

ABSTRACT

“Mass Incarceration in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation” recounts the evolution of state coercion in New Orleans from the Louisiana Purchase to Reconstruction’s collapse. Prior historians have argued that enslaved people were rarely incarcerated; that slavery stymied prison development; and that after Emancipation, the power to punish abruptly leapt from plantation to prison. This study demonstrates the opposite: free and enslaved menial laborers in antebellum Louisiana were arrested, condemned to specialized penal facilities, and redeployed as penal laborers at remarkably high rates. By 1820, nearly two percent of enslaved people living in New Orleans were incarcerated at any moment – comparable to the contemporary African American incarceration rate in Louisiana, the state with the highest incarceration rate in the United States. State coercion systems directed at free and enslaved laborers during the antebellum era directly informed the design of state coercion during Jim Crow: in essence, whereas previous studies frame slave emancipation as initiating a complete revolution in Southern police power, this study suggests nuanced adaptation and adjustment rooted in regional precedent. This study draws on qualitative and quantitative analysis of over 50,000 prison admittance records, as well as related trial records, plantation journals, municipal documents, and federal Freedmen’s Bureau and military records.

JOHN BARDES

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2020 – **Louisiana State University**
Present *Assistant Professor of History*

EDUCATION

Ph.D. **Tulane University**, History, May 2020
Major Field: United States | Minor Field: Black Atlantic

Dissertation: “Mass Incarceration in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation: Fugitive Slaves, Poor Whites, and Prison Development in Louisiana, 1805 – 1877”

B.A. **Carleton College**, History, June 2008
Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles:

“The Notorious Bras Coupé: A Slave Revolt in Memory and Anxiety,” *American Quarterly* 72 (March 2020)

“Redefining Vagrancy: Policing Freedom and Disorder in Reconstruction New Orleans, 1862-1868,” *Journal of Southern History* 84 (February 2018)

“‘Defend with True Hearts unto Death’: Finding Historical Meaning in Confederate Memorial Hall,” *Southern Cultures* 23 (Winter 2017)

Book Chapters:

“Witnessing Ned Scott’s Coffin: Spectacular Police Violence in the Age of Emancipation” in *The Civil War Era and the Summer of 2020: Race, Violence, and Memory in the United States*, eds. Hilary Green and Andrew Slap (forthcoming, Fordham University Press, 2021)

Book Reviews:

Review of Sara M. Benson, *The Prison of Democracy: Race, Leavenworth, and the Culture of Law*, in *Punishment and Society* 22 (October 2020)

Manuscripts in Preparation:

“Mass Incarceration in the Age of Slavery and Emancipation: Race, Punishment, and Resistance in Louisiana, 1805 – 2020”

“There is No God in Heaven”: Religion, Race, Violence, and Police Power in Jim Crow New Orleans” (co-authored with K. Stephen Prince)

Other Publications:

“Sailing While Black: Forgotten Stories of Free Black Sailors Trapped in Louisiana’s Slave Prisons,” *64 Parishes* (Spring 2020)

“Voting Rights and the 1866 New Orleans Massacre,” *werehistory.org*, July 30, 2018

“The New Orleans Streetcar Protests of 1867,” *werehistory.org*, April 28, 2018

GRANTS AND FELOWSHIPS

2021 **Manship Summer Research Grant**

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Louisiana State University

2019 – **Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship**

2020 American Council of Learned Societies

Postdoctoral Fellowship (*declined*)

Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African-American Studies, University of Rochester

Dissertation Completion Fellowship (*declined*)

African & African Diaspora Studies Program, Boston College

Josephine De Karman Dissertation Fellowship (*declined*)

