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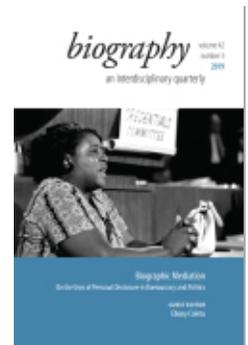
Biographic Mediation and the Formerly Incarcerated: How
Disassembling and Disclosure Counter the Extended Consequences
of Criminal Convictions

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Biographic Mediation and the Formerly Incarcerated

How Dissembling and Disclosure Counter the Extended Consequences of Criminal Convictions

Michelle Jones

Michelle Jones: So, tell me about a situation where you were required to disclose.

Jarrold: Okay. Well, you know, obviously, it comes down to applications. You click the box and a whole other process starts up. So, [state university] wanted a brief explanation, [including] the legal documents and then further explanation.¹

MJ: Legal documents? What documents did they require?

J: It was an arrest report that they wanted. Really, really hard to find. You know, a 198— arrest report. They wanted the actual sentencing . . . from the court where the judge read it off, or other times they want the state police record that shows any charges that you have. I have one. I've [also] had to get verification that I was fully discharged. . . . [The admissions administrator said,] "If you want in this institution, write me a detailed description of whatever it might be" . . . with this disclosure, you know, they're demanding it . . . **they are wanting a description of something that was almost thirty years ago as if it's a present reality.**

We all have stories to tell. When possible, we generally choose how to tell these stories according to our personal goals and ways of understanding our experience, but we also have to confront biography: how the stories others tell about us compete with, affirm, or undermine our own. Formerly incarcerated people are forced to narrate their lives with the constant awareness of this tension, often restructuring disclosure to address biographies constructed by others with more power or control.² In the article "Biographic Mediation," Ebony Coletu describes the power dynamics of disclosure that enable access to resources: "disclosure appeals to the

preferences and stock understandings of a benefactor, reshaping self-narrative into the anticipated mode of description that an external evaluator might use to justify resource sharing” (384–85). For the formerly incarcerated, biographic mediation is a process that facilitates lasting discrimination by affixing labels that justify stigma, and therefore exclusion. Institutions define the context for biographic mediation because institutional agents can demand prejudicial personal information as a requirement for access. From this vantage point, institutions can speak more authoritatively about personal history because they create the frameworks within which we must tell our stories. In this essay, I draw upon Erving Goffman’s widely cited *Stigma* as a starting point to unfold how biographic mediation works in the lives of the formerly incarcerated.

The power dynamics are oppressive for those who are not “normal human beings,” meaning “young, married, white, urban, northern male,” and I would add never arrested or convicted of a crime (Tyler 755). In *Stigma*, Goffman emphasizes personal efforts to avoid disclosure, rather than the demand for disclosure itself. In the interview excerpted at the beginning of this essay, Jarrod’s frustration is evident as he navigates multiple institutions to secure legal documents for a college application. In situations like these common to formerly incarcerated people, Goffman misses the damage wrought from the administrative management of a “spoiled identity,” by those who are racialized, criminalized, and non-heteronormative (Tyler). The existence of successful Ban the Box legislation—thirty-three states and 150 cities removed the criminal history disclosure question from applications—across the United States shows that disclosure of a person’s criminal history is not necessary (Avery and Hernandez; “A Guide to Ban”).³ Then how do we account for the violence inflicted upon Jarrod, particularly when the information requested is optional and varies state by state?

In this essay, I argue that biographic mediation directly affects the civil rights of the formerly incarcerated, and has the power to render them rightless (Paik 3–4).⁴ But biographic mediation also offers a limited source of personal power, as applicants navigate the technical requirements of access to resources. Rights campaigns and legal challenges have destabilized the effectiveness of stigma as a justification for exclusion, while applicant experiences point to a more nuanced set of strategies to manage the persistent stigmatizing effects of biographic disclosure required for admission, employment, and access to resources and opportunity. Biographic mediation has two poles: a biographic request linked to resources and a choice to strategically fulfill the request to access those resources. The “structured request” (such as applications, forms, letters detailing criminal history) requires “personal information that facilitates institutional decision-making” (Coletu 384), and is a form of social control. The second pole is an ideological framework in which a person changes how they narrate their story, oscillating between dissemblance and disclosure in order to navigate demands for biographic mediation and manage a “spoiled identity” (Goffman 70–72). The reactivation of “spoiled identities” occurs because the demand for disclosure animates consequences for past

arrest and/or incarceration in the present tense (Tyler 753–54).

The social analysis that follows emphasizes how the demand for personal information limits access to resources and opportunity, and how the formerly incarcerated work with and around those exclusions. Dissemblance and disclosure strategically address exclusionary practices, offering insight into how biographic mediation assigns those involved in the criminal legal system⁵ a “permanent pariah status” (Alexander 95). Goffman noted how a stigmatized individual is likely to feel that he is “on,” meaning a “self-conscious and calculating effort to impress” (14). In his analysis, dissemblance is a technique to manage an identity that “normals” judge, but in my approach dissemblance is examined in relation to power, which exposes the naturalization of punishment across institutions, limiting the experience of freedom. If this entitlement to extend punishment via stigma is not an official policy, how does it become a de facto administrative practice affecting the life course of a formerly incarcerated person?

The focus on these two poles addresses the cumulative weight of biographic mediation in everyday life, which manifests as rigid administrative tasks rather than mounting pressure. The process is burdensome and works upon the spirit and psyche of the formerly incarcerated, extracting payment every time past experiences are readjudicated in the present. This essay will consider how these poles converge and constitute a violence, which is not readily apprehended because it is widely dispersed in “capillaries of power,” internalized in the collateral consequences and the taint of criminality, and results in the ongoing punishment of those who have completed their sentences (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 37–55). Goffman’s theory of stigma is most useful when considered in relation to these power dynamics and the production of stigma. Weaponized stigma cannot be understood outside of its relationship to power, which is why reengagement with Goffman’s theory fifty years later tends to emphasize the practices that naturalize stigma as a tool for mediating power (Tyler 754–57). Consider how application forms seem to represent opportunity for the formerly incarcerated, but the requirement to check the box effectively limits access because the application process integrates information that is technically not considered a condition for automatic rejection. This contradiction is apparent in the fine print that indicates how such information may be used. However, initiatives to “ban the box” can be problematic because they use silence as the primary means to safeguard opportunity, and as I show, particularly in the case of Jarrod, silence about past experiences undermines successful reentry. It also limits what we know about the cumulative violence experienced by the formerly incarcerated, especially as we pursue educational opportunities. This essay will highlight the role of storytelling in understanding these processes. This is by no means a comprehensive assessment of the subject, but it may open a critical line of inquiry for further study.

