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THE COP IN YOUR HEAD: CRIMINAL JUSTICE
EDUCATION, LIBERALISM, AND THE CARCERAL STATE

by

NICOLE HAIBER

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2022

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The Cop in Your Head:

Criminal Justice Education, Liberalism, and the Carceral State

by

Nicole Haiber

Advisor: Karen R. Miller

This thesis centers policing ideology in higher education and the way it is constructed and fortified through criminal justice programs. In 1968, the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) made funds available to police officers to attend college and awarded grants to universities to create criminal justice programs. The program effectively funneled federal money into the project of professionalizing the police and developed criminal justice as a field devoted to conducting crime research, as defined by the federal government. Criminal justice programs exploded across the country with the availability of LEEP funding, and the City University of New York's (CUNY) John Jay College of Criminal Justice was the largest beneficiary, becoming a prominent arbiter of liberal arts focused criminal justice education. This thesis is based on a study of federal policy and university programs historically and an ethnographic examination of one college-level criminal justice program in particular. I argue that criminal justice education is complicit in the expansion of the carceral state by legitimizing its ideology and staffing its workforce. By taking for granted that the carceral state can be reformed, criminal justice education increases the scope and power of the prison industrial complex while claiming to produce workers, policy, and research that make policing and prisons less deadly.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, concern with the presence of police on college campuses has received considerable attention from scholars and student activists. Several texts have explored the history of the relationship between campus policing and student movements, as students have collectively organized to remove police from their campuses and campus police departments have been deployed to quell student protests.¹ Even more recently, the murders of George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor sparked a global uprising that challenged racist policing, including on college campuses, where student activists at the University of Minnesota pushed to end the relationship between their university and the police, and abolitionist organizations like the Cops off Campus Coalition have fought to remove cops from campuses all over the country.² While much scholarly attention and many social movements have focused on the *physical* presence of campus police departments, safety officers, and securitization, this thesis centers policing ideology in higher education and the way it is constructed and fortified through criminal justice programs.

In the mid-1960s, mass uprisings for Black liberation and against racialized police violence erupted in cities and on college campuses across the country. In response to these demands for racial justice, reforming the criminal justice system became the Johnson administration's top policy priority. Administration officials worked to build a set of laws and policies that would address these concerns and simultaneously curb "crime," an issue whose importance had dramatically amplified within electoral politics over the previous decade. As scholars such as Naomi Murakawa and Elizabeth Hinton have shown, the Johnson administration was an early architect of policies and

¹ For more information about the relationship between police, student movements, and the university, see Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Roderick A. Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

² Lucien Baskin and Erica R. Meiners, "Looking to Get Cops Off Your Campus? Start Here," *Truthout*, October 24, 2021, <https://truthout.org/articles/looking-to-get-cops-off-your-campus-start-here/>; "Who We Are," Cops Off Campus Coalition, February 26, 2021, <https://copsoffcampuscoalition.com/about/>.

laws that led to mass incarceration³—increasing federal funding to ramp up police presence in Black neighborhoods, develop new security technologies, and expand higher education’s role in preparing the criminal justice workforce. In 1967, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice released a report entitled *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* which found that “crime” could be solved by strengthening the criminal justice system—defined as an interconnected system of law enforcement, courts, and correctional facilities—through the recruitment of “more and better” criminal justice workers “with more knowledge, expertise and integrity.”⁴ In order to facilitate this, the authors encouraged state and local law enforcement agencies to require police officers to have a bachelor’s degree, arguing that this kind of education would provide officers with specialized training that could help them better understand human behavior and, they assumed, be less violent.

In 1968, the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) made funds available to police officers to attend college and awarded grants to universities to create criminal justice programs, developing criminal justice as a field devoted to conducting research into the “problems of crime,” however the federal government decided to define them.⁵ Ultimately, LEEP sought to transform crime, something that was ideological, into something scientific that could be quantified, predicted, and contained. The university then became the site where the state could conduct this research. Criminal justice programs exploded across the country with the availability of LEEP funding, and the City University of New York’s (CUNY) John Jay College of Criminal Justice was the largest beneficiary of LEEP, becoming a prominent arbiter of liberal arts focused criminal justice

³ Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

⁴ United States. President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), vi.

⁵ President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, vi.

education.⁶ Fifty years later, John Jay launched the CUNY Justice Academy—a joint degree program with six of CUNY’s seven two-year colleges that effectively expanded criminal justice programming across the CUNY system.

Despite being one of the most popular majors in the country, there are limited studies about criminal justice education, its students, and its curriculum. However, in 1981 William Arnold produced a review of criminal justice literature, which was less than two decades old at the time. In his review, he found that most criminal justice education literature focused on describing the functions of the criminal justice system and evaluating the effectiveness of particular prison programs and reforms. The study of criminal justice, Arnold argued, was mostly reform-oriented and heavily influenced by the “funding and shifting concerns” of federal and local governmental agencies.⁷ According to sociologists Bill Farrell and Larry Koch (1995), this influence led the discipline to adopt keywords and theories that are reliant on state definitions. In their review of the field, they highlight how criminal justice textbooks have treated “crime” as an “inevitable characteristic of social organization,” ignoring the racialized social and political contexts in which “crime” occurs. At the same time, they found that this narrow definition of crime excluded crimes that are not typically prosecuted, like corporate fraud, government fraud, and murders by police.⁸ Additionally, self-identifying radical criminologist Tony Platt (1974) argues that institutional violence like imperialism, colonialism, racism, and worker exploitation were not considered crimes at all in criminal justice curriculum.⁹

Studies about criminal justice students in the past three decades have been more common

⁶ Gerald Markowitz, *Educating for Justice: A History of John Jay College of Criminal Justice* (New York: John Jay Press, 2008).

⁷ William R. Arnold, “Criminal Justice: Review of a Field,” *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 6, no. 2 (1981): 90.

⁸ William Farrell and Larry Koch, “Criminal Justice, Sociology, and Academia,” *The American Sociologist* 26, no. 1 (1995): 59.

⁹ Tony Platt, “Prospects for a Radical Criminology in the United States,” *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 1 (1974): 2–10.

than reviews of criminal justice literature, but these studies have primarily considered the perspectives of white male students at four-year universities. For example, in a study measuring the empathy levels of criminal justice majors, Kevin Courtright and David Mackey (2005) found that criminal justice majors, who were overwhelmingly white men, harbored more punitive attitudes about criminalized people than students in several other majors. Likewise, while looking at one criminal justice program in Michigan, Bill Farrell and Charles Thomas (1997) found that white, male criminal justice students used dehumanizing and racialized language when talking about criminalized people. The culture of this program even attracted active members of the Ku Klux Klan, whose world views were unchallenged in the criminal justice classroom.¹⁰

Sean Gabbidon and Everette Penn (2003) expanded the literature's previously narrow focus on white criminal justice majors in their study on the career aspirations of criminal justice majors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. They found that Black criminal justice majors held more negative attitudes about police than white criminal justice majors, but still represented a growing percentage of criminal justice majors in the U.S. The students surveyed largely cited economic and altruistic reasons for pursuing a career in law enforcement.¹¹ Recent work published by Colleen Eren, Shirley Leyro, and Ilir Disha (2019) builds on this study and works to correct the omission of the tens of thousands of students of color who enroll in criminal justice programs at urban colleges each year. In their study, they found that 83 percent of student respondents, who were primarily students of color, had negative views of the criminal justice system. However, these students still viewed law enforcement as a desirable career path because, the authors argued, like

¹⁰ Kevin E. Courtright, David A. Mackey, and Susan H. Packard, "Empathy among College Students and Criminal Justice Majors: Identifying Predispositional Traits and the Role of Education," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 16, no. 1 (February 2007): 125–144; William Farrell and Charles Thomas, "Sociology, Humanism and Criminal Justice Education," *Michigan Sociological Review* 11 (1997): 97–108, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40969014>.

¹¹ Shaun L. Gabbidon, Everette B. Penn, and Winston A. Richards, "Career Choices and Characteristics of African-American Undergraduates Majoring in Criminal Justice at Historically Black Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 14, no. 2 (2003): 229–244.

the students in Gabbidon and Penn’s study, they believed that their work inside “the system” could make a difference in their communities.¹² Unlike their white, male four-year university counterparts, these studies argued that criminal justice students of color were motivated to work in law enforcement by a desire improve the criminal justice system rather than uphold the status quo. Similarly, Farrell and Thomas concluded that the presence of students of color in their university’s criminal justice program had a positive effect on countering punitive attitudes in the classroom.

The notion that an increase in criminal justice majors of color will positively benefit the criminal justice system aligns with diversity campaigns that have been waged by police forces in major cities like Los Angeles and New York in recent years.¹³ New York City Mayor and former police captain Eric Adams, who, during his campaign, wrote an op-ed entitled “Beaten by Cops, I Became One,” has amplified this tactic of multicultural law and order by disparaging calls to defund the NYPD while promising to restore public safety and focus on police accountability.¹⁴ At CUNY, the hiring of a Black head of public safety in December 2020—during a time when campus policing was under intense scrutiny nationwide and CUNY organizers were advocating for anti-racist structural changes—is another example of a superficial diversity measure that left white supremacist structures unchallenged.¹⁵ According to Dylan Rodríguez, articulations of multiculturalism and diversity in policing act as a counterinsurgency rather than a threat to white

¹² Colleen Eren, Shirley Leyro, and Ilir Disha, “It’s Personal: The Impact of Victimization on Motivations and Career Interests Among Criminal Justice Majors at Diverse Urban Colleges,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 30, no. 4 (April 26, 2019): 510–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2019.1612931>.

¹³ Dylan Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020); Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “NYPD Aims to Diversify Ranks with Minority Appointments,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nypd-diversifies-ranks-with-minority-appointments-1517781089>.

¹⁴ Eric L. Adams, “Beaten by Cops, I Became One,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/beaten-by-cops-i-became-one-11619383875>.

¹⁵ Corinna Mullin, Sofya Aptekar, and Karanja Keita Carroll, “Abolition vs. the Myth of ‘Public Safety’: Past and Present Struggles for a Liberated CUNY,” *CUNY Struggle*, January 29, 2021, <https://cunystruggle.org/2021/01/29/abolition-vs-the-myth-of-public-safety-past-and-present-struggles-for-a-liberated-cuny/>.

supremacy, as these reforms still rely on a system of anti-Blackness and racial-colonial violence.¹⁶

While many criminal justice professors embrace multiculturalism in their teaching, the history of liberal carceral reform shows that efforts to change the criminal justice system through piecemeal reformatory measures, such as recruiting students of color for careers in law enforcement, only reproduces and expands the carceral state. Following the scholarship of prison industrial complex abolitionists like Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Dylan Rodríguez, and Mariame Kaba, I reject the idea that anything other than the abolition of police and the prison industrial complex will make the state less violent. Instead, as Judah Schept, Tyler Wall, and Avi Brisman have highlighted, criminal justice and criminology are complicit in the expansion of the carceral state by acting as a legitimizing ideology and staffing pipeline.¹⁷ Criminal justice education, by taking for granted that the carceral state can be reformed, increases the power of the prison industrial complex while claiming to produce workers, policy, and research that make policing and prisons less deadly.

This thesis is organized into three chapters that consider the past, present, and future of the relationship between the university and the carceral state, and the role of liberal ideologies in upholding this relationship. In the first chapter, I will consider the history of criminal justice programs at higher education institutions in order to explore how the discipline has legitimized and expanded the carceral state from its inception. As this chapter will show, criminal justice was embraced by universities who were eager to accept federal funding to facilitate their own expansion. With the rise of austerity and the decline of state spending on higher education, criminal justice programs provided universities with an opportunity to grow in tandem with the rise of the carceral state. Particular attention will be paid to the history of John Jay College and its role in

¹⁶ Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide*.

