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As America Grapples with Justice Issues, “Parsimony,” New Book from Square One Project Reframes Debate with More Than Two Dozen Ground-Break Essays from Leading Experts, Advocates and Thinkers.

Washington, DC – After decades of over-policing and ever-more punitive criminal justice measures, and in the midst of an ongoing reckoning around race and justice, a new book published in partnership with Columbia University’s Square One Project sets out to reframe the justice and safety debate.

Parsimony And Other Radical Ideas About Justice brings together more than two dozen contributors from the cutting edge of justice advocacy, who together lay out a blueprint for a justice system that combines the least possible punishment with the greatest possible healing.

The authors, all part of the Square One Project’s Executive Session on the Future of Justice Policy, propose a new path built on “parsimony”—a historical legal concept holding that the state should exercise only the most limited intrusion into a person’s liberty to achieve a broader goal. If every decision—from policing tactics to sentencing to parole revocation—were viewed through this lens of parsimony, there would be a profound reduction in the reach of the criminal justice system.

Grounded in a new social contract that prioritizes safety over punishment, *Parsimony And Other Radical Ideas About Justice* describes a paradigm shift where justice is provided not by police and prisons, but in healing from harm. The book brings together leading activists, legal practitioners, and researchers, many of them justice-involved, to envision a justice system that applies a less-is-more framework to achieve the goal of public safety.

As editors Jeremy Travis and Bruce Western note in the introduction, “History teaches that the traditional role in which the state defines criminal conduct and punishes those who violate the law has proven inadequate to achieving true justice and has been deeply harmful to individuals and communities.”

These essays show how a parsimonious approach to punishment, alongside a reckoning with racism and affirming human dignity, would fundamentally change how we respond to harm and violence. They encourage mercy as a part of accountability, reducing reliance on police and increasing community investment in safety, addressing the trauma lying at the heart of mass incarceration, reducing pretrial incarceration, closing the democracy gap between community residents and government policymakers, and eliminating youth prisons, among other significant changes to justice policy.

Contributors include: Amanda Alexander, Daryl Atkinson, James Austin, Matthew Desmond, Anamika Dwivedi, Nancy Gertner, Elizabeth Glazer, Thomas Harvey, Laura Hawks, Katharine Huffman, Nneka Jones Tapia, Evangeline Lopoo, Greisa Martínez Rosas, Tracey Meares, Vivian Nixon, Jackie Prokop, Lisa Puglisi, Arthur Rizer, Robert Rooks, Vincent Schiraldi, Danielle Sered, Patrick Sharkey, Abbey Stamp, Jeremy Travis, Elizabeth Trejos-Castillo, Elizabeth Trosch, Emily Wang, Bruce Western, and Lynda Zeller.

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