

State Crime, the Prophetic Voice and Public Criminology Activism

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Abstract State crimes are, by far, the most destructive of all crimes. The use and threat to use nuclear weapons, the aerial bombardment of civilians, wars of aggression, torture, the failure to mitigate global warming and adapt to climate change ecocide, along with myriad other state-corporate crimes, fill the world with death and devastation, misery and want. This article argues that criminologists have a responsibility to act as public criminologists by speaking in the “prophetic voice” concerning these crimes and their victims, and then acting in the political arena in an attempt to control and prevent these harms. The paper briefly describes three approaches to engaging in what Belknap (*Criminology* 53:1–23, 2015) calls “criminology activism” on these issues. The first approach is for criminologists to counter the cultures of denial and normalization that usually cover state crimes. The second involves contesting the global corporate capitalist system and the power of the American capitalist state in an effort to achieve specific progressive policy reforms and structural changes in the global political economy. Finally, criminologists can work to enhance the democratization of the international political community and strengthen the ability of specific international legal institutions to control state crimes.

Introduction

Do criminologists have a responsibility to advocate for social and legal justice? In her 2014 American Society of Criminology (ASC) Presidential Address, Joanne Belknap answered this question with a resounding yes! President Belknap (2015, p. 1) forcefully argued that criminologists should have a commitment to advancing social and legal justice changes, what she refers to as “criminology activism.” In her presidential address, as well as in the theme she selected for the 2014 ASC national conference, Belknap focused on “Criminology at the Intersections of Oppression,” particularly oppressions related to race, gender,

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class, sexuality, citizenship and nationality. The address did not explicitly refer to the topic of state crime, but the general thrust of her arguments can be applied to this serious form of criminality as well. This is the objective of this article.

In his own 1988 American Society of Criminology Presidential Address, Chambliss (1989, p. 184) described state crimes as “acts defined as criminal and committed by state officials in the pursuit of their job as representatives of the state.” A few years later Chambliss (1995, p. 9) enlarged this definition by asserting that, “criminologists must develop a disciplinary vision which defines crime sociologically as behavior that violates international agreements and principles established in the courts and treaties of international bodies.” These illegal acts include the use, threat to use and continued possession of nuclear weapons (in violation of International Humanitarian Law and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty), aerial bombardments that target or indiscriminately harm civilians (in violation of Humanitarian Law), wars of aggression, what the Nuremberg Tribunal called the “supreme international crime” (in violation of the United Nations Charter), torture and other war crimes (in violation of the Geneva Conventions), and the failure to respond to climate change ecocide and other environmental harms (a violation of Human Rights Law and the Public Trust Doctrine). These state crimes fill the world with death and destruction, misery and want. They cause enormous harm and suffering. This article argues that criminologists have a responsibility to speak in the *prophetic voice* and engage in *public criminology activism* concerning these crimes of the powerful (Barak 2015).

Public Criminology and the Prophetic Voice

Belknap (2015, p. 5) defines an *activist criminology* as “one of criminologists engaging in social and/or legal justice at individual, organizational, and/or policy levels, which goes beyond typical research, teaching, and service.” Although she does not use the term, what Belknap is advocating for is what others have called *public criminology*. For Currie (2007, p. 175), public criminology is, “one that takes as part of its defining mission a more vigorous, systematic and effective intervention in the world of social policy and social action.” For Loader and Sparks (2011, p. 33), Belknap’s activist criminology seems to represent that particular form of public criminology that they label “social movement theorist/activist.” Kramer et al. (2010) have advocated for a public criminology that is specific to state crime and/or state-corporate crime, which is the primary focus of this article.

Kramer et al. (2010) follow Burawoy’s (2007: 28) conceptualization that, “Public sociology brings sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in a conversation.” Thus, they argue that a public criminology of state crime would seek out extra-academic audiences and enter into dialectical conversations with various publics such as the victims of state crimes, the international political community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), state agents, media organizations, and other more generalized, amorphous “publics.” The content of these conversations will be quite varied but would in some form be a dialogue about the moral and political implications of criminological research findings and theoretical explanations concerning state crime.

