

INVISIBLE VOICES

**The Black Presence in Crime and
Punishment in the UK, 1750-1900.**



Research Project

Project Director

Dr Martin Glynn



Dr Martin Glynn is a criminologist, dramatist, screenwriter, children's author, data storyteller, and the creative director of Algorhythm Creative Lab, with over 35 years' experience of working in criminal justice, public health, and educational settings. Dr Glynn is currently a lecturer in criminology at Birmingham City University.

The Black (Historical) Presence in Crime and Punishment



At the time of writing my new book *'Invisible Voices: The Black Presence in Crime and Punishment in the UK, 1750-1900'* I am the writer in residence at the National Justice Museum (Nottingham). This important connection not only reinvigorated my passion for researching history, but it afforded me a space to engage in the *'reimagining'*, *'revising'* and *'retelling'* of some hidden histories within crime and punishment that have traditionally excluded the **'black presence'**. I am further reminded about the need and responsibility to contest, examine, and expose gaps within the national story where all things *'race and crime'* are concerned. Of note the recent pulling down of the Colston statue in Bristol, combined with repeated calls to decolonise the curriculum in schools and higher education, I have similarly recognised the pressing need to pause for reflection, whilst at the same time, heeding the call to generate a contemporary strategy to make teaching and learning about the history of *'crime and punishment'* more reflective, inclusive, and diverse. If history contextualizes and shapes the way in which we understand, and engage with,

significant events in relation to major developments within society such as crime and punishment then more must be done to foreground hidden histories and buried narratives. Historical research on crime and punishment is a method that should allow for a critical examination on crime and punishment, shaped by events from the past. Locating the black presence in crime and punishment within a historical context therefore becomes important here, as there is an acknowledged forgotten legacy that has largely been ignored by mainstream historians and writers on crime and punishment. The need to bring urgent attention to 'excluded' and 'marginalised' perspectives within contemporary historical research on crime and punishment is called for, to give a fuller, more accurate, and concisely nuanced representation of crime and punishment, overall. Studying the black historical context of crime and punishment therefore should cast doubt over racialized constructs and biased assumptions regarding who committed crime, who stopped crime, and who put crime on trial during both the Regency and Victorian periods.

Whose period in history, is it?

Eminent Victorian writer Charles Dickens populated his writings with characters much of London didn't want to see, whilst at the same time satisfying an appetite for exposing the harsh realities of life during the Victorian era. However, even Dickens in his powerful and evocative work did not seek to draw on the growing black community in London during the time of his writings. If only Dickens wrote more concisely about the black presence at the time of his writings, we may have seen some significant impact on the cultural lens in which Britain viewed black people in the Victorian times, beyond notions of othering black people at that time. The importation of the African American historical experience has also been served up as a benchmark for black British life, as if somehow the black experience is one homogeneous mass, devoid of experience/s outside of slavery and North America. Within the research for my book the pathology that attempted to define black people during the 18th and 19th centuries has at times succeeded in embedding black stereotypes within contemporary society, as my own lived experience will attest. I wanted to move beyond a mere recounting of facts, and push into a critical dialogue where the intersection of history, race, crime, and punishment, would inform the narrative drive of racialized hidden histories, expressed through '**reflexive storytelling**'. Reflexive storytelling in this context refers to marginalized voices in criminology, like my own that should represent its own historical recounting, driven less by restrictive governance, metrics, and peer review, but instead by qualitative insights of a hidden past.

Setting the Context:

Having reflected on the historical context of 'crime and punishment' over many years, my perceptions of both the Regency (18th Century) and Victorian (19th century) periods, have been shaped by representations coming from film and TV that are in the main mono-cultural and distinctly white. The bawdy and hedonistic depictions of the regency period are contrasted with the bleak Dickensian portrayals of the Victorian era with a few notable exceptions where diversity is concerned. Examples such as Netflix's *'Bridgeton'* and BBC2's *'Harlots'* seamlessly embedded diversity within their stories in a way that much mainstream period drama does not. This cultural amnesia masquerading as an accurate historical depiction of crime and punishment to a large extent still excludes people who look like me, identifying as non-white. It is also true that throughout my sojourn into the black presence in crime and punishment I discovered rich data contained in *court transcripts, autobiographies, letters, and other assorted writings*, where many historians and criminologists have previously omitted these stories in both their claims and writings. I also wanted to add that in Oct 2021, I was a participant in Nottingham City Council's *'Black Newstead Project'*. Newstead Abbey has a long, complex, and unique history. Newstead's place in the global consciousness was cemented by the last of these generations: the visionary poet George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron. The project saw the telling of black people's experience and influences at Newstead, interpreted by multiple Black voices through words, art, and performance. The importance here is that country houses and stately homes are now subject to inquiry and critical responses in unearthing the black historical presence. This in my view suggests there is a reckoning taking place, which is designed to broaden the current discourse around the National story.

