

NOFSW Webinar

Anti-Oppressive Social Work and the Carceral State

Patricia O'Brien and Judith S Willison

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will be introduced to an anti-oppressive social work approach, incorporating public health responses, in work within the carceral state across multiple criminal legal settings.
2. Participants will recognize the criminal legal system's inequities and its disproportionate impact on marginalized groups of people.
3. Participants will identify avenues to criminal legal system reforms such as decarceration and will consider restorative and transformative justice strategies.

Selected References:

- Drucker, E. (2018). *Decarcerating America: From mass punishment to public health*. New York: New Press.
- Gottschalk, M. (2015). *Caught: The prison state and the lockdown of American policies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kaba, M. (2021). *We do this 'til we free us: Abolitionist organizing and transformative justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- O'Brien, P., Kim, M., Beck, E., & Bhuyan, R. (2020). Introduction to special topic on anticarceral feminisms: Imagining a world without prisons. *Affilia Feminist Inquiry in Social Work, 35(1)*, 5-11.
- O'Brien, P., & Willison, J. (2022). *Anti-oppressive social work practice and the carceral state*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pettus-Davis, C., & Epperson, M.W. (2015). *From mass incarceration to smart decarceration*. (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative working paper No. 4). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

Biographies:

Patricia O'Brien, MSW, PhD

After working as a social worker for a decade to end violence against women, Patricia completed her PhD at the University of Kansas and worked as an educator and-scholar at the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of IL for twenty years. Known for her advocacy and research with women in and out of prison, she published one of the first studies exploring how women succeed after making it out of prison. Post-retirement she moved to Colorado and is working with El Movimiento Sigue in Pueblo, CO to develop restorative and transformative justice alternatives for the equitable and inclusive world we want.

Judith S. Willison, MSW, LICSW, PhD

Judith Willison, Ph.D., MSW, LICSW practiced social work for 22 years in the criminal and juvenile legal systems as a clinician, supervisor, administrator, trainer, consultant, and advocate. In 2011, Judith completed her doctorate at Simmons University and joined the Bridgewater State University School of Social Work where she became an Associate Professor, and now holds the

position of Research Fellow. Judith's scholarship seeks to target the role of institutionalized white supremacy in the expansion of the carceral state and the impact on those entangled in the system and to support activism. Judith provides workshops and consultation in a bi-racial training partnership focused on culturally responsive and racially just social work practice and organizational equity. She is the Co-Chair of the National Association of Social Workers MA Chapter Racial Justice Council.