

bureaucratic board combined with their pioneering stance on gender-based claims means that the country has been broadly receptive to claims of forced sterilization that had been common from Chinese asylum seekers. Meanwhile, the United States' fragmented system produces unpredictable results that vary widely by presidential administrations and jurisdictions, and in Australia "the administrative tribunal is a powerless fulcrum in a highly charged battle between Parliament and the courts" (p. 158).

In Chapter Nine, Hamlin covers complementary protection or the extension of asylum protection (or at least relief from deportation) to individuals seeking protection from human rights violations that do not fall squarely within the Convention definition of a refugee. Again, this has become an increasingly important aspect of international protection, and one that sorely needs the level of examination that Hamlin gives it. She closes with a summation of how her analysis improves upon the explanations of RSD regimes offered in the international convergence, exclusionary convergence, and domestic divergence theses she introduces in Chapter One.

Overall, *Let Me Be a Refugee* addresses extant weaknesses in the fields of public law and international relations (perhaps most notably the tendency of international relations theory to conceptualize the state as a homogenous unit or "unitary black box," p.13). Hamlin does not provide as detailed an explanation as to the mechanisms of how public opinion and domestic policies thread into the institutional structures of the RSD regimes and at times may downplay other influences. But given how well-researched this book is, these omissions are minor. This book not only is a must-read for refugee scholars from a variety of disciplines but also speaks to those interested in understanding the relationship of law at multiple levels to state policy and state involvement in human rights protections.

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*Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to the Penitentiary.* By Dennis Childs. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 259 pp. \$22.50 paperback.

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Malcolm X and George Jackson articulated the unbroken line from African kidnap to the middle passage, from chattel slavery to Jim Crow and race-based incarceration. Social scientists working on

mass incarceration generally make mere gestures to the period before 1973, while historians and legal scholars either limit their work to pieces of this narrative, or cast this continuity as a broken chronology rather than a single cultural, legal, moral, and causal arc. Michelle Alexander, for example, points to “a certain pattern to this cycle” punctuated by “period[s] of confusion—transition” (2010:21). None seriously consider the Black imaginary. Continuing the work of imprisoned Black writers, while layering in deft and subtle readings of literary texts, Dennis Childs sweeps away even as he provides us the means to weave together all limited and tentative configurations. He helps us to see pieces—and the layering of the pieces—of a cultural and legal history whose organic evolution we might otherwise fail to appreciate so fully. In readings of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, the Thirteenth Amendment, the archives of Angola State Prison, and Chester Himes’ *Yesterday Will Make you Cry*, Childs brings works of Black imagination into heuristic relations with the history of the chattelization of Black bodies; he deftly and irreversibly binds cultural and historical artifacts into a sure and layered path from slavery to mass incarceration. Childs helps us hear the ghosts of the death chambers of the Middle Passage reborn and murdered again in the “neo-slavery” of convict leasing and the mass prison. While others have heard an echo of slavery in the current penal state, Childs (like X, Jackson, Angela Davis, and Mumia Abu-Jamal before him) works to liberate an unbroken chorus of racialized pain. As an exercise in scholarly methods, *Slaves of the State* is impressive for the range of its sources: from works of fiction, to archival research, to legal decisions, to a virtual personal essay on Child’s visit to Angola. The book at once makes us question how literary products, historical records, legal cases, and personal impression can work as co-equal grounds for a single thesis, and carries us over to a larger vision of the intermodal homogeneity of the slave state that has existed within current U.S. borders since before the founding.