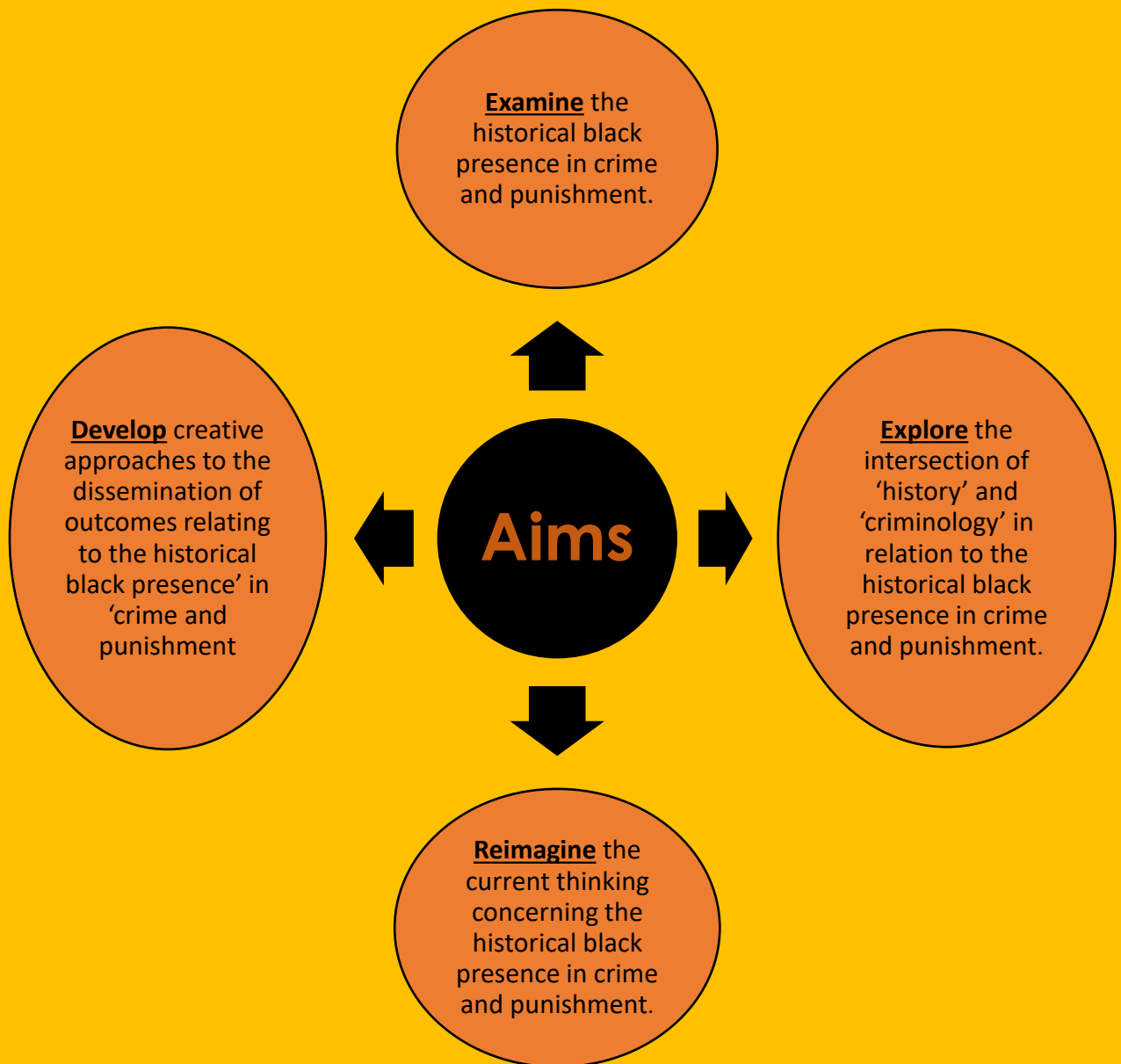
Footnote:

