

**Curriculum Vitae**  
**MELISSA L. BURCH**  
[mlburch@umich.edu](mailto:mlburch@umich.edu)

**EDUCATION**

- 2017                      PhD, University of Texas at Austin. Department of Anthropology; Doctoral Portfolio in African and African Diaspora Studies. Dissertation, *Navigating the Criminal Records Complex: Hiring and Job Seeking in the Inland Empire.* João Costa Vargas, Chair.
- 2003                      M.S. in Urban Studies, Applied Anthropology Program. University of New Orleans. Thesis: “Activists and Activism Against the Prison Industrial Complex in Louisiana: The Challenge of Choosing Effective Grassroots Strategies.” Martha Ward, Advisor.
- 1998                      B.A., Goddard College/Institute for Social Ecology, Plainfield, Vermont (interdisciplinary degree in Social Ecology, with focus on environmental justice, social movements, Latin American Studies and Spanish Language). Thesis: “Resources, Culture and Autonomy in the Neoliberal Age.” Brian Tokar, Advisor.

**ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

- 2022-2023              Fellow, American Council of Learned Societies.
- 2020-2021              Postdoctoral Fellow, Ford Foundation. Hosted by Dylan Rodriguez, University of California, Riverside, Media and Cultural Studies.
- 2018-present           Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology
- 2018                      Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Texas, Department of African and African Diaspora Studies; Production assistant for Smith, Cherise. 2019. *Michael Ray Charles*. University of Texas Press.
- 2017                      Teacher Assistant, University of Texas, Department of African and African Diaspora Studies, Introduction to Black Studies
- 2016                      Teacher Assistant, University of Texas, Department of Anthropology, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
- Teacher Assistant, University of Texas, Department of Africa and African Diaspora Studies, Introduction to Black Studies

2000-2001 Graduate Research Assistant, University of New Orleans, four semesters

1999 Instructor, Institute for Social Ecology, Plainfield, Vermont, summer course

### **PUBLICATIONS, PEER-REVIEWED**

Burch, Melissa. Under Review. "To Refuse the mark: racial criminalization and twenty years of struggle to Ban the Box." *Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict & World Order*.

Burch, Melissa. Forthcoming. "Fit to Protect: race, vulnerability and risk politics of California firefighting." *Current Anthropology*.

Burch, Melissa. 2021. "Scripting the Conviction: Power and Resistance in the Management of Criminal Stigma." *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 3 (2021): 645–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13613>.

Burch, Melissa. 2019. "Captive Afterlives in the Age of Mass Conviction." *History and Anthropology*, 30:5, 515-520, DOI: [10.1080/02757206.2019.1638778](https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1638778)

Burch, Melissa. 2016. "(Re)Entry from the Bottom Up: Case Study of a Critical Approach to Assisting Women Coming Home from Prison." *Critical Criminology*, October 15, 2016, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-016-9346-3>.

Setsu Shigematsu, Gwen D'Arcangelis, and Melissa Burch. 2010. "Prison Abolition in Practice: The LEAD Project, the Politics of Healing, and A New Way of Life." In *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*. Rickie Solinger et al. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

### **PUBLICATIONS, PUBLIC-FACING**

Lerandean, Rehana and Melissa Burch. "The Rise of 'Criminal' Background Screening, Employment, and Impacts on People Looking for Work: An Interview with Melissa Burch by Rehana Lerandean." *The Abolitionist*. Fall 2022, Issue 38.

Burch, Melissa and Carolina Jones. 2021. "The Rise of Criminal Background Screening in Employment." <https://www.afterlivesofconviction.org/discrimination>

Agid, Shana, Melissa Burch, Priya Kandaswamy, Erica Meiners, Dylan Rodriguez and Setsu Shigematsu. Resource Guide for Teaching and Learning Abolition. 2021. [http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CR\\_GuideforTeachingLearning-Abolition-1.pdf](http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CR_GuideforTeachingLearning-Abolition-1.pdf)

Burch, Melissa and Charlotte Smith. "The Best Firefighting Jobs Require the EMT License." Research Brief. University of Michigan, Carceral State Project, February 9, 2021. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c4c124fe224246d0b682deb125a88adc>.

Burch, Melissa. 1999. "People of Color Chiapas Delegation," *Z Magazine*, June, 1999. Woods Hole, MA.

Burch, Melissa. 1998. "Bringing the Struggle Home, Zapatismo in my Backyard," *Dark Night Field Notes*, 1998, no 12/13. Chicago, IL: Dark Night Press.