Millions of people with criminal records—and the number is growing—may experience epistemic violence, the flagrant dismissal of our right to be knowers and disseminators of our stories, which manifests when narrowed forms of knowledge

redirect life opportunities. I am formerly incarcerated. Methodologically, this fact is relevant because I use “we” as a collective and inclusive reference to the formerly incarcerated. I chose interviewees who knew about my past, which opened up space for sharing in the interviews, and allowed me to expand the interview method to include myself in the research process. As Anneleen Masschelein and Rebecca Roach argue, “Such reflection can include the point of view of the interviewee, the apparent subject of the interview, but it can also include the viewpoint of the interviewer, who uses the interview to shape her own subjectivity as researcher” (172–73). I offer my own narratives constructed around specific engagements with biographic mediation that allow me to reveal the impact of these processes on my life and subsequent investment in this inquiry (Smith 71–77). My selection of the men and women for these interviews was based on: (1) equal familiarity with one another’s story as formerly incarcerated people, and (2) consideration of experiences based on race, sex, and ability to reflect comprehensively on each person’s life, which is important in order to highlight the differences in impact related to identity.⁶

Each narrative demonstrates the cumulative effects of biographic mediation across institutions, contributing to a growing archive of published experiences that speak back to the violence of bureaucratic practices shaping reentry.⁷ Such collections expand the archive of lived experience beyond functional demands for disclosure that limit life outcomes. The Reentry Think Tank, among other initiatives, collects the stories of formerly incarcerated people and their difficulties with reentry as a tool for policymakers “to create strategies for re-integration,” strategies that reimagine social services as remedies rather than mediators of violence (Greenburg). It is critically important to collect and highlight the stories of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people because our lived experiences make visible the fundamental flaws and cumulative impact of this system.

Grounded in the Black feminist tradition, these interviews were designed to center our experiences as commentary on institutional arrangements, clearing space for reflection that yields theoretical insight (Collins S16–19). In this reflective space, we epistemically privilege our definitions, alternative modes of valuation, and our right to be knowers of our own experiences in the face of oppression. In other words, the knowledge produced in the context of our lives can only be flattened from the orientation of those who objectify us and control access to resources and opportunities. Furthermore, solutions to these problems must involve the testimonies of those directly impacted.

This essay foregrounds our experiences, but it isn’t a story of victimhood. Quite the contrary. This inquiry shows how the formerly incarcerated find ways to counter violence even as we cannot fully deflect it. In other words, refusing stigma and opposing the demand for biographic mediation are forms of resistance, even when they exact a price upon the psyche and spirit.

This particular study contributes to a larger project that examines the consequences of carceral ideologies on people’s lives by demonstrating how racial

capitalism and its carceral rationality of governance weaponize stigma. Those of us who have been criminalized economically and politically, and are navigating social disenfranchisement (Robinson 204–205; Wang 69), also have a vision of how to transform this system—through its dismantling (Critical Resistance 10–11).⁸

Biographic Mediation and Weaponized Stigma

The ordinariness of applications as a means to access opportunity can cause us to overlook the form as a method for policing opportunity. However, the consequences of being involved with the criminal legal system inevitably surface on the form. Checking a box to indicate a felony conviction in the past can transform administrators, readers, and data entry clerks into “carceral judges,” because they determine the weight of disclosure and its impact on eligibility.⁹ For this project, I use the term “carceral agents” to describe the administrators who control access to resources for the formerly incarcerated because I want to convey how the afterlife of incarceration extends carceral logics of governance into everyday life. Carceral agents, endowed with the power to establish who and what is normal, require “each individual, wherever he may find himself, [to] subject . . . his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements” to these processes (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 304).

Carceral agents hold discretionary power to determine whether an arrest warrant is issued, probation or parole is revoked, or a payment is processed. This power is great, and therefore, people at the mercy of this power walk a tightrope. In her work examining the changing roles of welfare officers, Celeste Watkins-Hayes highlights how discretion used by carceral agents “is not merely a product of random decision making, it is embedded in a certain interpretation of who clients are, what they should expect from institutions, and how agencies should in turn define ‘help’” (79). Judges are thought to have the most discretion over individual cases, but the process of discretion is woven throughout the criminal legal system and institutions generally, forming a network of carceral agents embedded in every institution capable of providing or denying a resource: “Teachers, police officers, social workers, judges, public lawyers, court officers, and health care workers are all gatekeepers and bureaucrats, and how they process people creates, informs and constitutes policy” (Harris 126).

Michelle Alexander observes that “the ‘whites only’ signs may be gone, but new signs have gone up—notices placed in job applications, rental agreements, loan applications, forms for welfare benefits, school applications, and petitions for licenses, inform the general public that ‘felons’ are not wanted here” (141). When carceral agents decide to render services, they are making those decisions through their racial prejudices, ideas of gender norms, and their “moral assumptions that parse out the ‘deservingness’ of various groups . . .” (Watkins-Hayes 9). Watkins-Hayes acknowledges that through carceral agents’ orientation to the population they serve, they “transform welfare offices into social environments in

which groups continually engage to reinforce, contest, or circumvent existing inequalities” (9). The formerly incarcerated are currently subject to nearly 45,000 legal collateral consequences of their criminal convictions (*National Inventory*).¹⁰ These laws, and accompanying policies and regulations, are overwhelmingly tied to forms and other demands for disclosure that block or hinder successful reintegration into full social, economic, and civic participation.

Access to opportunity for the formerly incarcerated requires writing ourselves in a way that is acceptable to others. Conviction for a crime requires repeated and extensive biographic disclosure in interviews with parole/probation officers, doctors, employment agents, loan officers, and leasing agents, beyond the local need for information related to the task at hand. What is lost over time as we parrot the “right” self-narrative to gain access to resources and opportunity? How does the need for identification and authorization shape identity when the formerly incarcerated are trying to find themselves after incarceration? The result “yields a conflicted calculus,” as our trajectory toward self-determination is troubled by carceral agents, institutional decision-makers, and others who possess the power to stigmatize us in ways that can gravely affect life outcomes (Coletu 384–85).

