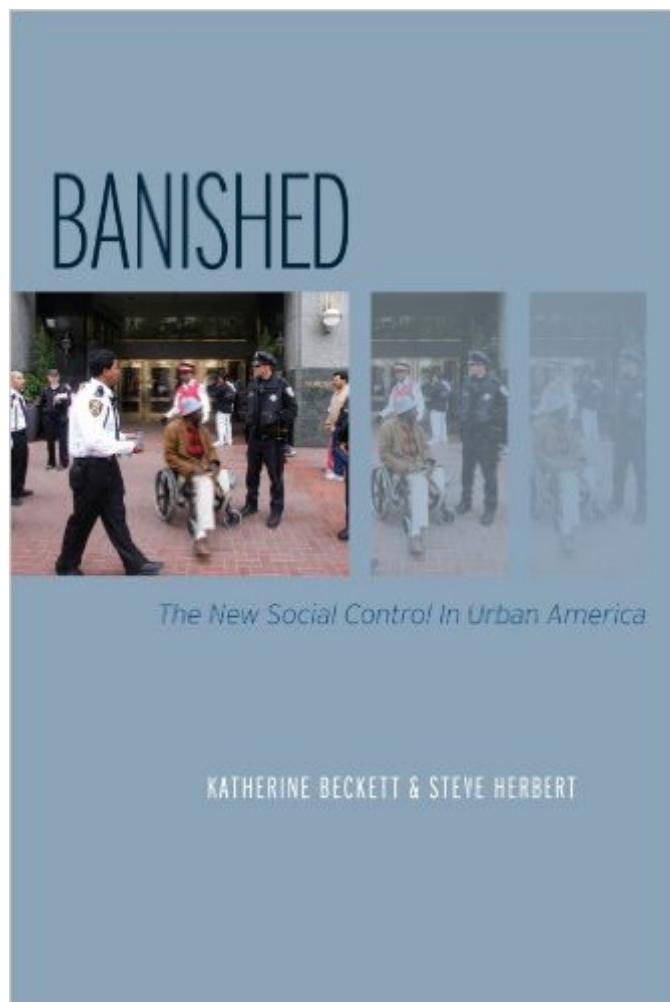


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Banished: The New Social Control In Urban America (Studies In Crime And Public Policy)



Synopsis

With urban poverty rising and affordable housing disappearing, the homeless and other "disorderly" people continue to occupy public space in many American cities. Concerned about the alleged ill effects their presence inflicts on property values and public safety, many cities have wholeheartedly embraced "zero-tolerance" or "broken window" policing efforts to clear the streets of unwanted people. Through an almost completely unnoticed set of practices, these people are banned from occupying certain spaces. Once zoned out, they are subject to arrest if they return—effectively banished from public places. *Banished* is the first exploration of these new tactics that dramatically enhance the power of the police to monitor and arrest thousands of city dwellers. Drawing upon an extensive body of data, the authors chart the rise of banishment in Seattle, a city on the leading edge of this emerging trend, to establish how it works and explore its ramifications. They demonstrate that, although the practice allows police and public officials to appear responsive to concerns about urban disorder, it is a highly questionable policy: it is expensive, does not reduce crime, and does not address the underlying conditions that generate urban poverty. Moreover, interviews with the banished themselves reveal that exclusion makes their lives and their path to self-sufficiency immeasurably more difficult. At a time when more and more cities and governments in the U.S. and Europe resort to the criminal justice system to solve complex social problems, *Banished* provides a vital and timely challenge to exclusionary strategies that diminish the life circumstances and rights of those it targets.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Banished explores geographic restrictions that are placed on people in the city -- often homeless people and people of color. The authors use a variety of sources: records from the police and the courts, archives from the city council, interviews with prosecutors, defenders, and judges, and -- most vividly -- interviews with people who are subject to the restrictions. The book focuses on Seattle, which uses a number of geographic restrictions. It should interest anyone concerned about poverty, homelessness, criminal justice, and civil liberties. Very often probation (or a deferred sentence) for a minor offense includes an order to Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution (SOAP) or to Stay Out of Drug Areas (SODA). Hundreds of people are also given trespass admonishments, with orders not to go to one or many parks or not to go to one or many businesses. Violating these orders subjects a person to arrest, trial, and jail. And yet obeying the orders often isolates the person from his or her community and makes it difficult to get social services, and so most people covered by the orders do not obey them. The scope of the system is large (and therefore costly). In Seattle, for example, criminal trespass charges led to over 10,000 jail days in 2005. And the city attorney estimated that jailing SODA violators cost the city about \$1 million from March 2006 to December 2007. Thoroughly researched and eye-opening.

This is a very readable book about a social problem being faced -- and dealt with badly -- by cities all over the country. The authors explain that homeless and street people are being effectively banished from cities and parts of cities at great cost and little social benefit. This is clearly a book worth reading for anyone interested in this issue.

Read this book on recommendation from one of her students, might have been assigned reading. Book repeated itself in every chapter. For the amount of research done, I was hoping to hear some fresh ideas on what could be done for/about the homeless situation in Seattle. The authors idea (and appeared to be only solution) was to build government housing for homeless to do drugs and drink alcohol in..... The language used was an attempt to evoke sympathy and empathy for the homeless, which we should as a society be concerned about. However I can only remember one or two lines that attempted to sympathize with the communities affected by the issue. No talk of when "disorder" urinates on your child's toys or leaves trash in public parks. The sympathy framing is extensive and overdone. Would you empathize with a an individual that got so drunk he

had to be removed from the bar, then got in his car and got pulled over for DUI after he smashed your mailbox.....now this individual is "banished" from the bar, banished from his car, and banished from the person's residence where the mailbox was destroyed. Maybe we should build him public housing so he can drink more.

This is a great book if you are at all interested in legal/political issues, homelessness, poverty, and of course the main topic of the book - 'banishment', or the (legal) exclusion of individuals from certain places. The book is about the city of Seattle, and being from Seattle myself, I thought that was very cool. It's well written, interesting, educational, plenty of first-hand interviews, and easy to read. The only reason I give it 4/5 stars is because I can't say I 'love' it - I wouldn't have picked this up and read it unless it was assigned by a teacher (which for me, it was)...but I enjoyed it nonetheless :)

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