Throughout the writing of my book, I was constantly, troubled, and conflicted. Years of built-up frustration within academia at having to justify my racial existence, combined with the lack of accountability for the posturing of whiteness meant that my feelings were both, familiar and routine, and negatively impacted. This meant that I was in danger of suffering from a form of racial determinism that could have resulted in self-sabotage of this project before it started. I then retreated to the confines of my old school reports where to my surprise I discovered throughout my early years of education, between 1968 and 1973, I had come first, 6 times in my school exams, which meant the seeds of my new quest were laid many decades ago. I began to pause and

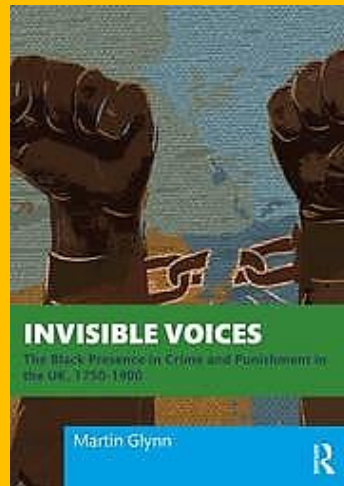
reflect, where the voices of my past began to speak to me. As I embarked on the initial phase of the research, I found voices, all speaking with passion, eloquence, and tenacity, which provided me with a rich tapestry of illuminating insights into a deeply troubling, racialized acquaintance within the study of crime and punishment. By exploring a new lens from which to view the marginalized historical black presence in crime and punishment, revealed how the gap in my current knowledge could shorten. This provided new vistas for a black (historical) criminological imagination. It is against this that **'Invisible Voices: Black presence in crime and punishment in the UK, 1750-1900'** is set.

Dr Martin Glynn (March 2022)

Research Aims



Background



In writing my book I discovered; *hidden histories, indigenous perspectives, class representations, contributions of women, working alongside poor interpretations-depictions*, of the black presence within so called mainstream crime and punishment history. Moving towards a black historical criminological imagination therefore should be a rallying cry amongst progressive scholars, historians, educators, curators, and practitioners, who see the need to both expand the national story of crime and punishment, whilst at the same time exposing the restrictive historical amnesia that exists within the current landscape. In saying that I must praise historian David Olusoga's noteworthy BBC documentary series '*Black and British: A Forgotten History*' that laid a new foundation for a renaissance in uncovering black hidden histories presented by a black British historian of note. It is therefore important to examine how the racialization of history enhances or hinders our understanding of the past. When I delved deeper into the world of historical crime and punishment, I found myself still cast adrift, wanting an explanation as to why black people have been airbrushed out of the historical canvas, when the evidence clearly demonstrates the black contribution to crime and punishment in the UK has a clear visible presence going back centuries. Frequenting bookshops up and down the UK, I have searched aimlessly for relevant material rooted in both the Georgian and Victorian periods in the hope I could find a truer reflection of the diversity within the field of historical criminology. Over the years I had similarly acquired legions of books and assorted materials that had been robustly researched and well-argued but scouring this material further I still came away dismayed and frustrated, as much of the history that was presented seldom revealed the voices behinds the reported facts. In choosing this quest I knew it was not just about publishing a book, but it aimed to serve notice on those who

claim domain over a history of the inaccurate portrayals of a black past that I am inextricably connected to. My book is a personal odyssey, an ode to making the invisible, visible, a libretto whose stanzas have yet to be heard, all wrapped around a shroud of legacy ready for the next generation to run with. Historian Arthur Schomburg in 1925 saw the necessity of preserving history, where oppression, domination, and subjugation, removed many traces of black existence in the US. Schomburg concluded with a powerful reminder further arguing that black people must remake their past to make their future. It was therefore less about what had been written about the black past, but more about what has been taken out, excluded, not investigated, and remained unwritten. Despite the array of books on crime, criminal justice, and crime and punishment within a UK context, there is scant attention paid by historians and criminologists alike, regarding the historical black presence in crime & punishment. It is my view that a new critical questioning the black presence in 'crime and punishment' now needs to be undertaken. Renowned historian David Olusoga when writing about black representation in history writes,

Many most significant black figures are mute, silenced by a lack of written sources' (2016: xx)

