FUGITIVE LIFE / THE QUEER POLITICS OF THE PRISON STATE

STEPHEN DILLON

FUGITIVE LIFE

FUGITIVE LIFE THE QUEER POLITICS

OF THE PRISON STATE

STEPHEN DILLON

Duke University Press Durham and London 2018

© 2018 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Text designed by Courtney Leigh Baker
Cover designed by Matt Tauch
Typeset in Whitman by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Dillon, Stephen, [date–] author.
Title: Fugitive life : the queer politics of the prison state / Stephen Dillon.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017051974 (print) | LCCN 2017060640 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822371892 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822370673 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822370826 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Gays—Political activity—United States—History—20th century. | Prisoners—Civil rights—United States. | Social movements—United States—History—20th century. | Protest movements—United States—History—20th century. | Gay activists—United States. | Anti-racism—United States—History—20th century. | Neoliberalism—Social aspects—United States—History.
Classification: LCC HQ76.8.U6 (ebook) | LCC HQ76.8.U6 D55 2018 (print) | DDC 306.76/60973—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017051974

Cover art: Coco Fusco, still from *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert*, 2004. Black-and-white single-channel video. Courtesy of the artist.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction. "Escape-Bound Captives":
Race, Neoliberalism, and the Force of Queerness 1

1. "We're Not Hiding but We're Invisible": Law and Order,
the Temporality of Violence, and the Queer Fugitive 27

2. Life Escapes: Neoliberal Economics,
the Underground, and Fugitive Freedom 54

3. Possessed by Death: Black Feminism,
Queer Temporality, and the Afterlife of Slavery 84

4. "Only the Sun Will Bleach His Bones Quicker":
Desire, Police Terror, and the Affect of Queer Feminist Futures 119

Conclusion. "Being Captured Is Beside the Point":
A World beyond the World 143

Notes 155
Bibliography 171
Index 185

This page intentionally left blank

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In an interview about his relationship with Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze describes Foucault, not as an individual subject, but as a diffuse force he called "passion." The intensity of passion was contrasted to the feeling of "love." Love was a name for becoming through other people—a relation between discrete individuals. In contrast to love, passion named an attempt to comprehend how one can become "dissolved into something undifferentiated." Passion is a state wherein "being oneself no longer made any sense." It is a state wherein it is no longer possible to say "That's you" and "This is me." Being "me" is simply incomprehensible. Passion is an affective intensity where love is no longer the right word. For Deleuze, Foucault wasn't "like a person." He was a laugh, a gesture, "a changed atmosphere," an "event," a "magnetic field," or simply and indescribably, "something." Foucault was a piece of Deleuze—but not quite a piece—because one can remove a piece, identify it, name it, mark it. Being a part of someone is still under the analytic of love. Passion can't be undone.

I begin with this anecdote because it describes the problem with thanking the "you" that helped "me" with completing what has become a book under the name I was given. The people named here, and many more who are not, did not simply help me write, read, and think; they are entangled with what is here. The fiction of me wouldn't be possible without everyone that made me, me. With that in mind, what is here would simply not exist without the physical, emotional, and epistemological support and encouragement of my advisors in graduate school, Regina Kunzel and Roderick Ferguson. Rod's patience, kindness, humor, generosity, and genius will always be a model for me as I navigate a world that so often leaves people unable to laugh in the face of so much stress, frustration, violence, and despair. He always helped me find my way when I got lost, and I think of him

in moments large and small when what looks like the right way is never simply that. He continues to provide a path for me to follow—a comfort when so much seems incomprehensible and impossible. Five years ago I wrote that I didn't know how to describe Reg's dedication, compassion, generosity, humility, brilliance, and insight. I said that one day I would figure out how to describe her impact on me. Now that the time is here, the task still eludes me. But this failure now feels appropriate—I'd rather leave it with the words *gesture, event, atmosphere*, and *something*.

