

Rise Up: A Conference to Liberate Higher Education During and After Prison 2021 Conference Abstracts

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Thursday, September 9

Concurrent Paper Session 1

1:00-2:00pm

Session 1A: Equity & Inclusion Track

Creating Paths for Others to Follow

Bashir Hawkins, Raritan Valley Community College RISE program

Raritan Valley CC has offered an inside-degree program since 2010. Formal education is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by institutional and personal commitment to integrating the voices of formerly incarcerated scholars into the work. We will use the lens of our experiences to show the importance of business and personnel processes that not only welcome, but prioritize the inclusion of our students in our work. We believe academically mature students can have a strong impact on recruiting, motivating, mentoring, and supporting newer students on the inside. But we also believe that growth in program staff should intentionally include alumni that are working to begin their professional lives. Formerly-incarcerated scholars face challenges when transitioning from education to employment. These range from exclusion from certain industries based on background, to emotional challenges, such as self-doubt, when unfair hiring practices happen. Often, formerly incarcerated scholars have to lower their standards just to create a path for themselves. Some formerly incarcerated scholars have been able to make professional advancements and accept an obligation to assist others who have been similarly impacted. Programs involved in HEP must also be committed to providing pathways for their students. We all have to be conscious that there is a bigger goal, and that goal is to make the path clearer for the next person to follow! This will be a discussion between 2 RVCC employees who were former students, intentionally recruited because of their background (not excluded for it), and will be moderated by the program director.

The Impact of Trauma on Formerly Incarcerated Persons' Use of Webs of Support

Daniel Bullman, From Prison Cells to PhD

Evidence indicates that webs of support can benefit outcomes of individuals as well as organizations. However, little is known about whether the justice impacted population has access to or utilizes support networks in achieving their goals. This paper reports the results of qualitative interviews with 4 adults with varying levels of conflict with the criminal justice system and compares findings with current work exploring the impact of trauma on individually perceived success. Research Question: Does trauma affect justice impacted individuals' use of webs of support? Research Method: 1. Four justice impacted individuals were recruited from two service organizations dedicated to higher education support for the formerly incarcerated. A four-question interview was conducted over video to determine individual perceptions of success, resilience, and use of webs of support. 2. Common themes were identified and compared to current literature examining individual support networks and webs of support after chronic exposure to trauma. Participants reported perceived career success despite the barriers they faced but indicated significantly different reactions to stress ranging from well controlled through planning, to anger and aggravation. All participants believed themselves to be more resilient than non-impacted peers because of resiliency as a defense mechanism. Discussion: Define Webs of Support vs Networking Discuss results of qualitative data. How policy restricts individuals' ability to seek upward mobility due to background through modern redlining. How do organizations or communities build inclusiveness with justice impacted individuals or families? There are varying levels of success across institutions of higher education and religious communities but

establishing true webs of support instead of simple networking remain imperative for individual success and quality of life.

Creating Pathways to Advocacy with the Education Trust's Justice Fellows Policy Program

Omari Amili and Patrick Rodriguez, Ed Trust

The Education Trust is a K-12 and higher Ed policy organization that works to create equitable based outcomes amongst black and brown communities. We have found that the incarcerated population is affected immensely both during their schooling years and after. We have decided to tackle these issues by creating a fellowship that disrupts traditional pathways to professionalism and advocacy. The Justice Policy Fellowship consists of 8 fellows around the nation that have a vested interest in both the rights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people at the intersection of incarceration and education. This program was created hand in hand with formerly incarcerated leaders to ensure the design of a program that specifically focuses on policy training, networking and leadership skills to equip recently released individuals to become leaders and advocates for the issues that face their communities directly. Our presentation will center the Justice fellows as they reflect on their experience thus far, what they are working on and what they are planning their next steps to be. This program is meant to challenge the traditional methods used to train formerly incarcerated people for professional positions within the policy space.

