



Special Edition: Left Realism Today Guest Editor's Introduction

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Since its birth in the mid-1980s, as a major variant of critical criminology, Left Realism continues to ebb and flow. Furthermore, not all Left realist contributions are alike and some are subject to very heated debates. The fact remains, however, that Left Realism is 'alive and well'. Of course, given that I devoted 26 years of my life (much of it with Martin D Schwartz) to the realist project, I could easily be accused of being biased. Nonetheless, some contemporary empirical support for my claim is the recent publication of Roger Matthews' (2014) book *Realist Criminology*. The main objective of this volume is to use this offering as a 'launching pad' or 'springboard' for broader analyses of the relevance of Left Realism to critical criminology as we know it today.

Matthews' piece is the lead article. Following this are six others that, in part, address his monograph and that also point us to new directions in Left realist ways of knowing. In keeping with the spirit of the *International Journal of Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, the authors constitute an international cadre of progressive scholars, including me, Joseph Donnermeyer, Steve Hall, Russell Hogg, John Lea, Claire Renzetti, and Simon Winlow. It cannot be emphasized enough, though, that this special issue is not a 'love-in' and there is no 'party line' here. All of the authors have strong positions on topics of major concern to academics and activists seeking new ways of thinking critically about crime, law and social control.

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