



# LA Criminal Justice Newsletter



## CJ Students Graduate Amid Pandemic



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#### Editor-in-Chief:

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# Greetings from the CJ Director



**Dr. Robert Michael Worley**

**H**ello, friends! 2021 is a new year with infinite possibilities. And, though 2020 was a very challenging year, the Criminal Justice Program still had several accomplishments.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, we had quite a bit going on. First, the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice had Dr. Mitchel Roth give a talk to our students and faculty. Roth, a criminal justice historian, talked about the Texas Prison Rodeo and its 55-year history. It was quite a pleasure to see this dynamic speaker engage with our students as he discussed his passion for conducting historical research.

In February of 2020, I also had the pleasure of attending Cardinal Conversations. This was an event where Jefferson County Sheriff and LU Alumnus, Zena Stephens, met with some of our

best criminal justice students at a dinner event. It was inspirational to see the Sheriff bond with our students and give invaluable career advice. These type of mentorship opportunities help our students grow and excel in and out of the classroom. Before the quarantine, the criminal justice faculty also participated in Cardinal View in February.

Of course, beginning in mid-March, COVID-19 began to impact both Lamar University and the greater Southeast Texas community. We switched to online learning for the remainder of the Spring Semester—which went quite well. Not only did we battle COVID-19 but also hurricanes. Many of our students had to evacuate during the storm in the midst of a global pandemic. And, unfortunately, some of our students caught COVID-19. In spite of all of the obstacles, enrollment in the criminal justice program is strong.

Mark Broome still offered the Police Practicum (PIP Academy) during the summer at the Beaumont Police Station. Social distancing measures were used and by the end of the class, 14 of our best students successfully completed this course. I would very much like to congratulate all of those Cardinals who successfully made it across that stage. You persevered, and Life goes on. As proud Cardinals, we have prevailed. As I write this, millions of doses of a new vaccine are currently being distributed. I am very optimistic that 2021 will be a great year for all of us.

Go Cardinals!

## ***Resilience & Recovery Summit 2020 viewed 14,000 hours online***

In 2020 the Resilience & Recovery Summit started with almost 14,000 hours of viewing by people near and wide accessing sessions online. Dr. Jim Mann and his team plan to repeat that success with the next summit on April 9, 2021. The summit will examine all forms of community resilience with break-out sessions specializing in the Community Preparedness relating to Government, Industry, Healthcare, and Business organizations. This year there will be breakout sessions explaining the science of natural disasters and how that knowledge may be applied to preparedness planning. Submissions for presentations are currently being processed. Please review the website at <https://www.lamar.edu/resilience-recovery/summit.html>.



## 14 Graduate PIP Academy Complying with COVID-19 Protocols in Summer 2020

Lamar Criminal Justice and the Beaumont Police Department conducted another successful session of the Practicum in Policing (PIP) Academy during Summer 2020. Although the program had to be modified to comply with COVID - 19 protocols, 14 students successfully completed the course under the able guidance of Mr. Mark Broome, and were recognized by Beaumont Police Chief Jimmy Singletary.

The PIP Academy, unique to Lamar University, is a full credit upper level elective designed for students considering a career in law enforcement after graduation. The curriculum includes both academic instruction and practical exercises intended to demonstrate the challenges of completing a law enforcement training academy and life as a new police officer. PIP combines the technical aspects of policing along with application of the law and ethical issues. In addition to the lectures and discussions, students participate in hands on defensive tactics, use of "Shoot- Don't Shoot" MILO computerized simulations which measure both judgement and accuracy, as well as live firearms training.



## Mourning the untimely loss of LU, PIP Alumni & BPD Officer Sheena



The Practicum in Policing course was in its last week when word was received about the tragic death of Beaumont Police Officer Sheena Yarbrough-Powell who was killed in the line of duty on August 9, 2020. Sheena was a Lamar Criminal Justice graduate, Class of 2018, and was herself a PIP Academy Alumni. Just days before her death, Sheena addressed the PIP class and served as a source of inspiration to all who had the privilege of knowing her.

A 23-year-old Lumberton Native, Sheena was by far one of our best and brightest students. She was known for her work ethic and dedication to the task at hand. Sheena was very well-liked by both faculty and students. She was a leader both in and out of the classroom. Upon graduation, Sheena was immediately hired by the Beaumont Police Department as a Police Cadet on August 13, 2018. On December 20, 2018 she was sworn in as a Beaumont Police Officer. Sheena was assigned to 4th Watch Patrol. As an officer, Sheena even helped to recruit students to become potential BPD officers.