Session 1B: Advocacy Track

Unlock the Bar: Challenging the Barriers to Equity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession

Tolu Lawal and Dieter Tejada, Unlock the Bar (UTB) in association with National Justice Impact Bar Association (NJIBA)

The legal profession most often fosters systemic inequity by protecting the classist, elitist, and white supremacist institutions within America. We see this from the structures and processes of law school, to the barriers marginalized groups experience in the pre- and post-admission process, to the repressive legislations that lawyers either author or defend. It is imperative, so long as the legal profession continues to exist in this form, that the legal field uplifts, centers, and is led by the communities that the law most often harms. In 2020, NJIBA and UTB connected to lead UTB-NY, a coalition that takes direct aim at the barriers to entry into the legal profession set by the New York State Bar through its Character and Fitness (C&F) application. While the C&F purports to determine the "morality" and "professionalism" of potential lawyers, it functionally aligns more with the way the State policies marginalized communities through criminal and civil systems. This means that the Bar disproportionately affects system-impacted applicants who have devoted time and money to the pursuit of a career in law. It has often been said, "those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but furthest from resources and power." No one is closer to the resources and power of the criminal justice system than those in the field of law, yet paradoxically no one is more restrained from accessing and entering the field than those impacted by the system. UTB-NY wants to call in to question the necessity of the C&F, and help envision a future for a truly democratized and accessible legal profession. In symposia, we would like to discuss our campaign, our solutions, and contextualize it as part of the larger discussion about abolition, equity, and collective liberation.

Barriers to higher education for returning citizens in the USA and Australia

Lukas Carey, Independent Scholar

Returning to the community after a period of incarceration can be challenging for anyone, with many barriers existing to a successful return. The same can be said for previously incarcerated people wanting to commence or continue with higher education, their challenges, however, can appear in different forms. This paper will explore the Lived experiences of a previously incarcerated, African American woman who is undertaking Higher education in the USA with a focus on barriers and mitigations and a previously incarcerated, White man teaching in the higher education field in Australia. The importance of lived experience and its value in education will also be explored with a focus on The USA and Australia and transnational similarities.

Speaking Up: Creating space for lived experience

Tina McPhee, Flinders University

This paper is a call to action. It is advocating for meaningful involvement of people with lived prison experience in important conversations or decisions that are about them. It is about giving formerly incarcerated citizens a seat at the table. It is about framing the lived experience voice as an expert in punishment and survival. It is written using my own lived experience of years of incarceration and invasive state surveillance as a carceral citizen. I will not be “free” from the parole system until the end of 2022. I am also nearing the end of my criminological training. I am both a student and a subject. From this standpoint, the following text will explore the concept of lived experience and interrogate the positioning of formerly incarcerated people in institutions that shape and engage criminal punishment policy. By focussing on the university-prison nexus, I can extrapolate both the tensions and opportunities that exist because of this dynamic. I will also explore Australian criminology’s failure to embrace lived experience voices – the voices of people the discipline has exploited and benefited from since the 1800s. Finally, and this is where action is required, this paper will suggest a path forward; a way to work together that benefits us all.

Concurrent Paper Session 2

2:30-3:30pm

Session 2A: Programming & Informal Education Track

Ameliorating Academic Outcomes of Formerly Incarcerated Students through Faculty Development and Ally Training**Taryn Williams, CSU Long Beach**

Senate Bills 1391 in 2014 and Proposition 57 in 2016 have contributed to a boom in the number of formerly incarcerated (FI) individuals enrolling into 2- and 4-year academic institutions in California (Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Students, n.d.). With this increase in FI students entering the academic landscape, their particular needs must be addressed to ensure their success. However, little scholarship on factors affecting FI students' success exists. Based on a systemic review of the literature, this thesis identifies problems that FI students face, such as social stigma, negative familial support systems, and lack of academic preparation. Additionally, this thesis highlights resources that contribute to FI students' successful reintegration, including support groups, student service programs, and student/faculty connections. Using the state of California as a case study to identify what is currently available for FI students, this research proposes faculty development programs (FDPs) as the missing link in ensuring the quality and completion of their degree programs. Because university faculty members are asked to teach students from marginalized groups for which they have no training, FDPs are essential to give them the tools they need to help support specific student subpopulations. No known FDP or ally training programs exist specifically for FI students. This project will analyze and synthesize the necessary components of the structure, delivery, and rhetoric of successful ally training that address other similar student groups – i.e., groups that may be hesitant to self-disclose their status. The goal of this thesis is to inform a comprehensive solution for educators to create inclusive learning environments for FI students—taking into account all of the challenges that affect self-identification—as a model for any college campus.