¹⁷ Judah Schept, Tyler Wall, and Avi Brisman, "Building, Staffing, and Insulating: An Architecture of Criminological Complicity in the School-to-Prison Pipeline," *Social Justice* 41, no.4 (138) (2014): 96–115.

developing and promoting the infusion of criminal justice with a liberal arts teaching tradition, which popularized the discipline as a method of professionalizing the police.

The second chapter of this thesis will consider the consequences of the expansion of criminal justice programs, and particularly, of their spread into community colleges over the last decade. While most studies of criminal justice education focus on four-year institutions, the focus on two-year colleges provides an opportunity to consider how the contradictions of community college, as both a pathway to educational opportunity and a site for workforce development, are manifested within criminal justice curricula.¹⁸ This chapter will focus on one community college program in particular—The CUNY Justice Academy—in order to explore the subjectivities that are produced in immigrant and working-class Black, Latinx, and Asian criminal justice majors as they prepare for careers in an institution that criminalizes immigrant and working-class Black, Latinx, and Asian people. Rather than embracing the tough on crime emphasis apparent in criminal justice programs of the 1980s and 1990s, The CUNY Justice Academy curriculum has evolved to focus on social and racial justice, bail and prison reform, and even prison industrial complex abolition. As this chapter will show, this curriculum satisfies Black, Latinx, and Asian students faced with organized abandonment who must reckon with their awareness of the cruelty of the system and their desire for the economic stability a criminal justice career promises to provide.

The final chapter of this thesis will consider what role the university can and has played in the movement to abolish the prison industrial complex. While scholars such as Joy James argue that universities have co-opted the language of abolition and removed it from its radical history,¹⁹ the abolitionist organizing of university groups represents an important contingent of the current

¹⁸ Kevin J. Dougherty, *The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts, and Futures of the Community College* (Albany: State University of New York Press: 1994).

¹⁹ Joy James, “Airbrushing Revolution for the Sake of Abolition,” *Black Perspectives* (blog), *African American Intellectual History Society*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/airbrushing-revolution-for-the-sake-of-abolition/>.

struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex. Student and university worker organizing has successfully drawn attention to the relationship between the university and the carceral state through fights to remove cops from campuses and end university contracts with prison labor profiteers, among other campaigns. In order to fully sever the relationship between the university and the carceral state, I argue that university affiliated abolitionist organizations must also fight for the abolition of criminal justice education.

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

In March 1965, President Johnson delivered a speech to Congress that signaled the beginning of the War on Crime and marked the first federal intervention in local crime control in national history. The speech came just eight months after Harlem residents protested the murder of an unarmed, Black fifteen-year-old by a New York City police officer, and more uprisings reverberated in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; Philadelphia; Chicago; and Rochester, where nearly 1,000 residents were arrested and four were killed.²⁰ In his speech, Johnson emphasized the need to push beyond the goals of his War on Poverty, which had been to address the root causes of civil disorder by “combatting poverty and improving education, health, welfare, housing, and recreation.” He claimed that these efforts “are vital but they are not enough.” Instead, he fixated on subduing rebellions in urban areas, isolating them from the social conditions they erupted in response to. He asserted that “crime will not wait while we pull it up by the roots. We must arrest and reverse the trend toward lawlessness.”²¹

Johnson’s declaration of a War on Crime foreshadowed a massive increase in federal funding for the militarization of local police departments and the development of new training and securitization methods. Federal funding dedicated to local policing, which was nonexistent in 1964, rose to ten million in 1965. By 1970, \$300 million was budgeted for law enforcement—an unprecedented 2,900 percent increase in just five years. In September 1965, following a week-long uprising in Watts, Los Angeles that erupted after the arrest of a young Black man, and several more in Selma, Alabama; Bogalusa, Louisiana; and Chicago, Illinois, President Johnson signed the Law

²⁰ Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*.

²¹ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice,” American Presidency Project, March 8, 1965, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-law-enforcement-and-the-administration-justice>.

Enforcement Assistant Act.²² The legislation had already passed through Congress unopposed weeks before the Watts uprising and in the first week of September 1965 it passed through Senate with bipartisan support.²³ This action marked the first move in the transition from the social welfare reform proposed in Johnson's War on Poverty to the punitive intervention that would come to be known as the War on Crime.

While the War on Crime may seem like a departure from Johnson's Great Society programs, administration officials intertwined the programs of the Wars on Crime and Poverty so that the most immediate response to grievances about systemic anti-Blackness in education, housing, and employment was the fortification of the police. Historian Elizabeth Hinton argues that these programs were connected in their desire for social control and view of Black pathology as the root cause of social conditions in Black neighborhoods. This fear of young Black Americans and their participation in urban rebellions also led to the deployment of police officers and National Guardsmen onto college campuses, where Black and Latinx students led the fight for the expansion of affirmative action policies, more Black and Latinx faculty, Ethnic Studies departments, and the removal of police from their campuses and communities.²⁴ At the same time as Black and Latinx students fought to remove police from their schools, the university was being considered as a key site to respond to the crime panic, and criminal justice education was emerging as a discipline that would ultimately bring more police officers and policing ideology onto college campuses across the country.

Taking direction from Naomi Murakawa and Elizabeth Hinton—whose groundbreaking

²² Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021).

²³ Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*.

²⁴ For more information on the Black Studies Movement and other campus takeovers led by Black and non-black students of color in the 1960s see Amaka Okechukwu, *To Fulfill These Rights: Political Struggles Over Affirmative Action and Open Admissions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*; Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*.

scholarship have revealed how liberal rhetoric and policies were formative in the development of the carceral state—this chapter will highlight how liberal carceral reform has historically expanded the carceral state. Moving beyond the scope of Murakawa and Hinton’s analyses, I will focus on the historical development of one liberal reform in particular: the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). This program was part of a bipartisan effort to modernize and professionalize the police in response to unrest in major cities, which had led to both a media-induced crime panic and a social movement that called police conduct into question. The 1967 report *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* popularized the push for police modernization and professionalization, arguing that universities—which had experienced a period of mass expansion in the post-World War II era—had an important role to play in the prevention and reduction of crime. LEEP, later proposed in the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safety Act, provided the federal seed funding to ensure universities were equipped to modernize—through the research and development of security technology—and professionalize—through education programs for police officers—the criminal justice system.

In addition to providing federal aid to colleges and universities to fund the education of individual officers, LEEP also developed criminal justice as an academic discipline, which was envisioned as a means for conducting state-approved research on crime prediction, improving crime management, and recruiting and training criminal justice workers. More than fifty years later, despite evidence that suggests modernization and professionalization do not make policing any less violent, criminal justice has become one of the top ten awarded degrees in the country.²⁵ The growth of criminal justice education has happened alongside a massive expansion of police forces, machinery, violence, and power across the country. While LEEP promised to rein in both

²⁵ Max Felker-Kantor, “Police Professionalization and the Institutionalization of Racist Repression,” *Black Perspectives* (blog), *African American Intellectual History Society*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/police-professionalization-and-the-institutionalization-of-racist-repression/>; Eren, Leyro, and Disha, “It’s Personal.”

crime and police violence, this thesis shows that the program ultimately contributed to the amplification of police power in cities across the United States—and a concomitant amplification of police violence, since police power and violence go hand in hand.

Furthermore, LEEP had no effect on crime rates, which have gone up and down in the years following the program’s implementation, since police do not have a significant effect on criminal behavior. Clearly, “criminal behavior” is not a clear descriptor of harm but an ideological idea, which the state and police officers give meaning to through laws and carceral practices, marking some populations as “criminal” as they do so.²⁶ Despite this, criminal justice education is held up by liberals as the solution to state violence. By historicizing the development of criminal justice education as an extension of the policies that fashioned the carceral state, I will show how criminal justice education—as a liberal, bipartisan reform—is incapable of ending state violence. As the history of their development will reveal, criminal justice and criminology²⁷ expand the carceral state by serving as a staffing pipeline and legitimizing discourse for the armed apparatus of the state.²⁸

Crime Panic Management: Professionalizing and Modernizing the Criminal Justice System

Through criminal justice education, the university helped to expand and legitimize the

²⁶ Andrea J. Ritchie and Jared Knowles, *Cops Don’t Stop Violence: Combating Narratives Used to Defend Police Instead of Defunding Them*, (Interrupting Criminalization, n.d.), <https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/cops-dont-stop-violence>.

²⁷ While criminal justice and criminology are considered by academics in each field to be two distinct areas of study, taking direction from Micol Siegel, I do not differentiate between the two in any significant way, since they are both disciplines transformed by funding from LEEP and equally expand the carceral state. However, I will primarily use criminal justice education to describe the discipline. Micol Seigel, *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

²⁸ Schept, Wall, and Brisman argue that criminal justice and criminology are specifically complicit in the school-to-prison pipeline through both staffing school resource officers and legitimizing the criminal justice system. I build on their analysis to show how criminal justice education expands all aspects of the carceral state through staffing and legitimizing discourse. Judah Schept, Tyler Wall, and Avi Brisman, “Building, Staffing, and Insulating: An Architecture of Criminological Complicity in the School-to-Prison Pipeline,” *Social Justice* 41, no. 4 (138) (2014): 96–115.

carceral state through its technological resources and imagined ability to train and recruit a criminal justice workforce. In 1967, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice released its final report, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, which laid the ground for the development of criminal justice as an academic discipline. The report concluded that the criminal justice system as it currently existed could not “eliminate the conditions in which most crime breeds,” and the Commission made nearly two hundred recommendations on how to manage crime through the fortification of the criminal justice system.²⁹

Their recommendations combined social reforms with punitive action—emphasizing the need for job training, housing, and education programs, while also recommending increased federal investment in the modernization and professionalization of police. However, the proposals to modernize and professionalize law enforcement were among the most defining recommendations of the report, and unlike the recommendations for job, housing, and education programs, these proposals were codified in the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. The report found that in order to be effective, the criminal justice system must “seek to prevent crime before it happens” and consequently “attract more and better people...with more knowledge, expertise and integrity” to work in its ranks.³⁰ The university was then imagined as a space that could facilitate the reconstitution of the criminal justice system as a site for training and recruiting “more and better people” and conducting research focused on crime prevention.

In order to modernize the criminal justice system’s approach to “prevent[ing] crime before it happens” the Commission looked to the university as a source of technological advancement. *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* aligned with the earlier efforts of the Office of Law

²⁹ President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, 6.

³⁰ President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, vi.

Enforcement Assistance (OLEA) to increase the “scientific” study of crime by calling for federal funds to expand the university’ role in crime prediction.³¹ This federal funding, the Commissioners suggested, would help universities and non-profit foundations establish crime research institutes composed of scientists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, and lawyers with insight from and “close ties” to local criminal justice agencies.³² Just as dramatic increases in federal funding for university research projects facilitated the Golden Age of the university during the Cold War, where nearly 70 percent of all university research funds came from the federal government, LEEP was envisioned as a way to expand *domestic* militarization through the study of crime and development of security technologies.³³

In addition to its role as a research institution, the report also fixated on the university as a way to professionalize the police—whose misconduct was brought to public attention during uprisings where police actions often preceded outbreaks of violence.³⁴ In the report, Commissioners recommended that police officers should receive at least two years of college, or preferably, a bachelor’s degree in the liberal arts or social sciences. Taken for granted here is the belief that higher education is moralizing, and that the conduct of individual police officers could be improved through exposure to “the nature of the social problems he constantly encounters [and] the psychology of those people whose attitude toward the law differ from his.”³⁵ However, educating police officers does not account for the fact that policing is itself violence work, as Micol Siegel calls it. To categorize police officers as “good” or “bad” misses the fact that violence is the essence of police power, whether it is excessive (police brutality) or mundane (traffic stops, stop

³¹ Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*.

³² President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, 271.

³³ Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016).

³⁴ Mariame Kaba, “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html>.

