

The Future of the Global Prison Industrial Complex

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Nations are becoming increasingly interconnected in the 21st century. A person's security, health, and safety are no longer limited to the plight or success of the country in which he or she is a citizen or resides. With an ever-connected international order, the global prison industrial complex is increasingly being seen as the governmental answer to societal woes. Punishment has long been practiced in human cultures, but the global prison industrial complex presents numerous challenges to sound global order which must be examined. Corporate influence and ownership of prisons, and the governmental outsourcing of prison operations, are emerging trends with legitimate challenges to reducing violence and crime worldwide. Private prisons force countries to examine the role of prisons in modern society, but the implications of the global prison industrial complex go far beyond the prison walls.

Instead of incarceration functioning as a means within its own end to control social problems, it is, ironically, becoming a social problem in its own right. This paper will explore the origins and magnitude of the global prison industrial complex and survey the key global challenges. Criminology and sociological thought exist in four main areas which inform and influence the international evolution of prison development: international definitions for and laws regulating crime; economic motives and ramifications of the global prison industrial complex; societal customs manipulating the role of prisons; and the role of identity politics in the growth of global prison industrial complex.

Background

The global prison industrial complex is the interweaving of private business and government interests, or more simply, the privatization of prisons.¹ It reveals the friction between the need for profit versus crime control and the relationship between private profit and public cost. Private prisons develop in two forms: the takeover of publicly-operated prisons by private companies and the development of new prisons by for-profit companies. Private prison companies can be contracted by governments to build prisons as well as manage day-to-day prison operations.

The International Centre for Prison Studies documents over 8 ½ million prisoners being held in penal institutions around the world. Prison populations grew in most countries throughout the 1990s. Amongst industrialized countries, the growth during this period was as high as 40 percent.² How did incarceration rates become so dense? Minor policy changes to

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¹ The global lockdown on crime is a broad category which includes prisons, jails, immigrant detention centers, psychiatric hospitals, refugee camps, and boarding schools. Although all of those stakeholders play an important role in the global crime arena, the focus of this paper is limited to the prison industrial complex.

² It is imperative to note that global prison growth is not solely in private prisons. The levels of incarceration are rising within government-owned and -managed prisons as well as private prisons. However, the swelling prison populations are a critical baseline area of understanding how the global prison industrial complex has come to pass

incarceration have occurred throughout the last thirty years, but the use of punishment as a response to social problems has remained the constant underlying foundation of law enforcement. Criminologist Pat Carlen suggested that there was a brief downward imprisonment trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to policies of transcarceralism, or the geographic dispersal of the prison into home detentions, curfews and tougher community sanctions. Ultimately, though, such policies were deemed “soft on crime” and subsided. In their place, the staid ideological counterpart to transcarceralism, prisons, returned with a vengeance (Sudbury, 2000, p. 137). Leading the global incarceration race are the United States and the United Kingdom. Although the United States houses a higher rate of prisoners per capita, today the United Kingdom has a higher proportion of prisoners in private institutions than the United States, with 7.2 percent and 11 percent respectively.

International Definitions

Since incarceration is predicated upon the conviction of a crime, how crime is defined is a critical baseline measurement in the global prison industrial complex debate. International definitions for and laws regulating crime can be used as indicators of anticipated inmate population levels. If prison populations declined, current prisons may not endure and the necessity to build new prisons would be mitigated. The nature of crime is a fluid concept. What qualifies as a crime changes over time and definitions of crime also vary between countries. This variability evokes a nationalistic undertone to how citizens conceive crime and presents a significant impediment to thinking about crime and prisons on a global scale. Lacking a global mindset, the global prison industrial complex is free to grow without concern to cultural changes and the trends of modernization that impact all nations. The ascent of the Internet and the onset of increasing globalization have caused some crimes, namely pornographic activity and gambling, to shift from corporeal to cyberspace. More importantly, the definition of a crime is inconsistent between regions and nations at the epicenter of the global prison industrial complex. The United States and the United Kingdom define crime differently, yet both uphold the highest incarceration levels. Online gambling firms in the United Kingdom were engaged in activities deemed legal under European Union law, but illegal in the United States. Contrastingly, pedophile rings prohibited by EU law are protected under the First Amendment in the United States. Other industries and systems are also at risk and in need of uniform prosecutorial practices. For example, telephonic advancements in banking, such as the ability to make payments with cell-phone transfers, present challenges to the monetary system (Aguilar-Millan, et al, 2000, p. 44).

