



Prison Race

Renford Reese

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This book is written primarily for those members of the public - including lawmakers - who might be unaware of the damage wrought on U.S. society by decades of counterproductive criminal justice policies. In these pages, two fundamental questions are addressed: Why have lawmakers embraced counterproductive criminal justice policies? What have been the consequences of these policies? *Prison Race* is a double entendre. During the past two decades in the U.S., there has been a move toward incarceration, and one group in particular has been impacted by discriminatory and unjust corrections policies driven by the promises of politicians to "get tough on crime." Although this book is more about criminal justice policies than it is about race, it examines these policies in the context of their impact on the African American male population. The federal government's extraordinarily slow response to the desperate black victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the surrounding areas has forced the U.S. to examine, once again, its most recalcitrant sociocultural phenomenon: racial bias. The hypothetical suggestion of former U.S. Education Secretary and national drug czar William Bennett that aborting all black babies would reduce the crime rate in the U.S. is reflective of a deeply troubling mindset. The public was shocked and outraged at the callous and insensitive treatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib; however, those familiar with conditions in U.S. prisons were not surprised. Multiple human rights violations exist within the walls of our prisons, which are woefully overcrowded. Inmates are given substandard health care, sexually assaulted, warehoused and punished without opportunities for rehabilitation. *Prison Race* candidly examines prison conditions in the U.S. It also explores, among other issues, the business of prisons, including the positioning of prison guard unions as influential interest groups, the proliferation of prisons, and the role of prison labor in a cycle of capitalistic exploitation. This book integrates survey data and interviews with inmates, parolees, correctional officers, and others to examine one of America's most shameful creations, a *Prison Race*.

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