Goffman defines stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (3). Once “criminal” and crime-specific monikers such as “thief,” “killer,” and “whore” are attached to someone involved in the criminal legal system, they are difficult to leave behind, because the presence of a “criminal” in society allows all others to think of themselves as normal by contrast. “Criminal” is a categorization much like race, sex, and class that is most consequential as a binary definition, determining outcast status (Goffman 48).

Not all formerly incarcerated people are visibly marked as outcasts; most pass as “normal” people, so a carceral logic determines the distinction. In prisons, specific colored uniforms and/or badges make this distinction visible, but once released, clothing is no longer an identifying tool. Stigma should be “perceptible,” and perceptibility is aided, according to Goffman, by previous knowledge. Therefore, the “criminal” background must be known in order to effectively establish otherness. Without it, a formerly incarcerated person could mistakenly be treated like everyone else and given access that is not due to them. Therefore, “stigma pertains to social identity,” meaning the identity used in social interactions is mediated by a conviction and a criminal record when disclosed in forms (Goffman 49–50).¹¹ Personal identity comprises a social and legal identity, and a conviction modifies the affordances of personal identity, which makes it part of every encounter that requires identification. When integrated, an official identity is “intentionally articulated through a series of documents produced for a specific purpose—‘to delineate and enforce a single identity through which an individual must conduct his or her affairs, and on which the state can rely for monitoring that conduct’” (Robertson 330). This official identity, rooted in a person’s documented criminal history and stigmatized social identity, and substantiated through processes of verification, is the primary reason the formerly incarcerated cannot detach themselves from a

“criminal” designation (331).

Goffman did not account for stigma’s relation to power or how the processes of stigma become widespread (Tyler 754–57). While stigma is relational, it is also structural. Political elites, through the creation of punitive policies, craft the structural basis for the cultural reproduction of stigma (Bonn). Stigma is then folded back into laws, codes, and regulations, which are disseminated to law enforcement and carceral agents for implementation (Keene, Smoyer, and Blankenship 800). Biographic mediation is a structural process that judges past experiences. It can weaponize stigma against the formerly incarcerated by placing criminal history in a unified biography required for applications. Backed by the power of the state, weaponized stigma ensures that the formerly incarcerated experience little to no class mobility, as well as wagelessness, disenfranchisement, and civic exclusion (Tyler and Slater 727). Everyone, however, is not harmed to the same degree. Social networks can shield some from harm. As Bonn states,

Unfortunately, the crimes of privileged individuals within the context of either legitimate corporations or government offices frequently go undetected and unprosecuted due to the relative power, status and political influence of the perpetrators. They are often shielded from prosecution by corporate law and their greedy allies who have similar interests.

But in most cases, stigma means the formerly incarcerated must constantly meet the demand for biographic mediation. Weaponized stigma can also negatively affect how a person thinks about themselves. Because most of us can’t claim “innocence” in order to receive the support of civil rights organizations or the dominant power structure, as the criminal past is recounted and remembered, the weight of failing can be debilitating, negatively colliding with reentry and stabilization, and threatening psychic trauma and self-devaluation (Wang 262–67). While Goffman explains how to “cover” stigma, he fails to excavate the structures and power dynamics that formulate and reproduce the violence of stigmatization (Tyler 757).

Several scholars have conceptualized this violence. Michelle Alexander argues that through social stigma processes—of which biographic mediation is one—the formerly incarcerated are “confined to the margins of mainstream society and denied access to the mainstream economy” (4). Social stigma processes have a way of deteriorating the quality of life formerly incarcerated people, crafting the conditions that lead to a slow death. Lauren Berlant describes the process of slow death as “the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence” (95). At the heart of slow death is social death, as the deterioration, the wearing away of social networks and family connections, is accompanied by lasting criminalization often occurring in the everyday experiences of formerly incarcerated people. Lisa Marie Cacho extends Orlando Patterson’s theorization of social death to suspected terrorists, gang members, and the undocumented, theorizing status crimes as a

mechanism for rendering groups rightless—and here I include the formerly incarcerated. Social death can be defined as group criminalization, wherein members of that group are systematically excluded or threatened with exclusion from the law's protection, but not from its discipline. Individuals alone do not assign social values, but rather values are shaped by a system composed of legal, state, governmental, and financial entities that empowers their agents to implement norms (Cacho 6–8).

In the arrest, conviction, incarceration, and hyper-surveillance of the formerly incarcerated, and in our subsequent exclusion, violence is not necessarily visible upon the body but is dispersed across time and space, and thus is not considered violence at all. Most incarcerated people find ways to navigate the dehumanization inherent in the operation of a prison and its consequences, but not without lasting ill effects, as I and others argue (Pager 2–3). The “unfreedom” of release is defined by violence, as the newly released find ourselves overwhelmingly poor and subject to legal, financial, and social consequences of criminal convictions, along with the accumulated mental and emotional trauma that accompanies incarceration and reentry (Gilmore 12).¹²

Dissemlance

Unfortunately, applying to most graduate programs across the country while incarcerated is nearly impossible without help. Beyond checking the box (disclosing a criminal record), most applications are only available online, yet most prisons do not permit internet access. While incarcerated, a prospective student may choose to have a friend or family member apply for them in their name. Another option is to contact the university directly and request someone in the department to input an incarcerated person's application through the online portal. This is the strategy I used and it required a mediator. The mediator is someone who contacts the university on a student's behalf and finds a university representative to submit the application. The mediator has to disclose a great deal of information about a student in order to gain assistance to input their data. Even then in my case, the university representative required written permission to create a login and password in my name. These technical practices represent some of the concrete ways a person has to meet the demand for biographic mediation or be locked out of opportunity. Nevertheless, I was determined. I completed the applications, prepared my personal statement, and disclosed the reason for my incarceration along with my academic statement outlining my career objectives.

