



**“Weissman addresses a set of twinned issues that are critical for our understanding of urban education, criminal justice and youth development through a lens of racial injustice: the school to prison pipeline, and growing surveillance/securitization within public schools. She offers a compelling analysis of these dynamics through the voices and from the perspectives of young people who know, and have seen too much.”**

—Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor of psychology and urban education, The Graduate Center, CUNY

## Prelude to Prison

### Student Perspectives on School Suspension

Marsha Weissman

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**“Weissman interweaves her own background, experiences, and insights drawn from her work as a community organizer and advocate for prisoners and youth to cover the extremely important topic of the school-to-prison pipeline, in one of the first books (if not the first) to include and thoroughly incorporate the voices of youth who are directly impacted by the trend.”**

—Tamar Birkhead, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law

By the close of the twentieth century, the United States became known for its reliance on incarceration as the chief means of social control, particularly in poor communities of color. The carceral state has been extended into the public school system in these communities in what has become known as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Through interviews with young people suspended from school, Weissman examines the impact of zero tolerance and other harsh disciplinary approaches that have transformed schools into penal-like institutions. In their own words, students describe their lives, the challenges they face, and their efforts to overcome those challenges. Unlike other studies, this book illuminates the students’ perspectives on what happens when the educational system excludes them from regular school.

Weissman draws attention to research findings that suggest punitive disciplinary policies and practices resemble criminal justice strategies of arrest, trial, sentence, and imprisonment. She demonstrates how harsh school discipline prepares young people from poor communities of color for their place in the carceral state. An invaluable resource for policy makers, *Prelude to Prison* presents recommendations for policy, practice, and political change that have the potential to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

**Marsha Weissman** is the founder and executive director of the Center for Community Alternatives. For more than thirty years, the center has worked to end mass incarceration through alternative-to-incarceration programs for youth and adults and research and policy advocacy to educate the public and policy makers regarding needs for a more effective juvenile and criminal justice system.