Additionally, the lack of an internationally agreed upon definition for white-collar crime reveals the various levels of acceptance and immersion in capitalism. International cooperation is more readily accessible when countries are trying to deter money laundering or terrorist activity, but the areas of corporate and security fraud still have scarce regulation across countries. The global free market is unlikely to react to economic disruption in any single

and the continuing threats in the future. Furthermore, not all research published on issues of crime, prisons, or judicial areas distinguish between private or public prisons. It is not common practice to delineate private prisons.

country until it presents a more substantial threat to the stability of the world's market system overall (Aguilar-Millan, et al, 2000, p. 49).

Certainly none of these technological advancements are unique to the crime; they are endemic to the transformation of business and lifestyle changes in the last couple decades, as well. Still, these issues influence the functionality and judiciousness of punishment. Technological advancements assist crime and permit activity in multiple countries regardless of citizenship or origin. The 20th-century notion of crime being a geographically-constrained action is thwarted. Perhaps more so than in any prior century, governments ought to rethink if punishment, in the form of prisons which house criminals who committed crimes in its country, can continue to be a relevant, effective practice. Furthermore, the ascent of the private prison business and the increased use of punishment as a solution to societal malice raise significant questions about morality, human rights, and the integrity of government bodies. Societies across the world ought to contemplate the implication of corporate entities managing the treatment of prisoners. Corporations and governments, especially within democratic or free societies, have distinct responsibilities, obligations, and principles.³

The difficulty of policing wider jurisdictional boundaries has spurred increased cooperation between law enforcement agencies and military intelligence. Effectually, the enforcement response has been to mirror the pattern of the criminal behavior. As gangs, drug trade, pornography, gambling, and other crime went global, governmental law enforcement agencies followed. Private prisons may indicate the first sign of the coming crime control management practice: militarization. The global prison industrial complex is, as will be discussed later in sections on identity, a form of war against communities of color in various societies. It is especially troubling that private prison companies could be enlisted to help wage this battle and be so intimately aware of governmental efforts to keep citizens safe. How crime is regulated is an indicator of whose interests the government puts first.

Finally, the wide spectrum of criminal justice policy between nations sheds light on the reactionary role of prisons and the looming challenges for lawmakers. Deep discussions need to occur about what it means to be a global citizen and how to create a just global community. Instead of making societies safer, the need for private prison companies to make a profit is pressuring government adoption of new laws. Simultaneously, it is clear that criminal sophistication will require some new laws to protect the community. Governments face a significant challenge of not simply playing into the game established by corporate lobbyists. As the next section on economic motives and ramifications of the prison industrial complex shows, governments engaged in the global prison industrial complex have thus far failed to deliver safe, citizen-oriented protection to their constituents.

Economic Motives and Ramifications

Since the global prison industrial complex is spreading rapidly within capitalist countries, it is important to consider the economic motives and ramifications of the prison industrial

³ Ample public service literature exists on the roles and expectations of government agencies compared to private industry. The book *Practical Ethics in Public Administration* (Geuras and Garofalo, 2005) provides a helpful briefing on ethics and explanation of how ethics differs from the public sector to the private sector.

complex. By 1989 in the United States, correctional firms operated two dozen facilities. The private prison industry took off in the 1990s. After a law signed by President Clinton in 1996 ended court supervision and decisions, overcrowding and violent, unsafe conditions in federal prisons developed. Thus, one of the key factors opening the door to prison privatization in the United States was the overcrowding of federal prisons. Leading the world in incarceration rates, U.S. federal prisons are functioning at 137 percent of their capacity. Private prison corporations in Texas began to contact other states whose prisons were overcrowded, offering “rent-a-cell” services in the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) prisons located in small towns in Texas. The commission for a rent-a-cell salesman is \$2.50 to \$5.50 per day per bed. The county gets \$1.50 for each prisoner.