³⁵ Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, 103.

and frisk).³⁶ Police professionalization then, as articulated by Alex Vitale, is merely an effort to reestablish the legitimacy of policing rather than question what it is that police are meant to do: manage and produce inequality.³⁷ Focusing on universities to engage in crime research, recruitment, and education of police officers successfully diverted attention away from solutions that could have positively affected communities, such as housing, employment opportunities, and public education. Instead, the Commissioners' recommendation to pour federal funding into criminal justice education increased the carceral state's resources and manpower, consequently expanding state violence while claiming to eliminate it.

Criminal Justice and the University: The Birth of Criminal Justice Education

Criminal justice education—as a tool for curbing police violence, promoting justice, and managing crime—became popular as a reform that both conservatives and liberals could support. The role of universities that *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* promoted was put into action through the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, which established the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). Importantly, LEEP created a financial relationship between the state and the university that became a defining feature of criminal justice education. This relationship determined the direction of LEEP-funded criminal justice education programs, including the courses they offered and the research they produced. Universities across the country were eager to take advantage of federal funding to develop criminal justice programs in an effort to facilitate their own expansion in a time where demand for public education had increased and state budgets for higher education had started to diminish. Consequently, criminal justice programming—with curriculum guidelines

³⁶ Seigel, *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police*.

³⁷ Alex S. Vitale, "The Myth of Liberal Policing," *The New Inquiry*, April 5, 2017, <https://thenewinquiry.com/the-myth-of-liberal-policing/>.

from the state—skyrocketed across the country.

The overall purpose of the LEAA was to encourage state and local governments to create planning agencies designed to strengthen law enforcement, and the administration provided federal funding and guidance in that process.³⁸ One of the programs administered by the LEAA was LEEP, which made federal funding directly available to individual police officers to attend college and awarded grants to universities to create criminal justice programs. LEEP was established as a federal assistance program “designed to help improve the Nation’s criminal justice system—police, courts, and corrections—by enhancing the quality of criminal justice personnel through opportunities for higher education.”³⁹ The program had two central objectives: to incentivize police to pursue college as a way to improve the overall performance of criminal justice agencies and to encourage college students to enroll in programs where they would receive degrees pursuant to careers in law enforcement.

In its first year of operation, LEEP had a budget of \$6.5 million to offer grants to full-time “in-service” police officers and accredited institutions willing to develop criminal justice programs that were “responsive to systematically identified criminal justice personnel needs.”⁴⁰ LEEP students who qualified were eligible to receive grants of up to two hundred dollars each semester or loans for as much as \$1,800 each academic year, which would then be cancelled at a rate of 25 percent for each year of work in a law enforcement agency.⁴¹ While LEEP students were not

³⁸ Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, H.R. 5037, 116th Cong. (1968).

³⁹ Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *LEEP... An Opportunity to Move Ahead* (United States Department of Justice, n.d.), National Criminal Justice Reference Service.

⁴⁰ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Department of Public Safety, *1975 Directory of Law Enforcement Education Programs and a Perspective on Career Development and Planning* (District of Columbia Office of Criminal Justice Plans and Analysis, June 30, 1975), National Criminal Justice Reference Service, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/directory-law-enforcement-education-programs-and-perspective-career>; Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Law Enforcement Education Program Guideline Manual* (United States Department of Justice, June 23, 1978), i, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/law-enforcement-education-program-guideline-manual-0>.

⁴¹ Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *LEEP... An Opportunity to Move Ahead*.

required to enroll in degree programs in criminal justice, criminology, or police science, they were required to take courses that would be “suitable for a person employed in law enforcement,” and their loan forgiveness depended on their ability to be employed by a criminal justice agency.⁴² The program’s guidelines emphasized that qualifying educational institutions, which were responsible for disseminating grants and loans to students, must “exercise conscientious judgment” to ensure that LEEP recipients’ academic programs would ultimately benefit their job performance.⁴³ While colleges and universities were granted this discretion, LEEP also provided guidelines of what would constitute a crime-related degree program (See figure 1). Consequently, criminal justice programs were primarily designed to respond to the staffing needs of local criminal justice agencies, including police departments and correctional facilities.

⁴² Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Law Enforcement Education Guideline Manual*, 1.

⁴³ Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, *Law Enforcement Education Guideline Manual*, 9.

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APPENDIX 8

TYPOLOGY OF CRIME-RELATED DEGREE PROGRAMS

For purposes of LEEP administration, the following list constitutes the approved crime-related degree programs. The designation of a criminal justice concentration must be the official designation by the educational institution for the degree program.

Administration of Justice

Corrections/Correctional Administration/Probation-Parole

Criminal Justice/Criminal Justice Administration

Criminal Justice Planning/Evaluation

Criminology

Foresnic Science/Criminalistics

Judicial Management/Court Administration

Law Enforcement/Police Science/Police Administration

Social Justice

Behavioral Science-with criminal justice concentration

Political Science-with criminal justice concentration

Psychology-with criminal justice concentration

Public Administration-with criminal justice concentration

Social Welfare/Social Work-with criminal justice concentration

Sociology/Anthropology-with criminal justice concentration

Other program areas approved by LEAA as directly related to law enforcement and criminal justice.

Page 1

Figure 1: Approved coursework for LEEP recipients, *Law Enforcement Education Program Guideline Manual* (United States Department of Justice, June 23, 1978)

According to historian Gerald Markowitz, criminal justice programs at universities “mushroomed across the country” in response to the creation of LEEP, and the acceleration of

these programs was widely supported.⁴⁴ Put aptly by Don Riddle, the first Dean of Faculty and former president of CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice: "The liberals thought the police ought to go to college, and the conservatives were willing to give the police what they wanted."⁴⁵ Importantly, universities were also in a period of dramatic transformation. After mass student protests led by Black and Latinx students challenged the purpose of the university, conservative opposition was emboldened at the state level. In *Austerity Blues*, Stephen Brier and Michael Fabricant highlight that opposition to student protests coincided with opposition to financial support of public universities. In 1967, for example, newly elected governor of California Ronald Reagan argued for steep cuts to public higher education, using the state's fiscal crisis to reason that "taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing intellectual curiosity."⁴⁶ The opportunity for sustained financial support in a time of increasing austerity in higher education led LEEP's initial \$6.5 million budget to triple by 1970. By 1975, the budget had reached \$40 million, with the number of participating schools expanding from 485 in 1970 to 1,036 by 1975.⁴⁷ This expansion proceeded even though the White House administration had changed from Democratic to Republican with the election of President Nixon in 1968. Clearly, crime management vis a vis criminal justice education was a bipartisan effort.

While the implementation of LEEP was primarily envisioned as a way to provide individual police officers with education, the program's predominant impact arose from the grants it distributed to higher education institutions to develop criminal justice programs and departments. Even as LEEP funding dried up by the end of the 1970s, the seed funds that LEEP provided to colleges and universities to create criminal justice institutes, schools, and programs, developed

⁴⁴ Markowitz, *Educating for Justice: A History of John Jay College of Criminal Justice*, 18.

⁴⁵ Markowitz, 16.

⁴⁶ Fabricant and Brier, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education*, 79.

⁴⁷ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Department of Public Safety, *1975 Directory of Law Enforcement Education Programs and a Perspective on Career Development and Planning*.

criminal justice into a profitable field of study devoted to conducting research into what *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* called the “problems of crime.”⁴⁸ Even though the use of the university to train in-service police officers was not new, LEEP’s funding of criminal justice programs transformed the trajectory of the field. With its emphasis on liberal arts and social sciences, and disavowal of narrowly vocational programs, LEEP-funded criminal justice was promoted as a discipline that was nonpartisan and academic, unlike earlier police science programs that were more vocational in nature. Significantly, this reliance on federal funding and focus on agency-approved research prevented criminal justice scholars from producing any radical critiques of the criminal justice system.⁴⁹ Therefore, most criminal justice scholarship made suggestions for improving policing through reformatory measures that expanded and legitimized, rather than questioned, state power. This ideologically liberal focus would become the most prevalent ideology within criminal justice education as the discipline continued to develop, outpacing both radical and conservative orientations of the discipline that predated LEEP.

Two such programs that existed prior to LEEP—CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the University of California Berkeley’s School of Criminology—are illustrative of the way LEEP transformed criminal justice education and facilitated the expansion of colleges and universities that aligned with its liberal focus. Whereas John Jay’s original mission was to train police officers, Berkeley’s School of Criminology had grown to attract organizers of social movements interested in analyzing the role of policing in a broader political and economic context. The creation of LEEP influenced these programs in drastically different ways. While John Jay would become the single largest beneficiary of LEEP funding, Berkeley’s School of Criminology would eventually close during the LEEP-imposed criminal justice boom. The fates of each of these

⁴⁸ Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, vi.

⁴⁹ Platt, “Prospects for a Radical Criminology in the United States,” *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 1 (1974): 2–10, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29765882>.

schools signals the solidification of criminal justice as a discipline that functioned as a staffing pipeline and research arm for the state, even as it was positioned as academic and scientific. In this next section, I will historicize the trajectory of each college in order to show how LEEP determined the future of criminal justice education.

John Jay and the Tradition of Liberal Arts in Criminal Justice

John Jay College experienced immense growth as a result of LEEP funding and the college's administration eagerly adopted LEEP's liberal vision, shaping its mission and values in order to facilitate that expansion. As this analysis of John Jay's history will show, the college continuously molded itself in response to federal and local funding opportunities to sustain its growth. While John Jay originally began as a school solely focused on educating police officers, LEEP's focus on liberal arts and social sciences, rather than vocational education, led John Jay to restructure and expand its academic programming. However, during the New York City fiscal crisis that threatened to close the school in 1976, John Jay forged strategic relationships with local law enforcement agencies to subvert the threat with new, stabilizing partnerships and funding streams, and eventually eliminated its humanities and liberal arts programming as a condition for remaining open. John Jay College is indicative of the way that successful criminal justice programs bend to the needs of the state as a way to ensure their own existence.

CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice opened in 1965, evolving from two college programs that began in 1953 before the city's public colleges had joined to become the City University of New York: an associate degree in police studies at Brooklyn College and a police science program at City College. In 1961, when the city's four senior colleges were united to become the City University of New York, the idea of professionalizing the police through a bachelor's degree had already started to gain popularity among senior criminal justice officials in

New York City. In 1963, Police Commissioner Michael Murphy, Police Academy Commander Patrick V. Murphy, and Commissioner of Corrections Anna Kross approached CUNY Chancellor Al Bowker to propose the founding of a new police college within the CUNY system. In *Educating for Justice: A History of John Jay College of Criminal Justice*, Gerald Markowitz writes that Chancellor Bowker had already believed CUNY should “fulfill new educational and training responsibilities to fit New York City’s professionalizing needs,” and was thrilled that “support for his vision was coming from within the city bureaucracy.”⁵⁰ After being approached by Murphy, Murphy, and Kross, Bowker appointed a committee to look into the idea of creating a new college that would aid in the professionalization of NYC’s criminal justice workforce, and on June 15, 1964 the Board of Higher Education approved a proposal for the college.⁵¹

The school was initially housed in the NYPD Police Academy and was inadvertently named the College of Police Science (COPS), but police students thought the name was too pejorative, and the administration wanted the name to reflect the school’s intention to focus not only on policing, but also on corrections and the court system. The college was renamed the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 1966 after the former New York governor and first Supreme Court chief justice. During its first year, John Jay offered a single major—police science—and enrolled 1,000 in-service students. Reflecting its student population, the school’s initial concentration was to train police officers and was consequently more vocational in nature. After the infusion of LEEP funding and a doubled student population by Fall 1969, John Jay president Don Riddle, who was unsatisfied with the school’s narrow focus and inspired by LEEP’s promotion of liberal arts education for police officers, advocated for a curriculum beyond police science. Riddle pressed the administration to adopt a criminal justice curriculum that included both

⁵⁰ Markowitz, *Educating for Justice: A History of John Jay College of Criminal Justice*, 8.

