

Curriculum Vitae
MELISSA L. BURCH
mlburch@umich.edu

RESEARCH AREAS/INTERESTS

criminalization and punishment; race and racism; work and labor; risk and governance; stigma and stigma management; policy and social change; urban ethnography; qualitative methods; North America

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

- 2018-present Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology
- 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 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

Books

Burch, Melissa. In press, Princeton University Press. *The Criminal Record Complex: Risk, Race, Capital, and Hiring in America*

Articles

Burch, Melissa. “Fit to Protect: Race, Vulnerability, and the Risk Politics of California Firefighting.” *Current Anthropology* 65, no. 4 (August 2024): 724–47.

Burch, Melissa. 2023. “To Refuse the Mark: Racial Criminalization and Twenty Years of Struggle to Ban the Box.” *Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order* 49-1/2: 177–90.

Burch, Melissa, Nicole Burrowes, Marisol LeBron, Amaka Okechukwu, Jennifer Rittner, and Designing Justice + Designing Spaces. 2023: “Geographies, Systems, Spaces, and Pictures: Scholars and Practitioners on Designing Against Infrastructures of Harm.” Edited by Paula Austin and Shana Agid. *Design and Culture* 15, no. 2: 267–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2023.2216105>.

Burch, Melissa. 2021. “Scripting the Conviction: Power and Resistance in the Management of Criminal Stigma.” *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 3: 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: 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

Lerandeu, 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 Lerandeu." *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

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.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

External

2022-2023	American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowship. (\$60,000)
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).
February 2025	

Internal

- 2023 College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Individual Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education. (\$3,500)
- 2019 Humanities Collaboratory. University of Michigan. *Documenting Criminalization and Confinement*. (\$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)
- 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

- 2024 “Vocation Stymied: Systemic Obstacles to Occupational Licensing.” Invited Speaker. Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. December. Zoom.
- 2024 “Fit to Protect: Race, Vulnerability and the Risk Politics of California Firefighting.” Invited Speaker. University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology. March. Vancouver, BC.
- 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 3rd

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

FIELD RESEARCH

- 2024- present California, Afterlives of Conviction Documentary Project.
- 2018-present California. Field research on politics of firefighting labor.
- 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.
- 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

- 2024 Author Meets Readers: *Prison Capital: Mass Incarceration and Struggles for Abolition Democracy in Louisiana*. American Studies Association, November, Baltimore, MD
- 2023 Panel Discussion: “Abolition” in/from the University? An invitation and a problem.” American Studies Association, November. Le Centre Sheraton Montreal. Montreal, QC.
- 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

- 2022-present “Qualitative Research Methods and Grant writing.” Graduate seminar.
- 2019-present “Urban Ethnography and the Black Experience.” Upper-division seminar.
- 2019-present “Critical Theories of Criminalization and Punishment.” Graduate seminar.
- 2018-present “Crime, Criminalization and Punishment.” Lower-division team-based lecture.

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

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

- 2025 Graduate Admissions Committee, Department of Anthropology

2024-2025	Anthrohistory Executive Committee
2019-2021	Steering Committee Member, University of Michigan Car-ceral State Project.
COMMUNITY SERVICE	
2024-present	Fair Chance Data Task Force, US/national.
2023-present	Member, Fair Chance Act II Coalition, California.
2018-present	Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA. Member, Abolitionist Educators Working Group.
2018-2020	Member. Occupational Licensing Reform Coalition, Oak-land CA.
2019-2021	Steering Committee Member, University of Michigan Car-ceral State Project.
2017	Californians for Safety and Justice. Oakland, CA. Volun-teeer Consultant.
2013-2014	Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty and Justice, Austin, TX. Volunteer Consultant.
2004-2012	Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA. Nonprofit Board mem-ber.
2003-2006	A New Way of Life Reentry Project, Los Angeles, CA. Coordinator, Leadership Education Action and Dialogue Project