After a department reviews the application, they forward it to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) or an equivalent, and the dean's office sends an award/admissions or rejection letter. The award/admission letter outlines the program, stipend, health coverage, etc., and gives a deadline to accept. Two Midwest universities were the first schools to admit me. Each department followed up with contacts—faculty and students—to answer all of my questions. In the meantime, two West Coast universities and one East Coast university sent me award letters. While processing these developments, one Midwest university came back and requested consent for a background check. I found this strange, as all of my paperwork clearly stated my incarcerated status including my address. I had also spoken with the chair of the department that admitted me while incarcerated via video conference. I clearly met the requirements for disclosure in that interview. He said he didn't understand the additional request and suspected it was a formality. I completed a form that agreed to the background check. Within a few weeks, the department chair contacted me and apologized profusely. Apparently the GSAS used the hard "facts" of my background check and the hard "facts" of my incarceration to rescind the award letter and stated in a curt letter that they erred in offering me the opportunity in the first place. Though I was angered by this development, ultimately I wasn't too surprised. The liberal university has historically reified structures of racism, classism, and sex discrimination—why would they not reify carceral logics of exclusion for someone who apparently hadn't "paid their debt to society," even after nearly twenty-eight years? When the second Midwest university sent me the same "standard" request for a background check form, I simply withdrew my application and wrote them a kind rejection letter thanking them for the offer before they could perform the same dance, which is similar to Jarrod's experience with the universities.

Biographic Mediation as a Counter-Strategy

The Work of Dissemblance

What is dissemblance? It is derived from the word “dissemble,” which means “to hide under a false appearance, to put on the appearance of, and to put on a false appearance: conceal facts, intentions, or feelings under some pretense” (“Dissemble”). When someone “dissembles,” they create “the appearance of disclosure, or openness about themselves and their feelings, while actually remaining an enigma” (Hine, “Rape” 915). Historian Darlene Clark Hine identifies dissemblance as a strategy that enslaved African American women (and men) used to survive and resist their captivity and avoid sexual violence (“African American Women” 12–14). In effect, they showed one face to the master while they raised their children and taught them survival strategies. For those captive women besieged by racism, arduous labor, and sexual violence, “survival *was* resistance” (Hine 12). The master could not know what they truly thought of him or her. The strategy of dissemblance proved valuable in the antebellum and Jim Crow eras as well. White supremacy backed by the power of the state created a hotbed of precarity for African American women in the form of economic discrimination and ongoing sexual violence. Dissemblance “enabled [them] to appear open, but actually to preserve their interior lives from whites, and even from Black men and children” (Hine 14). It is what is meant by Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask”:

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

Dissemblance isn’t limp acquiescence. The poem says, “Why should the world be over-wise / In counting all our tears and sighs?” In essence, Dunbar is saying that

while we are suffering, we will keep it to ourselves and protect ourselves from exposure. The poem speaks from the lived experience of pain, knowing that better treatment is deserved. Recognizing dignity and self-respect internally is what Daina Berry calls “soul value” (33–34). As a counter-strategy to social death, soul value affirms what is not externally recognized.

Importantly, dissemblance differs from Erving Goffman’s notion of covering. Covering is the acceptance and/or admission of a stigma that restricts display before others (102–103). Dissemblance, on the other hand, pushes against acceptance and protects the inner self. The formerly incarcerated should not continue to be punished via constant disclosure of our past upon release. Nor should we be forced into silence, wherein we hide who we are and what we’ve come through in order to receive access to resources and opportunity.

Nevertheless, dissemblance allows the newly released to carve out mental space to reenter society on our own terms and gather resources to avoid reincarceration. In order to face a hostile world that routinely disregards, violates, and discriminates, the formerly incarcerated present a dissembling face in response to biographic mediation. Dissemblance is selective disclosure, played out with family, friends, and others with whom the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated have frequent contacts, such as guards and parole/probation officers and other carceral agents. Just as dissemblance helped African American women work and live every day amid a high level of precarity, so too has dissemblance helped the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated today. The formerly incarcerated commonly use dissemblance in employment. We live every day knowing we’re paid less or under the table, which also means no benefits. We know that someone could steal something and blame us, and our probation/parole officer could be called and our freedom revoked. We know that someone at our workplace could look up our case on Westlaw, an online legal research service, and use the information to attack us. We know that we can’t call the police for help or file complaints as others can, as we risk arrest because of our criminal history. We know that freedom is potentially fleeting and unfortunately subject to others’ decisions as well as our own. The work of dissemblance exposes the ongoing demand for disclosure and documentation (Couloute; Couloute and Kopf; “Understanding Policies”).

Dissemblance is one strategy for living through precarity, as our goal is to get the interview, get (and stay) employed, get into (and finish) college, get (and keep) an apartment, and regain (and keep) our children. The alternative is the cutting humiliation of reincarceration and the profound loss of everything—all over again.

Sociologist Joshua Price revealed the work of dissemblance when he interviewed a jailed African American woman as a part of his research into allegations of mistreatment and abuse in a Binghamton, New York jail (62–66). The woman told Price, a white man, a great deal about how she and the other women were treated in the jail, and her personal suffering for speaking up, but she told one of Price’s graduate students, an African American woman, about her own rape. Price suggested the woman’s selective disclosure might be part of a culture of dissemblance, as the

incarcerated woman and the graduate student were both African American. I would argue that a culture of dissemblance is present among incarcerated people of all races. As I have argued elsewhere, conviction and subsequent incarceration can cause white people to lose their white respectability and the privilege traditionally conferred upon them (Jones). The power dynamics between the incarcerated person and the guard/warden also supersede race. Jarrod reflected on how dissemblance is learned in prison when interacting with guards:

I think part of prison teaches you compliance. You know, so you don't like it [when a guard talks to you horribly]. You're like, "Well okay, alright. Well thanks for talking." And in your mind, you're thinking, "What the heck is this person thinking? This is unrealistic." You learn to accept things you don't like . . . and then you resent it to some degree too, but, but you're used to that "obey" and "resent" . . . Unfortunately, it's an easy pattern to fall into . . . you just learn to accept it and not like it, swallow it and keep going. I feel like we're [people who've been in prison] well practiced in that.

Like Jarrod, Celia embraced dissembling as a valuable tool when dealing with potential employers and other carceral agents. Celia recalled how in the early days of her release dissembling was the difference between getting a job or being locked out of opportunity:

Well I had this trick in my mind that . . . would go in my mind over and over, which was that if people could imagine what was going on in my mind while I was sitting there talking to them and looking completely normal they would understand how completely crazy the experience of being "normal" was for me.

So I was always for the first couple of years, five years, I would go into a situation and think "if they knew what was going on in my mind they wouldn't let me in the room." You know? Because I was completely embroiled in the anger of what the conditions were for prisoners . . . and constantly trying to say, you know, how do you negotiate between wanting people to take this issue up, while at the same time not trying to scare, freak, or you know, alienate the people that you're sitting in front of.