⁵¹ Markowitz, 9.

professionalization and a liberal arts approach to educate in-service police officers and “civilian” students, who had begun to enroll at John Jay in larger numbers following CUNY’s open admissions policy.⁵²

Riddle, who believed that police officers should be educated “like anyone else,” parroted the same language about liberal arts education that was popularized in *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, arguing that it can offer “a thorough understanding of the nature of man in society, of the nature and development of social institutions [and] the nature of the social forces that produce the conflicts which make [a police officer’s] role so difficult.”⁵³ It is evident that Riddle’s concept of a liberal arts approach to criminal justice education mirrors the same legitimizing discourse of LEEP: that policing is an essential institution that can be improved by equipping police with critical thinking skills and exposure to humanities education. At this time, John Jay also broadened their curriculum to be more liberal arts oriented, adding majors such as English, American studies, and history.⁵⁴ John Jay’s broadened mission to teach criminal justice in the liberal arts tradition allowed the school to align with the goals of LEEP and continue to expand as a criminal justice college dedicated to teaching current *and* future police officers.

However, when John Jay faced closure during New York City’s fiscal crisis in 1976, the college argued that it provided an essential role in staffing NYC criminal justice agencies. Primarily positioning itself as an institution that responded to the staffing needs of the criminal justice system in NYC, and eventually agreeing to eliminate its liberal arts and humanities majors as an indicator of that commitment, allowed John Jay to remain open.⁵⁵ In order to avoid future threats of closure, John Jay institutionalized relationships with the NYPD, the New York City

⁵² Markowitz.

⁵³ Donald H. Riddle, “Liberal Arts and Vocationalism in Higher Education Curricula for Police Officers,” n.d., 10, National Criminal Justice Reference Service.

⁵⁴ Markowitz.

⁵⁵ Markowitz.

Transit Police, New York City Department of Corrections, and other agencies, creating a task force focused on maintaining partnerships with those organizations. These relationships acted as a way to ensure that John Jay curricula responded to law enforcement staffing needs and these agencies often provided insight on relevant curriculum.⁵⁶ Ultimately, John Jay’s history illustrates the purpose of criminal justice education as a staffing pipeline and legitimizing discourse, and the way that criminal justice colleges and universities must mold themselves to fit those needs.

Radicalism at UC Berkeley’s School of Criminology

UC Berkeley’s School of Criminology, unlike John Jay, was not willing to capitalize on LEEP funding and adopt the liberal arts and police professionalization focus that federal funding entailed. While UC Berkeley’s School of Criminology also started as a training and baccalaureate degree program for police officers established by Berkeley Police Chief August Vollmer in 1916, the teaching, writing, and organizing efforts of a small contingent of faculty and large number of students developed a significant tradition of radical criminology at the school. This small but vocal contingent led to sustained academic repression from the Berkeley administration—who complained that the school was too concerned with community organizing and the interests of its students—and eventually led to the school’s closure. UC Berkeley’s School of Criminology showcases the fate of criminal justice programs that were unwilling to mold to LEEP’s liberal vision or respond to the staffing needs of local law enforcement agencies.

In its earlier years, the School of Criminology was known as a “program of good old-fashioned law and order” with “little patience even for the niceties of liberal social science.”⁵⁷ Like

⁵⁶ *Toward Excellence in Criminal Justice Education: 1976-79: a Period of Appraisal: The Advanced Institutional Development Plan* (New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, January 1976).

⁵⁷ Tony Platt and Greg Shank, “Editorial: Berkeley’s School of Criminology, 1950–1976,” ed. Suzie Dod et al., *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 6 (1976): 131.

John Jay, the School was originally designed to respond to the staffing and administrative needs of criminal justice agencies, and faculty members included chiefs of police, FBI agents, prosecutors, and architects of California's World War II era internment camps for Japanese Americans whose teaching methods focused on professionalism and vocationalism.⁵⁸ In the 1960s, however, this focus on vocational education was criticized by the faculty committee review board and the School was even slated for closure in 1961. This threat of closure led the school to establish a new emphasis on the social and legal aspects of criminology, as opposed to more narrowly defined police science, shifting to a more liberal teaching tradition.⁵⁹ The political climate of the late 1960s then influenced the development of a faction of radical criminologists with the school.

Even though most faculty remained committed to the school's liberal tradition, in the late 1960s radicalism began to grow among some students and faculty members. They formed the Union of Radical Criminologists and created the journal *Crime and Social Justice*, where they published writing that focused on a tradition of criminology influenced by Marxism and political organizing in the late 1960s and criticized criminal justice education divorced from these political contexts. In 1975, the Union of Radical Criminologists produced *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove*, a book critically analyzing the role of police that uses "iron fist" and "velvet glove" to describe the emergence of hard reforms, like police militarization and surveillance, and soft reforms, like community pacification and social research, as intertwined efforts to engage in repression. In the preface of the text, the authors clarify that the book is not meant to be an "academic exercise," but instead "a way of providing the kind of analysis that can help guide effective political action."⁶⁰ Radical criminologists within the school were inspired by various

⁵⁸ Platt and Shank, "Editorial."

⁵⁹ Richard Schauffler, "Criminology at Berkeley: Resisting Academic Repression," *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 1 (1974): 58–61; Platt and Shank, "Editorial."

⁶⁰ Susie Bernstein et al., *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Analysis of the U.S. Police* (Berkeley: The Center for Research and Criminal Justice, 1975), 6.

social movements—some of which were happening on Berkeley’s campus, like the student strike led by the Third World Liberation Front demanding a Third World Studies department, and local organizing efforts, including prisoners’ rights movements. Their academic work, including the courses they taught and writing they published, reflected these political commitments.⁶¹

However, UC Berkeley’s radical tradition of criminology stagnated when the school closed in 1976. In comparison to the growth of other criminal justice programs across the country, the closure of UC Berkeley’s School of Criminology was an anomaly, but it was not unexpected to radical criminologists at the school. In the first issue of *Social Justice and Crime* published in 1974, Richard Schauffler, a student and member of the Union of Radical Criminologists, suggested that the attempt to close down the school began in 1969 with the denial of tenure to Professor Tony Platt because of his political organizing. Former CUNY Chancellor Albert Bowker, for example, who later became Chancellor of the University of California, called Platt’s political actions “troublesome.”⁶² The academic repression continued with evaluation of the school’s degree programs in 1973, when faculty review committees recommended that the school be closed down because “it had *abandoned* its professional role; its graduate programs had become ‘too academic’ and its undergraduate program was too unstructured, catering too much to student interests on immediate social issues.”⁶³

With this history of academic repression in mind, students and professors speculated that the School of Criminology was closed down because “unlike most criminology schools around the country, [the school was] interested not merely in police training but [was] interested in the sociological aspects of crime.” This, they assumed, was “unacceptable to the administration.”⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ Platt and Shank, “Editorial.”

⁶² Schauffler, “Criminology at Berkeley,” 59.

⁶³ Schauffler, 60.

⁶⁴ David Stein, “A Spectre Is Haunting Law and Society: Revisiting Radical Criminology at UC Berkeley,” *Social Justice* 40, no. 1/2 (131-132) (2014): 73.

closure of the school was evidence to students and faculty that radical criminology is not beneficial to the state, unlike the criminal justice programs that were being funded around the country through LEEP. While the *Social Justice and Crime* journal persisted and members of the Union of Radical Criminologists continued to produce scholarship, liberalism had emerged victorious at the university level and consequently became the most prominent ideology within the field.

Criminal Justice Education, Liberalism, and the Issue with Bipartisan Reform

In the wake of LEEP, which ended in 1980, an emphasis on liberal reform and a collaborative relationship with local law enforcement agencies have become defining features of criminal justice education. The kind of reform prevalent within criminal justice education is what grassroots prison abolitionist organization Critical Resistance refers to as “reformist reforms”: they actively strengthen and expand the carceral state—through staffing, policy recommendations, and technological advancement—rather than reduce the scope of policing through methods such as minimizing police funding to generate funding for social programs like housing and education.⁶⁵ Reformism in criminal justice education relies on the belief that the criminal justice system is capable of addressing interpersonal and societal harm without fundamentally altering the carceral power of the state. This ideological focus is key, as it then sustains the relationship between college criminal justice programs and local criminal justice agencies, who can rely on these programs as a source of research and manpower.

With radical criminal justice programs like Berkeley’s affected by academic repression, liberal arts focused schools such as John Jay became the standard in the field, and partnerships with the state meant that the schools were often able to avoid austerity measures that came with the

⁶⁵ “Reformist Reforms vs. Abolitionist Steps in Policing,” Critical Resistance, May 14, 2020, <https://criticalresistance.org/resources/reformist-reforms-vs-abolitionist-steps-in-policing/>.

increased neoliberalization of the university. While reform-minded individuals like Don Riddle were optimistic about criminal justice education's ability to positively transform policing, scholars such as Tony Platt, Kay Whitlock, and Nancy A. Heitzeg argue that we must be wary of the transformative capabilities of liberalism, bipartisan consensus, and criminal justice reform. Criminal justice education's close relationship to the state has meant that the primary goal of the discipline is to reproduce the carceral state by staffing and training its workforce, responding to state-sanctioned research projects, and reinforcing a legitimizing discourse with roots in the Johnson administration: that police are the "front line" in the war against crime and poverty, and that a strong criminal justice system is the primary means to address systemic racism. Even though academics in the discipline produce scholarship that criticize issues such as police brutality and mass incarceration, the solutions offered reform and strengthen the criminal justice response, rather than fundamentally change the system. Even criminal justice academics who consider themselves to be prison abolitionists, according to Schept, Wall, and Brisman, "must contend with a deeply structured, historical, and intimate relationship" between their discipline and the state.⁶⁶

This analysis of criminal justice education still holds true today because criminal justice education continues to evolve to match popular discourse about criminal justice reform. After nationwide protests in the summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, the demand to defund the police as a step towards abolition was widely accepted. In response to this growing demand, President Joe Biden tweeted that he does not believe "we have to choose between law and order and racial justice in America" and criminologists have produced scholarship co-opting the language of prison industrial complex abolition as a way to expand the carceral state.⁶⁷ This chapter

⁶⁶ Schept, Wall, and Brisman, "Building, Staffing, and Insulating," 101.

⁶⁷ Joe Biden (@JoeBiden), "I do not believe we have to choose between law and order and racial justice in America.," Twitter, October 6, 2020, <https://twitter.com/joebiden/status/1313581042066952192?lang=en>; Mike Bagaric, Dan Hunter, and Jennifer Svilar, "Prison Abolition: From Naive Idealism to Technological Pragmatism," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 111, no. 2 (2021): 351–406.

will conclude with the most recent liberal reform gaining prominence in criminal justice education and its historical development: the diversification of the police and criminal justice workers.