Such a public criminology of state crime can take several different forms. Again, following Burawoy (2007), Kramer et al. (2010) distinguish between *traditional* public criminology and *organic* public criminology. Traditional public criminology attempts to

initiate a conversation, instigate a debate, or provoke a critical questioning within or between publics through the publication of books and articles addressed to audiences outside the academy or opinion pieces in national or international newspapers (or other media forums) that identify and analyze state crimes or comment on important public issues related to such crimes. Organic public criminology, on the other hand, involves criminologists working directly with specific groups, organizations, social movements or state officials, engaging in a dialogue or a process of mutual education that may or may not lead to specific political actions or policies related to the prevention or control of state crime. Organic public criminology may result in Currie's "vigorous, systematic and effective intervention in the world of social policy and social action;" or as Belknap (2015, p. 5) puts it, in "social and/or legal justice."

In another work (Kramer 2012a), I expanded on these conceptions of public criminology using a slightly different language and focusing on the potentially apocalyptic state-corporate crimes related to catastrophic climate change due to global warming (Kramer and Michalowski 2012). I argued that criminologists, as part of their professional role, can and should assume two important responsibilities in the larger struggle to resist global warming and other state-corporate crimes and the serious harms they cause. First, criminologists should take seriously the responsibility to *speak in the prophetic voice* concerning state and corporate crimes (traditional public criminology); and second, they should take the responsibility where they can to *engage in social and political actions* to reduce or prevent these harms (organic public criminology). The language used here comes from Robert Jensen's wonderful book *All My Bones Shake: Seeking a Progressive Path to the Prophetic Voice*. As Jensen (2009: 162–163) argues, given the "cascading crises" humanity now faces (many related to state and corporate crimes), "It is time to recognize that we all must strive to be prophets now. It is time for each of us to take responsibility for speaking in the prophetic voice."

"Prophecy" in this sense does not mean predicting the future. To speak prophetically with regard to state and corporate crime is to identify or name the harms committed by the corporate state as "criminal," call out the social injustices that states and corporations produce or tolerate, confront the abuses of powerful officials, and analyze how political and economic systems, such as neoliberal capitalism, cause destruction, devastation and untold suffering. By speaking in the prophetic voice criminologists attempt to counter the denial and normalization of state and corporate crimes, critique the structural and organizational forces that give rise to them, and create political or "deliberative frames" (Wilson 2009: 139) that can orient debate and/or produce progressive political action on these issues.

Speaking in the prophetic voice also means focusing attention on what Agnew (2011) calls "unrecognized blameworthy harms." This important concept comes out of Agnew's attempt to develop an "integrated" definition of crime. This effort combines norms of conduct, reactions of social audiences and state enforcement actions. As Agnew (2011, p. 30) notes, while "The integrated definition assigns a central place to violations of the criminal law and street crimes...it also focuses on a *range of harmful acts that are not legally defined as crimes, including acts committed by states and corporations*" (emphasis added). According to Agnew (2011, p. 37), the three general characteristics that should be used to classify behavior as criminal are, "the extent to which they are (a) blameworthy harms; (b) condemned by the public; and (c) sanctioned by the state." Thus, he argues that (2011, p. 38), "any behavior classified as a blameworthy harm, subject to at least modest condemnation by a significant portion of the public, or classified as a crime or 'crime-like'

civil violation by the state should be viewed as a proper part of the subject matter of criminology.”

This integrated definition initially yields a list of “core crimes,” which are mostly traditional forms of street crime. Mainstream or orthodox criminologists generally confine themselves to the study of such behaviors. Among the other forms of crime that Agnew also discusses in relationship to the integrated definition of crime, the most important category in my view is “unrecognized blameworthy harms,” a crucial distinction that allows him to incorporate much of the work of those who focus on state and corporate crimes.

Unrecognized blameworthy harms are those blameworthy harms that are not strongly condemned by the public at large and not sanctioned by the state. According to Agnew (2011, p. 38): “Much state and corporate harm falls into this category, since the power of state and corporate actors makes it easier for them to justify and excuse harm, hide harm, hide blameworthiness, and prevent state sanction.” Bringing these harms within the boundaries of criminology is an important step towards Agnew’s goal during his ASC Presidential tenure of “expanding the core” of the discipline. Since these harms are often “unrecognized” by social audiences, bringing them within the boundaries of criminology requires that criminologists make an independent judgment or determination that these behaviors are morally blameworthy harms. Not only does Agnew think these unrecognized blameworthy harms should be made part of the subject matter of criminology, he also thinks that criminologists, acting as public intellectuals, can provide an important service with regard to these crimes by bringing them to the attention of social audiences. As Agnew (2011, p. 38) argues: “In such cases, criminologists can play an important role in making the harm and/or blameworthiness apparent through their research and *advocacy*” (emphasis added). This seems to be a perfect illustration of speaking in the prophetic voice. As noted above, to speak prophetically is to identify or name the harms committed by states and corporations as “criminal,” call out the social injustices these organizations produce or tolerate, and confront the abuses of powerful elites and state officials.