Navigating Systemic Barriers through Intrapreneurship**Ray Tebout, Independent Contract Consultant**

Criminal justice system involvement presents significant barriers to educational, career, and professional development. This is not only the result of having a criminal record but also, of not having pursued the traditional and/or linear career trajectory, typically available to non-justice-involved parties. Experience and research demonstrates that people with justice system involvement benefit from the ability to define and create their own career and educational pathways tailored to make the most of their unique experiences. My presentation would introduce a conceptual framework based on applying the concepts of entrepreneurship to creating a job, degree, or self-guided training program that allows people to use their justice, or other adverse experiences to define their own career path. While building and starting a business is not for everyone, everyone can benefit from taking an entrepreneurial approach to career development. This is a set of concepts I created, refined, and applied to myself and my coaching clients to obtain degrees, credentialing, jobs, and professional opportunities that are not typically pursued or accessible to people with criminal records. This framework, when applied, allows one to turn their

barriers into strengths to achieve academic and career success, as well as create a unique niche market with limited competition. Participants will be invited to use a one-page worksheet at the end of the presentation to prompt a discussion of how anyone can use this framework to create the career they want despite systemic barriers, misinformation, and personal doubts.

Education Not Incarceration

Dr. Suzanne Phillips, From Prison Cells to PhD

Hello, my name is Dr. Suzanne Phillips and I am married to my husband who had spent 20 years in the California prison system. I have dedicated my career to supporting individuals who have been impacted by the criminal justice system and I would like to share my experiences, education, and research with the group. My family was profoundly and negatively impacted by inadequacies of reentry support systems. Therefore, I understand the importance of education and supportive services for reentry, especially for individuals who have served 10 years or more. At the age of 19, my husband did not yet possess the experiences and education needed to become a productive member of a community. For individuals like him, rehabilitation and reentry support are critical in making reintegration into society possible. My husband's experiences of the inadequacy of the existing support led to my three year research of reentry programs, higher education in the California prisons. I had created a reentry program that I teach to all my students who are currently incarcerated in the hopes that it gave them more tools to be successful upon returning home.

Session 2B: Research/STEM and Advocacy Tracks

Finding Your Inner IT Genius

Joshua Lange, Synergetics Education LLC

I learned how to work with computers to diagnose and repair state vehicles while in maximum security prison, then furthered these skills with my first job during work release. Knowing my way around a computer and the internet was the key to ensure my employment and advancement to regional manager at a Fortune 500 company within two years of release. Since then I've built online and hybrid learning systems worldwide for top 100 universities and three online learning companies operating in 24 countries, and have earned three Masters and a Doctorate degree. With this set of skills, nobody cares about my criminal record. Although I teach Practice-Based Research at the PhD level, this presentation is practical. It will introduce ""MyInnerGenius,"" a free one hour aptitude test used by IBM and Microsoft that will identify whether inmates can thrive in an IT job, and how using the test can help prison education programs to offer specific learning pathways for STEM education relevant to success in transitioning to IT roles upon release.

We Must Not Serve Power; We Must Speak Our Truth to It

Jay Borchert, University of Michigan

As a pioneering and trailblazing formerly incarcerated PhD recipient, I have, over the last 5 years, watched my career descend into shambles, as neither I, nor those around me - my advisors, mentors, and colleagues - had any idea what to do to stop the hemorrhaging. Being a former prisoner PhD was new to everyone, yet the problems I encountered were not new to the academy. Beginning with the personal transformation that ended my criminal career and fueled my long but steady ascent to the PhD and its many successes, my story will serve to show how a radical scholar with a PhD from the top program in his field can be systematically rendered powerless to do meaningful work, lift his voice, or maintain his dignity and independence despite his work gaining readers everyday. Through a non-accusatory narrative of events, the author will show how treacherous the road "at the top" can be. And, in-so-doing will serve to demonstrate, as a call to arms, how absolutely critical a cadre of intensely supportive comrades are to anything approaching career success for any radical formerly incarcerated scholar. We must stand on our own. We must create our own power.

