



# First Strike: Educational Enclosures in Black Los Angeles

*Damien M. Sojoyner*

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California is a state of immense contradictions. Home to colossal wealth and long portrayed as a bastion of opportunity, it also has one of the largest prison populations in the United States and consistently ranks on the bottom of education indexes. Taking a unique, multifaceted insider's perspective, *First Strike* delves into the root causes of its ever-expansive prison system and disastrous educational policy.

Recentering analysis of Black masculinity beyond public rhetoric, *First Strike* critiques the trope of the “school-to-prison pipeline” and instead explores the realm of public school as a form of “enclosure” that has influenced the schooling (and denial of schooling) and imprisonment of Black people in California. Through a fascinating ethnography of a public school in Los Angeles County, and a “day in the life tour” of the effect of prisons on the education of Black youth, Damien M. Sojoyner looks at the contestation over education in the Black community from Reconstruction to the civil rights and Black liberation movements of the past three decades.

Policy makers, school districts, and local governments have long known that there is a relationship between high incarceration rates and school failure. *First Strike* is the first book that demonstrates why that connection exists and shows how school districts, cities and states have been complicit and can reverse a disturbing and needless trend. Rather than rely upon state-sponsored ideological or policy-driven models that do nothing more than to maintain structures of hierarchal domination, it allows us to resituate our framework of understanding and begin looking for solutions in spaces that are readily available and are immersed in radically democratic social visions of the future.

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