In the case of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, the goal is often to avoid additional punishment, harassment, or violence while attempting to gain access to resources and opportunities that make life inside livable and life on parole/probation survivable. As shown in the interviews, the practice of dissemblance honed in prison is deployed because there is a keen awareness that discrimination operates through biographic mediation, or marking one's record to foreclose future opportunities. The warden, guards, correctional staff, and probation and parole officers all seemingly have more power over the incarcerated and formerly incarcer-

ated, so a degree of dissemblance is necessary to survive.

Dissemblance and Ban the Box strategies are different. Dissemblance is performative, personal, and typically face-to-face. Dissemblance is selective disclosure on the individual's terms. Ban the Box strategies attempt to level the playing field by removing unnecessary disclosure. However, Ban the Box strategies are limited. As a recent report shows, in cases where the criminal history question is not asked on an application, younger men of color receive fewer callbacks by potential employers, because they assume a "likelihood that the applicant has a criminal history" (Stacy and Cohen). In other words, carceral agents can draw conclusions about a person even when the box is removed. Dissemblance will not necessarily prevent discrimination in this manner. However, in situations where there is no box, dissemblance provides a space for reflection and allows the individual to protect the self and avoid psychic and spiritual harm, because dissemblance anticipates different modes of questioning aimed at disqualification and discrimination. Ban the Box strategies in comparison do not. It has become increasingly apparent that we now need to focus our efforts on developing strategies to counter weaponized stigma in addition to banning the box.

Disclosure

When I left prison, I possessed my state identification from my home state, a social security card, and a birth certificate. Once I checked in with parole and signed my apartment lease, I needed to secure a non-driver New York state identification. I carried all of these records and pieces of identification to the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). I believed this process would be a snap.

I walked into the DMV, took a number, sat down and filled out the application. After an hour and a half, my number was finally called. Quickly, I rushed to the counter and began pulling out all of my identification. I offered my Indiana state identification, social security card, birth certificate, NYU University ID, and NYU insurance card. The clerk said, "You don't have enough points. You have only five and so I can't give you a state ID." I was shocked. Most formerly incarcerated people don't have that much identifying documentation. What would they do? I suddenly remembered that I had my release papers from prison, my interstate compact paperwork,¹³ my sentence modification court papers, and my divorce decree. I offered all of it to the clerk and she called for a supervisor. The gentleman took the paperwork and told me he'd call me back. After another half hour and after he reviewed all I had to establish my identity, again, not enough identification. The supervisor asked if I had transcripts from New York University, and I told him that I'm a new student entering the state and the university. He asked for other pieces of identification that most people would possibly have if they had not been incarcerated. I needed only one point. In the end, he could/would not help me. Re-penalized and criminalized, I pondered what to do.

The supervisor said I could request a review from his supervisor, which required me to go to another window, take a different number, and wait another hour. When the supervisor's supervisor called my number, I laid before him eleven pieces of identification: Indiana state identification, social security, NYU student identification and NYU health insurance cards, birth certificate, interstate compact, letters of fellowship award and enrollment from NYU and the Charles Warren Center, divorce decree, sentence modification, and release court paperwork—all I had in the world to prove my identity. Everything had my name on it and two pieces of the eleven had my photo. He took it all and disappeared.

The sun had set, the doors were locked, and the clerks were processing the last few people. Sitting there for hours, waiting on a carceral agent to affirm my legal identity and biography. Well after 6:30 p.m., the supervisor's supervisor came out of the office and decided that I could be who I am. Through a process behind closed doors, he endeavored to verify my biography. He then conferred upon me a document that establishes my legal and social identity. I only have a New York state identification now because of the personal choice of an individual who needed eleven pieces of identification to agree that no other person could have this much personal information and also look like the person in the photos except me. The irony of it all is that obtaining my passport required less.

What I remember most about that day is the frustration, hunger, and anger that mounted from pleading and trying to convince others who I am. I gave these strangers

more personal details of my life in conversation than most would think of giving a stranger in any circumstances. My experience shows how dissemblance and disclosure often work together, as both were required in order to reach my goal. Rejected twice that day, the conferral of my identity not only rested with strangers but also rested with my ability and my willingness to hide my pain and anger, while revealing my past.

Disclosure

Disclosure is a decision as much as a requirement. Husbands and wives may choose not to disclose credit card information or separate banking accounts to one another for certain reasons. A student may disclose their racial and ethnic background in order to gain college scholarships. I would like to consider how disclosure is also about engagement with acquaintances, strangers, and carceral agents.

For the formerly incarcerated, missing documents disrupt critical relationships with institutions. The process can render a person rightless (Cacho 7). Mediating stigma is about fashioning and/or reclaiming a positive social identity in relationship with institutions (Goffman 59–60). Celia discovered early in her release that the lack of identifying documents needed to determine her identity at the DMV significantly hampered her reentry.

Celia: So it took me months to get ID, you know. The only ID I had was my prison ID and that just didn't wash. So going to the DMV and trying to get a birth certificate with a proven ID was ridiculous. So I had a friend that helped me go through all of that. And it took months just to get the paperwork just to live in the world.

We are immensely burdened with establishing a personal identity that is rooted in legitimate documentation. Why the need for such identification? Identification authorizes identity, citizenship, and access, and without proper identification, one's social identity can be misrepresented (Goffman 61). Identification is also a material process that is linked to countless application and access procedures. Our biography sets the parameters on our access, and that biography must be legible. In the case of the formerly incarcerated, total strangers become "knowers" of the individual in personal ways (Goffman 66).

Disclosure is about revealing relevant or secret information, facts critical to some designation or understanding of something or someone (Goffman 42). In *Becoming Ms. Burton*, Burton's previous drug convictions would come back to haunt her desire for a higher education. After providing care to an elderly woman, Burton wanted to pursue a nursing degree to improve her own skills and the quality of care she was providing, and that required her to fill out forms and secure permission from a carceral agent:

He asked about my background, and I stumbled through some answers, which prompted him to ask if I'd ever had a felony conviction. "Yes," I said. "You can't be

licensed as an RN or certified as a home health aide with a criminal record. . . . You should forget about being in health care.” I felt like the air was knocked out of me. I wanted to say, *But Ms. Andrews might lose her leg, and maybe I could have done something.* I asked, “Can I take nursing courses just to learn?” “You should forget about being in health care,” he said. . . . When I returned to Ms. Andrews’s, I closed my bedroom door and cried. (Burton and Lynn 137)

Burton had to disclose her background only to discover she was permanently locked out of a career for which she possessed experience and enthusiasm. As Burton realized, “it hadn’t occurred to me that my path to advancement couldn’t go much further, that I’d be denied the opportunity to learn, to gain skills, to better myself” (137).