Finally, speaking in the prophetic voice also carries a responsibility to then advocate or act in the political arena. To engage in progressive political action involves, among other things, organizing or participating in peace, environmental or transitional justice movements, challenging empire, contesting the power of the corporate state, working to reinvigorate democratic governance, and enhancing the power and control of international political and legal institutions. By engaging in such “political” actions, criminologists can raise awareness of the obstacles and possibilities concerning progressive social change and perhaps contribute to the construction of collective solutions to state-corporate criminality.

Speaking in the Prophetic Voice About State Crime

Criminologists can assist the effort to resist state and state-corporate crimes by speaking in the prophetic voice to publicly identify, sociologically analyze and politically frame major forms of these crimes. In my judgment state crime criminologists have generally done a very effective job of doing this. As previously noted (Kramer 2016), following the publication of Chambliss’ presidential address on state-organized crime in 1989, there was a significant increase in research by criminologists, particularly those who identified as “critical” criminologists, that focuses attention on “state crime” (the “organized” modifier is usually dropped). A partial list of just books and anthologies that deal in whole or in part

with state crime published after 1990 include: Balint (2012), Barak (1991, 2015), Bonn (2010), Chambliss et al. (2010), Cohen (2001), Doig (2011), Friedrichs (1998, 2010), Green and Ward (2004), Kauzlarich and Kramer (1998), Michalowski and Kramer (2006), Mullins and Rothe (2008), Ross (1995a, b), Rothe (2009), Rothe and Kauzlarich (2014), Rothe and Mullins (2006, 2011), Smeulers and Haveman (2008), Stanley (2009), Stanley and McCulloch (2013), Tombs and Whyte (2003, 2015), Tunnell (1993), Welch (2009), White (2010, 2011), White and Heckenberg (2014), and Whyte (2009).

At least two major journals have devoted special issues to the topic of state crime since 1988: *Social Justice* (Volume 16, No. 2, Summer 1989); *The British Journal of Criminology* (Volume 45, Number 4, July 2005); and *Social Justice* again (Volume 36, No. 3, 2009–2010). Shortly before his death, Chambliss and co-editor Chris Moloney assembled a massive four-volume collection of most of the cutting edge and foundational research on state and corporate crime since Sutherland's white collar crime address (Chambliss and Moloney 2015). 68 of the 76 articles in the collection were originally published after the 1988 presidential address on state-organized crime.

In recent years a number of special international conferences have been held that were directly or indirectly inspired by Chambliss' concept of state-organized crime: Prato, Italy in 2006 (*Roundtable on Transnational Crime*); Maastricht, The Netherlands in 2007 (*Expert Meeting: Toward a Criminology of International Crimes or a Supranational Criminology*); Onati, Spain in 2008 (*State Crime in the Global Age*); Wellington, New Zealand in 2010 (*State Crime and Resistance*) to mention a few. At the American Society of Criminology meetings there is a well-established annual workshop on state crime (now crimes of the powerful) organized by Dawn Rothe of the International State Crime Research Center located at Old Dominion University. In 2010, the International State Crime Initiative (ISCI) was launched in London. The ISCI "is a multi-disciplinary, cross institutional and international initiative designed to collate, analyze and disseminate research based knowledge about criminal state practices and resistance to them," and it publishes the journal *State Crime* (Volume 1, Number 1, appearing in Spring 2012). And recently, several criminologists usually associated with more "mainstream" approaches have also decided that the issue of state crime warrants attention (Agnew 2011; Hagan 2010; Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2009; Savelsberg 2010).