## **PUBLICATIONS IN PREPARATION**

Burch, Melissa. In preparation. *The Criminal Record Complex: race, capital and hiring in the age of risk*

## **GRANTS AND AWARDS**

### **External**

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|-----------|---|
| 2020-2021 | Ford Foundation. Postdoctoral Fellowship. (\$50,000)  |
| 2017      | Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Engaged Anthropology Grant. (\$3,538)    |
| 2016      | Ford Foundation. Honorable Mention Dissertation Writing Fellowship Competition.               |
| 2014      | Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Dissertation Research Grant. (\$20,000). |
| 2000-2001 | Davis Putter Scholarship Fund. (\$3,000).   |

### **Internal**

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|-----------|---|
| 2019      | Humanities Collaboratory. University of Michigan. <i>Documenting Criminalization and Confinement</i> . (\$546,560)    |
| 2019      | Teaching Transformed. College of Literature, Sciences and the Arts, University of Michigan. (\$11,696)                |
| 2014      | University of Texas, Austin. Graduate School. Professional Development Award. (\$325).                                |
| 2011-2013 | University of Texas, Austin. Department of African and African Diaspora Studies Graduate Summer Fellowship. (\$3,000) |
| 2013      | University of Texas, Austin. Graduate Thematic Fellowship. (\$16,000)   |

March 2023

2012 University of Texas, Austin. Graduate Thematic Fellowship. (\$16,000)

2012 University of Texas, Austin Community Engagement Center. Social Justice Institute, Activist Research Grant Initiative (\$2,500)

2011 University of Texas, Austin. Graduate Diversity Fellowship. (\$16,000)

### **INVITED TALKS**

2022 Conversations Across Social Disciplines. Invited panelist. University of Michigan, Joint Program in Social Work and Social Sciences. April. Zoom.

2022 “Everyday Violence and Strategies for Its Reduction.” Moderator. School for Advanced Research, Creative Thought Forum Event. March. Zoom.

2022 “Fit to Protect: race, vulnerability and the risk politics of California Firefighting.” Invited Colloquium Speaker. Cornell University, department of Anthropology. March. Ithaca, NY

2022 “Teaching and Learning Abolition.” Invited panelist. University of California, Riverside Center for Ideas and Society. January. Zoom

2021 “Behind Walls, Beyond Disciplines: Science, Technology, and the Carceral State.” Invited roundtable speaker. University of Michigan Science, Technology, and Society Program and the Science, Technology, and Public Policy Program, June. Ann Arbor, MI

2020 “Racial Injustice in Employment.” Invited speaker. Checkr, speaker series on racial inequality in the criminal justice system for employees and customers. November. Zoom.

2020 “The Criminal Records Complex.” Invited Colloquium Speaker. Washington University St. Louis, department of Anthropology. November. Zoom.

2020 “Policing and Protest.” Invited panelist. LSA Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies. July. Zoom.

2020 “Racial Criminalization.” Invited faculty workshop leader, *Pan-cakes and Politics* conference. University of Michigan Black Student Union, March. Ann Arbor, MI.

- 2018 “Critical Resistance South at Fifteen: The 21st-Century Landscape of Abolition in the U.S. South and Beyond.” American Studies Association, October. Westin Peachtree Plaza, Atlanta, GA.
- 2018 “The Criminal Records Complex.” Invited speaker, Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership and Center for Employment Opportunities, January, Los Angeles and San Bernardino, CA.
- 2015 “The Potential for Prison Reform.” Invited panelist, Pomona Student Union, Public Forum, April, Pomona, CA.
- 2014 “Reflections on Abolition.” Invited speaker, Critical Resistance, Fundraiser, December, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2013 “Barriers to Reentry.” Invited Workshop, Department of State Health Services, Texas Behavioral Health Institute, Convention Center, July, Austin, TX.
- 2013 “Prisoner Reentry and Narrative.” Invited panelist, Ethnic and 3<sup>rd</sup> World Literatures section of English Department, University of Texas at Austin, March, Austin, TX.
- 2000 “Zapatismo versus Neoliberalism: the Politics, Strategy and Principles of the Zapatista Movement and its Implications for People of Color Resistance in the U.S.” Invited Workshop, Globalization Coalition, University of California Santa Barbara, April, Santa Barbara, CA.
- 1999 “Indigenous Autonomy and Neoliberalism in Chiapas, Mexico.” Invited Lecture, Committee on U.S.-Latin American Relations, Cornell University, February, Ithaca, NY.
- 1999 “Lacandona: The Zapatistas and Rainforest of Chiapas, Mexico.” Invited Lecture, Middlebury College, February, Middlebury, VT.
- 1997 “Roots of the Struggle: The Zapatista Movement in Chiapas, Mexico.” Invited Lecture, Rockefeller Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

### **RESEARCH AREAS/INTERESTS**

Race and Racism; Criminalization and Punishment; Prisoner Reentry and Post Release Control; Risk and Governance; Inequality and Work; Urban Ethnography; Qualitative Research Methods

