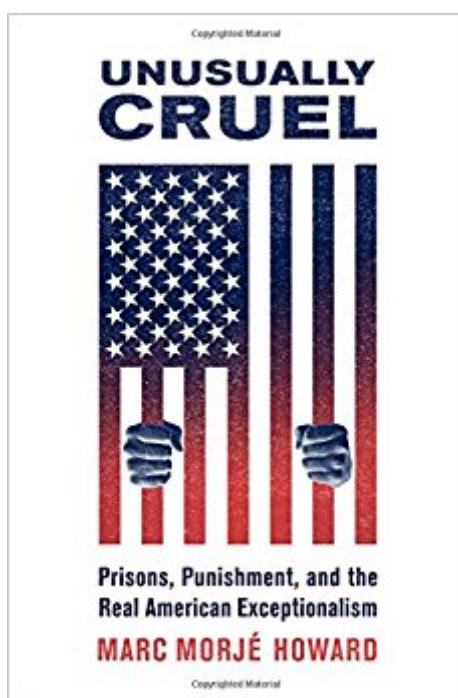


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Unusually Cruel: Prisons, Punishment, And The Real American Exceptionalism



Synopsis

The United States incarcerates far more people than any other country in the world, at rates nearly ten times higher than other liberal democracies. Indeed, while the U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world's population, it contains nearly 25 percent of its prisoners. But the extent of American cruelty goes beyond simply locking people up. At every stage of the criminal justice process - plea bargaining, sentencing, prison conditions, rehabilitation, parole, and societal reentry - the U.S. is harsher and more punitive than other comparable countries. In *Unusually Cruel*, Marc Morjé Howard argues that the American criminal justice and prison systems are exceptional - in a truly shameful way. Although other scholars have focused on the internal dynamics that have produced this massive carceral system, Howard provides the first sustained comparative analysis that shows just how far the U.S. lies outside the norm of established democracies. And, by highlighting how other countries successfully apply less punitive and more productive policies, he provides plausible solutions to addressing America's criminal justice quagmire.

Book Information

Paperback: 296 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 17, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0190659343

ISBN-13: 978-0190659349

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.8 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #26,874 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Privacy & Surveillance #28 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > State #53 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Law Enforcement

Customer Reviews

"Outstanding and timely. Howard presents a breathtaking account of American 'exceptionalism' in the most revealing and negative connotation of that term." --Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Stephen and Evalyn Professor of American Studies, Emerita, Cornell University "In the recent flurry of writing about the United States' extraordinary level of incarceration, this book stands out: it brings together the expertise of a lawyer, the analytic skills of a political scientist, and the passion of a person with a

'new calling and vocation' - all combined in one author. The result is simultaneously salutary, depressing, and encouraging." --Jennifer Hochschild, Henry LaBarre Jayne Professor of Government, Harvard University "Howard makes a convincing case that we have much to learn from other nations about our criminal justice system, and he provides a practical approach for recalibrating it to one that is both effective and fair." --Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project

Marc MorjÃ© Howard is Professor of Government and Law at Georgetown University, where he also directs the Prisons and Justice Initiative. He is the author of two previous award-winning books.

This is an exceptionally good book, scholarly but written in a way that anyone can understand and appreciate. It has a terrific bibliography and 23 figures and 1 table that supply important information. The argument is coherent and important, the book is extremely well written. Race, religion, politics and business explain the unusual cruelty of the American system of criminal justice and the increase in incarceration since 1970. The author's logic is hard to argue with. His knowledge of the history and literature is impressive. His analysis is comprehensive. He has a strong point of view but is not biased. This is extraordinary scholarship and analysis. He compares the US with other major countries on all of the important aspects of criminal justice and shows how the US is consistently more cruel and backward. I evaluate 20 books a week, 1000 a year and I find very few this good. Midwest Independent Research, educational websites. Law, mwir-law.blogspot. There is information and a book list on criminal justice here.

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