Incarcerating the Crisis
Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State
JORDAN T. CAMP

“Movingly resists the temptation to imagine that our plight results from social movements being so easily defeated. Again and again Camp shows with sober analysis and passionate care that popular creativity and resistance were the very stuff to which brutal neoliberal policies responded and have continued to respond. An eloquent, learned, and optimistic study by an important new voice in American Studies.”—David Roediger, author of Seizing Freedom: Slave Emancipation and Liberty for All

The United States currently has the highest incarceration rate of any country: one in thirty-five adults are in jail, prison, immigrant detention, or on parole or probation. Over the last four decades, structural unemployment, concentrated urban poverty, and mass homelessness have also become permanent features of the political economy. These developments are without historical precedent, but not without historical explanation. In this searing critique, Jordan T. Camp traces the roots of this explosive carceral crisis through a series of turning points in U.S. history including the Watts insurrection in 1965, the Detroit rebellion in 1967, the Attica uprising in 1971, the Los Angeles revolt in 1992, and post-Katrina New Orleans in 2005. Incarcerating the Crisis argues that these dramatic events coincided with the emergence of neoliberal capitalism and the state’s attempts to crush radical social movements. Through an examination of poetic visions of social movements—including those by James Baldwin, Marvin Gaye, June Jordan, Jose Ramirez, and Sunni Patterson—it also suggests that alternative outcomes have been and continue to be possible.

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