our scope to include a theoretical foundation for Convict Criminology, and by uplifting the voices of system-impacted individuals, we can move the proverbial needle forward. Creating a dramatic shift within the field will be difficult as criminal justice researchers are often dependent on the system for funding (Ortiz, 2021). However, we must continue to call them to task for their complicity in the oppression of marginalized people, even if it upsets some people.

As the first woman and person of color to lead the Division of Convict Criminology, I recognize the need to continue our efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion. As such, in my first letter to the division (see <https://concrim.org/newsletter/>), I outlined my vision for the future into three main points:

1. Further diversify the opinions and perspectives that exist within our leadership;
2. Develop and expand international collaboration between the DCC and convict scholars around the world; and
3. Continue supporting system-impacted undergraduate and graduate scholars.

The Convict Criminology 3.0 I envision is one of unity, unapologetic activism, and uplifting all people who have been victimized by the criminal injustice system. While many mainstream scholars have historically dismissed or outright ignored our presence and work, they can no longer continue to do so. A day of reckoning is coming. Our presence at the 2022 American Society of Criminology conference made people take notice and our presence at this year's conference will be greater. I hope this special edition illustrates to academics across the field that Convict Criminology will no longer be ignored. We are here and we are not going anywhere.

¡Pa'lante!

– Jennifer Ortiz

REFERENCES

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