Remembering the age of mass incarceration

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EDITORIAL

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Introduction

In 2015, the US teetered on the apex of the age of mass incarceration. After four decades of imprisoning more people than any other country in the world, and than at any other time in its history, the US was, very slightly, beginning to reduce its prison population (Humphreys, 2016). A remarkable bipartisan consensus emerged that the policies that created mass incarceration had failed, producing a stream of public statements unimaginable even five years before. President Obama declared that "mass incarceration makes our country worse off, and we need to do something about it," and became the first president to visit a correctional facility. Paul Ryan agreed that "I think criminal justice reform is probably the biggest [issue] we can make a difference on … there's a real way forward on that" (Sherman, 2016). But before starting on reform, the "incarceration generation" demanded a reckoning. "Taking a hard look at this recent past," wrote Michelle Alexander, "is … about whether the Democratic Party can finally reckon with what its policies have done to African-American communities" (Alexander, 2016). "It's time," conceded Bill Clinton, under whose administration incarceration rates grew by 60%, "to take a clear-eyed look at what worked, what didn't, and what produced unintended, long-lasting consequences" (Clinton, 2015).

In this context, over 700 students and others directly affected by incarceration embarked on an experiment to look at the past together, to build a broad public engagement in the past and what it tells us about the present and future. Together, they built *States of Incarceration*, a public history of mass incarceration that seeks to foster civic engagement in criminal justice reform. The experiment was organized by the Humanities Action Lab (HAL), a collaboration among 20 colleges and universities, each working with local justice issue organizations and public spaces to create national public history projects on contested contemporary issues. *States of Incarceration* includes a traveling exhibit, web platform, and curricula on the past, present, and future of incarceration, from the vantage point of 20 different communities. The exhibit is now traveling to each of the communities that created it, with public dialogues in each place. The project's core experiment is to explore whether history curation can be activated as civic engagement, and whether public memory can be activated to shape public policy. What follows is an exploration of the project teams and their revelations in developing this project.

The carceral state of denial

In the past 40 years, America's correctional apparatus has become so vast, so wide-reaching, that by 2015 politicians, journalists, and scholars were describing it as a historical era ("the age of mass incarceration") (Clinton, 2016; Coates, 2015; Travis, 2015) and a new geography ("the carceral state.") (Journal of American History, 2015). These terms widen the focus from our prison system, to a society that has been transformed on a much broader scale. It has produced a racialized "incarceration generation": 1.7 million children have a parent in prison; African Americans have been incarcerated at six times the rate of whites (Schirmer, Nellis, & Mauer, 2009). Whole neighborhoods have been decimated by the disappearance of millions of residents. The prison boom has transformed our workforce and economy: since 1979, 36 states opened prisons to private companies. This created a new sector of the economy – involved in everything from prison construction to goods and services as varied as tech support and T-shirts – with its own interests and influence. It also shaped a new labor market, both inside and outside prisons, as incarcerated people do and make more things, and more free workers make things to serve incarcerated people. Even democracy is different: most people are incarcerated far from their homes, but are counted as residents where they are imprisoned, though they do not live there and cannot vote – increasing the census population of prison towns, the power of free residents' votes, and allocations of federal money.

The carceral state was sustained by widespread societal denial of the scope and implications of mass incarceration. In New York City, Rikers Island Jail is part of a daily commute for thousands of visiting families and corrections workers; yet as students at The New School found, for much of the city's history the jail is unmarked on subway maps, and many students had no idea where in the city it was located. As criminologist Stanley Cohen argues (and as Michelle Alexander applies his work to the carceral state), individual and societal denial operates through simultaneously "knowing" and "not-knowing"; perhaps being aware of something happening, but claiming "not to have known the big picture" (Cohen, 2001, p. 128). For Cohen, "there is no exact line between denying the past and denying the present" (2001, p. 117). So how can confronting the past help people see the present?