Olusoga further reveals how many white historians have failed to locate the representation of the black presence in crime and punishment within a wider historical context. For the scholar, student or community member, whose interests lie within the study of those historical perspectives there are few courses, academic modules, exhibition spaces, museum content, or specialist archives, the options to increase a wider knowledge of the black presence in crime and punishment is limited by default. It is right therefore to assume that the black historical presence within crime and punishment must now occupy an embodied research space that calls for the 'invisible' to be made 'visible' by using robust historical research scholarship. Retelling the history of crime and punishment does not require altering the story criminologists or historians have talked about the origins and path of their discipline. However, it does require those respective disciplines to be open to (re) contextualize those histories that connects itself to wider debates regarding the intersections of both criminology and history. I would therefore like to thank Routledge who have given the opportunity to develop this work fully by commissioning me to write a new book, which is intended to lay a foundation for future scholars and historians wanting to engage in a new dialogue regarding the excluded aspects of crime and punishment history.

Book Description

Invisible Voices: The Black Presence in Crime and Punishment in the UK, 1750-1900, explores the intersection of criminology and history as a way of contextualizing the historical black presence in crime and punishment in the UK. Through case studies, court transcripts, and biographical accounts it reimagines the understanding/s of the role of history in shaping contemporary perceptions. The book:

- Moves beyond the confines of presenting 'criminological history' as monocultural
- Demonstrates how 'mainstream criminology' is complicit in obscuring 'hidden criminological histories'
- Critically assesses the implications regarding the positioning of 'the black presence' within the discipline of criminology
- Revises current thinking around excluded, marginalized, and muted histories, when looking at 'crime and punishment' as a whole.

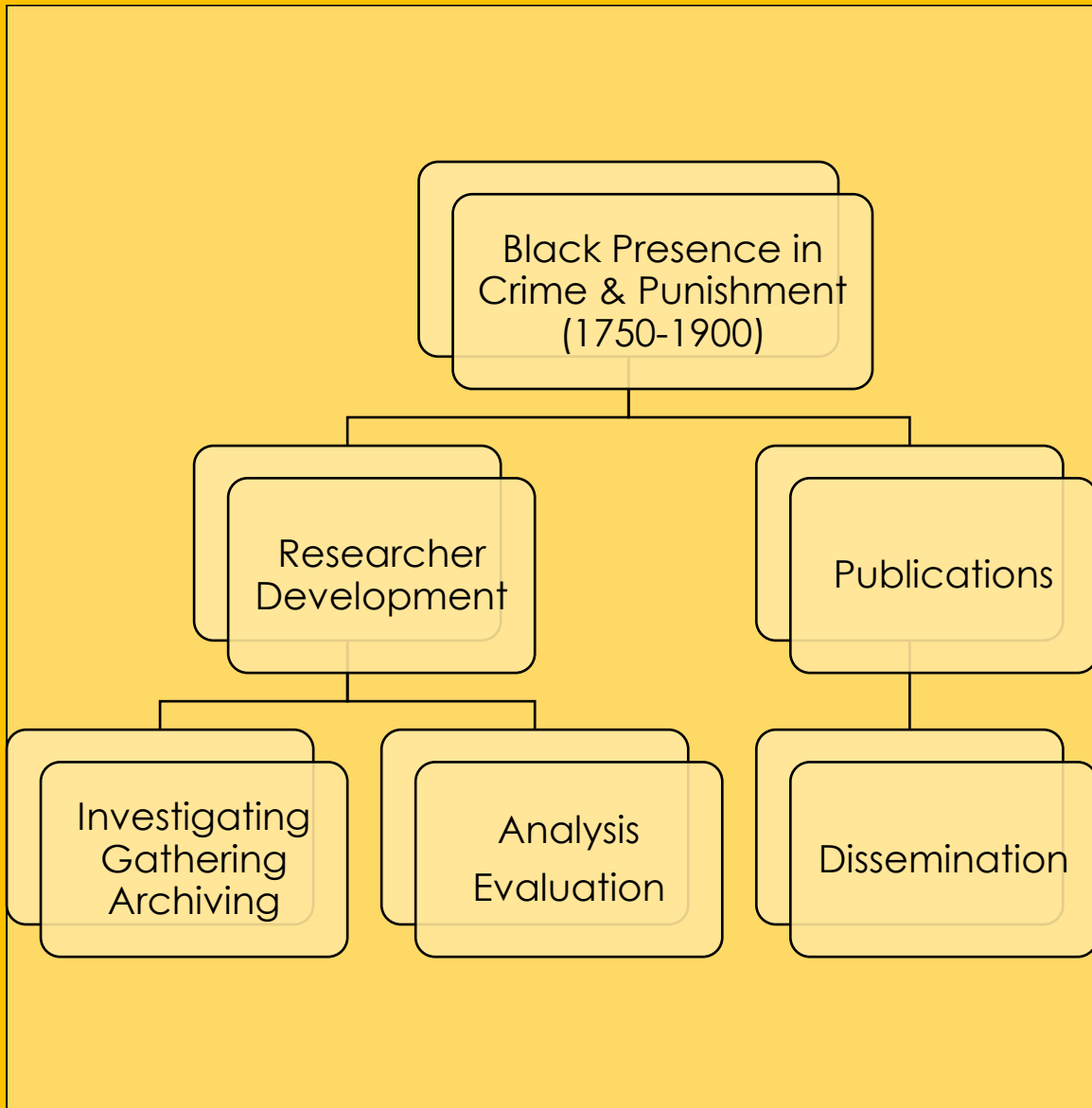
The opening chapters lay the foundation for locating the historical black presence in crime and punishment, whilst offering practical guidance for anyone wanting to pursue the journey of unearthing hidden history. Chapters Five to Nine comprise compelling case studies designed to fuel new discussions regarding important excluded voices in crime and punishment history. The following chapters reveal powerful testimonies from those black voices involved in speaking out against slavery during the Georgian and Victorian periods, and highlight the pivotal role played by black activists during significant periods of British history. Chapter Twelve explores 'The Black Rage Defence', illuminating a moment in British legal history which tied both the UK and US into a struggle for validating mental health and offending, where race was a significant factor. The final chapter focuses on the need to engage criminologists in a critical dialogue regarding a reimagining of the way criminological history is (re)presented. *Invisible Voices: The Black Presence in Crime and Punishment in the UK, 1750-1900*, is crucial reading for students not just of Criminology and History, but also Sociology, Cultural Studies, Black Studies and Law, as well as criminal justice practitioners. It also aims to provide scope for A-Level students contemplating going to university, community educational programmes, and prison education departments, as well as anyone wanting to learn more about the black presence in UK history.