Reentry and the American Dream: People returning to the community share the same dream but lack the same access

Dr. Esther Matthews, Gonzaga University

Researchers and professionals in the criminal legal system typically define successful reentry using one measure: recidivism. However, current recidivism rates suggest something might be missing from this limited definition of

successful reentry. Additionally, research reveals that reintegration is a reflexive process between the individual and the community. The public must support reentry in myriad ways, if successful reentry is to be achieved. To fully understand the various perspectives regarding reentry, and the potential pitfalls, this study used semi-structured interviews and a survey experiment derived from the interviews. Seven formerly incarcerated mentors and 67 people currently incarcerated in two Northeastern prisons were interviewed. Qualitative analysis of the data reveals that people reintegrating into the community have the same goals as everyone else: they aspire to own a house, achieve financial success, have a family, and feel like productive members of society. However, the survey results suggest that people in the community view certain aspects of success, especially the financial elements, as less important for people who have been incarcerated. According to policy and public opinion, people returning to the community – most of whom are from poor, minority communities – appear to be relegated to a second-class American Dream. Given the findings, a variety of policy implications and recommendations will be discussed. Ultimately, race and class equity cannot be achieved if the jobs deemed most appropriate for those returning are in the construction or manufacturing fields and Ivy League institutions are reserved for children whose parents have never been incarcerated.

Brief Talks

4:30-5:10

Room BT-A: Programming/Equity & Inclusion

Higher Education at Attica, 1971-2021

Jason Rodriguez and Doran Larson

The demands of the men who organized and died inside Attica from September 9 to 13, 1971, did not disappear. Among those demands were calls for more contact with the community and for formal education programs. Genesee Community College offered both by delivering credit-bearing classes inside Attica, classes that continued until Pell tuition support was placed beyond the reach of incarcerated people in 1994. GCC programming resumed inside Attica in January, 2011, with the support of a private donor. In 2020, Ashland University of Ohio, an institution that seeks out opportunities to get their online programming into prisons beyond Ohio's borders, was approved to deliver remote, online courses in NY DOCS and at Attica, drawing down the Second Chance Pell accounts of incarcerated students, and to do so even as GCC's in-person programming continues. The New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (NYCHEP) approached our Department of Corrections with concerns related to new program approvals, academic quality, and importance of in person learning but was ultimately unsuccessful in getting the Department to reconsider this decision. This presentation will address the historical irony, and risk, of college programming originally inspired by incarcerated people's desire for face-to-face human contact between incarcerated people and community members, being placed in competition with screen time managed from out of state. It will include thoughts from at least one program graduate and the organizer of the renewed GCC-Attica program. It will address the concerns that we should all bring to thinking about the restoration of Pell eligibility in an era of mass-produced and disseminated online education, and it will locate this discussion in the half-century shadow of the Attica rebellion.

Spreading Love Unapologetically

Gaylisa Cart

I am formerly justice involved and I created a simple program about cognitive behavior and I have presented this material to several people incarcerated since 2014. I presently program in a city jail in Ohio with groups of men. I am also an expert on all areas that this conference involves and I am living proof that people DO change. I broadcast every Wednesday from a radio station and our mission is "Spreading Love Unapologetically", and we talk about various issues and have guests who were previously incarcerated. I have a plethora of resources and information but am not privy to the funding. Hope to hear from someone soon and thank you.