Two specific, but significant, examples can provide insight. First, the fantastic success of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, first published in 2010 and then popularized by the paperback release in 2012 (Alexander, 2010), fostered a new popular understanding of mass incarceration as part of a long history of racial control. In the fall of 2015, a huge proportion of the nearly 700 students involved in the *States of Incarceration* project reported that *The New Jim Crow* introduced them to the phenomenon of mass incarceration. As a Rutgers University-Newark student shared in the project's online platform, "I think I first heard of it as many people did – when Michelle Alexander's book blew up." As the students' observations suggest, beyond the 400,000 who bought the book, many others heard its arguments repeated across various media, from TV appearances to discussion guides used by the new national organizations it inspired. The book played a role in policy change, cited in the decision declaring "stop and frisk" unconstitutional (The New Press, 2013). *The New Jim Crow* was far from the only piece of media calling attention to mass incarceration, and it built on the work of hundreds of other historians. But for public historians concerned with mass incarceration, the significance of *The New Jim Crow* is that it

introduced many people to mass incarceration for the first time as part of a racist historical trajectory. For this Rutgers University-Newark student, who remembered growing up in a neighborhood where "everyone seemed to know someone who had been incarcerated," "labelling seemingly isolated events as part of the phenomenon 'mass incarceration' and associating that with the history of Jim Crow made the state policies and practices that produce it visible" (Humanities Action Lab, project communication 2016).

Another example of the past disrupting denial emerged in the 2016 presidential campaign. Before Hillary Clinton could articulate her vision for the next four years, protesters in the crowds she addressed repeatedly interrupted to insist she first account for 1994. That year, Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control Act, a "tough on crime" bill that a growing number of African American and other progressive voters were "remembering" as the foundation of mass incarceration. By 2015, the former president had to publicly reckon with this history for his wife's campaign to move forward. "I signed a bill that made the problem worse" he said, "and I want to admit it" (Byrnes, 2015). Those most vocal about the 1994 bill were babies when it was passed – yet they marshaled an inherited memory of its devastating effect on their families and communities, and the ways it shaped their entire generation. By the summer of 2016, the DNC made criminal justice reform a key piece of the party platform, and Hillary Clinton emphasized the issue in her convention speech.

The past, then, can be activated for popular critiques of public policies around incarceration. How can museums – or public memory projects – combat individual and collective denial? How can we create a space for those with the knowledge of direct experience or inherited memory, as well as those who have the luxury of "not knowing", to "know" mass incarceration together?

Museums, memory, and mass incarceration

States of Incarceration began with a gathering of about 50 people with a wide range of expertise and responsibilities in the project to explore what role a public memory project could and should play in the public dialogue and social movements around mass incarceration. Participants included historians and policy experts; advocates; artists; students; returning citizens; interpreters of prison museums; and the faculty who would be teaching the courses to produce the exhibit.

Participants addressed two key questions. First: what should be publicly "remembered" about incarceration in the past, to build a more informed discussion of incarceration in the present? What kind of public memory was needed to shape public policy? Discussion of *The New Jim Crow* and the 1994 Crime Bill suggested how a consciousness of history could provide a new frame for voters and judges to make arguments about criminal justice. But the history in these two examples was a generalized, national one, obscuring the ways the country arrived at a shared crisis from 50 state starting points. The 1994 bill covered only the 10% of the prison population the federal government controls. It was subsequent state and municipal legislation that affected the vast majority of incarcerated people. While this legislation was inspired and enabled by the federal crime bill, the varying paths localities took – and the different populations that wound up impacted – were rooted in their own particular histories. Dismantling state policies requires understanding of how each was constructed.

Second, who should the project be created with, and for? Despite the growing national discussion of the failures of the criminal justice system, stigma around formerly incarcerated people and their families remains strong. Many participants in the meeting shared concern for the silences perpetuated in affected communities and felt there was still a great need for spaces where people who had been incarcerated could "say it out loud." As one student later explained, without a vocabulary to name her family's experiences, and without a political and historical context in which to place and honor them, family histories can be lost. "The stories he [my father] would tell me as a child about hiding from the 'immigrant popo' and being detained … seemed so removed from my family's reality that I easily forgot them after they were told." The project should provide an ongoing space for people to come together and tell their stories as a shared experience and a piece of American history. At the same time, participants felt strongly that the project must engage those who had never thought about the issue before. Educating or raising awareness was not enough – they argued the project should inspire people to actively participate in shaping the future of criminal justice. This did not mean launching an advocacy campaign promoting specific policy solutions. But it did mean mobilizing participation in specific policy questions, using the specific resource we had: the power of historical perspective and public memory. We left the discussion with a shared challenge: how could we reimagine the process of curation as a strategy for engagement that met both goals – a space for sharing intimate direct experience and a space for raising new awareness?