The Department of American Studies at the University of Minnesota offered me a place to do what I wanted and needed to do in a world where that is often not possible. I'm grateful to have learned so much from Kevin Murphy, Jennifer Pierce, Laurie Ouellette, and Zenzele Isoke. I'm also grateful to have had a community of so many wonderful people engaged in similar epistemological struggles: Jasmine Mitchell, Kate Beane, Patricia Marroquin Norby, Benjamin Wiggins, Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, Raechel Tiffe, Elizabeth Ault, Juliana Hu Pegues, Tom Sarmiento, Rudy Aguilar, Ryan Cartwright, Karisa Butler-Wall, Ryan Murphy, Michael David Franklin, Daniel LaChance, Aniruddha Dutta, Tammy Owens, Michelle Garvey, Jessica M. Petocz, and Karla M. Padrón. Remembering Jesús Estrada Pérez always makes me smile in the darkest of times.

Myrl Beam, A. J. Lewis, and Eli Vitulli helped me through many aspects of the early stages of this project. Their friendship, support, humor, and insight during and after graduate school have been invaluable. I'm so grateful for their thinking and presence. As a transplant to New England, I am always excited to be near people from the Midwest. It was such a joy to spend two years with Eli as colleagues in the Five Colleges. I was also lucky enough that my Minnesota friend Elizabeth Sharrow got a job at the University of Massachusetts at the same time I accepted a position at Hampshire College. She's been such a support through moments large and small, hilarious (bears!), bizarre, and horrifying. I'm also grateful for new friends I've made in a new part of the country: Jules Rosskam, Alex Samets, Mara Toone, Deborah Schwartz, and Aeryca Steinbauer. Pooja Rangan and Josh Guilford have always been unflinchingly supportive, hilarious, and excited. Pooja helped demystify much of the process of writing a book. Bernadine Mellis, Andrea Lawlor, Hart, and Jordy Rosenberg are the most amazing friends I could ask for. Their encouragement, curiosity, questions, excitement, knowledge, and support have meant everything to me. Creating work in the same small world as them has been a true joy. I'm thankful

to Jordy for helping with the fourth chapter and talking through my many questions and concerns on our impromptu walks. Bernadine gave me a title in our many title workshops on snowy nights that I did not use. I'm grateful for it because it helped as I edited and revised. I'm holding on to it for another time.

I'm so appreciative of my colleagues at Hampshire College for their support and encouragement: Angie Willey, Jennifer Hamilton, Amy Jordan, Chris Tinson, Jutta Sperling, Uditi Sen, Hiba Bou Akar, Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, Djola Branner, Wilson Valentín-Escobar, Marlene Fried, Lili Kim, Susana Loza, Kristen Luschen, Flavio Risech-Ozeguera, George Fourlas, Michele Hardesty, and many more. My students helped me think through many of the book's central questions. Their openness, curiosity, and excitement is inspiring and their brilliance is often breathtaking.

A dispersed group of people have supported my work by inviting me to give a talk, publish an article, or participate on a panel, or have offered me encouragement in ways minor but significant. I first read Dean Spade's work as an eighteen-year-old a decade and a half ago; to have had him engage my work over the past decade has been thrilling. Eric Stanley, Craig Willse, Jason Stahl, and Michelle Potts were wonderful interlocutors and editors of some of my earlier thinking. Sarah Haley gave me a boost at an early morning panel that meant so much to me. Abbie Boggs has been supportive and excited even after moving all the way to Connecticut. I always look forward to a chance to see Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts; they have been supportive and excited about my work from the moment I met them and learning from them has been a true pleasure.

Ken Wissoker believed in this project from the beginning and guided me through the editing process so that my memories of finishing are full of grace and ease. Elizabeth Ault was there for all my questions and concerns; I'm thankful for her kindness and encouragement. I'm also deeply grateful and indebted to two anonymous reviewers for their care, insight, concerns, questions, and enthusiasm. Susan Albury guided the book through copy editing and production and the copy editing of Judith Hoover was a joy to work with. The artist Henry Schneiderman created the index.