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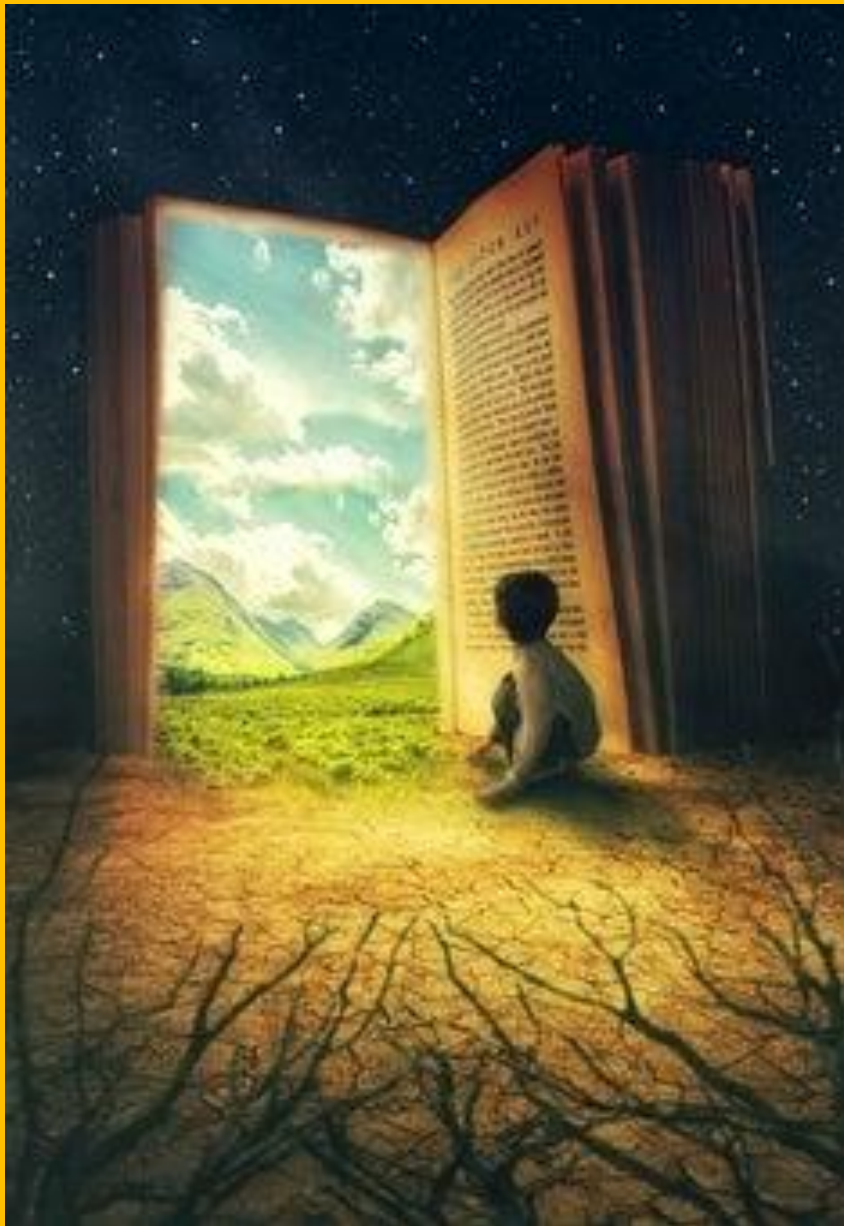
- **Prologue**
- **Chapter One – *Towards a black (historical) criminological imagination***
- **Chapter Two – *Researching the Black Presence in Crime and Punishment***
- **Chapter Three – *Gathering the Information***
- **Chapter Four: *Don't gaslight me, Slavery Matters***
- **Chapter Five - *The case of Arthur William Hodge***
- **Chapter Six - *The case of John Kimber***
- **Chapter Seven - *The case of Sir Thomas Picton***
- **Chapter Eight - *The case of William Woodcock***
- **Chapter Nine - *The Case of John Hogan***
- **Chapter Ten – *Visible Voices***
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- **Epilogue – *Criminologist as Historian***