The first private prison in the United Kingdom, Altcourse, opened its doors in 1997 and the United Kingdom remains the flagship area for private prisons in Europe. In the United Kingdom, the private finance initiative (PFI) helped institutionalize private prisons. Although originally only one private prison was renewed and only two new ones were launched, within a year it was announced that all new prisons in England and Wales would be built and run by private companies, under the PFI.

Now, many state and national budgets are strapped and ill-suited in the current economic climate to invest the time or capitol to build new facilities. This dire fiscal climate makes private ventures more attractive to governments. According to an October 2009 article from the Wall Street Journal, “half the new inmates over the past year were sent to private prisons, even though less than 9 percent of prison beds are privatized.” Over the last few years, it has become increasingly common for privately operated prisons to absorb the spillover from these congested government-run sites.

The exploding prison population can be seen as both an explanation for as well as a reaction to the global prison industrial complex. According to the Centre for Research on Globalization, in 1998, there were only five private prisons in the United Kingdom to house just 2,000 inmates. Prison privatization flourishes most heavily in neo-capitalist cultures due to the relationship between state and capital it cultivates so well. Government is attracted to privatization because of cost-savings and corporations are motivated to privatize due to the logic of profit maximization and accumulation of capital. The prison industry now employs more than half a million people—more than any Fortune 500 corporation, other than General Motors. Mushrooming construction has turned the prison industry into the main employer in scores of economically depressed rural communities. A host of firms profit from private prisons, prison labor and services like healthcare and transportation, as well.

Private prison companies have a sweeping global influence. The security firm Wackenhut Corporation (WCC) maintains operations in 56 countries on six continents. It offers “global integrated service solutions” and describes its international trading base as Central and South America, although recently it has established itself in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. WCC’s main domestic rival, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), has prison contracts in the United Kingdom and Australia. CCA’s joint venture partner and a major shareholder is Sodexo SA of France, which has operations in 60 countries and offers “a whole world of services across five continents.” Based in Nashville, TN, CCA operates the largest women’s prison in Australia. The European security firm Group 4, which runs prisons and associated services in the United Kingdom and Australia, will soon open a 3,024-bed maximum security

facility in South Africa. In May, the company announced a merger with Danish security firm Falck, creating a combined operation base of 50 countries.

One of the most important areas affected by the global prison industrial complex is prison labor. Prison labor is economically valuable and undermines the prisoner's sense of personal control. The private prison effectually transforms the prisoner into a commodity where the prisoner's primary function is capitalist tool instead of human being. The largest state prison industry in 2000 was in Texas where it used 7,000 inmates to generate \$83 million in sales. Across the nation, state governments use prison inmates as cheap, captive laborers and sell the labor to prospective companies looking for manual, unskilled labor. More than 37 states in the United States have legalized the contracting of prison labor by private corporations that mount their operations inside state prisons. Contracting companies include: IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Wireless, Texas Instrument, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Lucent Technologies, 3Com, Intel, Northern Telecom, TWA, Nordstrom's, Revlon, Macy's, Pierre Cardin, and Target Stores. Just between 1980 and 1994, profits went up from \$392 million to \$1.31 billion. State penitentiary inmates usually receive minimum wage for their work, but Colorado has paid as little as \$2 per hour. In privately-run prisons, inmates receive as little as 17 cents per hour for a maximum of six hours a day, the equivalent of \$20 per month. The highest-paying private prison is CCA in Tennessee, where prisoners receive 50 cents per hour if in a "highly skilled position." In federal prisons, inmates can earn \$1.25 an hour and work eight hours a day, with occasional overtime.