My twin sister, Michelle, cheered and clapped and chanted me on every step of the way. We have been together since before our first breath—I hope some of that breath comes through here. My parents, Michael and Marcia, were always there with questions, support, and encouragement even when I could only leave them confused. I hope the book lives up to

the core values I learned from them. My brother, Jeff, will always be my intellectual sparring partner; he has made me a sharper thinker. Kevin and Marcie are always lighthearted, even when things feel so heavy. My nieces and nephews, Jacob, Steve, Ben, Katherine, and Megan, have brought me so much joy over the past decade. They've given me perspective and scope when I needed it most. I hope the world is slightly better for them. Finally, Allison Page has read, edited, and commented on every single thing I have written for more than the past decade. What is here would not be here without her. I hope her brilliance and energy shine through. As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney write, "We owe each other everything."

INTRODUCTION

"ESCAPE-BOUND CAPTIVES" RACE, NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE FORCE OF QUEERNESS

On July 4, 1977, the George Jackson Brigade issued a communiqué that began with the following statement: "Today we bombed the main substation for the state capital complex in Olympia [Washington]. The purpose of this action is to support the struggle of prisoners in the hole at Walla Walla state prison. These men are still on strike as a focus of their militant fight against illegal confinement, barbarism, and torture."[1] From the spring of 1975 until the fall of 1977 the George Jackson Brigade bombed state and corporate institutions throughout the Pacific Northwest. In order to fund their fugitive organization they robbed half a dozen banks to make the state and capital "pay for their own destruction."[2] The George Jackson Brigade was an underground group of working-class former prisoners who were "of different races and sexes" and "different sexual orientations within those races and sexes."[3] The group saw themselves as a form of "armed self-defense" in support of Native sovereignty, domestic national liberation movements, workers' rights, feminism, gay liberation, and, most centrally, prison abolition. Throughout their writings their analysis of power navigated the complicity among race, gender, class, sexuality, capitalism, and incarceration. The Brigade emphasized repeatedly that their choice to go underground was motivated by their involvement with the struggles of "women, prisoners, Third World people, gays and young people."[4] Prisons were the analytical center of the Brigade's theoretical and political work,

informing their analysis of white supremacy, sexual violence, colonialism, and heterosexism. When prisoners at Walla Walla took hostages and seized the prison's hospital wing as part of a decade-long struggle for more humane conditions, the Brigade bombed the office of the director of the Department of Corrections in Olympia, causing more than $100,000 in damage.[5] In addition to calling for the end of the random transferring of rebellious prisoners and the use of "psychofascist" forms of control, such as electroshock therapy, sensory deprivation, and drugs, the Brigade situated the prison rebellion in a larger network of racialized and gendered state power by declaring, "If people want a better society, they can start by becoming active feminists, anti-racists, and anti-imperialists."[6]

Rita Bo Brown, the group's bank robber, was known throughout the Seattle area as the "Gentleman Bank Robber" because she dressed "as a man" during robberies, was acknowledged for her "polite gun-pointing prattle," and was praised by bank tellers for her congeniality.[7] Brown's performance was so effective that the FBI spent two years looking for a man. Narrating her transition from aboveground activist to underground "freedom fighter," Brown wrote, "I was part of the politico lesbian community. I worked on lots of different projects with children, womyn, men and 3rd World peoples but prison work was always the most important in my life. In a couple of years, I heard a lot of folks in a lot of places talk about the revolution, but nobody did anything except talk. The BLA and Assata [Shakur] were working their asses off but nobody in Seattle did a thing."[8] When she was captured and stood in court facing twenty years in federal prison, Brown took the opportunity to describe how her lesbian "white life" was made possible by the fabrication of racialized death and dying. Following Bertolt Brecht, she asked the courtroom, "What is the biggest crime, to rob a bank or found one?" She went on to question the legitimacy of the trial, arguing that the Brigade's theft and bombings meant nothing in the face of chattel slavery, genocide, the "terrorism" of prisons, misogyny and sexual violence, and homophobia. For Brown the prison was at the nexus of these multiple forces: "Prisons are big business too. Nationally, the annual profits reach $2 billion. Prisons promote 'terrorism' by making the denial of human and democratic rights a respectable and common thing. Look at who is in prison and why—75 percent of all adults in amerikkan prisons are 3rd world people."[9] Brown's claim that the prison makes the denial of human rights a "common and respectable thing" theorizes white supremacy and the prison as structures of invisibility. As Brown argued, even as

many people may imagine the prison sitting on the edges of social and cultural life in the United States, even as some lives may seemingly never be touched by the terrifying logic of capture, the prison is central to who and where we are, what we know, and what we can become.

