

# Picturing crime, harm, and injustice

Will McMahon and Rebecca Roberts introduce this issue of *cjm*.

*Imagery of harm and crime can offer powerful and moving representations of different forms of injustice. The What is crime? photography competition, held in 2008/09 by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies in collaboration with the Independent newspaper and funded by the Wates Foundation, provided an innovative and exciting way to explore these issues. Many of the entries are showcased in this issue of cjm. Tim Walker's article, (first published in the Independent) presents a number of the photographs.*

As readers will see, the photographs offer challenging and thought provoking visual interpretations of what crime is, what harm is and what injustice might look like under the competition themes of environment, finance and violence. The themes led to a very wide range of interpretation, ranging from the Palestinian Wall and pensioner poverty in England to opencast mining in the United States. We were also pleased to welcome such a wide range of international entries; every continent had a photograph entered into the competition across all three themes.

A key lesson of the *What is crime?* competition and the articles in the themed section of *cjm* illustrate how important the 'visual' can be in exploring different avenues of injustice, harm, crime, and social control.

The use of imagery is developed further in this issue's themed section which focuses on Visual Criminology. The guest editor, **Peter Francis**, outlines his approach as having 'been to bring together a range of practitioner and academic researchers whose work can be broadly described under the heading of visual criminology, in order to showcase their creative and academic work, and to highlight the potential of a criminology that embraces the image and visual culture' ... '[within] the size constraints and raison d'être of *cjm*'. This has certainly been achieved and we hope that *cjm* readers have their imaginations stimulated by the articles commissioned from an international array of writers.

In our 'Topical Issues and Comment' section, **Michael Teague** considers the possibilities for US criminal justice reform under the Obama administration, exploring opportunities to reduce imprisonment, the war on drugs and capital punishment.

**Helen Wallace** of GeneWatch UK raises concerns about the potential uses and abuses of the National DNA Database and questions whether it has had a significant impact in solving serious crimes. **Wendy Fitzgibbon** explores recent high profile probation cases, arguing that while public and media attention focuses on case loads and failures in risk assessments, more systemic issues relating to the de-skilling of probation officers and 'tick

box' culture will remain unexamined.

**Mark Drakeford** explores the Welsh approach to youth justice which favours treating young people caught up in the criminal justice system as children first, 'with offending only one element in a much wider and more complex identity'. **Richard Garside**, director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies critiques the evidence base for current risk based policies in relation to young people. He argues in favour of an approach that looks more broadly at risky societies rather than risky people.

From our next edition in March 2010, we will be expanding the 'Topical Issues and Comment' section of *cjm*. This is to encourage ongoing discussion and debate about contemporary developments in the areas of social justice, public policy, and criminal justice in the UK and internationally. A new 'Review' section will also be introduced, providing short analysis pieces on anything from policy and legislation to publications, films, and events. We hope that readers will continue to submit articles and use *cjm* as a forum for critical analysis, debate and the sharing of research, ideas and practice. Please contact Rebecca Roberts ([rebecca.roberts@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:rebecca.roberts@kcl.ac.uk)) for information on submissions or visit the *Criminal Justice Matters* website: [www.informaword.com/cjm](http://www.informaword.com/cjm). ■

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## AGM and Annual Event

### Will anyone notice if the Conservatives win? Poverty, inclusion and social order over the next decade

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies Annual Event will take place on 20 January 2010 and will be preceded by the AGM. Chaired by Mark Easton of the BBC, an expert panel will lead a discussion on the impact of a possible Conservative general election victory.

See [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk) for details.