Multiculturalism in the Field Historically and Contemporarily

Following the unrest in majority Black neighborhoods of U.S. cities in the late 1960s, the desire for more Black police officers was one shared both by many Black citizens as well as white government officials. After the riots that erupted in Watts, the *Sentential*, a Black newspaper in Los Angeles, printed an article pointing out that the Los Angeles Police Department did not have any Black captains, while *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* cited the hiring of more Black police officers as a way to mend the broken relationship between the police and Black communities.”⁶⁸ While this opinion was not universally shared by Black citizens—many felt, and research also corroborated, that Black officers were just as physically abusive as white officers—this particular reform nevertheless gained popularity as a response to police violence in majority Black neighborhoods in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Contemporarily, the recruitment of Black and non-black people of color into the criminal justice system as workers has only increased, and criminal justice education has been one method of that sustained recruitment. Criminal justice programs in urban areas enroll tens of thousands of students of color every year. John Jay in particular is classified as a Hispanic and Minority Serving Institution, with 40 percent of its student population identifying as Latinx and approximately 20 percent identifying as Black. Additionally, John Jay students majoring in criminal justice or criminology account for 40 percent of the undergraduate student population, and 74 percent of

⁶⁸ James Forman Jr., *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2017), 103.

these students identify as Black, Hispanic, or Asian.⁶⁹ This is concurrent with the diversity campaigns waged by police forces in major cities like Los Angeles and New York in recent years.⁷⁰ New York City Mayor and former police captain Eric Adams, who, during his campaign, wrote an op-ed titled, “Beaten by Cops, I Became One” has amplified this tactic of multicultural law and order by disparaging calls to defund the NYPD while promising to restore public safety and focus on police accountability.⁷¹ This approach of addressing police brutality through diversity measures has also been exalted by criminal justice scholars, who have pointed to the increasing number of Black and non-black students of color majoring in criminal justice as an opportunity to counteract police culture and violence, as many of these students enter with the intention of producing institutional change.⁷² This outlook is prevalent despite evidence that disproves that diversifying police forces alters the racial violence of everyday policing, racist protocols, or the behavior of individual police officers, regardless of their identities.⁷³

While this optimism may be tempting for progressive and leftist scholars who find themselves in the criminal justice classroom, Dylan Rodríguez argues that the emphasis on multiculturalism in reforming the criminal justice system acts as a counterinsurgency rather than a threat to the white supremacy imbedded in these institutions. As criminal justice education continues to evolve and match the current political moment, it will continue to act as a legitimizing discourse and staffing pipeline for the carceral state. Therefore, criminal justice will never reduce state violence, even as it claims more diversity and training will create positive change. Instead, police and prison industrial complex abolition is the only way to end state violence. In the next

⁶⁹ Eren, Leyro, and Disha, “It’s Personal”; “Diversity at John Jay: Facts & Resources,” John Jay College of Criminal Justice, February 26, 2018, <https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/diversity-facts-resources>.

⁷⁰ Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide*; Kanno-Youngs, “NYPD Aims to Diversify Ranks with Minority Appointments.”

⁷¹ Eric L. Adams, “Beaten by Cops, I Became One.”

⁷² Eren, Leyro, and Disha, “It’s Personal”; William Farrell and Charles Thomas, “Sociology, Humanism and Criminal Justice Education.”

⁷³ Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide*.

chapter, I will consider how contemporary criminal justice programs use the language of diversity and other liberal reforms to legitimize the carceral state and funnel working-class Black, Latinx, and Asian students into careers in the carceral economy. While it is true that academics in the field of criminal justice produce scholarship that is critical of policing, most of this criticism does not address the structures that shape the carceral state. Instead, this criticism is often produced to address bureaucratic issues *in service to* criminal justice agencies, such as the creation of probation and parole, the juvenile court system, and half-way houses, which have expanded the carceral state. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, it is these logics that largely inform criminal justice education today.

CHAPTER 3: THE CUNY JUSTICE ACADEMY

In *The Contradictory College*, Professor of Higher Education Kevin Dougherty theorizes that, from its inception, the community college has embodied many contradictory purposes which prevent it from providing upward mobility to the students it serves. He argues that the purposes of the community college undercut each other, as they simultaneously act as “a doorway to educational opportunity, a vendor of vocational training, [and] a protector of university selectivity,” with vocational training, for instance, circumventing the focus on transfer education, and causing funding to primarily focus on the former.⁷⁴ Dougherty argues that these contradictions reveal community colleges to be both a democratizing and antidemocratizing institution: at the same time as they provide more access to higher education than four-year colleges, they also promote less academic and economic success than four-year colleges. While *The Contradictory College* shows that community colleges are unable to effectively address inequality, two-year schools are still *imagined* as the solution to address economic and educational equality.⁷⁵ Put differently, there is an impulse to use community colleges, as opposed to four-year colleges, to expand access to higher education, regardless of whether these institutions provide the same opportunities for success as four-year colleges. This impulse is apparent in CUNY’s historical efforts to serve New York City high school graduates.

In 1963, recognizing the disconnect between the growing population of Black and Puerto Rican high school students in NYC and the demographics of students at CUNY, Chancellor Albert Bowker appealed to the Board of Higher Education (BHE) to expand the number of community colleges in the CUNY system and implement a CUNY-wide open admissions policy. This open admissions policy, which was set to go into effect by 1975, guaranteed NYC high school graduates

⁷⁴ Dougherty, *The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts, and Futures of the Community College*, 8.

⁷⁵ Dougherty.

admission to one of CUNY's senior or community colleges, with their placement depending on their high school class ranking. By spring of 1969, Black and Puerto Rican CUNY students who were unsatisfied with this incremental change took over campuses across the CUNY system, in part demanding an increase to the number of Black and Puerto Rican students admitted to CUNY. In response to this pressure, Chancellor Bowker implemented an open admissions policy for the following semester.⁷⁶ In practice, however, open admissions benefited white students more than the population it set out to serve, as more white students gained access to CUNY's senior colleges than students of color, who were more likely to be admitted to a community college.⁷⁷

These contradictions are also clear in the development of the CUNY Justice Academy: a joint AS-BA program developed by CUNY's John Jay College in partnership with six of CUNY's two-year colleges. The articulation agreement grants students who receive their associate degree in criminal justice at one of six participating community colleges guaranteed admission to John Jay. The program was established in 2009 as John Jay sought to discontinue their own associate degree program and transition from a comprehensive college, that grants both associate and bachelor's degrees, to a senior college, which awards bachelor's degrees and graduate-level degrees.⁷⁸ According to former John Jay president Jeremy Tavis, the Justice Academy was an opportunity to share John Jay's "brand power" and some of its student population with the community colleges, whose administrations, he claims, were "eager to have criminal justice programs... eager to associate with John Jay."⁷⁹ Even as Tavis framed the partnership as mutually beneficial, and it was supported by the community colleges, the Justice Academy was ultimately part of a wider strategic

⁷⁶ Fabricant and Brier, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education*.

⁷⁷ David Lavin, Richard Alba, and Richard Silberstein, *Right versus Privilege: The Open Admissions Experiment at the City University of New York* (New York: Free Press, 1981).

⁷⁸ The President's Advisory Committee on Critical Choices, "Report on Associate Degree Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice" (New York: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2005).

⁷⁹ Markowitz, *Educating for Justice: A History of John Jay College of Criminal Justice*, 201.

plan to transform John Jay into a "first-tier" baccalaureate institution. Ending their associate degree program allowed John Jay to be more selective in their admissions, which, according to Tavis, would make the college's student population more "homogenous" and raise the school's academic profile.⁸⁰ Thus, the Justice Academy became a way for John Jay to build more prestige, under the cover of the claim that it was a way to create more opportunity at the community college level.

By offering students both automatic enrollment to a four-year college and a clear vocational path in law enforcement, the CUNY Justice Academy embodies many of the contradictions about the purpose of community colleges that Dougherty describes. While it removes barriers that often prevent students from transferring to a four-year school, by way of tailored advisement and assurance that credits will transfer, the program also promotes criminal justice career paths that are attainable without a bachelor's degree, encouraging entry into the workforce after or even before students earn an associate degree. This dynamic is further complicated by the contradictions inherent within the criminal justice discipline. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the historical development of criminal justice as a field of study has been fraught with tensions between the state, faculty members, the university, and students who have different subjectivities, expectations, and visions about what the purpose of the discipline should be. The goal of this chapter is to explore how these tensions and contradictions, both inherent to criminal justice as a discipline and community colleges as an institution, surface within the Justice Academy, where a majority of students identify as Latinx, Black, or Asian and come from communities affected by structural racism and organized abandonment.

Organized abandonment, as defined by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, refers to the consequences of neoliberal economic restructuring and deindustrialization, where in both rural and urban parts of

⁸⁰ Markowitz, 201.

the U.S., “people have lost the ability to keep their individualized selves, their households, and their communities together with adequate income, clean water, reasonable air, reliable shelter, and transportation and communication infrastructure.”⁸¹ Policing and prisons have then emerged, both as a way to manage surplus populations—which Gilmore defines as “workers at the extreme edges, or completely outside, of restructured labor markets”—and as a promise of economic stability through jobs created by the carceral economy: correctional officers, police officers, and other criminal justice professionals.⁸² In New York City, where many communities of color face the reality of organized abandonment, the carceral state is a way to manage and provide economic opportunity to the same population: working-class kids of color are both being incarcerated and policing the incarcerated. In New York City, 54 percent of NYPD officers are Black, Latinx, or Asian. In 2021, the NYPD ramped up their recruitment efforts in largely Black, Latinx, and Asian neighborhoods with their “Be the Change” campaign and waived the forty-dollar application fee for taking the police exam, citing both efforts as a way to increase diversity in the police force, “an incredibly important” priority according to former Police Commissioner Dermot Shea. As a result, 52 percent of policing exam applicants in June 2021 identified as Black, Latinx, or Asian.⁸³

Becoming a police officer in New York City requires sixty college credits and offers a starting salary of \$42,500 that more than doubles to \$85,292 after five and a half years. Including overtime pay, holiday pay, and longevity pay, students in the Justice Academy who pursue a career

⁸¹ “Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition,” June 10, 2020, in *Intercepted*, produced by Jeremy Scahill, podcast, <https://theintercept.com/2020/06/10/ruth-wilson-gilmore-makes-the-case-for-abolition/>.

⁸² Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 70.

⁸³ Ben Chapman, “NYPD Sees Increase in Minority Applicants for Entrance Exam,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nypd-sees-increase-in-minority-applicants-for-entrance-exam-11621375835>; Rocco Parascandola, “‘Be the Change’: NYPD Hoping New Recruitment Campaign Draws Applicants, Even Those Skeptical of Police,” *New York Daily News*, April 6, 2021, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-20210406-szyx4ilnonajpnrxjim7n74p4-story.html>.

in law enforcement could potentially earn over \$100,000 with 60 college credits.⁸⁴ With additional college credits, or a bachelor's degree, they are eligible for positions with even higher starting salaries.⁸⁵ Reflecting on the way organized abandonment limits opportunities for economic stability, Kay Whitlock and Nancy Heitzeg write in *Carceral Con* that “in the midst of abandonment, almost any possibility of employment can seem hopeful to people who, understandably, are frightened about their own futures.”⁸⁶ Schept, Wall, and Brisman, who argue criminal justice education acts as both a legitimizing ideology and a staffing pipeline for the carceral state, contend that criminal justice provides a promising career path for working- and middle class students at their Kentucky university, who have “grown up in an era in which their parents have lost jobs and local factories, mines, and plants have been closed.” These students, they highlight, “are increasingly bombarded with images and indicia of bleak job prospects. That is, of course, except for the bright future of one industry: criminal justice.”⁸⁷

CUNY Justice Academy students are similarly drawn to careers in criminal justice as an engine of upward mobility, even as they point to desires like helping victims of crime or ending mass incarceration and police brutality as reasons for pursuing the career path. Professors in the program are motivated by increasing the academic and economic success of their students, even as that “success” is measured by an upward mobility that is tied to the expansion of the carceral state. These professors have expressed ambivalence about their roles as criminal justice educators. A number self-identify as prison industrial complex abolitionists, for example, but they are also

⁸⁴ “Police Officer Salary & Benefits,” NYPD, The Official Website of the City of New York, accessed February 16, 2022, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/careers/police-officers/po-benefits.page>.

⁸⁵ In the NYPD, becoming a sergeant requires sixty-four credits, a lieutenant requires ninety-six credits, and a captain requires a bachelor's degree. A starting salary for a sergeant is roughly \$80,000 and for a lieutenant is just over \$100,000. Office of Professional Development, “Professional Development Guidebook for 2022” (New York City Police Department, n.d.), <https://www.nycpba.org/media/36306/nypdd-scholarships.pdf>; “New York City Police Officers,” CAPstat, accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.capstat.nyc/officers/?universe=all&officers__county=&rank=&sort=-salary.

⁸⁶ Kay Whitlock and Nancy A. Heitzeg, *Carceral Con* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 12.

