

Resource Guide on Racial Justice and the Criminal Legal System

This document, compiled by the Northwestern Prison Education Program ([NPEP](#)), is an extensive—but by no means exhaustive—guide for those who would like to learn more about and take action on racial justice and the criminal legal system.

This guide is arranged in three parts:

- 1) **“Learn.”** A number of articles, books, and webinars that can help you educate yourself and others.
- 2) **“Take Action.”** Steps to become involved on the university, local or state level.
- 3) **“Know and Support.”** A number of local organizations that could use your support, financial and otherwise.

1. Learn

First, a [caveat about anti-racist reading lists](#) to be considered, from Northwestern Professor Lauren Michele Jackson.

1.1. Some introductory pieces on Racial Justice

- [“Where Do We Go From Here?”](#) A July 2020 Webinar with leading Black voices, giving an overview of current discussions.
- [“America, This is Your Chance”](#) (Michelle Alexander, *The New York Times*, June 2020)
- [“The Case for Reparations”](#) (Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Atlantic*, June 2014).
- [“What is Racial Capitalism and Why Does It Matter?”](#) (Lecture by Robin D. G. Kelley).

1.2. Mass Incarceration & Surveillance

- *Understanding Mass Incarceration* (James Kilgore). A concise overview of the major aspects of the rise of mass incarceration.
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (Michelle Alexander). A by now classic work studying the role of incarceration in the creation of a colorblind “racial caste system.”
- *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Angela Y. Davis). A short and concise introduction.
- *The Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Ruth Wilson Gilmore). A study of racial capitalism’s intertwinement with the biggest

increase in “prison-building and -filling” in the history of the world, which took place in California since 1982.

- *Imprisoning America: The Social Effects of Mass Incarceration* (eds. Mary Pattillo, Bruce Western, and David Weiman).
- [Prison by Any Other Name](#), (Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law). Investigates the ever-increasing scope of surveillance, and how reform movements can unwittingly perpetuate and even extend social control and punishment.
- [For the Children? Protecting Innocence in a Carceral State](#) (Erica Meiners). Analyzes how the figure of the child produces and blocks discourses and policies around the criminal legal system.
- [Blood In the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy](#) (Heather Thompson). Analyzes a prison uprising, the state’s violent response, and how the legacy of Attica shaped incarceration in the U.S.
- [Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Rights](#) (Juno Mac and Molly Smith). How the law harms sex workers—and what they want instead.
- [Shattered Bonds: The Color Of Child Welfare](#) (Dorothy Roberts). Analyzes the racial politics of child welfare in the U.S.
- [Killing the Black Body](#) (Dorothy Roberts). Investigates the treatment of Black women, historic and present day, in the U.S.
- *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. (eds. Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock).
- *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, (Elizabeth K. Hinton). Investigates links between mass incarceration and the Great Society.
- [“Welcome to the Zo”](#) (A multimedia project by The Marshall Project, highlighting the day to day challenges faced in a prison environment)
- A resource guide to prison abolition: [Prison Abolition Syllabus 2.0](#)
- [A legislative guide for winnable, high-impact criminal justice reform](#)

1.3. Race, Racism, and Policing

- The Northwestern Prison Education Program is hosting a six-part series titled [“Toward Transformative Justice: A Community Roundtable Series on Race, Racism, and Policing”](#) this summer. See recordings, including on the history of Chicago policing, gender-based violence, immigration policing and much more, [here](#).
- Another roundtable series on policing hosted by the [Urban History Association](#) and co-organized by one of NPEP’s graduate students (Charlotte Rosen)
- A longer piece on police abolition by one of its leading theorists: [Mariame Kaba -- Summer Heat](#)
- What about sexual harm and policing? [The Feminist and The Sex Offender Confronting Sexual Harm, Ending State Violence](#) (Judith Levine and Erica R. Meiners)

- Which police reforms could/should one support?
 - Mariame Kaba, [“Police ‘Reforms’ You Should Always Oppose”](#)
 - [Critical Resistance: Reformist vs. non-reformist reforms](#)

Further resources guides on police abolition

- [A Community Compilation on Police Abolition](#)
- [Resource Guide to Prisons, Policing, and Punishment](#)
- [8toabolition.com](#)
- [Reading Towards Abolition: A Reading List on Policing, Rebellion, and the Criminalization of Blackness](#)

1.4. The University—Education, Incarceration, Policing

- Two talks by NPEP Director Jennifer Lackey on [“The Prison Education Paradox”](#) and [“Incarceration and Education”](#)
- A Webinar on [“Police, Race, and the University”](#) hosted by Scholars for Social Justice
- [Comprehensive article](#) about universities and policing, written by two Northwestern Ph.D. students
- Northwestern efforts: [“Students call on University to divest from police forces and invest in Black communities”](#)
- [“Arresting the Carceral State: Educators must work to end the school-to-prison pipeline”](#)

You might also want to consider the [Office for Social Justice Education](#) at NU for further resources.

