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A Letter from the Editor

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

This issue of the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* marks an editorial transition and provides a valuable opportunity to reappraise the purposes and priorities of the *Journal*. The *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* has occupied a central place in the history of American criminology. The *Journal* and the American Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology were products of a 1909 "National Conference on Criminology and Criminal Law" held in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Northwestern University School of Law. The Conference elected John Wigmore as its first President and called for the creation of the *Journal*, with the avowed purpose of articulating and promoting an ambitious criminal justice reform agenda associated with the Progressive Era that dominated the first third of the century.

The *Journal* energetically advanced the Progressive agenda. Its first issue promised to provide a forum for joining the contributions of lawyers and legal scholars, social scientists, and the helping professions. In the spirit of American pragmatism, the *Journal* vowed to overcome disciplinary divisions that otherwise threatened to separate students of crime. This interdisciplinary mandate remains a defining and unique feature of the *Journal* that has endured throughout its near century long history.

The purposes of American pragmatism and progressivism were advanced along several paths. The first path sought a new spirit of research and investigation in criminal justice by translating, excerpting, and reviewing contributions of European criminology. A second path advocated reform legislation and mandated the collection of statistics on all aspects of the criminal justice system. The third path reflected the remarkable awakening of interests in the scientific study of crime and penal methods in the United States and offered reports and reviews of resulting research findings. A fourth path incorporated reports of new legislation and leading court decisions from across the country.

Throughout its history, the *Journal* has balanced urgency and advocacy with investigation and reflection. Innovations in juvenile courts, indeterminate sentencing, and probation and parole were alternately documented and dissected, parsed and promoted. The atti-

tude was avowedly reformist, but also informed by a diversity of views that reflected the full variety of its professional audiences. Featured articles represented all sides of an emerging alliance that included legal scholars such as John Wigmore, European criminologists like Germany's Hans Von Hentig, and reformist administrators such as Berkeley Police Chief August Volmer.

One way the *Journal* operated to build the confidence of a potentially obstructionist legal profession was by encouraging critical analysis of reforms once in operation. For example, the *Journal* reprinted in full the 300 page report of a prestigious commission appointed in 1927 to conduct a complete review of the then decade-old indeterminate sentence system in Illinois. Its composition marked precisely the kind of knowledge alliance the *Journal* liked to build, including Dean Albert J. Harno of the University of Illinois Law School, Judge Andrew A. Bruce of the Chicago Bench and Northwestern University School of Law, and Ernest W. Burgess of the University of Chicago Department of Sociology.

Today, the reformist images of the progressive and pragmatic beginnings of this century seem a distant past. We approach the close of the century in the throes of transformative forces that seem no less sweeping than those that began the century, although they of course are quite explicitly different in intent. To name but a few of the unfolding transformations: we are seeing the reversal of a two century trend toward reformatory goals in punishment and indeterminacy on penal administration; experiencing an unprecedented rise in our prison populations; and witnessing the criminal justice system emerge as a recurrent flash point in local and national politics.

Yet this transformation by necessity emerges within the framework of a progressively reformist past. The contemporary turn to the more punitive unfolds, for example, within specialized offender prisons, community correctional programs of probation and parole, and juvenile courts that are the institutional residues of Progressive reform efforts. These institutions are being reformulated to take on the purposes of the present. Where could it be more appropriate to apprehend and appraise these transformative turns than in the pages of the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*?

The *Journal* offers a unique backdrop to a foreground of change. It represents a tradition of interdisciplinary analysis and assessment that is unique in the study of crime. The stakes are starker than in the early years of this century, but the traditions of disciplinary diversity and disciplined debate endure. Our goals are to build on these traditions by provoking and publishing the very best scholarship we can find on crime and criminal law. We expect that this scholarship will

not only respond to the transformations of the present, but even more importantly, contribute to a better informed future.

Our Fall volume is no exception to the *Journal's* tradition of confronting difficult social issues in an interdisciplinary context. The Guns and Violence Symposium features the most respected scientists and academics in the field of firearms and violence whose contributions have made the Fall volume the most widely circulated law journal in recent memory. In keeping with its reformist tradition the *Journal* devoted an entire day to hosting a conference where these scholars gathered to discuss their research, debating how best to deal with America's growing firearm violence.

The *Journal* has taken exciting steps to prepare itself for an era of lively debate and scholarship. To begin with, we are very pleased to introduce John Hagan as our new Criminology Editor and advisor. With his prolific scholarship and esteemed reputation in the field of criminology, Professor Hagan will focus the *Journal* on the most current and controversial issues being grappled with by our society. Under his direction, the *Journal* has amassed a new editorial team which is purposefully varied in its composition, reflecting interests in a variety of criminological work. We hope the eclectic membership of this group will symbolize and stimulate a broad range of submissions to the *Journal* and in this way advance debate and development of crime theory, policy, and research in America.

Research in the field of criminal law and criminology addresses the concerns that most plague American society. The *Journal* strives to publish the very best of this scholarship, inspiring the intellectual debate and discussion essential to the development of social reform. The *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* has a unique role to play in this transformative period.

THE EDITORS