Although government policies and legal regulations provide an instructive guide to predict inmate populations, the projected growth of the private prison industry can also be seen through examining the stock market offerings to potential public investors from private prison operators. Table 1 explores the 5-year projected growth rate of seven private prison companies.

Table 1

Company	5-Yr. Projected Growth Rate
China Security & Surveillance Technology (NYSE: CSR)	27%
Cornell Companies	12%
Corrections Corp of America	11%
Geo Group	16%
L-1 Identity Solutions (NYSE: ID)	20%
Smith & Wesson (Nasdaq: SWHC)	15%
Taser (Nasdaq: TASR)	30%

Source: Yahoo! Finance

As a private company, the private prison industry is logically expected to boom and the investors in such companies expect their success. However, the implication of the private prison industry's success on the global prison industrial complex is an altogether different story. The high profits seen by private prison companies are particularly troubling given the track record of worker conditions. Scotland's examinations of private prison conditions have, for example, described workers that bemoan the cost-cutting, intense workloads, and understaffing. Ultimately, a Scotland governmental study found that a private prison contractor degraded the conditions of staff to such an extent that the public interest was undoubtedly compromised.

There is no guarantee or necessity for private prison companies to act as citizen corporations which respect the public interest and treat prisoners and workers with respect, decency, and dignity. It is entirely reasonable to presume that the more profit these companies earn, the more profit they would like to keep. As a private business, their shareholders would expect nothing less from them. But the problem in the private prison industry is this directly undermines the safety, well-being, and dignity of the inmates and prison staff. This disparity between the expectations of private industry versus governmental values lies at the heart of the global prison industrial complex.

Societal Changes

In addition to government-driven incarceration through the international definitions and economic incentives discussed in the previous two sections, the global prison industrial complex is also manipulated through societal changes and social practices. Education in the United States is the most sweeping societal development of the last couple decades to affect the global prison industrial complex. The school to prison pipeline has become well-documented. The school-to-prison pipeline is a system of local, state, and federal education policies combined with public safety or criminal justice policies which push students away from school into the criminal justice system.

“Zero tolerance” policies in school districts are on the rise, contributing to an increase in suspension, detention, expulsion, and discouragement which translates into other areas of a student’s life. Rather than helping educate students, these policies criminalize and punish them. The ACLU and NAACP suggest that zero tolerance policies are often a student’s first exposure to the criminal justice system. Situations which may have once resulted in a trip to the principal’s office or a stern lecture are now resulting in handcuffing and being taken out of school to the police. Children as young as five have made national news for being arrested for throwing tantrums, riding bikes where it was not permitted, and throwing rocks as toys—all behavior which is a part of growing up. But instead of providing guidance and teaching right and wrong to these children, schools have started slapping them with criminal records.

Unfortunately, the disparity seen in the nation’s prisons is dominant in education, as well. In 2003, African-American youth made up 16 percent of the nation’s overall juvenile population, but accounted for 45 percent of juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2005, p. 9). The juvenile justice system is priming black youth for encounters with the prison industry, rather than providing alternative lifestyles and deterrence from incarceration. To make this pattern worse, the reaction to youth violence is over the top since the levels of youth violence are exaggerated. The explosion of school-based arrests cannot be attributed to an increase in youth violence. Between 1992 and 2002, school violence actually dropped by about half (Advancement Project, 2005, p. 11). Despite the fear generated by a handful of highly publicized school shootings, schools remain one of the safest places for young people.

The role of testing in American schools could be reformed to reduce juvenile arrests. The rise in suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests may be attributed, in part, to the rise of high-stakes testing. As a result of test-based accountability regimes such as the No Child Left Behind Act, schools have an incentive to segregate out low-performing students to boost overall test scores. One study found that schools dished out longer suspensions to students

who performed poorly on standardized tests than to high-performing students for similar offenses. This gap in discipline based on performance grew substantially during the period of time when standardized tests were administered (Figlio, 2006). Such a practice suggests that schools may be selectively employing discipline strategies that keep low-performing students out of school during testing days as a means of artificially inflating the school's performance.