Project Structure

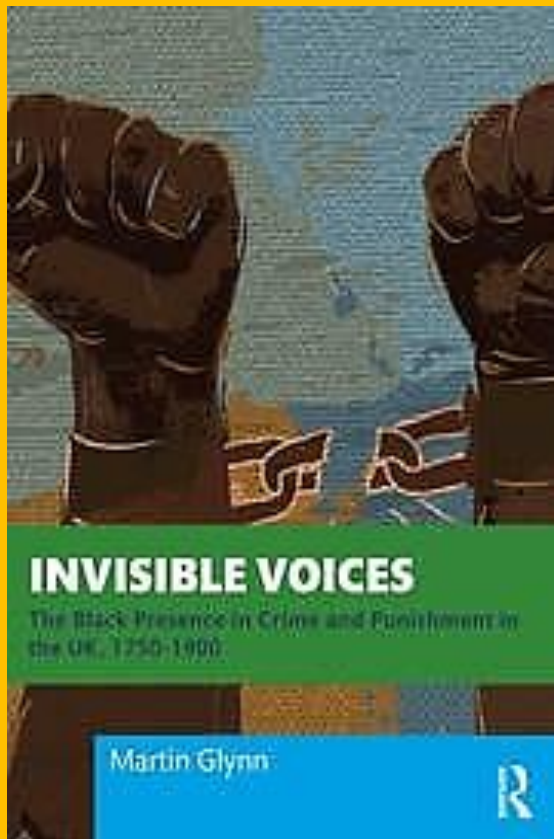


Development Matrix (Glynn, 2022)

Books by Dr Martin Glynn



***** Published 2023 *****



'Glynn makes an impassioned plea to locate the historical within the contemporary and black presence within the absence. The collation of historical sources invites the reader to envision an illuminating black historical criminological imagination that offers an important disciplinary contribution'