**FACULTY / STUDENT RESEARCH AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2020****DOCUMENTARY 2020**

***Editorial Excellence: How ACJS Journals have Influenced the Evolution of the Academy and the Discipline of Criminal Justice. (2020)***

Funded by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, this film was directed by Dr. Robert M. Worley and Edited by recent graduate and Lamar University alumni Noel Perez. Dr. Vidisha Barua Worley, Esquire served as an Assistant Director in the film. This documentary is 58 minutes long and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dztw2Zj40rM>

**PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES 2020**

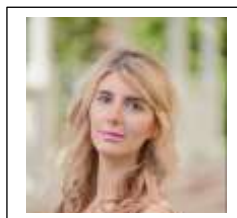
Worley, V.B. & Worley, R.M. Inmate Public Autoerotism and Hostile Work Environment for Female Correctional Officers: An Examination of Federal Cases. *Journal of Crime and Justice* (Published Online First July 2020)

Lambert, E., Leone, M, Hogan, N.L., Buckner, Z, Worley, R.M., & Worley, V.B. To Be Committed or Not: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature on Organizational Commitment among Correctional Staff. *Criminal Justice Studies* (Published Online First May 2020).

**FACULTY-STUDENT PUBLICATIONS 2020**

Breedlove, W. & Worley, V.B. (2020) Excited delirium and use of force by police. *ACJS Today*, 46(3), 1-8.

(Breedlove is a Lamar University alumni and Deputy Chief of Corpus Christi Police Department)

**INTERNATIONAL FORUM 2020**

Dr. Sanaz Alasti's article, The Iranian Legal Response to Covid-19: A Constitutional Analysis of Coronavirus Lockdown

(2020) was published in a German constitutional law academic forum, and is available at <https://verfassungsblog.de/author/sanaz-alasti/>.

**BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS 2020**

Tsado, L. and Raufu, A. (2020) Damon West, *The Change Agent: How a Former College QB Sentenced to Life in Prison Transformed His World*. New York: Post Hill Press. 2019. *Theory in Action*, 13(2), 149-155.

Worley, R.M. (2020). Pyrooz, David C. and Scott H. Decker, *Competing for Control: Gangs and the Social Order of Prisons*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2019. *Theory in Action*, 13(1), 264-269.

Blackmon, D. A. (2020) Jack Levin and Julia B. Wiest, *Premeditated Murder: Why Some People Plan to Kill*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2018. *Theory in Action*, 13, (4): 177-184.

Bakura, J. (2020). Terry Allen Kupers, *Solitary: The Inside Story of Supermax Isolation and How we Can Abolish It*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. 2017. *Theory in Action*, 13(3): 140-147.

Jewell, H. L. (2020). Stuart, Forrest, *Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row*. University of Chicago Press. 2016. *Theory in Action*, 13(1): 257-263.

# Texas Prison Rodeo: Roth Relives History of Convict Cowboys at LU



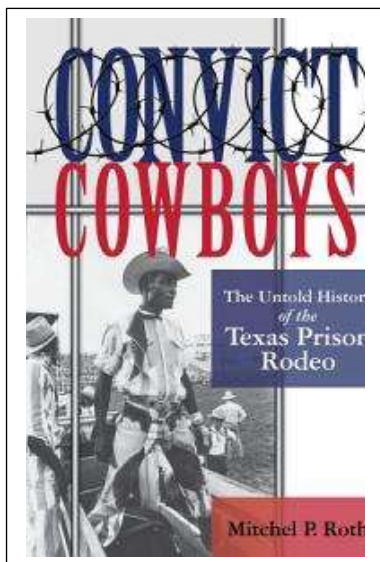
*Left: Eminent Criminal Justice Historian and the author of 20 books including *Convict Cowboys*, Dr. Mitchel P. Roth, presenting to students and faculty at Lamar University on March 5, 2020. Right: Roth with criminal justice student Morgan Winfree, who is sporting an Angola Prison Rodeo T-shirt!*

**Book Review by Robert M. Worley: Mitchel P. Roth, *Convict Cowboys: The Untold History of the Texas Prison Rodeo*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2016. ISBN: 9781574416527 (Hardback). 436 Pages. \$32.95. (First published in *Theory in Action*)**