⁸⁷ Schept, Wall, and Brisman, “Building, Staffing, and Insulating,” 103.

interested in supporting their students' aspirations to work in the public and private sector as police and corrections officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and criminal justice reform advocates. One strategy that many of these professors shared was their promotion of diversity, education, and other reforms as strategies for making prisons and police less deadly. Students in the Justice Academy are eager to adopt these ideologies, as they confirm that their decision to pursue a career in criminal justice is both worthwhile and ethical.

In this chapter I will explore how some professors in the Justice Academy grapple with the contradictions of preparing students for careers in criminal justice even as they believe a degree in criminal justice does not make police or prisons any less violent. I will also consider how students embrace and embody these subjectivities as hopeful criminal justice professionals. Ultimately, Justice Academy students are reform-minded, and embrace popular multiculturalist and liberal ideas about their futures as police officers, correctional officers, attorneys, and prison reform advocates. The Justice Academy curriculum's focus on career orientation, social and racial justice, and prison reform satisfies Black, Latinx, and Asian students faced with organized abandonment who must reckon with their awareness of the cruelty and deadliness of the criminal justice system and their desire for the economic stability a career in criminal justice promises to provide.

This analysis is the result of ethnographic research conducted at one of the six CUNY community colleges that host the Justice Academy. From April 2021 through November 2021, I conducted ten interviews with students and faculty members in the Justice Academy at this CUNY community college. In the Fall 2021 semester, I also attended one of the college's core criminal justice courses weekly, Corrections and Sentencing, which was taught over Zoom. This chapter is based on my interviews and class observation, and data gathered from the college's website, institutional reports, and program reviews. Importantly, this research is informed by Indigenous studies scholar Eve Tuck's desire-based framework. Through a desire-based framework, I chose to

conduct long form, semi-structured interviews, as opposed to surveys, with the hope that they could capture Justice Academy students' and faculty members' whole and complex personhoods, experiences, and beliefs. This analysis privileges the contradictory behavior of all individuals, and how we simultaneously, as Eve Tuck says, “reproduce, resist, are complicit in, rage against, celebrate, throw up hands/fists/towels, and withdraw and participate in uneven social structures.”⁸⁸

Rejecting the “Cop Shop” at City Community

At City Community College,⁸⁹ criminal justice has been one of the top five most popular majors for the past ten years. One of six CUNY community colleges that hosts the Justice Academy, City Community, like many other CUNY colleges, is a Hispanic Serving Institution. Nearly half of the students enrolled at City Community are Latinx, and 40 percent of students also identify as either Asian or Black. Seventy percent of students receive financial aid, and in a 2020 Brookings Institution report, the school was ranked in the top five among two-year schools demonstrating success in economic mobility for their student population.⁹⁰ The CUNY Justice Academy, and a career in law enforcement, is one way students at City Community are promised this upward mobility. Once students complete their associate degree in criminal justice with a minimum GPA of 2.0, they are guaranteed acceptance to John Jay as a criminal justice major. Even though students can become a police or corrections officer without transferring to John Jay, graduating with their bachelor's degree opens additional opportunities in the field of criminal justice. In 2020, following the start of a global pandemic and a global wave of protests against

⁸⁸ Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (October 6, 2009): 409, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>.

⁸⁹ I use a pseudonym for the CUNY community college this analysis is based on in order to protect participants' identities. All names of persons in this chapter are pseudonyms unless the person is a well-known public official. In some cases, two or more persons were merged in order to hide identifying characteristics.

⁹⁰ “New Study Confirms CUNY’s Power as National Engine of Economic Mobility,” *CUNY Newswire* (blog), June 17, 2020, <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2020/06/17/new-study-confirms-cunys-power-as-national-engine-of-economic-mobility/>.

racist police violence, nursing and criminal justice, respectively, were the two most popular majors declared by new students at City Community.

According to Luisa Martin, a professor who teaches criminology in the program, the NYPD provides City Community students with a “quick way into the middle class.” The program’s webpage advertises that students who earn their associate degree are eligible to become a police officer without any additional schooling. If they choose to become a correctional officer, they only need to complete thirty credits, which amounts to half of an associate degree program at City Community. Despite this advertised career path, several faculty members were not as straightforward about the Justice Academy acting as an “NYPD pipeline,” as Professor Martin calls it. Indeed, Dr. Martin stood alone. Most faculty in the department were intent on letting me know that City Community’s criminal justice program is not a “cop shop,” a term used pejoratively to refer to criminal justice programs that focus on work-based training for current or future police officers. Judith Hall, a criminal justice professor who has two decades of experience working in prisons, recalled that when she was hired, the program director emphasized that the curriculum should be more pedagogical than vocational: “She was very adamant when I started that she didn’t want this to be like, ‘this is how you prepare for the test, this is how to pass the exam’ she wanted it be like ‘this is how you understand whether your calling is, you know, to be in the NYPD.’” Even though many faculty members in the program have professional experience in the criminal justice system,⁹¹ department members say that the purpose of the program is to provide students with “solid academic skills,” rather than vocational skills, that prepare them for careers in criminal justice.⁹²

Rather than reflect the tough-on-crime approach that had previously dominated the criminal

⁹¹ City’s criminal justice program includes both full time and adjunct faculty members who have professional experience as prosecutors, defense attorneys, correctional officers, police officers, and reentry program administrators.

⁹² Field notes.

justice field in the 1970s through the 1990s, City Community claims to adopt a critical approach to understanding the criminal justice system, even as it helps students to explore jobs within it.⁹³ These objectives are illustrative of recent efforts by the department to remove several adjunct police officers in the program for teaching too uncritically. According to Professor Martin, the death of George Floyd and the movement that followed encouraged her to do something about the “discomfort” she has had with “detectives teaching criminal justice to students who are Black and Brown” since first joining City Community in 2014. Capitalizing on public statements made by the president of John Jay and other CUNY schools that they “stand with Black Lives Matter,” Professor Martin and a few other faculty members underwent a six-month long process of reviewing the program’s curriculum during the 2020 – 2021 school year. Anticipating at least some resistance, Professor Martin says that they decided to approach “the purging” of adjunct law enforcement officers from a pedagogical standpoint:

Each professor took a class and then over a period of six months we came up with a revised curriculum that doesn’t touch—doesn’t change the core objectives of the courses but it does make very explicit now the idea that critical thinking and racial justice have to be embedded in the curriculum. And that we need people who have pedagogical skills to do that.

As part of this process, the contracts of police officers who have historically been hired as adjuncts to teach the program’s policing course were not renewed. Professor Martin reasoned that “these individuals are not teachers. They don’t know anything about how to cultivate an environment of learning.” Therefore, the department decided to discontinue their contracts based on the fact that they do not align with the program’s learning objective: to provide students with solid academic skills in pursuit of a criminal justice career.

However, more than just their lack of pedagogical skills, Professor Martin claimed that “there is a very explicit bias in the way that they teach policing, in the way they teach civil rights.

⁹³ Field notes.

And it should not exist in a program that is catering to racial minorities.” In her assertion, Professor Martin makes clear that there is a certain kind of subjectivity that Justice Academy students are taught to embrace in the program as they prepare for careers in criminal justice. The department’s decision to remove police officers for teaching too uncritically is indicative of the subjectivities that faculty members intend to produce in students. A recent program review document produced by full-time faculty members in the Justice Academy at City Community captures these sensibilities. In this document, these faculty wondered aloud about how best to deliver and structure core course content based on recent a “paradigm shift” in the field which has seen a greater focus on issues like bail reform, the movement to defund the police, and prison abolition. Additionally, a core tenet of the program has been to “educate traditionally underrepresented groups” and “increase diversity in the workforce.”⁹⁴ The following sections will be based on interviews with students and full-time faculty members in City Community’s Justice Academy. They will focus on how that paradigm shift has influenced what criminal justice professors perceive to be their course objectives as well as the subjectivities they hope to instill in Black, Latinx, and Asian students who are pursuing a career in the criminal justice system.

Orientation around the Career

On the first day of Corrections and Sentencing, Professor Hall encouraged students to introduce themselves by answering the questions: “What is your dream job?” and “Do you have any hidden talents?” This course took place over Zoom and Professor Hall was the only participant with a camera turned on. She went down the line of Zoom participants, calling on students to answer the questions by unmuting themselves or writing in the Zoom chat. While many students

⁹⁴ Field notes.

unmuted themselves to give their introduction, other students were joining the call from work, and could only answer in the chat. Professor Hall was understanding of this, and let students know that they could participate in whatever way they were able to. As students shared their dream jobs, it was clear that many of them became criminal justice majors to join the NYPD. At least two students had already taken the police exam, and another student shared that they intended to take the exam after they received a bachelor's degree from John Jay. Several other students, mainly young women, expressed interest in other criminal justice careers, such as case managers and counselors in detention centers, and careers that are adjacent to the criminal justice system, such as law.

As students shared their dream jobs and hidden talents, Professor Hall helped them to see how their talents and career aspirations might be connected. To a student who shared she had an eye for fashion, Professor Hall joked that “undercover detectives get to pick out their outfits when they want to catch kids jumping the turnstile [in the subway stations].” At the end of introductions, she told the class that while the goal of the course was to teach students to think critically about prisons and punishment, she also wanted the content to be shaped by their career interests. When I interviewed Hall the summer before this class began, she told me she believes her students will likely become “street level bureaucrats” like police and corrections officers and that she teaches in a way that prepares students for these careers:

I don't teach like I was educated because I know that most of these students are not going to go into a PhD program and they're not as interested in a lot of these esoteric ideas that are like “What is mass incarceration?” They're going to be frontline ACS, NYPD... and we need to empower them with the ability to think critically, to understand both academically and in real life what's important, but also respect their intelligence and their academic interest.

According to Professor Hall, offering orientation around different types of careers in the criminal justice system is how she responds to student's “intelligence and academic interest.” Even though she assumes students are not interested in critical issues such as mass incarceration for the sake of

learning alone, several students who I spoke to—including students from her class—were very passionate about these issues. Alexander, one student in Dr. Hall’s course, expressed that learning about mass incarceration and prison reform is what he finds most interesting about his criminal justice courses.

In contrast, Professor Hall imagines that many students in the program are looking for *practical* solutions to violence in their own communities. She explained to me that students who have witnessed their family or community members be affected by crime and receive no help from the police, “decided that they wanted to be a cop, but like a *real* cop, that they would do it differently if they were an officer, because they would be effective. Because they’re from the neighborhood.” However, none of the students who participated in this study mentioned that witnessing violence in their communities or dealing with ineffective police officers—who do not come from their neighborhoods—were reasons that they decided to pursue a career in criminal justice. In fact, the NYPD has been more than 50 percent Black, Latinx, and Asian since 2006.⁹⁵ As City Community students are mostly 18 – 23-years-old, NYPD officers have primarily been from NYC communities of color for most of their lives, and it has had no measurable effect on police violence. Therefore, it is likely inconsistent with these students’ experiences with policing that simply being from the neighborhood makes you a better police officer.

Even so, Hall believes that the program offers these students orientation around different kinds of criminal justice careers beyond law enforcement that could respond to their desire to help people. She tells her students “If you’re angry about how the police are, you don’t have to join them, you could join the CCRB [the Civilian Complaint Review Board], you could join the DA’s Human Trafficking Commission, you can work as a detective, as an investigator.” Hall’s statement

⁹⁵Gabe Pressman, “In the NYPD, Minorities Become the Majority,” *NBC News*, October 28, 2010, <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/in-the-nypd-minorities-become-the-majority/2115876/>.

implies that she is interested in widening the narrow career focus that students come into the program with while still attempting to respond to their desire to help people and work within the criminal justice system. While professors are uninterested in having the program be a “cop shop” that uncritically prepares students to become police officers, many still see the program as clearly linked to career development and focus on helping students imagine a career within the criminal justice system.