2. Take Action

2.1. University

Advocate for NU to could become a national leader by taking the following actions for criminal legal system reform and racial justice in our own campus community:

- Commit to providing tuition-free BA from SPS for all [NPEP students](#) who complete the required coursework, including those released from prison prior to degree completion
- Provide reentry support (housing assistance, educational supplies, transportation assistance) to NPEP students released from prison; offer hiring opportunities, which are commensurate with their qualifications, for released NPEP students
- [End contracts with Chicago Police Department and Evanston Police Department, given history of misconduct and excessive force against BIPOC, including NU students](#)

- [Disband NUPD and invest in restorative transformative justice and in Black students](#)
- Make firm commitment to hire formerly incarcerated people across the university in positions with leadership tracks and to invest in their training
- Reevaluate [NU's relationship with immigration policing](#), in order to proactively protect international and undocumented students
- [Ban the Box](#) on applications to Northwestern and SPS
- Provide additional support for Pritzker School of Law Bluhm Legal Clinic's work on wrongful convictions ([Center on Wrongful Convictions](#)), juvenile justice ([Children and Family Justice Center](#)), and civil rights litigation for prisoners and victims of police misconduct ([MacArthur Justice Center](#))
- Research, publicly acknowledge, and outline approaches to divest from NU's entanglement with prison and policing industries (including but not limited to equipment sales; AI research; dining, telecom or sanitary services, etc.), including not only NU's schools and departments but also its endowment investment, its board members, and alumni leadership
- Institute a "[racial equity impact analysis](#)" requirement for all major financial university decisions that would publicly state the racial demographics of any furloughs, lay-offs, or pay cuts and compare it to the racial demographics of the university as a whole
- Commit financial and organizational support to campus educational opportunities on criminal legal system reform as well as police and prison abolition
- Commit to refraining from offering honorary degrees or commencement speaker invitations to persons whose work has run counter to efforts to reform the criminal legal system

2.2. Local

Support the following efforts to reform policing and address racial justice in Chicago and Evanston:

- Fight school-to-prison pipeline and [cancellation of CPS/CPD contract and removing police from public schools](#)
- [Endorse community oversight of CPD](#)
- Support the [Chicago Police Torture Justice Center](#) and [funding of the memorial to victims of CPD police torture](#)
- Defund the [CPD](#) and [EPD](#) and invest in BIPOC communities, [as other cities across the United States](#)
- Support the [10 Demands](#) of Black Lives Matter Chicago

2.3. State

Support the following ongoing, transformational statewide campaigns:

- [Restore parole in Illinois](#)
- [Accelerated compassionate release of elderly and medically vulnerable prisoners](#)

- [Abolish cash bail](#)
- [Close all five remaining youth prisons](#)
- [End solitary confinement](#)

3. Know and Support

Places to donate, get involved in, and sign up for action alerts

Evanston

[Evanston Fight Back for Black Lives](#)

[Moran Center](#) for Youth Advocacy

For Evanston based reparations efforts, follow Alderman Rue Simmons, architect of the legislation, on [facebook](#) or join the [Evanston Reparations: Solutions Only](#) facebook group

Chicago

- [Assata's Daughters](#)
- [BLM Chicago](#)
- [GoodKids MadCity](#)
- [Love & Protect](#)
- [The Invisible Institute: Citizens Police Data Project](#)
- [Chicago 400 Alliance](#)
- [Uptown People's Law Center](#)
- [Chicago Alliance Against Racist Police Repression](#)
- [Organized Communities Against Deportations](#)
- [BYP 100](#)
- [Brave Space Alliance](#)
- [Chicago Community Bond Fund](#)
- [Chicago Freedom School](#)
- [The Final 5 Campaign](#) (closing Illinois juvenile prisons)
- [Circles & Ciphers](#)
- [Parole Illinois](#)
- [Chicago Torture Justice Center](#)
- [United Working Families](#)
- [Lifted Voices](#)
- [Mothers Against Senseless Killings](#)
- [Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration](#)
- [Chicago Dyke March](#)
- [LetUsBreathe Collective](#)
- [Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation \(SOUL\)](#)
- [Fourtunehouse Chicago](#)
- [Southside Cleanup](#)

- [Thankful for Chicago/ The People's Free Food Program](#)
- [The Michael Airhart Experience / Taste for the Homeless](#)
- [Chicago Activist-Org. Fund](#)
- [SaveMoneySafeLife](#)
- [Illinois Prison Project](#)
- [Restore Justice Illinois](#)