In his book, *Convict Cowboys*, criminal justice historian Mitchel P. Roth analyzed thousands of pages of archival data and conducted extensive face-to-face interviews in order to tell the story of the Texas Prison Rodeo (TPR), a tradition which began in 1931 and would continue every October (except 1943) for the next 55 years. Roth contends that Americans have always had a fascination with correctional facilities,

an observation which has been made by other scholars (Ross 2015; Welch 2015). He refers to this as “prison tourism” and argues this phenomenon dates back to 1839, when up to 7,000 people per year paid 25 cents (roughly eight dollars today) to visit New York State’s Auburn Prison. In its early years, TPR, which was also referred to as “The Battle of the Outlaws,” attracted considerable public attention, not solely because it featured inmate performers but also because it paid homage to cowboys and the Wild West, a subject matter that has traditionally been of interest to Americans and particularly to Texans.

Although many historians, most notably



*From the left: Dr. Robert M. Worley, Dr. Jim Mann, Dr. Mitchel P. Roth, Mr. Mark Broome, Dr. Stuart A Wright, Ms. Karen Roebuck, Dr. Vidisha Barua Worley, Mr. Tim Brewer, and Ms. Jenny Hamilton.*



Robert Perkinson (2010), have written extensively about Texas’s convict leasing system, Roth begins the story of the TPR by pointing to a 1927 state constitutional amendment passed by the 40th Legislature, which essentially removed politics from the penal system. As a result of this amendment, a new prison board, which consisted of nine private citizens, was created. The board, along with an appointed general manager, controlled the Texas prison system and its vast properties. Roth asserts that it was this unification and consolidation that would, indeed, help to set the stage for creation of the TPR four years later. With the establishment of the prison board, a new organizational culture would flourish, one that would value both prison athletics and legitimate recreational opportunities for inmates. Though the first TPR in 1931 was a modest affair, at which only 10 to 15 convicts performed in front of 200 spectators, Marshall Lee Simmons, the Texas Prison System

general manager, quickly realized that it had the potential to generate revenue that could be used for rehabilitation programs that the Texas legislature would not support.

In his book, Roth notes that in its early years, the TPR permitted inmates of all races to compete. As the author explains, this is nothing short of extraordinary given that “during the 1930s, racial segregation was a fact of life almost everywhere in America; everywhere that is, except for the TPR arena” (98). Around this time, African American prisoners comprised roughly 40% of the inmate population and were overrepresented in prisons by a rate of three times their statewide population (see Perkinson 2010). In addition to competing for cash prizes, African American inmates also sang in the rodeo choir (known as the “Cotton Pickers’ Glee Club”) and performed as rodeo clowns. The first (and

only) convict cowboy to die from injuries sustained in the prison rodeo was H. P. Rich, an African American prisoner, who was thrown from a steer and dragged around on the ground before the other riders could come to his rescue. The author asserts that little news coverage was devoted to this incident and opines that this may have been because of the inmate's race. Even though prison officials declared that many of the inmate contestants were seasoned performers who had competed in outside rodeo shows, Roth argues that inmates rarely had true cowboy experience, with the exception of those who worked as farmhands prior to their incarceration.

While the TPR initially had the approval of local religious leaders, beginning in the 1940s, several of the state's largest religious denominations became disenchanted with the rodeo and urged the Texas Prison Board to abolish it. Roth maintains that these groups were critical of the fact that the rodeo occurred on a Sunday. According to the book, some of these religious groups went as far as to petition the governor to hold the rodeo on weekdays rather than on a day of worship. Nevertheless, initially little was done to placate religious critics, and tens of thousands of patrons continued to attend the Sunday rodeos from virtually every part of the United States.

Although much of the South was racially segregated during the postwar 1950s, the author argues that the prison rodeo continued to be perhaps the only competitive sport in Texas that encouraged African Americans to compete side-by-side with Caucasian performers. In fact, of all the convict cowboys ever to grace the stage of the

TPR, "Daredevil O'Neal Browning," an African American inmate, would become the most successful, winning the coveted Top Hand prize not once, but seven times. As it states in the book, Browning competed for 30 years and became a bona fide TPR legend. Even after suffering a broken leg from a bull ride in 1970, he managed to show up only one week later (on a brace of crutches) and ride in the prison rodeo. It is, indeed, fitting that African Americans were permitted to participate in the early prison rodeos, especially when one considers that they were crucial to the success of cattle drives in the late 19th century, a fact that is not lost on Roth. The author even suggests that at the pinnacle of the trail drive era, as many as 25% of the 35,000 cowboys who took part may have been African American. This is one of many examples throughout the book where the author employs a unique historical methodology to examine the underpinnings of Southern culture and the cowboy mystique.

