THE PRISON AND THE GALLOWS

Over the past three decades the United States has built a carceral state that is unprecedented among Western countries and in U.S. history. Nearly one in fifty people, excluding children and the elderly, is incarcerated today, a rate unsurpassed anywhere else in the world. What are some of the main political forces that explain this unprecedented reliance on mass imprisonment? Specifically, why didn't the construction of the carceral state face more political opposition? Throughout American history, crime and punishment have been central features of American political development. This book examines the development of four key movements – the victims' movement, the women's movement, the prisoners' rights movement, and opponents of the death penalty – that mediated the construction of the carceral state in important ways. It shows how punitive penal policies were forged by particular social movements and interest groups within the constraints of larger institutional structures and historical developments that distinguish the United States from other Western countries.

Marie Gottschalk is associate professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania. She has a PhD in political science from Yale University and an MPA from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She is the author of *The Shadow Welfare State: Labor, Business, and the Politics of Health Care in the United States* (2000). She is a former associate editor of *World Policy Journal* and a former associate director of the World Policy Institute in New York City. She also worked for several years as a journalist.

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Marie Gottschalk
University of Pennsylvania

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In loving memory of Sally Gottschalk

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Toward the end of my two-year stint teaching in Xian, China, in the 1980s, I thought I was inured to shocking scenes. And then I was shopping at the local outdoor produce market on a glorious sunny day in late spring when I heard a racket of loudspeakers. I looked up to see an aging flatbedded truck slowly winding its way through the crowded streets. In the back were about a half-dozen men with shaved, bowed heads, nondescript baggy uniforms, and blank faces. Watched over by crisply dressed police officers, each man slowly shuffled forward as his name was called. The blaring loudspeakers recited his alleged crimes and pronounced his sentence: death.

Over the previous months, my students had told me stories about witnessing executions at crowded outdoor stadiums. And Xian had been peppered with posters with big red X's scrawled across the mug shots of people rounded up in the "strike hard" campaign against crime, some for violations as egregious as petty larceny. Yet witnessing the punitive, unforgiving, and seemingly invincible arm of the state directly in action in the everyday setting of a bustling market deeply unsettled me.

After working for more than six years on this book about mass imprisonment in the United States, I remain similarly shocked and unsettled. The United States today has an incarcerated population that dwarfs that of China, a country that is several times larger and has at best only democratic aspirations and pretensions. The shock is all the greater in the U.S. case not only because of the enormity of the American carceral state, but also because of its invisibility – the invisibility of the numerous prisons that dot rural America and the desolate outskirts of urban areas; the more than two million men and women locked up on any given day; the hundreds of thousands released from prison each year with stunted employment, economic, educational, and social prospects; and the millions of families and children unhinged by the carceral state.

Most striking of all is that this vast, unrelenting, and costly punitive thrust in public policy has not been a central topic of political debate

and political analysis. While politicians and public officials still regularly invoke the war on crime, the carceral state and its far-reaching consequences for U.S. society, economy, and polity have not been a leading political concern. Nor has the fact that disadvantaged groups in the United States, especially blacks and the poor, disproportionately shoulder the crushing weight of the carceral state.

As I was completing the final revisions for this book, I took a week off to participate in the intensive training for faculty interested in teaching in the Inside/Out Prison Exchange Program. Originated by Lori Pompa at Temple University, Inside/Out takes college students behind prison walls to study alongside imprisoned men and women in a semester-long course on some specific topic. Much of my Inside/Out training took place at Graterford Prison, a maximum-security facility for men about an hour from Philadelphia, with members of the prison's "Think Tank." Nearly all of the men in the Think Tank are lifers. In a state where "life means life," they are likely to live and die behind prison walls. Despite their bleak prospects, a number of them expressed optimism about their potential – and the potential of those of us on the outside – to fundamentally challenge the carceral state in our lifetimes.

This book is my modest contribution to that cause. Writing it has been a bleak, sobering experience. Yet if the lifers in Graterford can somehow keep alive a sense of hope and political efficacy, then those of us on the outside also must not succumb to fatalistic despair as we excavate and consider the formidable political and other forces that built the carceral state and sustain it.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for the generous intellectual and other support I received for this project. I benefited enormously from constructive critics in my disciplinary home of political science and further afield in sociology and criminology. The following people provided critical feedback at various stages of the project: Fran Benson, Ann Chih Lin, David Garland, Paul Rock, Carroll Seron, Larry Sherman, Rogers Smith, the members of the Graterford Think Tank, and the anonymous reviewers for Cambridge and other presses. The comments, questions, and expressed skepticism of numerous seminar and conference participants also helped make this a much better book. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Desmond King, James Morone, and Austin Sarat read the entire manuscript and provided detailed, thoughtful suggestions that went far beyond the call of duty. An extra special thanks to Mary Katzenstein, who was a kindred spirit every step of the way and provided invaluable intellectual support and camaraderie. My editor at Cambridge, Ed Parsons, eased publication of this

book with his unflappability, straightforwardness, and amazing ability to turn big problems into small ones.

This project was completed sooner rather than later because I received generous leave and financial support for my research. In addition to my regular sabbatical leave, Penn gave me an extra semester off courtesy of a Faculty Research Fellowship. Penn's Alice Paul Center provided me with important financial help for my research, as did the School of Arts and Sciences and the Penn Research Foundation.

The Russell Sage Foundation, which made me a visiting scholar in 2001–02, provided me with enormous intellectual, infrastructural, and research support. I will always treasure the year I spent there, especially the friendships and intellectual connections I made with some of the other visiting scholars. Nicole Radmore and Katie Winograd of RSF's information services deserve a special mention for their invaluable help and dogged persistence in tracking down materials.

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This project was punctuated with great joy and sadness. It coincided with the death of my mother Sally Gottschalk, who succumbed to breast cancer in February 2002. I dedicate this book to her in admiration of her great strength in the face of all the adversity she faced during and at the end of her life. In the course of writing this book, my daughter Tara went from being a struggling, ill infant to a thriving six-year-old who has boundless good cheer and who is more aware of prisons than she probably ought to be at her age. My deepest love and thanks to Tara and Atul, my toughest and most forgiving critics.

December 2005