

It is time to collectively confront geography's complicity with carcerality.
Sign on to the pledge [here](#).

The uprisings of 2020 focused a global spotlight on longstanding and ongoing racial violence inherent in criminal punishment systems across Turtle Island. These systems target Black, brown, Indigenous, immigrant, queer, trans, and poor people with increased police surveillance, harassment, arrest, and harsher sentences. [Police murders](#) continue, as do [mass detention and surveillance](#) of immigrants; meanwhile, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted dangerous conditions in [jails, prisons](#) and [detention centers](#). Furthermore, techniques of carceral control in Turtle Island are linked globally through the spread of military and carceral power.

Geography as a discipline and a profession contributes to the violence of the carceral system, and its extension throughout our daily lives. Spatial technologies, digital platforms, and the geographers who make and use them are thoroughly implicated in surveillance, policing, and mass incarceration, as well as their gendered and racialized dimensions. Techniques like predictive policing, hot spot policing, and acoustic gunshot detection utilize big data and spatial analytics tools developed by academics and technocrats to extend carceral power and entrench racial oppression into our homes, streets, campuses and workplaces. Furthermore, spatial professionals trained in geography, including planners and designers, participate in the design of carceral spaces and systems.

The clearest example of geography's complicity in carcerality is that ESRI is a platinum level sponsor of the [Annual AAG meeting](#). ESRI provides a GIS platform not only to university and college Geography and GIS programs, but to [law enforcement agencies](#). ESRI is an active promoter of [predictive policing tools](#) ("Pred-Pol"), which have been denounced by [hundreds of global academics](#) for the [proven ways they reinforce racialized policing](#) and reduce accountability. Additionally, ESRI partners with dozens of private companies that provide spatial analytic platforms to police and corrections. These include:

- [LexisNexis Coplogic Solutions](#), an ESRI partner that offers a suite of data collection, management, and analytic tools for police departments. LexisNexis parent company RELX is a target of the #NoTechForICE campaign.
- [ShotSpotter](#), an ESRI partner whose tool for mapping sound has been implicated in [police murder](#).

Many of the ways that the geography community is implicated in the expansion of carceral systems that target Black, Indigenous, brown, immigrant, queer, trans, and working class communities with brutality, surveillance, and confinement remain unknown. We should interrogate these relationships. Our discipline has such a progressive veneer that the precise nature of the relationship our departments, universities, and professional organizations have with policing and prisons of geography are not often discussed. When they are discussed, for example through discussions of data ethics in Geography, substantive engagement with state violence is evaded. For example, in a recent [Geoethics Webinar Series](#) put on by the AAG and ESRI, the realities of police violence, the deprivations and violence of prisons, and the role of

spatial surveillance and analytics in these were glossed as “impacts on individuals” that might be “concerning”, rather than systemic and death-dealing. This stands in direct contradiction to ESRI’s everyday activities.

We call on geographers to organize in researching and revealing these relationships, as well as committing to ethical actions in geography.

Meaningfully disentangling the geographical community from the carceral state will require sustained organizing and collective action. While there are many possible actions to consider, we suggest an initial frame of targeting geospatial analytics in policing and prisons and researching geography-carceral state ties as a step to identify and focus further action, as well as forcing our institutions to articulate concretely how they relate to the carceral state, including through their public-private partnerships.

The flip side of examining the geography community’s imbrication with the carceral state is investment in liberatory geographies. There are many ways that geographers, such as foundational thinkers like Ruth Wilson Gilmore, have instigated, nurtured, and imagined ways to fight carceral expansion and make an abolition otherwise. Contemporary investments in Black Geographies, Latinx Geographies, Queer and Trans Geographies, and Indigenous Geographies are a necessary, life-giving antidote to our geography community’s entanglements with the carceral state; and still, these investments are meager and must be developed further.

You can take action by co-signing this statement [here](#). In doing so you will have the opportunity to pledge to do any or all of the following:

- (1) Read this document and discuss it with a colleague
- (2) Share the statement widely, e.g. on a departmental listserv or on social media-
<https://bit.ly/3vgDWrc>
- (3) For tenured/tenure-track academics: raise this statement for discussion at your next department meeting.
- (4) Refuse to provide research or data to police and prisons, including campus police
- (5) Refuse to participate in the design of spaces or technologies of confinement
- (6) Refuse to design, create, or contribute to geospatial analysis tools for policing, immigration enforcement and corrections industries
- (7) Refuse to write recommendation letters or serve as a reference for companies that collaborate in criminal punishment systems (including ESRI)
- (8) Conduct research on and/or teach about the relationship between geography and surveillance/carceral state
- (9) Stop using ESRI software in my classes
- (10) Advocate for my department or institution to cancel their contracts with ESRI

- (11) Advocate for my department to increase its investments in liberatory geographies, including through bringing in guest speakers, expanding curriculum, and offering new faculty lines in Black, Latinx, Queer and Trans, and Indigenous Geographies
- (12) Support student, faculty, staff worker and local organizing that actively confronts the university's role in racial violence.
- (13) Support abolitionist organizing on neighborhood, state, national and international levels through partnerships, information, and skill sharing.
- (14) Join the Ad-Hoc AAG Specialty Group Cops Off Campus Committee (your contact information will be shared automatically)

Abolish carcerality and the carceral state!