Jorge—a Latinx criminal justice major and student in Dr. Hall’s class—told me that he believes becoming a police officer is the best opportunity for fulfilling his desire to help people. While Jorge could not personally recall any instances where police have helped him, or really any personal experiences with police all together, he was eager to share hypothetical scenarios that he learned in his classes: “People think police are busy working on crimes but in reality, they’re actually doing social jobs like helping people with their cats, or helping a homeless person get to the hospital [more often] than they’re solving and like investigating crimes.” Jorge’s interest in becoming a police officer as a way to provide social services points to the fact that police officers are often deployed to provide social services, even as they are unqualified to do so. This is a result of austerity measures and an expansion of the political power of police that has created bloated police budgets and facilitated large cuts to public social services. In New York City, for example, one in six city workers are police officers.⁹⁶ While Jorge’s criminal justice classes may have explained and analyzed this phenomenon, these were not lessons that he had absorbed.

As austerity is characterized by a swelling carceral state and shrinking welfare state, it is not surprising that Jorge was unable to imagine another stable, well-paying government job that would fulfill his interest in helping people other than law enforcement. For instance, Jorge told me

⁹⁶ Tamara K. Nopper, “NYC Crime Statistics and the Politics of Open Data,” March 10, 2022.

that even though government employees, such as social workers, help people too, a career in law enforcement would offer him “job security” along with ability to “protect and serve communities.” Due to the visibility of a career path in law enforcement and the lack of other stable, well-paying government careers, for Jorge, becoming a police officer was still the most desirable career he could imagine pursuing with a college degree. While the Justice Academy did offer Jorge orientation around other careers in criminal justice—Professor Hall, for example, often introduced students to federal and government jobs where they could receive similar benefit packages at the beginning of class meetings—it also reinforced that individual police officers could make an impact at changing police culture. This ideology can be attributed to the infusion of racial and social justice in the program’s core courses. Even though students are aware of state violence in the form of police brutality and mass incarceration, the Justice Academy promotes the popular—though wildly false—idea that more educated and better trained police officers will alleviate state violence.

Infusion of Racial and Social Justice

When I asked Jorge if he had heard of the movement to defund the police—a demand that gained popularity following deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many others—he responded, jokingly, “Yeah if I didn’t know about it, I’d be a horrible [criminal justice] major.” Like Jorge, other criminal justice majors who I interviewed were aware of the demand to defund the police and ultimately viewed police brutality as a huge issue. According to Professor Kim Davis, a criminal justice professor and co-director of City Community’s Justice Academy program, focusing on issues such as police brutality and conditions inside prisons is something that many faculty members see as core aspects of their curriculum. For instance, Davis has taught a course focused entirely on police brutality and another on the issue of COVID inside prisons. She shared

that she and several other professors in City Community’s program are active in movements for police and prison reform and “make an effort to include it in our syllabi.”

When I asked how he felt about the defund movement—which argues that shrinking police budgets will increase municipal funding for public services, as well as limit the scope of policing and delegitimize its use as a public safety strategy—Jorge, who had recently finished a midterm project on the topic, did not think it was a feasible demand, especially when it comes to ending police violence. Instead, he was in favor of strategies that would ultimately increase funding for the NYPD: “I don’t think that defunding the police will help us. And if they want to end police violence, I don’t think that will work. Like how will defunding the police end police violence if violence is stemmed [from] the people who the NYPD is hiring? We should focus on areas like training and education to possibly reduce violence.” Echoing the rationale of *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*, Jorge implies that if the NYPD recruited better trained people to work in its ranks, it could reduce state violence. When I asked Jorge if he thought that an associate degree, which he would receive through the Justice Academy, should be a requirement to become a police officer, he said that police officers should have a four-year degree, another recommendation originally made in *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*.

Jorge’s belief that more training and education will reduce police violence is a policy position that has received bipartisan support historically and, as was shown in the last chapter, ultimately led to the development of criminal justice as a discipline. Immediately following the 2020 summer protests, criminal justice scholars and journalists celebrated the field of criminal justice in their declaration that a college degree would make police less violent,⁹⁷ despite the fact

⁹⁷ Gaylene Armstrong and Leana Bouffard, “5 Reasons Police Officers Should Have College Degrees,” *The Conversation*, June 8, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/5-reasons-police-officers-should-have-college-degrees-140523>; Matt Verderame (@MattVerderame), “An idea: Police officers should need a four-year degree in criminal justice.,” Twitter, June 1, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MattVerderame/status/1267480590695178240>.

that over 50 percent of current police officers already have at least a two-year degree.⁹⁸ Most recently, President Biden received applause from both Democrats and Republicans during his first State of the Union Address after declaring, “We should all agree: the answer is not to defund the police. The answer is to FUND the police with resources and training.”⁹⁹ Students receive this messaging in the classroom, too. Professor Marcus James, one of the program directors of City Community’s Justice Academy, told me he believes that a college education better prepares police officers for the job: “I believe it is an essential component... you are learning many aspects of law enforcement that have very little to do with the proper self-defense techniques and the penal code. You’re looking at some of the rationale behind it.” According to Professor James, having potential police officers study topics such as rehabilitation, disparities in the criminal justice system, and community policing is a positive development to police training.

Professor Katherine Green, a criminal justice professor who supports the demand to defund the police as a step towards abolishing police and prisons, was less confident in the ability of education to end state violence:

The idea that education will solve police violence and training will solve the problem—I think that has been shown to be not true. I don’t see criminal justice education as necessarily a curative. If they are being told—if they’re in an institutional structure that involves them intimately policing communities for quality of life issues, that intervenes in public health related matters, there’s no amount of training that will solve the problem that they shouldn’t be there in the first place.

As Professor Green mentions, experts have argued that increased training has no visible impact on ending police violence.¹⁰⁰ Her statement is aligned with abolitionist scholars who highlight that the only way to reduce police violence is to minimize contact between the police and the public.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ash Stephens, “Telling Cops to Get Criminal Justice Degrees Won’t End Police Violence,” *In These Times*, June 30, 2020, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/telling-cops-to-get-criminal-justice-degrees-wont-end-police-violence>.

⁹⁹ Joseph Biden, “President Biden’s State of the Union Address,” March 1, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2022/>.

¹⁰⁰ Char Adams, “Experts Stress That More Training Won’t Eradicate Police Violence,” *NBC News*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/experts-stress-more-training-won-t-eradicate-police-violence-n1264092>.

¹⁰¹ Kaba, “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police.”

Later in our conversation, Professor Green also expressed that her role as a criminal justice professor is not to “impose my worldview and my wishes for abolition on students,” but to “provide them with as much knowledge as possible about the functioning of the criminal justice system, its impact, it’s effectiveness at doing what it’s supposed to be doing [and] the theoretical toolkit with which to understand that. And then it’s up to students to use those tools to make their own decisions.” Objective knowledge about the criminal justice system, she reasoned, “I think makes the case for abolition.”

Professor Green ultimately argued for the utility of criminal justice education in preparing her students for law enforcement careers, despite her belief that more training and education does not end police violence. For her, these were practical matters: “The police aren’t going to disappear tomorrow, [so] wouldn’t I want my students who have heard information that I hope is compelling about the use of force and over policing—wouldn’t I want them to be police officers?” As a criminal justice professor, Professor Green opts to support her students in their pursuit of criminal justice because, she suggests, if they don’t work in the field, then others will. She recognizes these students buy into narratives about racial and social justice in policing because “they are invested in these institutions” and “they see a future for themselves in those careers.”

When Elena, a first-year student in the Justice Academy who identifies as Latinx, shared her belief that police officers should have more required training and education, she was conscious of her own choice to pursue a career as a police officer. Even though Elena partially agreed with protestors who demanded police should be defunded—because “it’s not just one police [officer] that has broken the rule... it’s a big pattern,”—she was also concerned about how defunding the police might influence her potential career: “I want to be part of the law enforcement so it may affect me later on with defunding them. So, I feel like instead of defunding them probably they could give them more knowledge, more education and training.” While only Elena explicitly

connected her criticism of defunding police to her career aspirations, Ishaan, a student in the Justice Academy who immigrated to NYC from India a few years before enrolling at the college, also saw the defund movement as something that could negatively impact his livelihood: “I think we and other people have to think that police officers are for us, to help, and they are risking their life to protect us. And I think that [police officers] need to receive enough budget or enough pay so they can raise their families.”

Both Elena and Ishaan used their criticisms of police brutality as justification for majoring in criminal justice and pursuing a career in law enforcement. They viewed college education as a solution to police brutality because they believed it was a problem of individual “bad” police officers even as they acknowledged that racism in policing was a widespread problem. Jorge, who was shocked to learn in his criminology course that modern policing was rooted in slave patrols, and that “it’s still kind of in our society, but in different names and formats,” simultaneously believed that police violence was an issue of individual actors that could be solved with more college education. Rather than being deterred by the issue of police violence, students imagined they could solve the issue of violence by working within the system.

In particular, Elena imagined that she would be able to better help survivors of gender-based violence “in poor communities” as a police officer: “If a victim was sexually abused and she goes to one police officer, and they do not believe her, or they don’t think she has much of a case, they could come to me and they will have somebody that will actually believe them.” Elena’s statement clearly shows that she understands that police officers are not typically helpful to survivors of gender-based violence. However, her belief that she could change this pattern as a police officer does not account for the fact that two-thirds of people who experience sexual assault

never report it.¹⁰² Moreover, sexual abusers and police officers are not two separate entities: police officers frequently commit sexual assault, making it the second most common form of police brutality.¹⁰³

Ultimately, students looked for solutions to the poor treatment that immigrant, working-class, Black and non-black people of color, and other vulnerable communities face in the city vis a vis the police by considering what differences they could make as a law enforcement officer. Even though students acknowledged that racism in policing is an issue, they subscribed to what Jackie Wang calls color blind liberalism, which categorizes racism as an “individual intention, feeling or personal prejudice” and diagnoses the legal system as “being infected with racism, masking the fact that the legal system is the constituent mechanism through which racial violence is carried out.”¹⁰⁴ At the same time, while Elena, Jorge, and Ishaan did not explicitly focus on job stability and salaries as reasons for pursuing a career in law enforcement, it is clear that their desire for a career with economic stability influenced their opinions on demands such as defunding the police, as they all concluded education—such as a college degree—would better alleviate state violence than defunding the police, which could negatively impact the livelihoods of individual police officers.

Professor Luisa Martin believes that the Justice Academy is a “CUNY to NYPD pipeline” that banks on recruiting poor students of color who “desperately need to land in the middle class” without spending money and time that they and their families do not have on advanced degrees: “They’re going to go for the NYPD, they’re going to try to do corrections, these kinds of jobs that are very easy to get because they require very little education.” For Professor Martin, taking a

¹⁰² Kaba.

¹⁰³ Kaba.

¹⁰⁴ Jackie Wang, “Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety,” *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* 1 (2012): 149.

racial and social justice approach in her pedagogy means meeting individually with students to talk through the realities of becoming a police officer as well as incorporating conversations about punishment, restorative justice, and the racialized concept of crime. In these conversations with students, Professor Martin asks them to consider that “if you get a job in this industry, then you’re pretty much going to be doing all the stuff that you know is not right. And if you don’t do it, you’ll be fired... you can’t disobey because you will get fired. So how are you going to be able to live ethically with yourself?”

Professor Martin makes clear that racial and social justice cannot be achieved in criminal justice education because a degree in criminal justice does not change the fact that police exist to maintain social control through racialized violence. For Professor Martin, being a criminal justice professor has meant slowly subverting the CUNY to NYPD pipeline with the ultimate goal of making her career “obsolete” by “doing away with punishment, which is doing away with policing, doing away with prisons... doing away with the CUNY Justice Academy.” Professor Martin’s statement implies that it is not enough to encourage students to pursue careers that are alternative to policing. Instead, it is important to recognize that the CUNY Justice Academy is also harmful through its capacity to legitimize the carceral state through ideology. The final section of this chapter will consider how City Community’s criminal justice program also reinforces the carceral state while teaching students about the reform of prisons and policing.