The school-to-prison pipeline has criminalized our schools, a cruel irony which guts a physical space intended to represent freedom and possibility in a democratic America. The American Bar Association has condemned zero-tolerance policies as inherently unjust:

zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems that schools confront. It has redefined students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences. ... Unfortunately, most current [zero-tolerance] policies eliminate the common sense that comes with discretion and, at great cost to society and to children and families, do little to improve school safety.⁴

Just as the global prison industrial complex is not a long-term solution for a safe, productive society, zero-tolerance policies do not deliver safer schools nor directly create smarter students in our schools. If anything, the social transformation of education only extends the reach of the global prison industrial complex into the childhoods of vulnerable student populations.

Identity Politics

Finally, it is crucial to explore how the global prison industrial complex masks the devastating effects of the prison industry on communities across the globe. The global prison industrial complex invites identity politics to be prevalent. Prisons have traditionally been understood to exist as a means to separate those who have offended the social body politic. The behavior of a prisoner is deemed "criminal" and accepted by the mainstream population as categorically different from that of a "normal" person. As a result, identity in the prison world is of central importance to being an inmate. Inmates are frequently segregated based on age, gender, and race. The assumption of heteronormativity, or heterosexuality as the normative sexual orientation preference, also pervades in the prison scene. Finally, mental health and intelligence factor into incarceration, as well. All of these identity issues could pose threats to community safety if retaliation around exclusivist causes were to occur.

In the United States, numerous governmental policies have been adopted over the last twenty years which have directly contributed to the increase in prison populations. These policies include truth-in-sentencing laws, three-strikes laws, treating juveniles as adults, and allowing juveniles' criminal histories to be considered by adult courts. These policies effectually target vulnerable populations, causing certain types of people to be more harshly affected by growing incarceration rates.

The crisis of the prison boom and the threat of the global prison industrial complex are directly related to identity and oppression. Activist Angela Davis has long since proclaimed that

⁴ <http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/zerotolreport.html>

criminalization has become the government's weapon of choice in responding to social problems caused by capitalism, globalization, and the protests engendered by the globalization of capital (Davis, 1998, p. 66). Overt racism against African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos, and overt sexism against women, has transitioned into sanctioning of prisoners who were never welcomed among the dominant society which established the prison industry in the first place. The prevalence of the prison industry is a troubling addition to a global community which is now engaged in wars against terror and international crime control. If prisons can be created for the same reasons countries choose to engage in war, philosophical distinctions between defense, retribution, and protection are blurred.

In the United States, African-American women and Latinas are disproportionately affected by mandatory minimums judicial sentencing. Since the only way a lesser sentence can be given is in cases where the defendant provides 'substantial assistance' in the prosecution of another person, women, who tend to be in subordinate positions within drug syndicates and thus have little access to information are usually unable to make such an agreement. The crack-cocaine disparity also feeds the disproportionate impact on women of color. The mandatory minimum sentence for crack cocaine is one hundred times harsher for crack than for powder cocaine. Since crack is cheaper, it has flooded poor central city neighborhoods. In turn, African-Americans and Latinos receive disproportionate sentences when compared with white powder cocaine users and dealers residing in more affluent areas (Sudbury, 2002, p. 64).

Undereducated and low-income African Americans are especially vulnerable to winding up in prison. In fact, some sociologists suggest incarceration amongst this population is not unlike joining the military or parenthood. "The novel pervasiveness of imprisonment indicates the emergence of incarceration as a new stage in the life course of young low-skill black men" (Petit and Western, 2004, p. 151). Likewise, professor Julia Sudbury contends that black women (and women of color overall) essentially fuel the global prison industrial complex by functioning as scapegoats for tough-on-crime rhetoric and the war on drugs and also carrying out the prison labor in workshops once incarcerated (Sudbury, 2002, p. 72). Serving time remains a prevalent event in the U.S. African-American community.

