Dorothy Roberts is George A. Weiss University Professor of Law and Sociology and the Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professor of Civil Rights at the University of Pennsylvania. She is internationally known for her work on the ways that law and public policy implicate questions of justice, especially for women, children and African-Americans.

Public Lecture:  Tuesday, March 31, 2015 at 12:00 - 2pm
Location:  Cone 210 B
Light Refreshments served.

Abstract: The dominant framing of the intersection of foster care and prisons tends to either blame incarcerated mothers for the systemic deprivations their children experience or to ignore these mothers all together. I argue that punishing black mothers is pivotal to the massive build up and operation of both prisons and foster care, and that black mothers suffer from of the intersection of both systems in their lives. In addition, the prison and foster care systems work together to punish black mothers in particular ways that help to maintain U.S. race, gender, and class inequality in a neoliberal age. Looking at this particular intersection of punitive systems exposes how state mechanisms of surveillance and punishment operate to penalize the most marginalized women in our society while blaming them for their own disadvantaged position. Thus, punishing black mothers in the prison and foster care systems obscures social inequities and the need for social change.