Over the last several decades, in the struggle to "master civic engagement" museums have made curation and historical interpretation a more collective enterprise. From Michael Frisch's *Shared Authority* (Frisch, 1990) to Jack Tchen's *Dialogic Museum* (Kuo Wei Tchen, 1992) to Nina Simon's *Participatory Museum* (Simon, 2010), generations of visionaries have called on museums to give their communities space to share their stories. A new collaborative practice has emerged, with scores of models for curating exhibits in partnership with people who experienced the histories being interpreted.

Models like these have shaped recent historical exhibits on incarceration, explored in a previous issue of this journal (Museums & Social Issues, 2011). The Jane Addams Hull-House's 2010 *Unfinished Business – Juvenile Justice* exhibit was developed in partnership with local advocacy groups, which both advised on content and contributed materials. The Eastern State Penitentiary 2016 *Prisons Today* exhibit had an advisory team that included the Secretary of Corrections' office as well as The Sentencing Project, and is developing a program to involve returning citizens as tour guides with interpretive authority over the site's history as well as their own personal story. These collaborative curation models all identify people with special knowledge and experience and invite them to "speak" to an uninformed public, shaping how a story gets communicated to the uninformed.

Having worked on many community-built public history projects over the years, I was always struck by how profound the experience was for the people who participated in making the project, and how superficial it was for the people who came to see it. In other words, I was struck by the power of curation as a process of civic engagement, and the disparity in levels of engagement between the curators and the audience. This disparity in depth of engagement was exacerbated by a disparity in breadth: while thousands of people might absently sweep through an exhibit, only a handful of people were deeply engaged as curators.

But what if the curatorial process was developed as the primary mechanism for civic engagement, and required as much from the uninformed as from the directly impacted? What if we made people take responsibility for finding out what has been hidden from them or what they have been hiding from themselves? Specifically, what if we invited people to find out what was going on in their own backyards? These questions formed the core experiment of the HAL.

Curation as civic engagement

The project was created by students at 20 colleges and universities, together with people directly affected by incarceration working outside the schools. HAL faculty, representing public history, museum studies, and other humanities departments at the 20 campuses, developed a shared syllabus for a course they would teach simultaneously during the fall of 2015. The course would explore both national histories of incarceration, and a specific local history – a specific site, event, person in the university's state – and its relationship to criminal justice in that place today. Using a design framework for both the digital and physical exhibit platforms created by professional designers HAL hired, by the end of the course local teams (students and stakeholders) were to curate one chapter of the national project, focusing on their local story. The chapters would then be put together into a single exhibit and web platform that would travel to each of the communities that created it, with public dialogues in each place.

Faculty were supported to build collaborations between their students and people directly affected by incarceration in their communities. At The New School, returning citizens from the Fortune Society, an organization supporting reentry, made regular visits to the classroom to consult on the local chapter about Rikers Island. The Fortune representatives had all been incarcerated on Rikers Island at different times over the last 40 years. Students also recorded interviews with the Fortune representatives and integrated their stories into the exhibit. At DePaul University, students worked with an "Inside-Out" class at Statesville Penitentiary – courses held in correctional facilities in which half the students are incarcerated and half are enrolled in the university "outside." Both inside and outside students responded to a common question: "What do you want your legacy to be?"; their chapter of the exhibit included a combination of writing and artwork by Statesville students and short histories of policing in Chicago and their legacies by DePaul "outside" students.

The risks of this approach were many. We were turning over curation of a national exhibit on an extremely serious, and seriously misunderstood, issue to a sprawling group of amateurs – people who were identified specifically because they did not (yet) have any idea what they are talking about. And we were trying to share authorship between people with wildly different investments in the project – people battling with criminal justice issues every day, and people who have been privileged enough not to have to think about it. Finally, we were trying to cobble together 20 disparate stories into a coherent whole. We took these risks in hope of two potential rewards. First, allowing the national story to be told through 20 different local perspectives generated a far richer and more complex national genealogy of mass incarceration than any one group of experts could have imagined. Second, the three-month process of curation became a public dialogue in and of itself.