Regrettably, the decried racial disparity found in incarceration rates is not unique to the United States' prison population. In Australia, the aboriginal Koori women represent 2 percent of overall population, but are 30 percent of prison population. In Canada, aboriginal people comprise 3 percent of the general population, but represent 12 percent of federal prisoners, a figure which increases to over 60 percent in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Finally, in England and Wales, 12 percent of female prisoners are African-Caribbean British passport holders compared to 1 percent of the general population.

The classic writing by Charles Mills on the racial contract in the United States contends the prison system is an indicator of the ignorance of white leaders who strive to maintain their stature. As Mills discusses the role of race in U.S. history, he writes:

One could say, then, as a general rule, that *white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self deception on matters related to race* are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy physically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomena are in no way *accidental*, but *prescribed* by

the terms of the Racial Contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity (Mills, 1997, p. 19; emphasis original).

The racial dynamics of the global prison industrial complex are incredibly important to human rights, equality, and justice. The racial contract targets a crucial, yet often overlooked, part of the 21st-century criminal justice evolution: prisons cannot deal only with the prisoner. Identity politics needs to be as much about the race of who is incarcerated as it is about who has the power to incarcerate. Mill also urges looking beyond the sheer racial composition to understand the philosophy and motivation for the continued implementation of the “contract.” The global prison industrial complex warrants the same investigative and judicious mindset.

Along with race, gender equity and the role of feminism are important, complex philosophical quandaries within the global prison industrial complex. Sometimes reforms dubbed as feminist in efforts to equalize the treatment of prisoners across gender lines has the unintended effect of making the lives of prisoners more dangerous. For example, Tekla Miller, the former warden at Huron Valley Women’s Prison in Michigan, complained that the arsenal at the women’s prison was inferior to those at men’s institutions. Miller also successfully lobbied for the right to shoot at women escapees. As the global prison industrial continues to grow, the ability to maintain prisoner and employee safety as well as to cultivate nonviolent communities could be threatened by such activity which fronts as equality, but does not do anything to assist or improve the lives of vulnerable people.

The final important identity heavily afflicted by the global prison industrial complex is the mentally ill population. Statistics from the Bureau of Justice (Right to be Hostile, p. 102) indicate that the largest mental institutions in the world come in the form of three jails. The Bureau of Justice Statistics acknowledges that the three largest de facto mental institutions in the world are Riker’s Island (New York), Cook County Jail (Illinois), and Los Angeles County Jail (California). The treatment of the mentally ill has evolved dramatically over time, and the high density of prisoners with mental illness ought not to be surprising. Nevertheless, the manipulation of human identity for the purpose of feeding a government’s bottom line is unacceptable.

The issue of identity politics embraces an important philosophical discussion of how we isolate and punish “the other” in our societies. Sociologist Slavoj Zizek suggests the United States exhibits obscene, brutal, racist, sexist fantasies under the guise of power by “official” (Christian, white, democratic, etc) societal entities. Zizek suggests these motives are not deliberately displayed or overt, but instead carried out in a censored, latent form. Ultimately, the global prison industrial complex could be seen as the manifestation of this bigoted mindset. In essence, the global prison industrial complex can be equated to Freud’s suggestion that “the unconscious knows no negation” run amok (Zizek, 2008, p. 101). The global prison industrial complex thrives on the ability to cordon off certain citizens. Zizek’s philosophy works to create a symbiotic relationship in the prison industry, where continued captivity of the “non-citizen” is necessary for the elevation and continued prosperity of the free citizen.

Simply, the global prison industrial complex is predicated upon the ability of political leaders to scapegoat “despised others”: welfare mothers, immigrants, those from lower social status, the underserved populations, and prisoners. Scapegoating refers to the act of identifying

the wrong perpetrator or enemy and making this person culpable for someone else's mistakes. In the discussion at hand, political leaders could identify failed punitive and enforcement policies, education, cyberspace, standard of living, overpopulation, economic shifts, or employer/corporate greed or liability as part of the global social disarray. Instead, the blame is placed on individuals from communities that represent embedded anxieties about race, gender, and power in the United States. Consistent with the aforementioned philosophical bent advanced by Zizek, this scapegoating represents "disdain built on the U.S. bedrock of white supremacy but without the indelicacy of using explicitly racist terms" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 315). Scapegoating undermines the dignity of the global prison industrial complex and opens the door to backlash and instability.