Despite the recent outpouring of criminological work on state crimes, research in this area still represents a tiny fraction of all criminological work that is carried out. Friedrichs (2008, p. 31) has posited an "inverse" hypothesis of criminological concerns, that is: "There is an inverse relationship between the level of harm caused by some human (individual or organizational) activity and the level of criminological concern." The state and state-corporate crimes analyzed in this body of literature are the crimes that cause the greatest level of harm by far. Millions of people have been killed and injured physically, financially and emotionally by these acts. Some state crimes, such as the threat to use nuclear weapons and the failure to reduce carbon emissions that heat the planet and cause climate chaos are existential threats; they ultimately constitute a grave risk to what Heilbroner (1974) called, "the human prospect."

Nonetheless, the overall body of criminological work on state crime provides an excellent resource for public criminologists to draw on in order to speak in the prophetic voice and engage in political action concerning these serious (often unrecognized) blameworthy harms and existential threats. Drawing on this theory and research on state crime, traditional public criminologists need to, as noted above, initiate conversations, instigate debates, and provoke a critical questioning within or between publics through the publication of books and articles addressed to audiences outside the academy or opinion

pieces in national or international newspapers (or other media forums) that speak in the prophetic voice concerning such crimes.

Two forms of public engagement that I have found to be effective in identifying and analyzing state crimes are producing local cable access television programs and working with local peace, justice and environmental groups to create lecture programs and teach-ins. Since 2001, I have co-produced and hosted a television program titled *Critical Issues, Alternative Views* on the Public Media Network in Kalamazoo, Michigan. While the program covers many diverse critical issues, we have often named, described and analyzed state crimes such as the illegal invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003 and the variety of state-corporate climate crimes that have occurred with regard to global warming and climate change. I have also worked directly with *Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents of War* (KNOW) and the *Western Michigan University Working Group on Climate Change* to speak in the prophetic voice and educate the Kalamazoo community about illegal US wars and state-corporate climate crimes. Both groups sponsor public lectures and create community forums to present alternative interpretive frames on these often “unrecognized blameworthy harms.”

Engaging in Political Action Concerning State Crime

Those criminologists who speak in the prophetic voice about state-corporate crimes then have a responsibility to act in the public arena (organic public criminology). This section sketches out three very broad approaches to engaging in progressive political action on these issues to which critical criminologists may be able to contribute. The first approach is to counter the denial and normalization that usually cover state crimes. The second approach is to help build progressive social movements to contest state power and change the political and economic arrangements of global capitalism. Finally, we can work to enhance the democratization of the general international political community and the ability of specific international legal institutions to better control state crimes.

Countering Denial and Normalization

Lens (2003) once observed that empires tend to cover themselves in a “myth of morality.” That is to say, state crimes are usually enmeshed in a “culture of denial” (Cohen 2001) and a socio-historical process that results in their “normalization” (Kramer 2010). More broadly this process can be analyzed as a variant of what Gramsci (1971) called ideological hegemony. One of the most important things criminologists can do by speaking in the prophetic voice is to engage in the hegemonic struggle and challenge the denial and normalization concerning state crimes, particularly the crimes of the empire of the United States (Kramer 2012b). Unless we counter the denial and normalization of state and corporate crimes, none of the other public conversations concerning the prevention and control of these crimes are likely to take place.

Cohen (2001) has demonstrated how individuals, organizations, publics, political cultures and governments, whether victims, perpetrators or observers, frequently incorporate statements of denial into their social definitions, beliefs, knowledge and practices in such a way that atrocities and suffering, such as those related to state crimes, are not acknowledged or acted upon. According to Cohen (2001, p. 51), *denial* “refers to the maintenance of social worlds in which an undesirable situation (event, condition, phenomenon) is

unrecognized, ignored or made to seem normal.” He identifies three major categories of denial: literal, interpretive and implicatory. A *literal* denial is: “the assertion that something did not happen or is not true” (p. 7). With an *interpretive* denial, the basic facts are not denied, however, “...they are given a different meaning from what seems apparent to others” (p. 7). Interpretive denial probably occurs more often than literal denial. Here the event or the harm is socially and morally framed in such a way as to deny the state’s responsibility or culpability. Finally, the notion of implicatory denial “covers the multitude of vocabularies-justifications, rationalizations, evasions-that we use to deal with our awareness of so many images of unmitigated suffering.” Here, “knowledge itself is not an issue. The genuine challenge is doing the ‘right’ thing with this knowledge” (Cohen 2001: 7–9).