Childs is a literary critic, and it is a habit of literary critics to take small pieces of evidence and from these to make broad statements about history and culture; historians more commonly present broad swaths of evidence to make narrow claims. The effect in this case is that we can admire Childs’ ability to be at once literary and historical scholar even while aware that the transition between disciplinary methods will seem odd to some and tonic to others. Childs’ Chapter One treatment of *Beloved* as a virtual historical text might well put off some historians even as it may change for good (in both senses) many literary readers’ understanding of that book. As a reader of historical documents, Childs is equally deft in his explication of the history and effects of the Thirteenth Amendment’s exception clause. What skeptics may

miss amid such disciplinary code melding is the infusion of the book's thesis with its most important discovery: Black *cultural* construction of Blackness in the United States is inseparable from the historical and legal *fact* of chattel slavery. More questionable is Child's rhetorical elision in an otherwise deeply insightful reading of the life and death of the real-life convict neo-slave James Bruce. Childs admits that there is no concrete evidence that Bruce—who cross-dressed in minstrel shows—was gay or transgender, but then repeatedly refers to Bruce as “s/he” and “her.” Childs explains his reasoning: through Bruce, the author hopes to speak for the uncounted neo-slave gay and trans lives of which we have no record. Childs won my trust in his intentions (here and throughout the book) without quite convincing me that so mapping Bruce's gender, in part from the evidence of southern white reports of Bruce's behavior, does not simply echo heterosexist white judgments that may have added to suffering sufficient to move Bruce to commit murder. However we parse the matter, Childs' argument would be equally strong without such supplementary renaming.

It is a common criticism of academic writing that it is often so thickly laden with jargon as to speak directly only to other academics. There is an added irony when critics so narrow access while claiming to speak for the silenced. A book that unearths important evidence for the unbroken arc of Black life as *de facto* bare life, *Slaves of the State* too often riddles its own findings in overburdened sentences and repeated strings of modifiers such as “the racial capitalist misogynist prison.” Childs knows all the proper culprits. But the pressure to demonstrate inclusiveness can render the prose turgid; it can also suggest a lack of trust in readers to recall what the author early and quite clearly sets up as the intrinsic connotations—and what by now should be understood as the practical denotations—of terms such as “prison” and “slavery.” Childs is quite successful in charting again, and more fully, the peculiarly American landscape of used, maimed, dehumanized and discarded Black bodies. Child's outrage is unquestionably well founded and directed; indeed, we trust this author's moral compass implicitly. Yet this aggregating expressiveness can have the effect, even while demonstrating to us an entirely just moral and political response, of doing too much moral work *for* us, easing up the demand for our own affective response. Such nominal and stylistic caveats aside, *Slaves of the State* is not only an important addition to scholarship on the middle passage, slavery, convict leasing, the Black imaginary, and mass incarceration; Childs' book excavates the foundational position that the seamless continuity between these practices and effects must hold in any realistic understanding of U.S. history.

## Reference

Alexander, Michelle (2010) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

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*Ideas with Consequences: The Federalist Society and The Conservative Counterrevolution*. By Amanda Hollis-Brusky. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 252 pp. \$29.95 hardcover.

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In *Ideas with Consequences: The Federalist Society and The Conservative Counterrevolution*, Amanda Hollis-Brusky tells the story of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies from its inception to its current dominant position in legal conservatism. The Federalist Society was established in 1982, during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, by libertarian and conservative law students and professors who felt alienated from the liberal academy. The Society formed “a formidable conservative and libertarian counter-elite” (p. 2) which articulated the following principles: “that the state exists to preserve freedom, that the separation of governmental powers is central to our Constitution, and that it is emphatically the province and duty of the judiciary to say what the law is, not what it should be.” The Society amassed considerable resources to support its campaign to transform these principles into law. Thanks in large part to noted conservative philanthropists including John Olin, the Koch family and Richard Scaife, the Federalist Society currently has an annual budget of over \$10 million, and boasts 40,000 members. In this insightful and carefully researched book, Hollis-Brusky shows how the Federalist Society assembled a cadre of lawyers, judges, and lawmakers to provide the intellectual framework for constitutional transformation.

*Ideas with Consequences* is a detailed account of the Federalist Society strategy to convince the United States Supreme Court to overturn longstanding precedent and interpret the Constitution in accord with Federalist Society ideology. Members of the Federalist Society participated in litigation to revitalize the Second and Tenth Amendments, establish broad rights of corporations under the First Amendment, and limit Congressional power to regulate state governments. Most notably, Federalist Society lawyers supported the cases of *DC v. Heller* (2008) and *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010), in which