Throughout their writings the Brigade placed their bombings in the context of the ongoing rebellion in Walla Walla but also the ways that capitalism and prisons were changing during the 1970s. One communiqué, "Capitalism Is Organized Crime," declared, "Capitalism causes crime. Overwhelmingly, the victims of crime are poor and third world people. Street crime is caused and perpetuated by joblessness and underemployment; by a ruling class that uses people for its own profit and discards them when it has no more profitable use for them. . . . [The prison's] sole purpose is to administer the warehousing and repression of human beings for whom capitalism has no use or no solution."[10] This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, it contests a discourse about the naturalness of criminality that took hold under the mid-twentieth-century politics of law and order as articulated by Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon. Unlike statist discourses that defined criminality as individual nonnormative behaviors created by racialized, cultural, and biological pathology, the Brigade argued that what was labeled "crime" was created by the profoundly unnatural formation of capitalism. Second, placed in the context of the Brigade's larger body of work, the passage is a feminist and queer theorization of how racial capitalism was changing under an encroaching dominance of neoliberal economics and a new state form in which the prison was foundational. For the Brigade, the expansion of regimes of incarceration and capital accumulation was central to the violent reorganization of gender, sexual, and racialized life in the post–civil rights era. Third, the Brigade described the function of the prison as "warehousing" those discarded by a new form of capitalism that was built on "joblessness and underemployment." A new formation of capitalism was abandoning the employment protocols of Keynesian economics in favor of a regime of accumulation that relied on the racialized mass production of workless and working poor people. These abandoned populations were then *stored* in state and federal prisons. The Brigade averred that the prison warehoused potentially rebellious, disposable people—its logic was not rehabilitation, but immobilization.[11]

As the Brigade argued, the state and capitalism were producing surplus populations no longer necessary to racial capitalism. Brigade members theorized the emergence of this new form of racialized economic power

founded on disposable, low-wage labor, the dismantling of welfare, and the creation of human beings as what Angela Davis calls "detritus" as a form of state violence.[12] In the closing statement to his trial for 14 bank robberies and 11 bombings, another member, John Sherman, asked the jury to find him guilty but also to set him free because "capitalism excretes the violence and terror of unemployment, the violence and terror of war, the violence and terror of crushing poverty."[13] Similarly, in an interview after his arrest, a founding member, Ed Mead, placed the group's actions in the context of cuts to welfare and a growing unemployment. He maintained that the "decay" produced by capitalism was a form of state violence cloaked as the natural outcome of the market's governance. The terror of racialized impoverishment and incarceration urgently required the answer to the question "How are we going to overturn this thing if not by armed force?"[14] The judge and jury sympathized with Sherman's passion. They found him guilty on all charges, and the judge sentenced him to the lightest sentence his "conscience [would] permit": twenty years instead of the two hundred demanded by the prosecution.[15]

I begin with the writings of the George Jackson Brigade because they were part of a much larger world of underground, fugitive activists in the 1970s who theorized and challenged the formation of a new form of state power called the neoliberal-carceral state.[16] This term describes the intimacy between the possession of life itself by the market under neoliberal economics and the exponential expansion of systems of racialized capture and caging under law-and-order politics. In this era countless feminist, queer, and antiracist activists were imprisoned or became fugitives as they fought the changing contours of U.S. state power. Indeed the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of two new voices in national debates about racism, imperialism, poverty, gender, and sexual politics: the prisoner and the fugitive. Although *Fugitive Life* tells a story about post–civil rights feminist, queer, and antiracist activism, it focuses on these two figures and two corresponding spaces: the prison and the underground. In response to police repression in the form of incarceration, sabotage, and assassination, and in order to deploy illegal tactics, hundreds of activists in the 1970s left behind families, friends, jobs, and their identity in order to disappear into a vast network of safe houses, under-the-table jobs, and transportation networks called the underground. While there has been a resurgence of interest in many of these groups (in part prompted by and reflected in the anxiety about Barack Obama's connections to the Weather

Underground member Bill Ayers during the 2008 presidential election), their significance to the post–civil rights landscape—as structured by the prison and neoliberalism—has only begun to be explored.