For example, the global warming denial counter-movement has been able to create doubts about climate science and therefore block state policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create clean energy alternatives, a state-corporate crime of omission (Kramer and Michalowski 2012; Kramer 2013). This movement started with literal denials about global warming. When the evidence made that an unsustainable position the movement shifted to interpretive denial, claiming that even if the planet was experiencing global warming, it was not caused by human activity but by natural forces. This denial has become an article of faith among right-wing politicians in the United States and every candidate for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination was a global warming denialist. Even more troubling is the fact that many of those who do accept the evidence of global warming and are aware of the unfolding tragedy remain apathetic and take no social actions to mitigate the problem as Norgaard (2011) has demonstrated in her powerful analysis of implicatory denial related to climate change. As long as these three forms of denial continue to operate there appears to be little chance to head off state-corporate climate crimes and global catastrophe, although the build-up to the December 2015 Conference of Parties (COP) 21 in Paris provides a glimmer of hope on this score.

As another example, US history is replete with the literal and interpretive denial of imperial crimes. As Iadicola (2010) has pointed out, US “crimes of empire” are usually covered by some form of interpretive denial; that is, some narrative that justifies the state actions that cause harm or could be labeled as criminal. He points out that wars of aggression, assassinations, torture, and even genocide, are often justified by imperial “myths” of bringing liberation, achieving manifest destiny or accomplishing a civilizing mission. US state crimes have often been interpretively denied by, among other things, a reference to the cultural narrative of “American exceptionalism” (Kramer and Michalowski 2005; Hodgson 2009) that shields the state from a critical examination of its imperial motives and justifies its criminal acts. Cohen also observes that denial is closely linked to the phenomenon of “normalization.” In general agreement with Vaughn (1996), he argues that state atrocities and other deviant acts can, over time, come to be socially defined as normal and acceptable to individuals and societies.

Criminologists who speak in the prophetic voice by presenting research evidence that documents state crimes and disputes literal denials, or who challenge the narratives of interpretive denial and the often-resulting normalization of deviance with empirically grounded theoretical counter-narratives are engaging in an important form of public criminology. We are entering into a conversation with various publics that may impact whether or not these blameworthy harms will be “problematized;” that is, socially defined as crimes that can then become suitable targets for prevention and control efforts. When critical scholars counter denials or negate normalization in their role as public criminologists they are participating as “claimsmakers” in the process of the social construction of

crime as a social problem to be addressed by society (Blumer 1971; Spector and Kitsuse 1977). There are problems and pitfalls to this form of engagement that arise from the elusiveness of consensus among scholars, the power of the state to attack and dismiss our work, and the uncertainty of fair and balanced coverage by the mainstream media of the positions we advocate (McCarthy and Hagan 2009).

Despite these difficulties and other obstacles (i.e., lack of funding, denial of access to data, academic pressures, etc.), it is important for critical scholars to speak in the prophetic voice and take on the roles and responsibilities of the public criminologist. Whether we act as traditional public criminologists and seek to influence publics through our writings and our media appearances, or whether we work directly with victims, social movements, international justice organizations, NGOs or government agencies as organic public criminologists, we can use our criminological knowledge and intellectual skills to break through denial and normalization, and help define state crimes as legitimate targets for social control efforts. My own experience has been that our public access television program (*Critical Issues, Alternative Views*) and the educational efforts of the peace group *Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents of War* have been able to play a small role locally in the hegemonic struggle to counter state propaganda concerning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The *Western Michigan University Working Group on Climate Change* has also challenged the climate change denialist effort through public lectures (such as one that featured climate activist Bill McKibben of 350.org) or community discussions of important books concerning climate change such one we organized around Naomi Klein's important book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*.

Assisting Social Movements and Changing the Global Political Economy

Once criminologists, and other scholars have spoken in the prophetic voice and state crimes are “problematized,” progressive social movements working to contest state and corporate power under global capitalism may be energized and their efforts to change political and economic arrangements enhanced. A second strategy then for public criminologists of state crime is to work with progressive movements in their efforts to challenge the corporate capitalist state and change policies related to these “morally blameworthy harms.” By contesting state power, movement organizations may be able to block imperial policies, help develop progressive alternatives, create structural changes in the capitalist political economy, and thus better control and prevent state crimes. As Coleman et al. (2009, p. 215) point out: “Those who have adopted a neo-Marxist analysis of the state have therefore not only consistently emphasized the contradictory nature of its institutional power base, but also its place as a site of struggle, which has been, and can be, mobilized by powerless groups to subvert policy proposals and challenge social injustice.”

