



Conference 2021

Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 2 - Session 4 Track A – Programming and Informal Education

3:00 – 4:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87447930712?pwd=VzlvNWVlOHBLUWQ1WXliY3BNejZTU09>

Rites of Passage for Reentry

Alexander Anderson

Ritual4Return is a 12-week art-education program that guides returning citizens through the process of creating and performing a rite of passage. A rite of passage is a ceremony meant to facilitate a person's transition from one social and spiritual identity to another. When a person is incarcerated, they undergo a rite of passage meant to degrade them from the status of "citizen" to the status of "prisoner" and "convict" or "outcast." But words like prisoner and convict are more than just legal labels. Society defines people by the crimes they've committed, and people can carry feelings of shame and stigma for many years after they've been released from prison and "paid their debt to society." I can speak firsthand about the transformative experience of Ritual4Return because I am a graduate of the program's first cohort in 2009. I also spent 15 years in and of prison. During my incarceration, I obtained a high school diploma and later a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University in Auburn prison. After my release, I obtained a master's degree in social work at Silberman School of Social Work and a CASAC certificate. In 2009, I joined Ritual4Return to address the trauma I experienced before, during and after my incarceration. The experience took me from feeling like a part of me would always be treated like a convict, to feeling completely free of that condition. Recently, I became the executive director to continue helping others define and mark their transition from incarceration into the new life they seek to manifest.



Restoring Our Communities from CTE to PhD

Vincent Garrett

Restoring Our Communities (ROC) is a campus-based academic support program for formerly incarcerated students at Laney College in Oakland, California. The program started in 2016 and has supported over 400 students (note: when we initially started, we also supported systems impacted students). We won a million dollar innovations grant through the California Community College Chancellor's Office which has allowed us to spend money in effort to understand how best to support formerly incarcerated students. Because of this we have been able to develop partnerships and programming that we were unable to do prior, due to a lack of funding. In this presentation, I will discuss the innovative programming of the ROC Program including our partnerships with Alameda County Public Defender's Clean Slate program, Open Gate, Oakland Adult and Career Education and REP; how we're supporting students on state parole, county and federal probation; our pathways model supporting students in Career Technical Education all the way through to graduation and transfer, and our strengths and opportunities for growth.

Being Liberatory With One Another

Carrie Hutnick

The Graterford Think Tank is a group of scholars, learners, teachers, and community members, navigating differences without being defined by them. It has members employed by institutions of higher education as well as members formerly and currently serving life sentences- some instruct college courses inside and some completing graduate and undergraduate degrees. This presentation will discuss the methods by which the GTT resists models of higher education in prison that reinforce theories and practices utilized by systems to categorize, separate, and then reduce people to their relationship to crime and incarceration. We will share how we work to create collaborative models of shared knowledge production across differences by first developing ourselves as a group of knowledge-producers in relationship to one another; as unique individuals who have particular relationships to harm, communities, academia, systems, and abolition that inform and strengthen our collective work. Our mission, educating people to freedom, shifts from focusing on the work we produce, creating experiential learning environments in prisons that promoted traditional hierarchies associated with formal higher education, toward creating the more just, equitable world we believe is possible modeled in the way we work together. We do this so our impact can move beyond educational outcomes, beyond self-imposed or institutional constraints, beyond circumscribed roles that constrain human capacity and reinforce hierarchies. We will describe how we arrived at our approach, our ongoing work of remaining committed to it, and the challenges we face moving from doing liberation work to being liberatory with one another.