As increasing numbers of activists were imprisoned or went underground to escape a repressive racial state and engage different tactics, a new body of knowledge arose from the prisoner and the fugitive that negated national narratives of progress, equality, and justice. I use the communiqués, literature, films, memoirs, prison writing, and poetry of underground and imprisoned women activists in the 1970s United States to provide an analysis of the centrality of gender and sexuality to this new mode of racialized state power. I pause on the neoliberal-carceral state's moment of inception in the 1970s to consider how feminist and queer prisoners and fugitive activists reorganized their efforts to respond to a rising wave of incarceration animated by a new mode of governance structured by the market. In this way I offer a reinterpretation and renarration of feminist, queer, and antiracist post–civil rights activism by exploring how it responded to the rise of the prison and the rule of the market. It is my contention that we have much to learn from the writings, art, and films of these activists, who saw what was coming before it took form. As the prison and market continue to engulf life itself, I argue that the fugitive is a queer figure who is the site of a dramatic reimagining of freedom that points the way out even as life is increasingly surrounded.

The Cultures of the Neoliberal-Carceral State

Of course the Brigade was not alone in theorizing the dramatic changes occurring to capitalism, incarceration, and the state in the 1970s. Six years earlier Angela Davis edited a collection of essays from a cell in the Marin County Jail, *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance.* Davis was imprisoned after spending months underground as a fugitive from the FBI. The text gathered the writings of political prisoners like Davis, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, George Jackson, John Clutchette, and Ruchell Magee. It also included court statements and letters of support surrounding Davis's imprisonment. The collection documents the various trials of black power activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it marks a moment when activists tried to make sense of the profound racial violence they were subjected to under a rising wave of incarceration. Davis and her coeditor, Bettina Aptheker, described this moment: "Political repression

in the United States has reached monstrous proportions. Black and Brown peoples especially, victims of the most vicious and calculated forms of class, national and racial oppression, bear the brunt of this repression. Literally tens of thousands of innocent men and women, the overwhelming majority of them poor, fill jails and prisons; hundreds of thousands more . . . are subject to police, FBI, and military intelligence surveillance."[17] For Davis the imprisonment of tens of thousands of poor people of color meant "fascism" had taken hold in the United States. Aptheker declared, "This is a fascist program. It is a genocidal program."[18] James Baldwin argued that Davis's isolation and loneliness in prison reminded him of a "Jewish housewife in the boxcar headed to Dachau," describing prisons as "concentration camps" under which white Americans could measure their safety in "chains and corpses."[19] These sentiments concerning racism and the prison formed a common sense among the radical and revolutionary left in the 1970s United States and around the world. Prisons, as Michel Foucault noted in an essay from the same year, were "a war having other fronts in the black ghettos, the army and the courts." Incarceration was "an experience of [a] hostage, of a concentration camp, of class warfare, an experience of the colonized."[20] The title of Davis and Aptheker's collection itself emphasized the profound violence the black power movement felt it was confronted with; as Baldwin exclaimed to Davis, "If they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night."[21]

What is most astonishing about *If They Come in the Morning* is what it tells us about the changes that occurred to the U.S. prison system just years after Davis and her cohort declared that fascism had gripped the nation. Less than a decade later a convergence between the intensely racialized politics of law and order and the poverty and unemployment created by deindustrialization produced the largest prison system in the world. In 1970 there were roughly 200,000 people imprisoned in the United States. By 1995 there were 1 million, an increase of more than 442 percent in a quarter century.[22] By 2008, 2.5 million human beings—1 percent of the population—were immobilized in U.S. prisons and jails. In the same period 7 million adults were subject to state-supervised surveillance.[23] In a typical year roughly 14 million people pass through the gates of a prison or the bars of a jail.[24] Throughout this massive reorganization of the state and civil society, roughly 70 percent of the people behind bars were, and continue to be, people of color. Race, gender, sexuality, and class are central processes that determine what bodies are captured and immobilized. LGBTQ people

(especially poor queer and transgender people of color) are drastically overrepresented in regimes of immobilization.[25] Within just four decades the prison emerged as a technology for the capture and management of racialized and gendered populations considered waste under the logics of late twentieth-century racial capitalism. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore has observed, it is a central regime for producing racism as the "state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[26] In other words, the prison has become a central institution for the state regulation and management of the contours, possibilities, and impossibilities of life itself.