Inspiring Reform in the Criminal Justice System

Alexander, a criminal justice major in his last semester of the program, was the only student interviewed that did not intend to transfer to John Jay or work directly in the criminal justice system in the areas of policing, sentencing, or corrections. Alexander, who planned to study political science at a different CUNY college after graduating with his associate degree, was

motivated to major in criminal justice by a career in non-profit criminal justice reform: “I really don’t want to go into the law enforcement aspect, I just want to go into the law reform aspect, just helping other people, you know. I don’t care about the pay... I just really want to help people who aren’t as fortunate. I’d rather be out there helping people than out there going after people.”

Alexander was the only student interviewed who mentioned salary when asked about his future career plans and presumably it is because he knows that by choosing a career in non-profit reform rather than in law enforcement, he is choosing a career with a lower salary and less stability. While Alexander’s description of police officers as “going after people” is a departure from his peers’ belief that policing is fundamentally a helping profession, his career choice is not surprising for a student majoring in criminal justice, as giant criminal justice reform non-profits like the Ford Foundation and the Vera Institute often collaborate with police.¹⁰⁵ Instead, non-profit reform is an expected career choice for students who participate in ideologically liberal, social justice focused courses.

In Corrections and Sentencing, where I met Alexander, students learn about history of the corrections system, contemporary issues in correctional facilities and sentencing, and the prison reform movement. While Dr. Hall identifies as an abolitionist—and has explicitly told her students that she doesn’t believe prisons should exist—the course draws upon myths that necessitate the existence of policing and prisons. There is a line drawn between people convicted of violent and nonviolent crimes, where the former deserves incarceration of some kind, and the latter does not. For example, on one class session about jail and bail reform, Dr. Hall discussed alternatives to incarceration for people considered “dangerous,” including probation, parole, and electronic monitoring, despite the fact that these alternatives are still a form of incarceration. Currently, more

¹⁰⁵ Whitlock and Heitzeg, *Carceral Con.*

than half of people ensnared in the criminal legal system are confined outside of prisons and jails under community supervision, such as parole or probation. Rather than providing a true alternative to incarceration, community supervision is “often so restrictive that [it] sets people up to fail.” In 2019, according to a recent Prison Policy report 153,000 people were incarcerated due to technical violations of their probation or parole.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, electronic monitoring, often referred to as e-carceration, extends prison sentences beyond prison walls, detaining people in their own homes in the name of decarceration.¹⁰⁷

Students pick up on the rhetoric that some individuals need to be incarcerated in the name of public safety, even though Professor Hall has openly shared with them that she does not believe prisons should exist. Alexander, for instance, shared that he would like to work in prison reform to alleviate mass incarceration and help people who have been wrongly convicted or convicted of nonviolent drug offenses and other “basic petty crimes.” However, what Alexander had seemingly not learned in his class is that most people who are currently incarcerated have not been convicted of nonviolent crimes, meaning that to only release people convicted of nonviolent offenses would not actually reduce the prison population in a significant way.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the dichotomy of “violent” and “nonviolent” prisoners does not actually tell us anything about the “dangerousness” of individuals: violent offenses, for example, include criminal acts where no physical harm was inflicted, like home burglary or stealing drugs. This dichotomy also ignores that people convicted of violent crimes are among the least likely to be rearrested.¹⁰⁹ However, when I asked about Dr. Hall’s belief that no one should be in prison, Alexander disagreed: “Very hardcore psychopaths,

¹⁰⁶ Wendy Sawyer, and Peter Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022” Prison Policy Initiative, March 14, 2022, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2022.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law, *Prison by Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms* (New York: The New Press, 2021).

¹⁰⁸ Sawyer and Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022.”

¹⁰⁹ Sawyer and Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022.”

people who are very bad in the head, they cannot be helped at all... they should definitely be incarcerated. I don't think incarceration [should be the response] for most people, [but] it depends on the crime.”

Even though many criminal justice professors expressed in their interviews that prison industrial complex abolition makes a case for itself in the classroom—by way of “objectively” describing the history and current features of the prison system—the case for abolition was never made in Corrections and Sentencing. Instead, the class inspired conversations about ways to reform the criminal justice system both within it and alongside it. This analysis holds true for all the core objectives of City Community’s Justice Academy: career orientation, the infusion of social and racial justice, and discussions of prison reform do not change the nature of policing and prisons and the fact that they operate in the way that they were designed. It is only through abolition—of police, prisons, and the CUNY Justice Academy—that CUNY community colleges will be able to create meaningful educational experiences for students in the Justice Academy that do not bolster the carceral state. In the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “abolition is not absence, it is presence. What the world will become already exists in fragments and pieces, experiments, and possibilities.”¹¹⁰ In the final chapter, this thesis will consider the possibilities for abolishing the relationship between CUNY and the carceral state by looking to the fragments, pieces, and experiments that already exist.

¹¹⁰ “Making Abolition Geography in California’s Central Valley,” *The Funambulist Magazine*, December 20, 2018, 14.

CHAPTER 4: CONSIDERING ABOLITIONIST UNIVERSITY STUDIES

The abolitionist organizing of student and university workers represents an important contingent of the current movement to abolish the prison industrial complex. This movement—led by students, university workers, and community members—has historically responded to police violence on and off campus with efforts to abolish campus police departments and make racist state violence in surrounding communities more visible. At CUNY, these efforts can be traced back to the late 1960s,¹¹¹ but after the uprising against police that began in June 2020, a new wave of abolitionist organizing erupted. Building on the momentum that this movement offered, student organizers at the University of Minnesota successfully pressured the university to end its relationship with the Minneapolis police department and groups like the Cops off Campus coalition organized a series of local actions to demand the removal of police from college campuses across the country.¹¹² However, despite the success of these actions, the current movement to end the relationship between the university and the carceral state has not addressed the proliferation of criminal justice education since the 1960s. While these movements make clear that organized action is the best approach to removing police from college campuses, criminal justice education must be targeted along with campus police in order to completely sever the relationship between the university and the carceral state.

In “Abolitionist University Studies,” Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein invite us to take up an abolitionist approach to historicizing the university, our relationships to it, and its centrality to settler colonial and racial capitalist modes of

¹¹¹ The CUNY Digital History Archive has several collections that track these histories which are open to the public: <https://cdha.cuny.edu/collections/browse>

¹¹² Valerie Strauss, “University of Minnesota Limits Ties to Minneapolis Police Department after Death of George Floyd,” *Washington Post*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/05/28/university-minnesota-limits-ties-minneapolis-police-department-after-death-george-floyd/>; “Who We Are,” Cops Off Campus Coalition, February 26, 2021, <https://copsoffcampuscoalition.com/about/>.

accumulation. Even though “Abolitionist University Studies” does not address the way criminal justice education produces many of these connections, it still serves as a useful paradigm for imagining how criminal justice education can be targeted in the movement to abolish the prison industrial complex. An abolitionist approach, they offer, allows us to see universities as “complex terrains with many conflicting and intersecting modes of world-making,” that are used to respond to capitalism’s crises, but can also be appropriated as a means of organizing and studying towards non- and anti-capitalist ends.¹¹³ To imagine an abolitionist university then is both a project of tearing down and building anew—an abolitionist approach reveals the university’s complicity in the carceral state as the same time as it makes visible the organizing efforts of students, faculty, and other university workers to seek an alternative.

Like the scholars of “Abolitionist University Studies,” I am interested in what role the university—or more accurately, the people of and in the university—can play in the movement to abolish police and prisons. As this conclusion will highlight, centering criminal justice education in the on-campus abolitionist movement provides an opportunity to consider how curriculum is used to expand the carceral state and can also be exploited to imagine abolitionist alternatives. In exploring this issue, I look to what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls abolitionist geographies: the places made by people who, in the face of organized abandonment and state violence, create spaces that counteract carceral geographies and represent the world they would like to live in.¹¹⁴ Illuminating the abolitionist geographies within the university reveals that curriculum has always been a site of struggle, and can offer insight to the kinds of education that is rewarding, life fulfilling, and at times, responsive to urgent needs. In this current moment, it can also help us to imagine what

¹¹³ Abigail Boggs et al., “Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation,” *Abolition Journal* (blog), August 28, 2019, 24, abolitionjournal.org/abolitionist-university-studies-an-invitation/.

¹¹⁴ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence,” in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Theresa Johnson Johnson and Alex Lubin (New York: Verso, 2017), 533–79.

centering criminal justice education as a site for political education can add to our fight to end the relationship between CUNY and the carceral state.

In 1969 at CUNY's City College, Black and Latinx students occupied south campus, issuing a set of demands that pressured City College to fulfil the educational needs and desires of its growing Black and Latinx student population as well as the surrounding Harlem community. They renamed City College the "University of Harlem" to make the clear that the college should embrace and serve its surrounding community and engaged in political education that helped them to imagine and articulate what they wanted the University of Harlem to be. For Black and Latinx students at City College, political education was in part a practice of reimagining curriculum. Toni Cade Bambara, a cultural worker, writer, activist, and teacher—who had her first teaching job in City College's Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program at the time of the student strike—recast her writing course to make it one such space of political education. In her classroom, she responded to the educational needs and desires of students who were engaged in a political movement by prompting her students to dream up a "Black University" filled with courses they would want to take.¹¹⁵

Bambara's decision to use her classroom as a site for political education can be read as an abolitionist geography: it counteracted the limiting curriculum that students were faced with and centered Black and Puerto Rican students as producers of knowledge, allowing them to further imagine what a university that responded to their educational needs might look like. These examples provide us with insight to the kinds of education that are life-sustaining, instead of education that reproduces the carceral state. At the same time, it is also an example of the way that political education strengthens social movements. According to Rachel Herzing, the executive

¹¹⁵ Toni Cade Bambara, "Realizing the Dream of a Black University." in *Toni Cade Bambara: Realizing the Dream of a Black University & Other Writings*, ed. Makeba Lavan and Conor Tomás Reed (Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Documentation Initiative, 2017).

director of the Center for Political Education, “political education isn’t just education about politics. It’s education for the specific purpose of making our politics more powerful.”¹¹⁶ For City College students in Bambara’s SEEK class, curriculum writing as political education helped students to articulate and refine their movement demands.

Contemporarily, there is a robust tradition of abolitionist organizing across CUNY campuses that specifically targets CUNY’s relationship with the carceral state. For example, as part of the Cops off Campus Coalition’s Abolition May, Free CUNY!—a coalition of CUNY students, faculty, and staff organizing across campuses for a tuition-free, anti-racist CUNY—in collaboration with several other cross-campus CUNY organizers, planned a walking tour, speak-out, and virtual action to highlight the relationship between CUNY and the carceral state. This action repurposed university spaces, including John Jay College, to call attention to CUNY’s use of safety officers to criminalize students, while also imaging how CUNY could use the \$64,109,473 it spends on policing to invest in life-giving opportunities for students instead, like free tuition, more academic advisors, and funding Ethnic Studies programs.¹¹⁷

These actions highlight that CUNY students and workers are already vigorously organizing to end the relationship between CUNY and the carceral state, and political education is a powerful tool to both expose this relationship and imagine alternatives. Widening the scope of this political education to include topics such as the history of John Jay College and the Law Enforcement Education Program, or conducting participatory action research projects to better understand how many CUNY graduates work at the NYPD or New York City Department of Corrections, can work to bring the tentacled relationship between CUNY and the carceral state to light. It is essential for

¹¹⁶ Rachel Herzing, “Political Education in a Time of Rebellion,” *Center for Political Education* (blog), accessed March 30, 2022, <https://politicaleducation.org/political-education-in-a-time-of-rebellion/>.

¹¹⁷ Free CUNY! (@cuny_free), “why are we demanding #CopsOutofCUNY?,” Twitter, May 14, 2021, https://twitter.com/cuny_free/status/1393213116620627978.

abolitionist university groups to take up the call to abolish criminal justice programs if they are serious about ending the relationship between the university and the carceral state, and political education is one practical place to begin.

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