### **FIELD RESEARCH**

March 2023

- 2018-present Inland Empire, CA. Field research on occupational licensing and the racial politics of firefighting
- 2016-2018 Inland Empire, CA. Follow up field research and distribution of findings on criminal records and employment.
- 2014-2015 Inland Empire, CA. Dissertation fieldwork on criminal records and employment.
- 2012 A New Way of Life Reentry Project, Los Angeles, CA. Qualitative case study on alternative approach to prisoner reentry.
- 2006-2011 A New Way of Life Reentry Project, Los Angeles, CA. Director of Programs and Policy for community nonprofit organization that provides reentry support services to formerly incarcerated women.
- 2004-2005 Los Angeles Unified School District, CA. Division of Program Evaluation and Research. Qualitative study on elementary and middle school classroom instruction.
- 2002-2003 University of Pennsylvania/Annie E. Casey Foundation, New Orleans, LA. Ethnographic field researcher for study documenting structural barriers facing families as they attempt to improve socio-economic status.
- 2002-2003 University of New Orleans, LA. Ethnographic field research for M.A. thesis on criminal justice activism in Louisiana.
- 1997 School for International Training, Oaxaca, Mexico. Study of indigenous autonomy under neoliberalism.
- 1996 Independent Field Semester, Chiapas, Mexico. Study of *zapatismo* and multinational interests in indigenous territories.

**PAPERS PRESENTED/ACCEPTED**

- 2019 “Fit to Protect, Deserving of Protection. “American Anthropological Association, November. Vancouver Convention Centre. Vancouver, BC.
- 2019 Panel Discussion: “The Ends of Criminal Justice: towards a politics of the ‘after.’” Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology Department, April. Eastern Michigan University. Ypsilanti, MI.
- 2018 “Regulating risk, preventing harm: criminal records, occupational restrictions and the promise of safety.” American Studies Association, October. Westin Peachtree Plaza, Atlanta, GA.

- 2017 “Job Seeking with a Criminal Record and the Politics of Scripting the Conviction.” American Anthropological Association, November. Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington DC.
- 2017 “Delicate Negotiations: Power, Meaning and Dissent in Constructing the Conviction Script.” American Studies Association, November. Hyatt Regency, Chicago IL.
- 2016 “Limits and Possibilities in the Struggle to Confront Criminal Record-based Discrimination.” American Studies Association, November. Hyatt Regency, Denver CO.
- 2016 “Legal versus Just: Employers’ Consideration of Criminal History in the Hiring Process.” Law and Society Association, June. Marriott, New Orleans, LA.
- 2014 “Keywords in Critical Prison Studies.” Invited panelist, American Studies Association, ASA Annual Meeting, Westin Bonaventure, November, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2013 “Prisoner (Re)Entry from the Bottom Up.” Rethinking Prisons, May. Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.
- 2013 “Toward a Critical (Re)entry.” New Directions in Anthropology, March. Rice University, Houston, TX.

### **COURSES TAUGHT**

- 2018-present “Crime, Criminalization and Punishment.” Lower-division lecture.
- 2019-present “Urban Ethnography and the Black Experience.” Upper-division seminar.
- 2019-present “Critical Theories of Criminalization and Punishment.” Graduate seminar.

### **LANGUAGE EXPERTISE**

Spanish, good reading and oral proficiency

French, fair reading and oral proficiency

### **SPECIAL TRAINING**

- 2018 LSA Teaching Academy. Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan
- 2013 Teaching Seminar for Graduate Student Instructors. Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Texas at Austin

March 2023

2008 Adult Education Clear Credential to teach Basic and Secondary Skills to adult learners, CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing

**CITIZENSHIP**

Canadian, U.S. Permanent Resident

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

2018-present Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA. Member, Abolitionist Educators Working Group.

2018-present Member. Occupational Licensing Reform Coalition, Oakland CA.

2019-2021 Steering Committee Member, University of Michigan Carceral State Project.

2017 Californians for Safety and Justice. Oakland, CA. Volunteer Consultant.

2013-2014 Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty and Justice, Austin, TX. Volunteer Consultant.

2004-2012 Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA. Nonprofit Board member.

2003-2006 A New Way of Life Reentry Project, Los Angeles, CA. Coordinator, Leadership Education Action and Dialogue Project

2002-2004 Critical Resistance, New Orleans, LA. Conference Coordinator for Southern Regional Conference that brought together 2000 former prisoners, activists and academics

2004 Hollywood Community Adult School. Teacher Assistant.

1999-2003 Estación Libre. Organizer of educational delegations for people of color to Mexico.

1998-1999 The Alliance for Global Justice, Washington DC. Nonprofit Board member.

1998-1999 Sister City Program - Burlington, VT-Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. Coordinator.