Professor Coretta Phillips, London School of Economics and Political Science

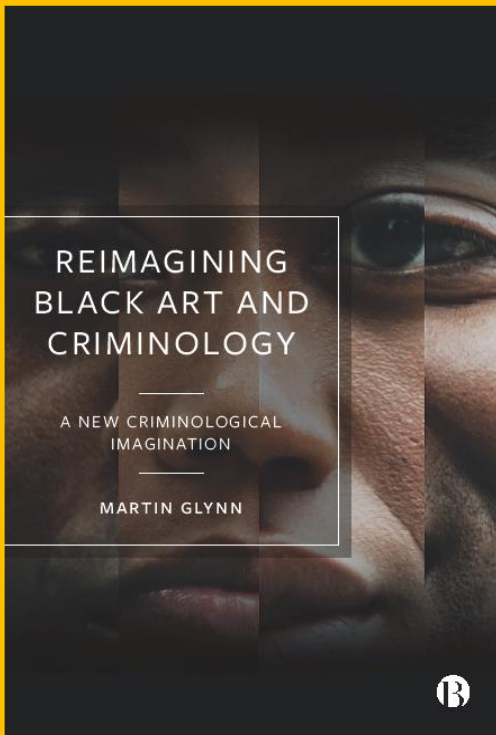
'Black people's presence in the history of criminal justice in the UK suffers from a fate even worse than the "enormous condescension of posterity" that E P Thompson says was imposed on the English working class. With this book Glynn supplies a corrective as he rescues black "activists, advocates, revolutionaries, writers and artists" from the oblivion of white erasure. Out of the archives of the National Justice Museum in Nottingham rise the voices of black people from the 17th 18th and 19th century. Court transcripts, crime registers, slave trades and other sources provide a presence that Glynn fashions into an important narrative. It is a narrative against condescension and oppression that points to a richer future for criminology.'

**Rod Earle, Senior Lecturer in Youth Justice,
The Open University**

'Thrillingly unique and meticulously researched, Glynn provides an urgent re-imagination of criminology as we know it.'

David Lammy MP

***** Published, 2022 *****



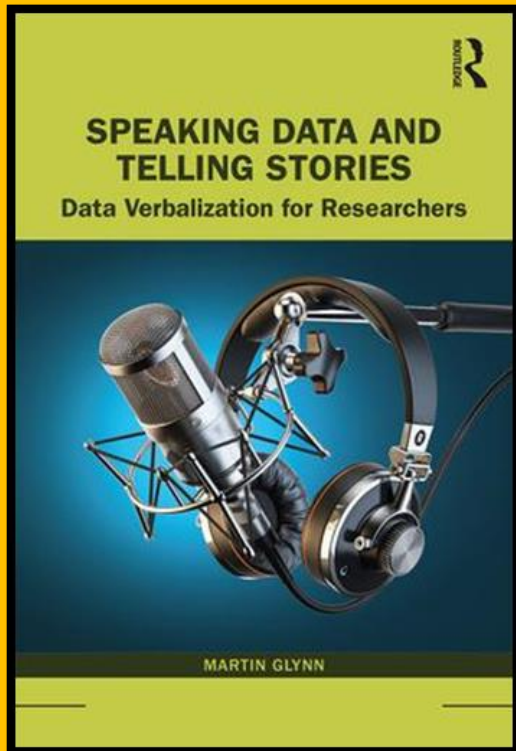
In this fascinating discussion of race and the representation in crime narratives, Glynn perfectly captures the contemporary zeitgeist around Black Lives Matter and Criminal Justice. The world may finally be ready to listen to Glynn's wisdom.

Shadd Maruna, Queen's University, Belfast.

Martin Glynn advocates for a long overdue reckoning in how criminology investigates race. His critique showcases the essential role of art in the reimagining and makes clear that the criminal –legal system, must adapt new, progressive paradigms.

Katheryn Russell Brown, University of Florida.

***** Published, 2021 *****



'At our time of metrics, league tables and depersonalised measurements, Martin Glynn's book is a welcome relief. A powerful account of a more creative, impassioned method for producing and disseminating research. Recommended for all who believe in the role of art in the academy - and know that research is diminished without its presence'.

James Thompson, Professor of Applied Theatre, University of Manchester

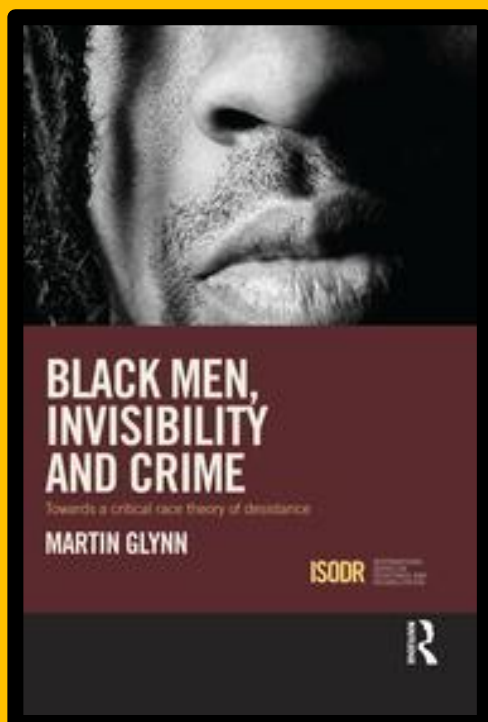
'Martin Glynn offers readers the theoretical and practical foundations of data verbalization through intimate revelations of his personal journey. Through the power of storytelling, in both traditional and contemporary genres, Glynn provides examples and guidance for the development of innovative counter-narratives. This is a rich handbook on the potential of performative art forms as acts of resistance, social justice, and personal healing'.