The local focus allowed existing scholarship to be brought to bear on and be enriched by new case studies; unearthed new evidence never before shared with the public; and perhaps most importantly, allowed for critical new analytical frameworks to emerge from connecting the historical experiences of different peoples, and different facets of incarceration. Several of the teams explored the legacies of racial slavery, applying analyses of continuous control of black bodies and exploitation of black labor they may have encountered in *The New Jim Crow* (Alexander, 2010) and in other scholarship. Students in New Orleans traced the evolution of the Louisiana State Penitentiary ("Angola") from plantation to prison farm; students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro mapped the post-reconstruction criminalization of black men onto the state's convict-built roads. In this way, teams could use existing scholarship to better understand their own backyards, while also strengthening that scholarship through unique evidence from their local contexts. The New Orleans team digitized a collection of photographs of Angola, opening their public access; the Greensboro team highlighted the voices of individual men working on chain gangs found in a unique collection of letters they sent protesting their conditions.

But woven in with these were others with very different roots: the University of Minnesota asked "How has settler colonialism shaped the carceral state?" To understand high rates of incarceration in Indian Country today, the team started with the Dakota Wars and the particular ideologies and technologies of American empire. As Amber Annis argues in this issue, centering indigenous histories of incarceration is not just a matter of adding back a group whose experience has been excluded, although this is in and of itself critical. Annis observes that in South Dakota, where her own reservation lies, data shows that American Indians are wildly overrepresented in federal criminal cases; yet in national statistics on racial disparities in incarceration, indigenous people are most often lumped in a category of "other," erasing the severity and the specificity of their experience. But beyond demonstrating that indigenous experiences of incarceration are distinct from those of other racial minorities, Annis argues, indigenous histories offer a distinct analytical framework indispensable for understanding American incarceration. Annis emphasizes that settler colonialism is a foundation of American incarceration, an equally important (and perhaps older) point of origin as that of racial slavery, so that mass incarceration cannot be understood outside of America's long history of displacing, criminalizing, and confining indigenous people as a means of controlling land and sovereignty. Indigenous histories suggest different sites of research on incarceration – not only the plantation and the penitentiary, but also the system of institutions – forts, reservations, Indian boarding schools, and others – that have incarcerated indigenous people over the last centuries.

Four of the local teams – in New Jersey, Arizona, Florida, and Texas – chose to focus on immigrant detention. The trajectories of incarceration and immigrant detention have converged in recent decades: the punitive culture of the "war on drugs" has influenced greater criminalization of immigrants and criminal approaches to immigration policy, and immigration detention rates have skyrocketed alongside incarceration rates.[1] The two systems sometimes converge in the same spaces: some of the same corporations, like Corrections Corporation of America, operate prisons and immigration detention facilities alike, sometimes in the same building. But while these paths have converged recently, they began in different places: Ellis Island and Angel Island represent different points of origin than the Angola plantation. Genealogies of immigration not only suggested different analytical

frameworks, as did indigenous histories, but also required different research strategies. Teams exploring immigration detention faced hidden histories and suppressed information, and had to uncover new evidence to make the sites and stories visible for the first time. Sarah Lopez's article tells of how her team wound up creating the first complete count and map of immigration detention centers in Texas; and, working with people who had been held in them to create cognitive maps, gave a first glimpse of what these centers looked and felt like inside. Mary Rizzo's team focused on a landmark legal case in the 1990s brought by detainees in the then-called Esmor detention facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey. This difficult period was too recent to have accessible archives: a rich set of records was still sealed; while newspaper photographs were too recent to be properly archived but too old to be born-digital and accessible that way. Dedicated to highlighting the voices of the detainees themselves, instead of relying on outsiders' accounts, Rizzo's article describes how her team worked to "read against the grain," both finding new material and creatively interpreting the scarce sources they had.

Looking at all three genealogies of mass incarceration – racial slavery, settler colonialism, and immigration/border control – and their historical sources suggests new connections between the experiences of different peoples, and new collective understandings of crime and punishment. Furthermore, local teams pursued different thematic branches of mass incarceration, each revealing new insights that applied nationally, and suggesting how different interests, issues, and systems intersected and diverged. For example, Lopez's Texas project was led by a team of architecture students, who explored the spatial dimensions of immigrant detention: her article here explores the architecture of confinement, to the geography of isolation. Their spatial analysis exposed new mechanisms of immigrant detention: after learning that 90% of detainees who are able to be represented by a lawyer win asylum (and release), they mapped the distance between centers and cities with pro bono legal services, and discovered how centers' isolation kept them not only out of public view, but also away from representation. The Vanderbilt team focused on a prison proposed for construction in a nearby rural county, allowing them to explore – and teach others in the project – economic development as an engine for incarceration. Massachusetts happens to be home to one of the oldest and one of the newest women's prisons in the nation; in researching these two local sites, the Western Massachusetts team asked "What are women's prisons for?"