One of the joys of reading *Convict Cowboys* is that Roth includes excerpts from private correspondence, which is now publicly available through the George Beto Collection at Sam Houston State University. The author even provides readers with humorous, albeit slightly inappropriate, written exchanges that occurred between Coffield and Beto. For example, when Candy Barr, a voluptuous and buxom inmate, made her first appearance at the TPR, Beto (who was also a Lutheran minister) wrote to Coffield and playfully inquired whether Candy put on a private show for the board members. As Roth observes, Candy Barr "proved to be a topic of jovial conversation among Beto, Coffield, and their confidants, and whenever she performed there was sure to be good-natured



badinage between the old friends” (240). Indeed, Candy Barr captured the attention of virtually all the male spectators (especially the inmates) when she made her debut singing performance with backup from the Goree Girls Band. Even though the ex-stripper received one of the biggest standing ovations in the history of the TPR, Roth maintains that Barr only agreed to sing on the condition that she be permitted to work in the prison library. After being released from the Texas prison system, Candy Barr was in demand and made frequent appearances throughout the Hollywood night club circuit. Nevertheless, the author notes that Ms. Barr still found time to sing at the rodeo, making her “only the second former TPR convict performer to return as a free world attraction” (245).

As it states in the book, in the early 1980s, prison officials began to discuss ending the TPR. One of the board members suggested that the rodeo cost more than previously believed and may have even resulted in a cash loss. Also, even though inmate performers continued to sign release forms, it became questionable whether they would actually protect the prison system from lawsuits if an offender was seriously injured. During 1984 and 1985, Texas correctional facilities also became extremely violent, with 52 inmates being murdered and 700 stabbed. Indeed, there was more violence in this two-year period than during the entire previous decade (also see Marquart and Crouch 1985). Not surprisingly, some prison officials began to believe that the rodeo carried enormously high liability and security risks. On top of this, there was the very real possibility that animal rights groups would soon create problems for the prison system, as virtually every rodeo since the 1930s featured injuries to livestock.

When engineers declared that the rodeo stadium was unsafe, this proved to be the straw that broke the camel’s back, and the rodeo soon came to an end. The final TPR was held in 1986, marking the end of a 55-year tradition.

Convict Cowboys is a must-read for anyone who is interested in topics ranging from prisons and punishment to Texas history to popular culture to the sociology of sports. The author includes several intriguing facts throughout the book, which readers will enjoy immensely. For example, I was interested to learn that country music icon Johnny Cash played at the TPR more than a decade before recording his legendary live prison albums at Folsom and San Quentin. Convict Cowboys is likely to resonate with scholars who are both critical and supportive of the mass incarceration movement. At times, Roth condemns the Texas Prison System (as he should) for some of its egregious practices involving inmates. Yet, the author is fair. Although Roth is certainly not an apologist for Texas prison officials, he does credit them for using the TPR as a means to provide inmates with recreational, educational, and rehabilitation programs that the state legislature simply would not pay for. Anyone who picks up a copy of Mitchel Roth’s latest work is likely to finish it within a couple of days. Convict Cowboys is, without question, one of the finest academic books I have read within the past several years, and I am delighted to recommend it to others.



**THE CARDINAL SPIRIT**



## Cardinal Conversations

*In February 2020, Sheriff Zena Stephens (an LU alumni) met with several of our students at the Cardinal networking dinner. Featured here is the Sheriff with LU McNair Scholar, Noel Perez. Perez graduated in Spring 2020 and is now attending Law School at Texas Tech!*

## Cardinal Boo in Costumes and Masks!



*From the left: Dr. Robert M. Worley, Ms. Karen Roebuck, Mr. Mark Broome, Eric Bankston, Sarah Scott and Javier Lopez; Above: Dr. Vidisha B. Worley*



## *Cardinal View!*

*Above: Ms. Karen Roebuck and Mr. Mark Broome with criminal justice students in February 2020 at the Cardinal View.*

*From the left: Mr. Mark Broome, Ms. Karen Roebuck, and Dr. Chen Hsien Lin at the Cardinal View.*

*The Criminal Justice Division of Lamar University wishes everyone a Very Happy, Healthy, Safe, and Prosperous New Year 2021!*



*Resilience* and  
**RECOVERY**  
at Lamar University

## **Research Summit**

*Recovery & Resiliency:  
Recovering and Growing as a Community*

**Friday, April 9, 2021**

Face-to-Face & Virtual

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October 14 - November 14

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