When applying for a job, a formerly incarcerated person may creatively account for the gap in employment history by listing their prison employment as “real” employment on an application, or finding other ways to explain the gap. This method is primarily used by those serving short sentences.

MJ: How did you narrate the time you were absent from society?

Roland: Well, I didn’t tell them . . . for those folks who didn’t know, I just carried on as if everything was still the same . . . you know, I just took some time off. [Because I was incarcerated in a different state,] I would say I was in [state], but not incarcerated. . . . I remember trying to gain a job and that was a very difficult thing. What to admit, how to explain it, and also how to finesse it. . . . So it was definitely about trying to evaluate the risk.

As Roland stated, several questions remain. How much do you tell? When do you tell? Under what circumstances are you compelled to tell complete strangers your involvement with the criminal legal system in order to gain access to resources and opportunity? For how long should you continue to disclose? Six months? Five years? Forever? How does one account for gaps in work and/or educational history?

While at work release, Jarrod learned a strategy that taught him how to control the level of disclosure in interviewing:

I practice levels of generality and specificity for interviews. Say like you are interviewing and it’s time to talk about the felony. I’ve got it to where I can be kind of general. . . . Or, I can go into [a] little more detail and if I have to, I can go into more. I practiced each one and try to give the minimum that’s necessary, but yet, what’s still necessary. . . . I learned that at the reentry facility actually on interview practices . . . it taught me to practice three different levels: general, medium, and specific. I don’t use specific often.

Although Jarrod was fortunate to learn some skills that helped him control the level of disclosure, he also understood the inevitability of questions. In fact, his effort to procure records that would satisfy disclosure requirements placed him in the “regime of verification” with educational and social service organizations (Robertson 331–32). He explained,

So there’s [state college] and/or this National Board Certification for ——. Between the two, I went to the courthouse, twice. I went to the county jail, two or three times. I went to the state police office. I went to my old attorney’s office who had passed away. The records were still there. [All of this] just to get the records that I needed proving to them because I checked the box. . . .

The University of — did a little something different. . . . They actually interviewed me. . . . They let me speak for myself. He’s [department chair] like, “So look I know you’re not going to be any problem,” he says, “but I got to convince the board.” So then he called in basically my therapist that I’ve known since 2000 that I’d been seeing since I’ve been out . . . and then he called my boss. My boss actually went in to see him . . . since I checked the box. . . . The layers of disclosure though. How many people have to go find their boss? How many people have to go get their therapist?

Sherrel faced a similar challenge in obtaining housing. Once released, she went many months without stable housing, living with family and friends:

Oh my goodness. I probably, before I found my apartment, I probably filled out fifteen applications from places throughout the city . . . because [housing] applications say, “have you ever been convicted of a felony,” period. . . . There was no telling them anything. Once they saw it, that was it. They didn’t want to hear anything. . . . So you’re spending anywhere from \$30 to \$60 per application. They take your money and go, “Oh well I’ve just made 60 bucks off her.” “Oh, I just made 30 bucks off her,” you know, and that’s it.

Sherrel came into contact with a formerly incarcerated woman who offered to help her secure housing. Employed by her mother as a property manager, the formerly incarcerated woman assisted from inside the bureaucratic process. Sherrel applied but nonetheless was required to disclose her criminal history in a letter:

So I had to end up writing a letter and just pretty much tell them what happened. . . . And in that . . . any other time I can write something down and hey, it flows, it goes. It took me three days to write this letter because in writing this letter, I kind of relived. Unfortunately, I, I kind of relived and that, that was hard. That was hard. I mean, you do your time, you want to put stuff behind you, but it’s not that easy. So in writing that letter I had to relive and I was extremely detailed. I told

them what specifically, what happened. . . . I had to inform them on what I did while I was incarcerated and who I am now. And in closing, I told them, I said, and I'm going to let you know what type of tenant I'm going to be and who I'll be five years from now.

Even though Sherrel had a contact at this apartment complex and had grown desperate for housing, she met the demand willingly, however retraumatizing it was. If in our biographies we can be painted as monsters, then the denial of opportunity isn't surprising. The revelation that someone has an arrest record and/or has been in prison immediately results in negative associations:

Celia: When I inherited some wealth because a family member died and I was named as a trustee of this inheritance as well as inheriting it, the bank said no. The bank said, "You're a felon. We've done background checks on you and, and you cannot be responsible for this money." Yes, Chase Bank baby. . . . It's not that I couldn't inherit it, [but] I couldn't be the trustee of it.

Celia was denied the rights bestowed by her relatives, because the background check "tainted" her identity and standing as a potential trustee. Her biography was mediated within a bureaucratic process that limited her ability to occupy the role specified in her relative's will.

In Jarrod's case, his greatest challenges came from institutions. To counter those challenges, he found creative ways to mitigate the stigma when dealing with carceral agents:

Jarrod: So, I think . . . that [state college] wanted more legal stuff, but I slid other more personal statements in there too. I even slid in some reference letters as well.

[For the] National Board Certification for —, at one time, I gave them an account of my daily routine. I was like, "I got up at four in the morning, went to the gym, then I went to work all day, then I went home at night, took my grandfather outside and we gardened together and then I did this and this and this and this." I just gave them "this is what I do day to day," or "all the day while we were traveling, I would read" or . . . "I'm doing this home project." I would try to give them accounts so that they could get a feel for me.

MJ: So you disclosed more of your personal self, your more personal life in order to counteract your previous quarter of a century of experience?

J: Cuz here's what they're asking, here's what they're demanding to see of me (*he pinches his fingers close*), this one little piece. What they're demanding of this disclosure, [is it] in person first language? No. It's in label first. [They ask,] "are you a felon?" Yes. Okay, now what? Well, I'm also all of this other. I want to make you

see that too. So then it's almost like I had to figure out how to insinuate, interpolate that knowledge, that information.