Identity politics is made even more challenging because the general public is painted a skewed, incomplete, and dramatic picture of prisons. Anthropologist Rhodes describes prisons as an "absent site" (Rhodes, 2001, p. 65). Prisons, crime and criminals are not represented by mass media in their entire portraits nor do mass media portrayals represent realistic life in prison. Instead, mass media circulates themes or images which trigger and reinforce feelings and beliefs which resonate with the public: violence, prison bars and uniforms. For example, consider the best-selling video game *Prison Tycoon 4: Supermax* which presents this challenge to consumers: "Build a profitable privately run prison from the ground up...Grow your facility to Supermax capabilities, housing the most dangerous and diabolical criminals on earth—all for the bottom line." Such stereotypical fragments, layered on top of the latent philosophies of power and whiteness described in the preceding paragraphs, are used to sensationalize prison life by invoking and engraving racialized fears.

Conclusion

Changing criminal law, dominant identity politics, private bidding, and intensified school and crime punishments have simultaneously created a new type of prison while putting into flux the sheer value of prisons. Although often a byproduct of government-run prisons, the private prison industry threatens to distort much of the reality we once knew when the government ran prisons by itself. By depleting the social wealth of institutions related to child care, education, housing, and hospitals, the prison industry plays a central role in creating the appearance of mayhem. By laying the groundwork of desperation, the private prison industry paints a picture of need for more prisons. And the more prisons which are built, the less social capital there is to go around, adding—and effectually justifying—an influx of new and repeat prisoners, and justifying the development of new prisons. It's a vicious cycle and the governments all over the world are implicit bystanders via the global prison industrial complex.

The global prison industrial complex may suggest serious questions about how to keep people safe in the 21st century. Future research must explore how the public fares with increased military and police cooperation and intelligence sharing. Private prisons also raise additional questions about economic profits and corporate influence which could threaten the value of human life, the safety of prisoners, and the legitimacy of criminal laws if left unexamined. Most would agree that government should punish some people and that crime in a society should be controlled. But the global prison industrial complex presents the possibility of a potentially violent, alienated prison industry. Instead of being driven by open, deliberative

bodies, the private prison industries could go unchecked and be dominated by companies looking to protect the bottom line at all costs, not the prisoners and society at large.

Activists and opposition to the global prison industrial complex also have challenges moving forward. Since the global prison industrial complex defies national borders, anti-prison activism will be challenged to expand beyond the borders of any single nation and become a global agenda. It seems unlikely activism in any one country would be sufficient to topple the industry's expansion, especially in highly westernized countries. Conversely, the global prison industrial complex presents the international community with an opportunity to examine the nature of punishment, race, and gender. In an era of global terror, it is clear questions of identity politics and crime control cannot be ignored or simply locked away in a prison cell.

As the debate continues about how to control crime, who should fund prisons, and the value of the global prison industrial complex, it must be remembered that societal changes will not procure any form of lasting societal advancement so long as any single segment of the population is destabilized in the process. The global prison industrial complex is troubling, but it is useful to acknowledge that it is also a malleable and fragile system. The silver lining of the global prison industrial complex is that governments can intervene now to slow its growth. Governments must quickly identify: what role prisons play in national economies when crime is global and fluid; how to manage private prisons to create consistent standards and operational procedures; and how to cultivate cultural reforms which work across mental, health, economic, and sociological lines to save money, become institutionalized more effectively, deter crime, and increase the productivity and vitality of citizens in countries all over the globe. No person deserves to be endangered, whether inside or outside a prison. All people deserve to have a government which supports their potential, protects their dignity, enacts anti-racist policies, and advances anti-retributive and safe institutions above profit for an elite few. Governments should rise to the challenge of transforming the global prison industrial complex.

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