Conference 2021

Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 2 - Session 4 Track B – Equity and Inclusion/Programming

3:00 – 4:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84395974813?pwd=eERvYWRLenNhYU1pakdWbzFrUVJCUTog>

Living in Prison is Not Free: College Affordability and Cost of Attendance (Prison Worker Wage vs. Student Pay)

Jarrold M. Wall

With the reinstatement of the Pell Grant, post-secondary education in prison is about to proliferate throughout the nation once again. Matters of equity, therefore, must remain on the forefront. One issue of equity seldom discussed is the affordability of college education in prison due to cost of attendance. Unfortunately, cost of attendance has long affected rates of enrollment and retention in post-secondary programs. Talking about affordability of college in prison might seem odd when tuition, books, and even room and board are paid for. Yet what people seldom consider is that living in prison is not free. As predicted by strain theory, we lose potential students (via enrollment) and current students (via retention) to higher-paying prison and industry jobs. This loss will be demonstrated using two methods. 1) Anecdote: My experience when I was a prisoner-clerk administrating the Ball State University program for over 12 years in a maximum-security facility in Indiana. I will also demonstrate how IDOC student pay grades were the lowest and monthly necessities quickly superseded that pay. 2) Reviewing the Literature: I will highlight several examples in the literature where the loss of wages due to becoming a student were voiced. I will also highlight the importance of how some programs discovered cost of attendance (or work vs. student wage) was an issue before they established their programs by conducting onsite focus groups. Consequently, they developed a solution of incentive pay to increase enrollment and retention. Addressing affordability allows opportunity for all individuals to attend HEP.



Inside Out: Working for a Nonprofit Inside and Outside the Walls

Charles Moore

I was involved for twelve years with Rehabilitation through the Arts (RTA) at both Sing Sing and Woodbourne Correctional Facilities. RTA is a non-profit that uses the transformative power of the arts to help people incarcerated develop skills to unlock their potential and succeed in the larger community. During my time with RTA, I performed a variety of tasks. I was a stage manager for several theatrical productions as well as an actor, and I served on the Steering Committee. Over time, I won the confidence of the Executive Director, Katherine Vockins, who referred to me as her Chief of Staff. I gained expertise in time management, communication skills, and problem solving. I believed that I had a pretty thorough understanding of the organization. When I was released in 2016, I was offered a position at RTA, and I thought I knew exactly what I was getting into. I did not. As a member of RTA inside the walls, I knew there were hurdles to overcome to put on a play or provide art supplies. From the inside, it appeared that RTA was a lot of fun and happy times. I knew the inside challenges—everyone needed a call out to attend meetings, everything that came into the prison needed clearance. As a staff member on the other side, however, I encountered aspects of managing a non-profit organization that I had never imagined. RTA couldn't exist with ongoing fundraising and that was central to our work. Computer technology invaded every aspect of the office. Presentations and daily interactions with new people were required. I was confronted daily with issues related to being the first alumni ever hired, the only related tokenism, language expectations and transitions. I began at RTA with the title of Program Coordinator. I am now the Director of Operations.



Abolish Human Silencing

Justin Allen

My experience as a Peer Educator in the New Mexico Department of Corrections and the interdisciplinary field of American Studies has motivated me to implement Transformative Justice as part of my rehabilitation and life purpose. I am advocating for voting rights for those behind the walls and formerly incarcerated people, to honor the 10th demand of the 2018 Prison Strike. I am currently leading a bill to restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated people in the state of New Mexico. I argue that humans are silenced before we enter the carceral state, while disenfranchisement reinforces civil death. Civil death continues to be a mechanism of slavery that perpetuates the prison industrial complex (PIC) by reinforcing the belief that full citizenship cannot be restored. I will demonstrate how the US Constitution is a framework for human silencing that has relied on the subordination and exploitation of women, Black, Indigenous, queer/gender-nonconforming, and people of color. I will dismantle the arguments used to legitimize human silencing and introduce a Decolonial Dialogue to expose the truth that is obscured by neoliberalism and American nationalism. I implement Critical Race Theory to demonstrate how and why New Mexico has upheld systemic racism despite the arid climate that has prevented plantation slavery. I will explain how the PIC relies on human silencing as a mechanism of murderous heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, land theft, and genocide for the purpose of demonstrating why abolishing human silencing is a necessary path for gender equality, racial equity, and reparations.