By choosing to over-disclose, Jarrod found a way to counter the stigmatization that comes with disclosure. He found a creative way to insist he is a person more than a "criminal" who is frozen in time and ineligible for opportunity. He told them about his day, his family, and his work. While denied entrance to the state college, Jarrod did receive an affirmative response from the National Board Certification he applied for and the graduate program at the University of —.

Yet Jarrod discovered while enrolled in graduate school that avoiding disclosure could be forced upon him in order to attend. He agreed to withhold his former incarcerated status from his fellow classmates because he agreed to be placed under a gag order to withhold that information. Even when required to deceive, avoiding disclosure can backfire:

Jarrod: They let me in, but the department chair, basically put a gag order on me saying that he did not want me to talk about my background, disclose my background. I told him I do not live duplicitously. This is not how I live. . . . I said, "I'm very upfront with this and I think professionally I want to be as well." . . . He's like, "let them get to know you first." That was the first step. Let them get to know me. Now it's a point to where I'm getting to be friends with these people. I was invited to a wedding. I'm coming over to one person's house to study, you know, together because we have a group project. I don't like doing this if they don't know. . . . So I told him, "it's a matter of time, it's a matter of time." And he's like, "Well, you never know how people are going to react once they know. So let's just wait and deal with it [later]." Well, he's just burying his head in the sand is what he [is] doing. . . . So I said, "When's the best time to do this?" He says, "When you retire." It's like at this point what do you do? This person is like the gate keeper. If I [was] going to go for the second half of the program, . . . I had to reapply. I really can't you know, buck him. First of all, I'm not going to do it cowardly, behind his back. If I'm going to do it, I'm going to tell him I'm doing [it]. But I really can't do that because he's got that [opportunity] held over me.

As a result, Jarrod experienced pain because his class focused on psychotherapy, the students shared a great deal of their personal lives, and he withheld, which felt inauthentic and wrong to him. His fellow students found out through other means, and many felt betrayed by Jarrod, but most felt betrayed by the university for insisting a fellow student deceive them on its terms.

Jarrod: A few of the students, were very angry at the university . . . that I was not allowed to tell. He [the department chair] owned up to it [saying], "Hey, I told him not to." He tried to act like it wasn't that I couldn't [tell], but he strongly suggested that I . . . You know, whatever. He backed up a little there, that's fine. But he

still owned up to it that I was not supposed to . . . but then it's a shock because here's someone that they've known for a year-and-a-half that they thought was this, . . . okay, I was that, but now . . . it was just a bad situation. Some of them have worked through it since then, some never will.

Some of the formerly incarcerated suffer mental and emotional strain because the pressure is great on all sides to meet basic social needs. These choices are not choices, especially when the formerly incarcerated experience legalized discrimination that creates precarity and threatens life outcomes.

Violence

As the news got around that I would attend graduate school once released from prison, a reporter contacted me to write a story. I was interested in talking for the formerly incarcerated men and women who might apply down the road. If 70–100 million Americans have criminal records, it is likely that some of them will decide to apply to an Ivy League school as well. In thinking about them, I agreed to the interview. I allowed myself to be interviewed, recorded and photographed. I erringly assumed that if the reporter would spend nearly two and a half hours recording my voice, then he would quote me directly and often. The opposite occurred. The reporter included just two statements from me. I'd foolishly believed his spiel about how much he cared about prison reform and social justice. I talked for over two hours about the toughest and most difficult period in my life, and for what? Two lines.

Initially I saw this interview as a platform where I could state to academia, and readers outside of the university, that the formerly incarcerated should not be judged forever by their conviction and that the liberal university should not play the role of benevolent gatekeeper for the state, thereby reifying carceral logics.

The reporter changed the point of entry and the story, allowing elite whites, the former prosecutor, dean, faculty, and others, to talk about me as authorities on my life. Their voices were more important than my own, yet there would be no story without me.

Historically, elite whites have viewed minoritized stories as a way to hide their gate-keeping strategies and reinscribe their power by fashioning narratives that serve themselves. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people are not allowed to be knowers of personal experience. I am an African American woman from a poor background who is responsible for a great tragedy that occurred in my life twenty-eight years ago. This article played out the racist and patriarchal ethics of value that prioritized external judgment over shared experience.

It is important to consider the fact that there will be others. Contrary to whatever myths people may hold about prisons, those few higher education programs in prisons educate those with non-violent and violent convictions alike. There will be more men and women with violent pasts that possess degrees prior to incarceration or earn college degrees while incarcerated. Many may desire to press onward academically. If having access to a higher education is rehabilitative in the common parlance, and the “rehabilitation” of incarcerated people is the goal and rhetoric of state actors and affiliates, then would it not be elitist and discriminatory to argue that those worthy of higher education in prison, lose access upon release, especially in the Ivy League institutions of whiteness and privilege? It is a question every educator must answer for themselves. I have, nevertheless, learned a lesson that will remain forever. Violence can follow the process of biographic mediation and the demand for disclosure. We know from Ban the Box initiatives that the demand is not necessary and doesn't equal nondisclosure. Can we not shift the function of narrative as a process of readjudication?

Conclusion

Countering the demand for biographic mediation helps mitigate the collateral consequences of arrest and/or conviction. Higher education can occasionally modify collateral consequences, so the current effort to bring back Pell Grants to incarcerated students beyond the initial federal pilot is important, yet there isn't much talk about students finishing their degrees at the same universities upon release. The focus is on the number of degrees granted in prison. Unfortunately, access to an education is not enough to alleviate all the challenges of reentry because the formerly incarcerated are targeted in biographic mediation processes that block and/or hinder opportunity beyond the university. Therefore, any plan to reinstitute Pell Grants to the incarcerated must be high-quality, include measures to remediate, or avoid whenever possible, processes that foreclose reentry, and create opportunities to complete a degree and assist, where necessary, students in acclimating to university life and feeling at home.

Stories about formerly incarcerated people abound, and advocacy widely perceived as supportive can still include violence. Reporters sometimes receive awards for inflicting such violence and take no responsibility for the ways they truncate opportunity and stigmatize the formerly incarcerated (National Council on Crime and Delinquency). In effect, such so-called advocates and short-sighted award-granting entities use the same techniques for disempowering people by controlling and undermining the formerly incarcerated's narrative, which imposes punishment for the so-called good cause. Greater care should be taken with personal narratives that are used to highlight and perpetuate disparities in opportunity.¹⁴

By being occupied with presenting the right "face" that will result in access to resources and opportunity, are the formerly incarcerated sacrificing energy and self-respect to obtain a modicum of success? Is there a measurable loss, a psychic and spiritual loss, in choosing and/or being required to constantly mediate? It is my contention that the already fragmented and battered psyche and spirit of the formerly incarcerated cannot be forced to maintain a carceral mindset and also be healthy and successful. Must we always be judged by our greatest pains and failures to be made legible in everyday life?