The late Zinn (1980) demonstrated that throughout American history powerless groups and people's movements have repeatedly challenged social injustices, fought against corporate domination, resisted imperialism and contested state power, frequently winning important victories. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a many sided social movement also known as “progressivism” achieved important liberal reforms at all levels of government through its participation in the political process (Nugent 2010); although such reforms may have blunted the broader challenge to the capitalist system mounted by the socialist movement of the era (Zinn 1980). A strong anti-imperialist movement also existed during this “progressive” era (Nichols 2004). Later, during the Great Depression, the socialist challenge and radical labor agitation helped to push President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Congress to enact many of the important New Deal social and economic

programs (Zinn 1980). During the “long sixties,” an extremely broad array of movements and countercultures arose to challenge the “Machiavellians” who represented the US corporate state (Hayden 2009). The civil rights, anti-Vietnam war and environmental movements played central roles in contesting the power of the capitalist state in this era. Reflecting on the history of these movements, White and Kramer (2015, p. 7) observe that:

The emphasis on social reform or social transformation is certainly not necessarily mutually exclusive. They can feed into each other, and occur simultaneously...progress toward significant social change demands multiple actions across multiple domains. History teaches us that momentum for revolutionary transformation must incorporate many different interest groups (in alliance formally or in united front), pursuing the struggle from within existing state and civil institutions as well as fighting against the power elite.

Although the progressive movements of the long sixties won some important civil rights victories, ended the imperial war against Vietnam, produced some environmental regulation and accomplished some significant social and cultural changes in American society, an extremely well funded and well organized conservative countermovement developed in the 1970s to fight back against progressive people’s movements and protect corporate interests (Hacker and Pierson 2010; Madrick 2011). The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 represented a significant victory for this countermovement and further enhanced the corporate domination of the state. Today, corporate power increasingly “holds the government hostage” (Hedges 2009, p. 143), and corporate interests have the strong ability to subvert democracy in the US, a phenomenon that the late Wolin (2008) called “inverted totalitarianism” and Galbraith (2008) terms “The Predator State.” The 2010 US Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which allows corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money directly in the electoral process, only enhances this subversion of democracy.

The grip of the corporate forces that control the state is strong, and the liberal class that once provided a minimal level of opposition to such private tyranny now appears to be dead (Hedges 2010). The limited progress against militarism, war, and environmental destruction achieved in the 1960s and 1970s has been derailed. And, as Barak (2015, p. 33) argues:

...unless the prevailing political and economic arrangements locally and globally as well as the contradictions of the bourgeois legal relations of the capitalist state are structurally addressed, it is very hard to imagine how any other kind of tinkering will alter the negative trends of unsustainable capital development or make any kind of dent in the volume let alone in the driving forces underpinning the crimes and victimization of the powerful.

Barak (2015, p. 33) goes on to propose a worldwide people’s movement on behalf of a variety of progressive reforms and utopian system level changes, but ends with this caution and challenge:

Consistent with this utopian vision is a realpolitik recognition that resisting the crimes of the powerful has little in common with trying to make the existing regulatory or penal arrangements of social control work better through reformist-type modifications of business as usual. Rather, fundamental changes of the political economy through social, cultural, and global activism are called for. Without

eliminating the basic conditions that nurture these crimes of the powerful, new and improved social controls will not change the enduring reproduction of these crimes.

Through theory and research on state crime, and active participation in movement organizations, critical criminologists can help bring about these progressive reforms and structural changes by contesting the corporate capitalist state and reinvigorating democratic governance. We can offer our expertise and energy to peace movement organizations to end the illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce the Pentagon budget and the power and influence of the military-industrial complex. We can likewise use our skills to work with anti-globalization groups to reveal and resist predatory corporate globalization practices and oppose free trade agreements that neuter (criminalize) individual state efforts to protect workers, consumers and the environment from these predatory corporate acts. We can describe and analyze state-corporate climate crimes and offer, as White and Kramer (2015) have, a matrix of an action plan against climate change. Such an action plan could help to galvanize the climate justice movement that Klein (2014) thinks could be the catalyzing force for a powerful and comprehensive mass movement; a broad based political force that could challenge capitalism and address a variety of progressive issues, not just global warming. Obviously, much more would need to be done to genuinely contest the corporate state and change the prevailing political and economic arrangements under capitalism, but these would be important steps in that process and state crime criminologists have an important activist role to play in such a movement.

