

SEEING: THE PROBLEM

By Professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore

"What if photographs depict what should not have been?" –Jacqueline Goldsby

I have been inconsistent in my relationship with and treatment of moving and still photographic images that depict what should not have been. In this lecture I will first briefly describe two projects in which visual documentation of premature violent death played a central role in the effort to organize evidence for political persuasion. Then, after showing the fragility of the projects' underlying assumptions, I will explore social features and uses that shaped and shadowed the democratization of photographic image-making. Finally I will offer the outlines of a counter-narrative to highlight how we might usefully consider the co-constitutive interdependencies of consciousness, historical geography, and the machine, in the process of materializing objects that inspire subjects in struggle.



Ruth Wilson Gilmore is Professor of Geography, and Director of the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics, at the City University of New York Graduate Center. She works on racial capitalism, organized violence, organized abandonment, changing state structure, criminalization, and labor and social movements. A second edition of her prize-winning book *Golden Gulag* will appear in 2019. Recent publications include "Beyond Bratton" (Policing the Planet, Camp and Heatherton, eds.), and "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence" (Futures of Black Radicalism, Lubin and Johnson, eds.). Gilmore has lectured in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. She is a co-founder of many grassroots organizations including California Prison Moratorium Project, and Critical Resistance, she has received numerous awards from community and scholarly associations.

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