Emphasizing that women are the fastest growing incarcerated population, the team demonstrated how gender analysis changes understandings of incarceration. Elizabeth Nash's article recounts how Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis built on its existing relationship with the Indiana Medical History Museum, formerly Central State Hospital, which housed the "criminally insane," to explore the relationship between mass incarceration and mental illness. Placed side by side, these local histories and the specific themes they explored allowed visitors to begin analyzing the multiple forces that shape and support incarceration.

The process of curation required discussion among students, and between students and their partners outside the university, around the most difficult questions the history posed. HAL created an online platform and invited exchange among students over the course of the semester about their first impressions and the issues they struggled with. Because it involved people from so many parts of the country with so many different relationships to incarceration, this process surfaced the very myths, misconceptions, and fault lines

that the project's future public audience would have. As Amber Mitchell at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis wrote in a student reflection (Humanities Action Lab, project communication, 2016):

> What I have found to be most surprising about the course thus far has not been from our readings but my classmates' surprise to the state of the prison system in the United States. As an African American woman from a working class Detroit neighborhood, the criminal justice system has never been that far away from my reality … But, my experience, as my classmates have demonstrated, are not as universal as I once thought … My classmates, I realize, represent the public that we are trying to reach through this exhibition. People who come from backgrounds like mine, who have been experiencing this world for so long, sometimes forget that others can be blind to it.

Students' own experiences with criminal justice drove choices about the histories they wanted to bring to a larger public. As Mayela Caro and Marissa Friedman write, at the University of California Riverside students began by sharing memories of police presence in their middle and high schools, and the keen awareness that brought them. This shared experience inspired them to focus on the criminalization of youth, and to explore incarceration history as the history of an interconnected web of state institutions designed to control youth of color.

For those who had little or no previous experience with the criminal justice system, working with those who did have this experience shaped their understanding of its specific history, as well as how to approach public history in general. For collaborations to function, and function equitably, they required funds (provided by HAL through the Open Society Foundations) to support partners' time, transportation, and other expenses, and strong organization and experience on the part of the faculty and students. This was an extremely heavy burden for faculty already tasked with teaching multiple courses; collaborations varied widely across teams in terms of the level of co-creation. At any depth, though, collaborations fundamentally shaped representation not only of individuals, but also of the overall issues. In Indiana, the project team explored the intersections between incarceration and mental health, and through their interactions with people confronting and struggling with the issue in their community recognized the ethical issues in representing individuals suffering from mental illness, past and present, as Nash describes.

Although it was primarily the students, and later, the uninformed public, who gained new knowledge and understanding, the dialogues could have mutual benefits. Student Hannah Galloway of the University of New Orleans wrote of her profound experience working with a man incarcerated in Angola, and the extent to which their interactions impacted each other. By reflecting on their own "aha" moments, community curators could better imagine what would make the most impact on a wider audience. Reflections also identified key fault lines in public opinion that the project would have to address, such as questions about the purpose of prisons. As one student from Northeastern University put it in her reflection: "Before this class I hadn't given too much thought on incarceration, and with the general assumption that those in prison and penitentiaries, deserve to be there for their crime." Responding to the history her state's chapter of the exhibit would focus on – of a famous rehabilitation program that trained incarcerated men in debate – she voiced the conflict many future audiences would also feel: the men "had their voice back, which I'm not entirely sure if it was a good thing" (Humanities Action Lab, Project Communication, 2016). Together, the over 1200 reflections of community curators,

shared over 3 months both within classes and across the country, helped shape the key questions and issues the exhibit would have to engage.

The 700+ people involved in creating the exhibit stood at the core of our circles of engagement. The project then built mechanisms to reach outward from there, to engage wider communities in each of the 20 localities (and counting) where the project is now traveling. Local universities partnered with a wide variety of venues to host the exhibit and public dialogues, from central branches of public libraries like the Indianapolis Public Library and the Phoenix Public Library; to fine art museums like the California Museum of Photography and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art; to history museums like the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro, NC, to public spaces like the Gateway Galleries in Newark, located along a heavily trafficked skybridge leading from the commuter train station.