Convict Criminology Testimony: Using polar opposites to fight against the epoch of neo-incarceration with autoethnography

Lucas Alan Dietsche, Transformative Justice Journal/Adams State University

Convict Criminology has existed for more than two decades. The main focus of Convict Criminology is in the classrooms researching various topics from the subjective position of the incarcerated person's experience and theory. There is not much in relation to convict criminology as a vocal and non-academic setting. This research uses evidence on how Convict Criminology can be used to resist the current contemporary epoch of the revitalization of the federal system, private prisons, the criminalization of immigration, and recently even more the criminalization of the activist. What is needed is that convict criminologists by advantage of two conflicting poles eg. Stigma of being a social and academic privilege can use these for the primary use of testimonials through autoethnographies. The convict criminologist is the ex post facto expert by his refusal to acquiesce and defend the law and order stance within the criminal justice system. Their proficiency gives an expert witness account of a particular side of the field. But this expertise is married with theory, research praxis, thesis, and contemporary normalities; maturing their "legitimacy" for society. How useful convict criminologists are depends on the situation they are giving testimony, what information are they willing to disclose, and for what purpose.

Brief Talks B: Advocacy/STEM

Liberation-P2P Program

Eric Shafi'i Bey, From Prison Cells to PhD

I'll be presenting an already established entity and program that I'm with, but with a spin on it from my point of view as well as ideas and resources I've collected over time to suffice future distractions when an individual has been re entered into society. I'll give the 411 on how to accomplish these things while working hand and hand with P2P as a scholar before re entry as well as building a foundation while incarcerated as to curb the distractions I've mentioned earlier.

Mandating Prison-Based Educational Spaces Through Comprehensive Land Use Ordinances- Urban Planning for Recidivism

Robert Woodmark, University of Washington Tacoma

My name is Robert Woodmark, I spent roughly a year in prison in Japan, the entire time in solitary confinement because I was a foreigner. My presentation will focus on ways that urban planners can begin to imagine how they can better serve the incarcerated population through zoning ordinances and provisions, and how they can plan for recidivism. Mandating spaces for prison-based education can be achieved by implementing a relatively straight forward comprehensive community zoning ordinance requiring all institutionally zoned entities to provide a percentage of their total square footage for educational, and schooling purposes. The results will be twofold, first, it will force prisons and detention centers who have no educational programs to dedicate space for those purposes, and second, more students will be able to enroll and participate in the prison-based educational programs that currently exist. This will allow rapid expansion of new and existing programs. The unfortunate side of this strategy is that it is a piecemeal approach to increasing accessibility and outcomes in prison-based learning because it would have to be implemented on a municipal level. Many prisons are in Unincorporated County areas making that task even more difficult. Regardless, it would be effective at achieving the intended results where the ordinance was adopted. The presentation would be centered around the new land use provisions and zoning, a cost-benefit analysis and feasibility report of such a policy, and the cultural shift that today treats punishment as an opportunity for an eye for an eye to a form of punishment that values and supports rehabilitation. The conversation will focus on the benefits to economic sustainability and social equity that providing rehabilitative services to those currently and formerly incarcerated creates- rather than our current system that seemingly values the revolving door that is prison in America. It costs a lot less to provide rehabilitative services than it does to house the masses of incarcerated people. Access to education is an issue of equity and inclusion. It is also largely dictated by wealth. Eliminating the financial obstacle will close the income inequality gap if we adequately invest in prison-based educational programs. While the change in culture would be profound, the changes to local land use laws would not. This is something that could be an effective and tangible way to force the hand of prison-based education in America.

Education in Prison

Nathaniel Jay, John Jay College

My name is Nathaniel Jay, my association with the criminal justice system (residency wise) ended September 28, 2020 after 17 year and nine months. My presentation will be limited to the area of advocacy for education geared towards a career a chosen field of interest. My ideas and experiences are my own. For each of us as people they're different. The trial and tribulation under which I went, was in part based on my personality and interpretation of circumstances and life. No one can define life for you. This is a life imposed right that lasts, life long, with options and decision making along the way that will no doubt affect long term goals and future plans. No one for certainty can guarantee a choice and/or moment of decision, but time will tell. So my encounters with life were first interpreted according to the standard in place, by me then defined as options and possibilities to choose from. The theme of "Rise Up" as based upon liberation and transformative change, is directly corresponsive to my chosen subject area track which is advocacy. I will use my experiences and lived encounters which formed itself into my personal and private life styles. This gives it validation and authenticity in origin and makes it original. The results of my findings are my own, no one else's and therefore cannot be disputed as irrelevant and/or invalid. These are life's lessons and resulting factors in choice and decision making. From my living I emerged and evolved.