Enhancing the Crime Controls of International Political and Legal Institutions

In the global era, reformed internal controls on state crime are not likely to be effective. However, enhancing the power and control of international political and legal institutions may have greater potential. As Rothe and Kauzlarich (2010, p. 183) have noted, “Control over state crime is strongest at the international level.” Formal international controls include public international law, international military tribunals, intergovernmental organizations, the International Court of Justice (World Court), and the relatively new International Criminal Court. In the post World War II era the United States often took the lead in the creation of these new international laws and organizations. But as Chambliss’ structural contradictions theory would suggest, the imperial domination of this international legal order by the US has resulted in political impunity for the crimes of the American empire and has undermined the ability of these political and legal institutions to control the crimes of other states (Kramer and Michalowski 2005; Kramer 2016). But this may be changing. Bennis (2006) argues that the illegal US war of aggression against Iraq in 2003 helped to generate three specific challenges to the American empire. These challenges came from the global peoples’ movement that arose to protest the invasion of Iraq, an assortment of governments around the world who recognized that this war and the American empire were not in their best interests, and the United Nations which defended its charter’s prohibition against the use of military force and rejected the US pressure for a resolution authorizing the invasion.

Thus, the third broad form of resistance to state crimes that we can offer as public criminologists is to enter into conversations with various publics concerning the strengthening of these challenges and other formal international controls over state crimes. In these conversations we can offer to share our research findings and theoretical narratives, our methodological and interpretive skills, with others who are struggling to react to

or reduce the harms that flow from the crimes of the American empire and other state powers. We may be able to use our criminological knowledge and intellectual tools to advocate for or even help construct policies related to the greater social control of state criminality.

As Rothe and Mullins (2012) point out, the creation of a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) provides a new, but partial, opening for holding state officials accountable for their crimes. Ideally, this could be an effort to end political impunity and legal immunity for powerful state actors. White and Kramer (2015) call for the establishment of a permanent environmental justice people's tribunal in their action plan matrix to deal with climate change. Yet some neo-Marxist theorists dispute the notion, advanced by some criminologists and legal scholars like Sands (2005), that any progress toward greater accountability for the state officials of capitalist societies has occurred, arguing that international legal norms have always been complicit with the violence of empires (Mieville 2006). Many critical criminologists might agree with this assessment, particularly as it applies to the empire of the United States (Iadicola 2010; Kramer 2012b). Michalowski (2013) reminds us of Audre Lorde's observation that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

But if critical criminologists can effectively help to challenge empire by countering the denial and normalization of imperial crimes and by assisting progressive social movements that are contesting the corporate state, then a space may be created that would allow for the enhancement of international controls over state crimes. With our knowledge of social control practices, criminal justice policies, punishment processes and transitional and restorative justice approaches, critical criminologists are potentially in a position to contribute to the efforts of the international political community to prevent and control state crimes by the US and by other states around the world. For example, in my own criminology activism locally I have attempted, through writing viewpoint columns in the newspaper, presenting public lectures and teach-ins and participating in marches and rallies, to educate people and politicians about the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the solemn legal obligation it imposes on the US and all the other nuclear powers to undertake nuclear disarmament. The *Western Michigan University Working Group on Climate Change* that I work with has also used similar tactics to inform the community about the upcoming UN Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris (December 2015) and the urgent need for an international agreement to drastically reduce carbon emissions. Educational efforts like these, along with broader political actions, are necessary to advance the project of creating greater international controls over state crimes.

Conclusion

Curbing state crime in the future will not be easy. It will require a long and difficult political struggle. As Weber (1946, p. 128) wrote: "Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective." But despite the difficulties and obstacles, I would argue that we, as critical criminologists, have a moral obligation to speak in the prophetic voice, to act as public intellectuals and use our passion, perspective, knowledge and skills to engage in what Belknap calls activist criminology to assist in the effort to prevent state-corporate crimes and help keep the struggle for political and economic justice alive. Most of us will feel most comfortable engaging in "traditional" public criminology through writing for and speaking to broader audiences about these issues. But

it will also be necessary for us to participate in “organic” public criminology and work directly with social movement organizations as criminological activists to help prevent and control state crimes such as nuclear proliferation, wars of aggression and climate change, the crimes of all crimes.

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