Johnny Saldaña is Professor Emeritus from Arizona State University's School of Film, Dance, and Theatre in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts

'Martin Glynn has done it again. In this engaging text, the legendary performer and academic researcher draws on his unique experiences as a pioneer of data verbalisation strategies to help researchers to think more creatively research dissemination. If every academic were to learn from this book, we would reach much wider audiences and our world would be much less dull and dreary'.

Shadd Maruna, Professor of Criminology, Queen's University Belfast

***** Published, 2019 *****



'Race is the elephant in the room in all of criminology, and few of us are brave enough to acknowledge it. Martin Glynn's remarkable new book isn't just brave, it is fearless. The elephant is finally within our grasp.'

Shadd Maruna, Director of Institute of Criminology & Criminal Justice, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK.

'Martin Glynn's challenging new book is an important and novel contribution to debates about desistance – but it is also more than that. Rather than focusing on how ethnicity affects desistance, he draws on critical race theory – and on the accounts of “Black British” and “African American” men he interviewed – to examine how racism and racialisation influenced the men's life chances and pathways through crime and justice. In seeking to develop a “black criminology of desistance”, Martin Glynn's analysis enjoins and compels us also to engage with the racialised politics of crime and justice – and of criminology itself.'

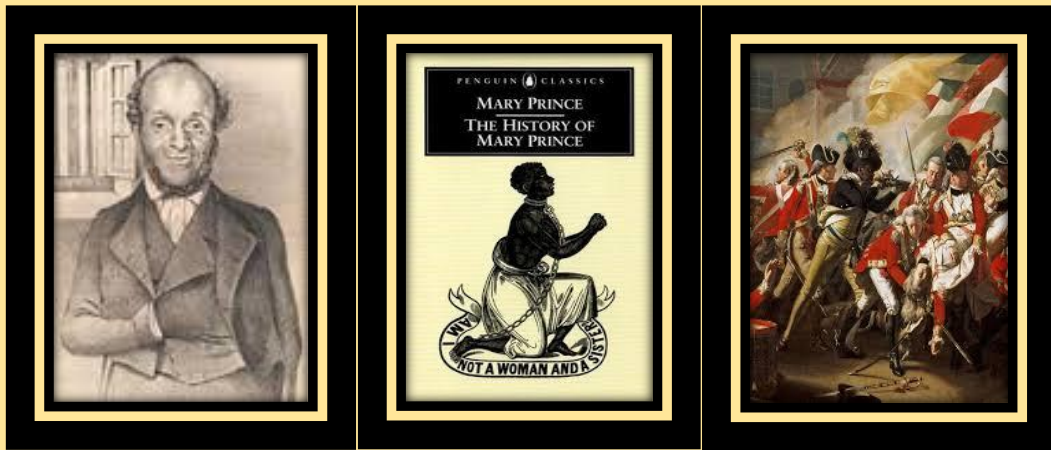
**Fergus McNeill, Professor of Criminology & Social Work,
University of Glasgow, UK.**

'In the book Black Men, Invisibility and Crime, Martin Glynn has produced an innovative and crucially important monograph that provides keen insights into desistance among Black men. Drawing on Critical Race Theory, Martin skilfully explores the contours of desistance specific to the condition and experience of Black men. His fresh comparative perspective provides readers with an examination of the analogous and divergent desistance concerns among Black men in Britain and America. Martin is clearly an important scholar on the rise whose thoughts on re-entry and desistance in the Black community need to be heard by the discipline and the larger criminal justice community in the UK and the USA.'

**Shaun Gabbidon, Professor of Criminal Justice,
Penn State Harrisburg, U**

Invisible Voices

The Black Presence in Crime and Punishment in the UK, 1750-1900.



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