



# The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America From Slavery to the War on Terror

*Christian Parenti*

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On a typical day, you might make a call on a cell phone, withdraw money at an ATM, visit the mall, and make a purchase with a credit card. Each of these routine transactions leaves a digital trail for government agencies and businesses to access. As cutting-edge historian and journalist Christian Parenti points out, these everyday intrusions on privacy, while harmless in themselves, are part of a relentless (and clandestine) expansion of routine surveillance in American life over the last two centuries—from controlling slaves in the old South to implementing early criminal justice and tracking immigrants. Parenti explores the role computers are playing in creating a whole new world of seemingly benign technologies—such as credit cards, website "cookies," and electronic toll collection—that have expanded this trend in the twenty-first century. *The Soft Cage* offers a compelling, vitally important history lesson for every American concerned about the expansion of surveillance into our public and private lives.

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