Notes by Marcia Bailey from THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS by Michelle Alexander

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Alexander says the issues are the same as those in her original book; she added some new thoughts.

Since the end of slavery, our nation has remained trapped in a cycle of reform, backlash, and reformation of systems of racialized social control. Divide, demonize, and conquer has worked for centuries in the US to keep poor and working people angry at, and fearful of, one another rather than uniting to challenge unjust systems.

The War on Drugs put down Blacks by purposely directing so much money to building prisons that it hurt funds for education, public housing, and welfare -- denying food stamps, credit, and financial aid for schools.

Mass incarceration refers to those inside prisons *and* those who are labeled criminals by rules, laws, and policies. It and mass deportation have expanded greatly because large corporations have lucrative contracts with government agencies to provide electronic monitoring of people suspected or convicted of crimes for a combined annual revenue of almost $700M. Companies earn billions through surveillance of this population. Electronic monitoring is widely used and paid for **by those being monitored**. Where they can go is often decided by algorithms with built-in biases. While monitoring may be preferable to prison, it doesn't bode well for our neighborhoods or communities.

When people talk about ending mass incarceration, they are talking about reducing the number of people behind bars and ignoring the

cycle of caste systems in America. Criminal justice is now one pillar of discrimination.

The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended: stop building prisons and close many. The Criminal justice system is a gateway to a larger system of racial stigmatization and permanent marginalization.

The drug war sweeps large numbers into the criminal justice system. They are denied effective representation and overworked public defenders advise them to plead guilty and plea bargain, placing them under formal control. Data reveals that White professionals may be the most likely to be engaged in illegal drug activity but the least likely to have a criminal record.

Being labeled a felon affects your life forever. “Felons not wanted here” has replaced the old signs but is just as effective. One’s debt to society is never paid. Felons are denied access to public housing and required by their parole board to maintain gainful employment although they may lack education and often cannot get a job because of their record or because factories are no longer in the city. They may have large debts, never be eligible for food stamps, and lose their right to vote. There are high concentrations of felons in certain areas of cities, yet released felons are not to associate with anyone with a felony conviction.

Black men are thought of as criminals and social pariahs. The shame and stigma are the worst. Felon is the new N-word. Marking Black youth as Black criminals allows mass incarceration to function as a racial caste system. Jim Crow was explicitly race based; mass incarceration, implicitly, and the laws are enforced in a discriminatory way. Having some Whites in the system preserves the appearance of a colorblind criminal justice system.

Most people in the ghetto prefer to work, support their families, and live without fear of harm or violence. Mandated treatment rather than jail for first time offenders could help.

Inner city mothers, worried about safety for their sons, see the only choices as more crime or more prison, so they choose racist policing with prison. The present caste system appears voluntary: don't commit crimes, don't make mistakes. Blacks may be accused of crimes for just being in the wrong place at the wrong time while Whites who break laws don't pay the same high price.

POC in ghetto communities must not be the enemy, and ghetto communities must not be occupied zones. The problems of the poor must be treated humanely with trust, healing, restorative justice, and reparations.

To make things better, we can educate ourselves and others about all struggles for liberation, speak unpopular truths, support those who have been harmed, and organize against the systems that seek to oppress, control, and divide us. We must demand reparations, open our hearts and minds to one another, and heal our communities as best we can. We must reimagine what justice should be and work to achieve that.