These changes would have been considered practically impossible and epistemologically unthinkable to the people contesting the post–civil rights expansion of the prison system. In fact, 1970s radicals and revolutionaries on the left thought that the worst had arrived and that a new world was dawning. Many of the collection's authors considered the intensity of the era's police and penal violence indicative of the "serious infirmities of the social order." For Davis and her coauthors, the "bourgeois democratic state," especially its judicial system, was "disintegrating," and the "revolutionary transformation of society" was close at hand. The increasing brutality of the police, courts, prisons, and an emerging economic crisis were reflective of a "profound social crisis, of systemic disintegration."[27] If we could speak to the past and issue a warning of what was coming, of the unprecedented regimes of racialized capture and immobilization that we live with today, our warnings would be inconceivable.

Davis and the Brigade theorized and contested these new epistemologies and institutional transformations in their writing. Underground organizations like the Weather Underground, Black Liberation Army, and George Jackson Brigade not only physically attacked symbols of state violence; the members also wrote poetry, stories, memoirs, communiqués, and magazine and newspaper articles and made films and art. They deployed culture to theorize the changes to global capitalism and incarceration happening around them. At the same time they used culture to imagine other ways of organizing life. Culture was a way to understand and see beyond the epistemological and affective dead ends of the forms of thought central to the neoliberal-carceral state. The fugitive activists I analyze understood culture as foundational to the production and survival of alternatives to the violence of the everyday. Thus the neoliberal-carceral state was not only made possible by cultural politics; for fugitive

activists, culture was also one of the sites of racial capitalism's ruin. The forms of culture created by fugitive activists are an index that makes visible connections, complicities, and ruptures that the discourses produced by the neoliberal-carceral state attempt to disappear.

For instance, the goal of *If They Come in the Morning* was to archive and distribute voices, feelings, and forms of knowledge that the state was actively trying to eradicate. In their preface Davis and Aptheker write that the collection aims to "decisively counter, theoretically, ideologically, and practically, the increasing fascistic and genocidal posture of the present ruling clique." They remark that the state worked to disappear political insurgents through incarceration, but the state also renders unknowable its violence against workers, students, the black liberation movement, and the antiwar movement in the United States and in Vietnam through discourses of freedom, democracy, and equality.[28] They thus position theory and culture as epistemological tactics in a broader mass-based political movement against capitalism and the racial state. Later in the collection Davis ends her essay "Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation" by declaring, "No potential victim of the fascist terror should be without the knowledge that the greatest menace to racism and fascism is unity!" She argues that state violence attempts to "physically decapitate and obliterate the movement" while also working to ideologically isolate and eradicate it. Thus, state power looks like assassination, incarceration, and police violence, but also the ways the state shapes memory, emotion, and knowledge. Davis argues that knowledge, theory, and culture are requirements in a successful multiracial struggle against the terror of prisons and attacks on organized labor, welfare, and the black liberation movement. "Unity" is a name for an epistemology, for a way of knowing grounded in a theory of relational difference whereby white workers can see their relationship to black workers and political prisoners because "their acquiescence" has "only rendered themselves more vulnerable to attack."[29] Yet this conception of unity would remain impossible without a politics of knowledge that could make it visible. A new way of knowing would lead to a new form of political struggle. Like Davis's emphasis on knowledge and culture, the Brigade did not think their bombings were an actual threat to the most powerful military in the history of the world. Bombings were a way to bring attention to forms of state violence that remained in the shadows of dominant ways of knowing. They called this "armed propaganda."[30] Writing and art were sites

for the creation of alternative epistemologies that the neoliberal-carceral state continually worked to erase and expunge from the knowable.