How could the project best engage – and connect – audiences in these spaces? Learning from the varied relationships exhibit creators had to incarceration – and the importance of starting any conversation with an invitation to articulate that relationship – HAL designers created a piece of the physical exhibit titled, "How Close Are You to Incarceration?" This low-tech, tactile interactive frames the entrance to the exhibit with an invitation to all visitors to place themselves in relationship to the issue. The installation consists of five panels indicating different relationships to incarceration, ranging from "I have been incarcerated/I work in corrections or law enforcement," to "I have broken the law and not been caught." Visitors write their experiences with the criminal justice system on tags, and reflections on how those experiences shape their feelings about the issue now. Responses are building a collaborative visualization of the shared yet divided incarceration generation.

To pursue the larger goal of harnessing public memory to shape public policy, with the knowledge that this needed to be done at the very local level, the project created a variety of strategies for communities to engage in local stories, issues, and policy decisions. First, each time the national exhibit travels to a new community, local partners are encouraged to produce a local companion exhibit that explores their local story in greater depth. For instance, in New York City, The New School students and the Fortune Society created a companion exhibit on Rikers Island, including a data visualization of the people who move back and forth to the jail each day, accompanied by portraits of some of those individuals. Second, each local partner is invited to identify a current, vulnerable local criminal justice policy issue – something very specific that is up for debate and change in the moment the exhibit is in that locality – that is rooted in the history they have explored. For instance, California focused on an upcoming budget decision around jail expansion; Rhode Island had just set up a commission to study changes to its policies on solitary confinement. The project does not take a position on these issues, but seeks to promote as much public engagement in them as possible, through its "Shape the Debate" live polling, and designs for public dialogues like Mass Story Lab, created by Piper Anderson of Create Forward. The Lab trains people with a variety of experiences with the local policy issue to share their personal stories, as the starting point for a creative visioning process that includes policy makers, directly impacted people, and concerned citizens. Local partners have also designed their own engagement strategies: New School students launched a "See Rikers" campaign that invited New Yorkers to mark the jail on the city's subway maps. Some participants felt these strategies preached only to the converted, or were not widely accessible.

The project can plan to catalyze engagement with new issues in each place, but must also be ready to respond to each new moment in time. The exhibit opened at the International Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro on election day 2016; the Mass Story Lab that weekend, featuring African American formerly incarcerated people sharing their stories of the criminal justice system, took place amid an explosion of hate crimes across the country and reports that the North Carolina KKK was planning a rally to celebrate Donald Trump's victory. When the exhibit comes to Phoenix in 2018, students hope to shape the 2018 Arizona Gubernatorial election, as Ethan Clay describes.

The reflections from students and faculty in this volume argue strongly for training that focuses on the role museums can play in fostering public engagement in social issues; training that will attract people committed to social issues to museum work, and will inspire and equip those interested in museums to open spaces for addressing social issues. Some students testify that while they had once dismissed museums as elite or irrelevant, the experience established museum work as a new arena for them to address the issues they cared about. Caro and Friedman argue for the importance of museum professionals as co-collaborators with the public who are both socially engaged and able to share authority with their constituents. This idea is echoed by Amy Halliday, Chelsea Miller, and Julia Peterson of UMass, who argue for the importance of confronting the role of museums and museum professionals in their relationship to action and activism.

The map of *States of Incarceration* is woefully incomplete. The project's "Add Your State" campaign invites new partners in new places to contribute their stories, using the curriculum and design frameworks to integrate them into the traveling exhibit. This allows both the national history to be continually enriched with new local perspectives, and more people to be involved in the deep engagement experience of creating the project.

If your college, museum, or organization would like to add new stories from your locality and open conversations there, please contact us through www.statesofincarceration.org.

Note

1. http://statesofincarceration.org/timeline/us-incarceration

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Liz Ševčenko is the founder and director of the Humanities Action Lab, a network of 20 universities that work with issue organizations and public spaces to develop traveling public projects on the past, present, and future of pressing social issues. She was founding director of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the Guantánamo Public Memory Project.

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