

The Feminist War on Crime: The Unexpected Role of Women's Liberation in Mass Incarceration.
By Aya Gruber. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020. 304 pp. \$29.95 hardcover

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America's current moment is one of tension between wide agreement that our carceral approach for addressing social problems has limited effectiveness, and our continued collective efforts to reckon with gendered violence as reflected in movements like #MeToo. Ideas that were previously considered fringe—such as police and prison abolition—have become topics of mainstream discussion following the 2020 killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, but gendered violence remains a sticking point in many of these conversations around policing and prisons.

Law professor Aya Gruber's *The Feminist War on Crime* is a timely work that illuminates these tensions by giving texture to a complex history of movements that sought to address domestic and sexual violence, dispatching quickly with any notion that feminism is anything like a monolith but instead contains a rich diversity of thought, strategy, and organization. In a text that is crisp, well sourced, and accessible, Gruber traces modern feminist thought and activism through the late white slavery panic of the early 20th century, with particular attention to first and second-wave feminist efforts and results from them.

Gruber nicely ties the stories of these movements that often sought to eschew state intervention with the broader story of modern American politics—and our collective punitive turn—that saw the interests of politicians who sought to govern through crime align with those of some feminist activists and scholars who deployed an atomized view of gendered violence that elided broader structural complicity, and instead asserted that gendered violence could largely be attributed to individual pathology. These alliances, in turn, resulted in some of the most punitive carceral architecture in the American arsenal, including enhanced criminal penalties, mandatory arrest policies, and lengthy postconviction sex offense registration schemes.

The benefits of these efforts to address gendered violence are often mixed, as Gruber notes. One common and effective theme that runs throughout the various planks of the text—and indeed that the title nods to—is one of complicated and sometimes unintended consequences, in particular for people of color. Gruber's exploration of the relationship between gender and race in the struggle for women's liberation in America brings into stark relief the fact that oftentimes throughout modern American history, calls for protection and equality of women became mechanisms through which racial hierarchies were enforced, and often brutally so. Mandatory arrest laws in cases of domestic violence, for example, benefitted white and middle-class women but were associated with staggering increases for mortality attributable to any cause for women of color.

The Feminist War on Crime notes the ways in which these carceral logics have bled into the wider culture and media: how Title IX became weaponized in the fight against campus sexual assault, the recall of Judge Aaron Persky (of Brock Turner infamy) in California, as well as our current fixation on human trafficking as examined through the lens of the arrest of New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft in 2019. The book also goes into some detail about the ways in which media propel these narratives, even as they become untethered from factual grounding. Culturally, Gruber also does an excellent job of exploring the ways in which legal reforms that were intended to aid women—such as rules of courtroom procedure that preclude defense attorneys from inquiring about witness' sexual history—could have the perverse effect of strengthening existing tropes about rape, chastity, and purity.

The Feminist War on Crime does not deny the existence or the general pervasiveness of gendered harms but instead questions our chosen methods to address them. Gruber observes that our impulse to utilize the criminal legal system as an engine for effecting broad societal change, while understandable, has limited reach and imposes enormous costs particularly on communities of color.

Gruber concludes with charting a proscriptive course for millennial feminists—a “neofeminism” in the hope that they “can yet transform feminism from a movement that maintains the US as a prison nation to one that actively opposes the penal system as racist, neoliberal, uncivilized and bad for women.” (192) Stated differently, Gruber calls for a recognition that gendered harms do not exist in a vacuum, but intersect with race, class, and broader societal structures (such as prisons themselves which, as Gruber notes, are places replete with sexual violence).

Gruber’s work negotiates a path through a cultural minefield: our rising recognition that punishment is not synonymous with justice on one hand, and our continued efforts to reckon with gendered violence. *The Feminist War on Crime* is at the same time provocative, educational, and necessary for our moment where people are beginning to question the utility of imprisonment as a panacea for social ills without denying the fact that those ills demand our attention and effort.

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Sexual Citizens: Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus. Jennifer S. Hirsch and Shamus Khan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020. 422 pp. \$17.95 paperback

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Jennifer Hirsch and Shamus Khan’s book *Sexual Citizens* offers an outstanding contribution to existing literature on campus sexual assault by applying a public health approach to understanding this phenomenon. Their extraordinary work not only identifies the root causes of this prevalent problem but also provides an array of appropriate solutions to address it. The book provides a much-needed conceptual shift that breaks away from familiar paradigms that largely focus on adjudication models toward implementing forward-looking preventive measures to address the problem of campus sexual assault. This innovative approach transforms our understanding of sexual assault in general and campus sexual assault in particular.

Hirsch and Khan’s main thesis is organized around three key concepts: sexual projects, sexual citizenship, and sexual geographies. “Sexual projects” considers the host of reasons why individuals engage in sexual interactions, including among others, achieving sexual pleasure, expressing their sexual beings, acquiring sexual experiences, connecting with others, and accomplishing certain societal status. (xiv) “Sexual citizenship,” the heart of the argument, posits that all individuals have a basic right to freely exercise their sexual projects. “Sexual citizenship” imposes obligations on others to treat their partners’ sexual projects with dignity and respect and refrain from treating them as mere objects to satisfy their own sexual projects (xvi). “Sexual geographies” describes the various ways in which the geographies surrounding college residential dorms, namely, college life spaces, not only create unique vulnerabilities for many students but also facilitate campus sexual assault (xix). Taken together, these concepts explain the ways in which campus sexual assault ought to be viewed as a result of problematic social constructs (xiii). The implication of this understanding is that rather than focusing on addressing individuals’ personal culpability for concrete instances of sexual assault, society in general and higher education institutions in particular must shift their attention toward addressing the societal root causes that contribute to the problem.

In what follows, I briefly sketch the familiar accounts that have dominated our understanding of campus sexual assault and identify their main failures. I then describe the book’s key contribution to