Why does the United States incarcerate more people than any other country on earth? What role does profit play in the crisis of mass incarceration, and how can the country work to end this human rights catastrophe?

In this talk, historian Dan Berger situates the rise of mass incarceration in the function and future of American prisons. Rather than profit, Berger shows that the prison system is driven primarily by punishment. Understanding this difference focuses our attention on how mass incarceration functions—and what kinds of policies could contribute to its eradication.

Bio: Dan Berger is an Associate Professor of Comparative Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington at Bothell. He is the author or editor of six books, including Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era, winner of the 2015 James A. Rawley Prize from the Organization of American Historians.