

*City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965.* By Kelly Lytle Hernandez. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

*City of Inmates* by Kelly Lytle Hernandez illustrates how incarceration in the United States was used to eradicate undesirable cultures. *City of Inmates* emphasizes how, why, and when Los Angeles became the “City of Inmates,” where all non-white settlers were eliminated. This pattern in mass incarceration began in the fifteenth and continued to the twentieth century. Mass incarceration of minorities impacted the region’s culture, society, and political system (p.1-2).

In the first chapter, Lytle narrates the history of the Tongvan Basin natives before Spanish colonization in 1769. Spanish colonization brought Catholic missions that converted Natives to Catholicism. Incarceration was practiced through the missions to accomplish this, effectively removing Natives from city life and eliminating their culture in the process.

The second chapter emphasizes the incarceration of tramps. Tramps were white, unemployed, and homeless males. Elites wanted these men arrested because these males threatened the nuclear family system ideal. Los Angeles elites declared a “War on Tramps” which tried to fight off tramps by incarcerating them. However, incarceration proved to be ineffective in removing tramps because World War I eradicated them from society. World War I created many factory jobs and drafted tramps into the military, which effectively removed the large tramp population from Los Angeles.

The third chapter focuses on Chinese immigrants as a target of mass incarceration. The Geary Act of 1892 attempted to eliminate Chinese immigrants by requiring Chinese immigrants to register under the federal government to avoid arrest and deportation. The Chinese opposed these

pieces of legislation by practicing civil disobedience, revolting in 1893, and disputing the Act in court. With the help of the Chinese Embassy many became citizens to prevent being deported, thus avoiding elimination from society.

Chapter four discusses the introduction of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. during the early 1900s. México had been under Porfirio Díaz’s control since 1876, and in 1908 he promised México a fair Democratic Election in an interview with a US journalist. This prompted activists like Flores Magón to run against Díaz in a fair election, but Díaz had no intention to relinquish his power and exiled Magón. Magón and other exiles planned a revolution from the US; however, US authorities supported the Díaz regime by incarcerating Mexican activists. These efforts by the US were futile because Díaz was overthrown, making México economically unstable. This resulted in many Mexicans to cross into US land for jobs.

Chapter five discusses the recorded increase of Mexican prisoners resulting from illegal migration into the US. The US passed the Immigration Act of 1929 to deport undocumented immigrants. The act increased the number of Mexican inmates because it required any undocumented Mexican to be incarcerated. In the end, Mexicans were not effectively eliminated from the society because they returned to the US even after being deported.

Chapter six explains the violence used to incarcerate African Americans. The Jim Crow laws allowed many African Americans to be incarcerated for defying the law. The Watts Rebellion in 1965 was a response by African Americans to the discrimination they faced from police

officers, who failed to protect their civil rights. In the end, Lytle emphasizes incarceration in Los Angeles was due to rebels refusing to conform to laws that were not equally enforced on White citizens.

*City of Inmates* uses rebel archives, photographs, maps, censuses, and historiographies as evidence to support Lytle's argument. However, the author worked with limited evidence because the LAPD withheld records on the number of people incarcerated in their prisons. Some rebel archives gave voice to lost voices like minority ethnic and racial groups. Lytle has a fascinating use of the term "rebel" because Lytle promotes the rebel as an advocate for justice, opposed to using it as any individual who is against the ruling regime. The author's emphasis of the term "elimination" as an outcome for prisoners, is a unique interpretation of incarceration's key objective. Lytle's persistence to find new information like the rebel archives helped shape her thesis.

Lytle organized her book perfectly; it was easy to navigate each topic of a chapter by following the subheadings, and the stories were in chronological order. One problem with her writing was providing a overwhelming amount of background information on Mexico, because it caused Lytle to drift from her central argument. Overall, the author was organized, and wrote a heartening account of the elimination and removal of minorities from history. *City of Inmates* by Kelly Lytle Hernandez is a great book for historians who study race relations because it explains patterns of incarceration through race relations. This book is worth buying for these historians because it is beneficial to communities wanting to argue the racial and ethnic discrimination of incarceration. The patterns displayed in Los Angeles are likely to be replicated in cities across the US, so the *City of Inmates* can be

used to explain patterns of incarceration in the US in general.

Erika Cabrera