Just as important is the conflict that potentially arises from violating one's understood relationship with institutions, as the failure to satisfy carceral agents—whose job it is to consistently assess those under their purview—can carry consequences. When I asked a formerly incarcerated student whether any institutions block his feelings of security or create anxiety for him, he said:

Well, at this time my biggest obstacle has been parole, board of parole. I've had obstacles thrown my way. You know, I've actually, had my level taken from me, for domestic violence in 1998. I had an argument, when I'm like twenty-two years old with my girlfriend, neighbors called the police. In [city], at that time, if they come for a domestic violence call, somebody has to go [to jail]. I went. She came and got me. Now mind you, we didn't call the police. A neighbor did. There was

no physical altercation. It was a verbal argument. I was arrested. I went to court. The judge seen it, threw it out. Okay, so it was on my record from 1998 that I had a domestic violence *arrest*. So, for that reason, here it is now 2018. I was a level 4 [at parole], which was the best level, you know, I only had to report once every three months. So now I lost my level because I had an arrest in 1998 in another state. No conviction. Now I have to report twice a month. So, that's been the hardest obstacle that I had to face, parole.

Who would think it fair and right to be judged for something they did twenty years ago by carceral agents who then use that past story as a weapon to punish in the present, particularly for those who lack the resources to counter the attack? This student is trapped in the circuit. The carceral agent in charge of his parole chose to reach back in time and apply the 1998 arrest to his current parole obligation. The agent created unbearable parole conditions, and under that pressure the student quit college and is now on the run. He is on a trajectory that leads back to incarceration. This is a carceral rationality of governance that prizes surveillance over justice and enacts violence in the institution of probation and parole.

Celia shared that she lived with that fear of going back to prison, and that the carceral system as a whole might break her: "I felt like the intent in my personal situation was to destroy me and so my commitment was to not only survive but to not be, not to have my soul and my heart to be completely broken." What follows after release is a refashioning of a person's identity that began at arrest. The mental and emotional turmoil that occurs results from the individual's attempt to avoid being rewritten or provoked. It is nearly impossible and depends on being equipped with tools to counteract this institutionalized violence.

The formerly incarcerated find ourselves subject to a circuit that can trigger reincarceration because we can't meet the demand for biographic mediation. One of the people interviewed for this essay walked away from the struggle and, in corrections parlance, absconded. The afterlife for the formerly incarcerated is one of ongoing punishment and unending payment. Alongside abolition efforts to dismantle the whole system, practices of locking the formerly incarcerated out of access and opportunity must end. Only when the many processes of legalized discrimination, including biographic mediation, no longer serve as means of social control will those involved in the criminal legal system know freedom. Only when advocates in the media and supporters in general refrain from reifying carceral logics that undermine the biographies of the formerly incarcerated for "a good cause" can punishment end and genuine reentry begin.

Our stories matter, and they must be shared through our perspectives. Our stories can counter the violence of narratives crafted about us in biographic mediation processes designed to discipline and punish in perpetuity. I look forward to the day when my lived experiences of loss, tragedy, and yes, incarceration will be epistemically privileged as viable wisdom that can be put to work to dismantle the carceral state and create a world wherein those most at risk get the assistance they

need regardless of race, sex, class, gender, or criminality *before* the criminal legal system is engaged.

Notes

1. In the process of protecting the interviewee's identity, I am inadvertently protecting the identity of the university, because the interviewee's story is intertwined with that of the university in question.
2. In this article, I chose to use the collective "we" when talking about formerly incarcerated people. The reason for this is that I methodologically structured my interviews with self-disclosure of my former incarcerated status in order to make room for my interviewees to be open in the interviews.
3. Ban the Box is a campaign to remove the stigma that formerly incarcerated face when filling out applications for employment, housing, college, etc. It started with the group All of Us or None, composed of formerly incarcerated people and concerned citizens, and was aided by the lawyers of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children to launch a national campaign (Legal Services for Prisoners with Children). This campaign got the attention of then President Obama and Secretary of Education John B. King. Together, they were responsible for the Beyond the Box Resource Guide, which advises college and universities on removing the box from applications for post-secondary education (U.S. Department of Education).
4. Rightlessness can be defined as a state in which subjects are denied the right to have rights, not listened to, and are subjected to violence to maintain their rightless state.
5. The choice to use "criminal legal system" instead of "criminal justice system" is an acknowledgement that the system, which hyper-targets black and brown people for arrest, conviction, incarceration, and indebtedness, is not just, and "justice" has historically been absent, hindered, or deferred. "Legal" acknowledges the law as the primary technology of the system.
6. Interviewees: Sherrel, an African American woman, was incarcerated twenty years and had been released for two years at the time the interview took place. Jarrod, a white male, was incarcerated for twenty-six years—released three years. Celia, a white woman was incarcerated sixteen years—released seventeen years. Student, an African American man, was incarcerated for eighteen years—released nine months. Roland, an African American man, was incarcerated ten months—released two years.
7. See Smart on Crime's forthcoming book *What We Know; A New Way of Life's Testif-i*, a platform where formerly incarcerated women and their children can tell their stories; Witness to Mass Incarceration's website; the American Prison Writing Archive; and the Prison Public Memory Project's blog.
8. Abolitionism means ending the proliferate use of prisons and responding to society's challenges restoratively and humanely.
9. Erving Goffman uses the term "functionaries," Celeste Watkins-Hayes uses "street-level bureaucrats," and Michel Foucault calls them "carceral judges."

10. The *National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction* website is a resource for defense attorneys to inform their clients of the potential collateral consequences a person faces when convicted of a crime or taking a plea.
11. “We normally develop conceptions whether objectively grounded or not, as to the sphere of life-activity for which an individual’s particular stigma primarily disqualifies him” Goffman wrote (59).
12. “Unfreedom” is an existence devoid of rights, threatened by external forces.
13. Official paperwork that allows a released parolee to move to a different state.
14. To the credit of NCCD, in light of a complaint about one of their awardees, they have made a commitment to revamp their entire Media for a Just Society nomination and award process.

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