This turn to cultural politics allows me to document how neoliberal political philosophy relies on an intimate and constitutive relationship to the carceral. Indeed, the earliest writing of neoliberal economists in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s advocated the containment of racialized and gendered populations considered surplus or potentially rebellious to the rule of the free market. At the same time, law-and-order politicians like Goldwater and Nixon argued in speeches and campaign ads that police and prisons were necessary to the freedom of the liberal individual and the deregulated labor market. While neoliberal economists argued that the free market needed the prison, law-and-order politicians argued that the prison would protect the free market and an emergent neoliberal social order. In other words, in the earliest articulations of what law and order and neoliberalism would be—before a wave of new laws and policy changes took hold in the 1980s—neoliberalism was imagined as a carceral project, and law and order as a neoliberal project.

Like the Brigade, Davis situated her imprisonment within the mutually constitutive relationship among racism, incarceration, and a changing economic landscape. According to Davis, prisons were filled with poor people of color and were thus a technology used to contain resistant and surplus populations. This containment occurred within a new formation of global capitalism that scholars and activists have come to call neoliberalism. Many of the contributors to *If They Come in the Morning* argued that the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state and a wave of deindustrialization produced a massive surge of poverty and unemployment. Law-and-order policies then criminalized the ways of living amid the neoliberal economic production of poverty. In effect, poor people of color were trapped between the abandonment of a crumbling welfare state and the power of an encroaching penal state. Within this context many prisoners and activists argued that the free world started to feel like a prison. Zayd Shakur wrote in 1970, "Prisons are really an extension of our communities. We have people who are forced at gunpoint to live behind concrete and steel. Others of us, in what we ordinarily think of as the community, live at gunpoint again in almost the same conditions. . . . It's the same system—America is the prison."[31] Mark Cook, a "black, ex-convict prison organizer" convicted of working with the Brigade, writes that the separation between the free world

and the prison was not distinct for the group: "We get out [of prison] and we don't distinguish between cops and prison guards. It took me *years* to understand that cops and prison guards weren't the same. When you first get out you just see them as guards and it's easy for ex-prisoners to get together and deal with them like we're still in prison." Brown saw the free world as "minimum-security," while Mead argued that in the free world "our leash is a little longer."[32] This theorization of prison undoes normative conceptions of space by exceeding the walls of the prison proper. A changing economic system became coextensive with an emerging carceral apparatus. An assemblage of race, gender, capital, policing, and penal technologies produced a symbiosis between the deindustrialized landscape of the late twentieth-century urban United States and the gendered racisms of an emerging prison-industrial complex. As feminist of color activists argued in this period, dispersed but structural regimes of racism and sexism paralleled and colluded with the cold cement of a cage. Many 1970s activists argued that the intimacy between the market and the prison was much deeper than had been articulated by scholars in the past two decades.

Throughout *Fugitive Life* I examine the economic, epistemological, and affective registers of neoliberalism. As an economic project, neoliberalism is a school of thought and a set of policy recommendations created by a transatlantic association of economists starting in the 1930s, including Friedrich Hayek, Karl Popper, Henry Simons, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman.[33] This economic project claims to expand the individual liberty of a rational, self-interested actor through the governance of a free market.[34] Neoliberalism attempts to free the individual, the market, and private enterprise from the constraints implemented by the state. This is accomplished by dismantling unions; cutting or eliminating public funding of social services (welfare, education, health care, social security, infrastructure); privatizing public resources, institutions, and goods; undoing environmental, labor, health, and safety regulations; deregulating the financial and banking industries; eliminating wage and price controls; and expanding "free trade."[35] Neoliberalism is a transnational political and economic project that aims to remake the nexus of state, market, and citizenship.[36] It does this by subjecting life to a logic that prioritizes the mobility and proliferation of capital at all costs.[37]

In order to justify and naturalize the capture of life by the economic, neoliberalism creates and requires a complex epistemological regime. I examine the intricacies of this system of knowledge in greater detail in