Josephine De Karman Fellowship Trust

2018 **J.E. Land Fund**

School of Liberal Arts, Tulane University

Educational Award

Colonial Dames of America

2017 **Global South Research Grant**

New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, Tulane University

Lurcy Research Travel Grant

Department of History, Tulane University

Summer Merit Fellowship

School of Liberal Arts, Tulane University

AWARDS AND HONORS

2021 **Melvin E. Bradford & Theodore C. Delaney Dissertation Prize**

Best Dissertation on the American South, St. George Tucker Society

2019 **Hugh F. Rankin Prize**

Best Graduate-Level Paper on Louisiana, History Louisiana Historical Association

- 2018 **William F. Holmes Award**
Best Paper by a Graduate Student or Junior Faculty Member, Southern Historical Association
- 2016 **Peter T. Cominos Award**
Best Graduate Paper, Department of History, Tulane University
- 2015 **Peter T. Cominos Award**
- 2008 **Williams-Harris Endowed Prize in Africana Studies**
Carleton College

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2022 **American Historical Association**, New Orleans, La., “From Marronage to Vagrancy: Captivity and Continuity in Jim Crow New Orleans”
- 2021 **Southern Historical Association**, New Orleans, La., roundtable organizer and presenter, “Rethinking New Orleans: Race, Labor, Violence, and Representation.”
Southern Historical Association, Junior Scholars Workshop, “The Once and Future Slave Workhouse: Captivity and Coercion in New Orleans, 1805 – 1970”
- 2019 **400 Years: Slavery and the Criminal Justice System**, University of Baltimore School of Law, “Mass Incarceration Before Emancipation”
Brooks Forum, St. George Tucker Society, Milledgeville, Ga., “The Problem of Incarceration in the Age of Slavery”
Prisons, Prisoners & Prison Records in Historical Perspective, University of Guelph, “The Problem of Incarceration in the Age of Slavery: Penology, Race and Reform in Louisiana’s Slave Prisons, 1805-1842”
Louisiana Historical Association, Lafayette, La., “‘So-Called Free’: The Penal Enslavement of Free Black Mariners and Migrants in Antebellum New Orleans”
- 2018 **Southern Historical Association**, Birmingham, Al., “The Problem of Incarceration in the Age of Slavery: Debates over Penology, Race, and Free Status in New Orleans”
Freedoms Gained and Lost: Reinterpreting Reconstruction in the Atlantic World, College of Charleston, “‘Idle and Dangerous’: Police Power, Penal Forced Labor, and Vagrancy Law in New Orleans, 1862 – 1877”
Towards a History of Louisiana State Institutions: Along Class, Racial and Gender Lines, Tulane University, “Twice Deprived of their Liberty: The Paradox of the Incarcerated Slave”
- 2017 **Harvard Graduate Conference on International History**, Harvard University, “Policing Immigrants and Migrants in a Southern Port City, 1850-1880”

LSU HGSA Conference, Louisiana State University, “Bras Coupé, One-Armed Brigand: Memory, Counter-Memory, and Slave Rebellion”

COURSES TAUGHT

- 2020 – *Louisiana State University*
Present History of the Antebellum South; Slavery in Baton Rouge; U.S. History to 1865; Crime and Punishment in American History
- 2017 – *Tulane University*
2018 Introduction to the Musical Cultures of the Gulf South
- 2017 U.S History, 1865 – Present

RELATED WORK

- 2019 – Consultant, unentitled future exhibit on New Orleans’ carceral history, *Historic New Orleans Collection*, New Orleans, La.
- 2019 – Researcher, *Legacy Project: New Orleans*, a local branch of the Community Remembrance Project, Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)
- 2020
- 2018 Contributor, “10 Years or Life,” *Reveal* interview with Eve Abrams, *The Center for Investigative Reporting* (originally aired October 6, 2018)
- 2017 – Researcher/co-author, amicus brief, Voice of the Ex-Offender vs. State of Louisiana, Louisiana Court of Appeal, First Circuit
- 2018
- 2014 – Researcher, author Edward Ball, *Life of a Klansman: A Family History in White Supremacy* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020).

SCHOLARLY AFFILIATIONS

American Historical Association
Organization of American Historians
Louisiana Historical Association
Southern Historical Association

REFERENCES

Rosanne Adderley, Associate Professor of History, Tulane University
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Emily Clark, Professor of History, Tulane University
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