Friday, September 10

Concurrent Paper Session 3

12:15-1:15PM

Session 3A: Equity & Inclusion Track

Building a Statewide Network of Formerly Incarcerated Students in Washington

Michelle Burchett & Steven A. Simmons, University of Washington Tacoma

In our presentation, we will be examining the development of the Washington State Student Council on Reentry. We will look at the beginning conversations that developed around Michelle receiving a grant from UW to pursue a community project, the interactions with non-student formerly incarcerated partners, the organizing ideas that were chosen and those that were not, the process of developing a group identity, and the current state of affairs in the group which are continuing to develop over the summer and until the Rise Up Conference event. Mission: As currently and formerly-incarcerated students, we seek not only to break barriers in pursuit of our own education and career goals, but to do the structural work necessary to create doorways where the barriers existed, so that future generations of formerly incarcerated persons can reenter our communities freely, to continue the work in new and more integrated efforts. Vision: We imagine a world where incarceration and recidivism are eliminated through the strengthening and healing of our communities. A world where access to existing resources is increased, new resources are developed, conditions of incarceration are improved, and where the economic and structural barriers to the successful social reintegration of formerly incarcerated peoples are dismantled.

Selling the Dream of Post-Incarceration Life: Education, Teacher / Prisoner, and Justice Work at Home and Behind Bars

Jason John Kahler

On September 19th, 2017, I reported to a low-security federal prison in the Midwest to begin serving a 41-month sentence for one count of possession of illegal pornography. In the years prior, I was a PhD candidate, then a graduate, and eventually a tenured Assistant Professor of English teaching writing at a small public university. In prison, I continued working in education, teaching in the GED program and volunteering to facilitate Poetry Writing and a National Novel Writing Month program through the institution's Adult Continuing Education program. After a little over two years, I was released to home confinement where I completed my sentence and began my five years of supervised release. My presentation will explore the role of prison education in adequately or inadequately preparing for students to live full, productive lives, obtain employment, assume community leadership roles, and establish new / improved personal relationships. I argue prison education systems are ill-equipped to prepare prisoners for much of what comes after the incarceration experience, and in many cases, society is not prepared to accept the story of rehabilitation that gets publicized by our criminal justice institutions. This piece will necessarily be informed by my experience as an educator / prisoner / prison teacher / re-entering citizen, a complicated and fractured identity that this chapter will, in part, attempt to describe. I will write in the form of autoethnography as I explore my time both working "for" the system while being "in" the system, and how

I find paths for change now that I am (mostly) “out” of the system. In part, I will draw upon the journals I kept during my time away to describe what it means to sell education and the power it has in post-incarceration life while simultaneously hoping to take advantage of that power myself. As the call for proposals mentions, my chapter will investigate the permeability of the borders between teacher / student / prisoner / staff / probationer, and the challenges of maneuvering through those ecosystems when one lacks the power to make those moves on their own.

Where Are the Teachers Who Look Like Us? The Need to Increase Diversity in HEP

Lisette Bamenga, Columbia University

Instructors in higher education in prison (HEP) are predominantly white while the majority of the students they teach are Black and Latinx. Students benefit greatly from having teachers who look like them and have had similar experiences. Working in a women’s correctional facility, where many of the students have suffered some trauma prior to their incarceration, the process of instilling self-esteem and a sense of self-worth is just as important as the education we provide. Having professors of color who possess advanced degrees also serves as a confirmation that education opens doors and provides the students with a perspective that inspires them to feel like they can pursue advanced degrees as well. As a formerly incarcerated Black woman with a Master’s degree who is pursuing an Ed D, I feel it is my duty to expose the students in the program to civilians who can relate to their situation. If students feel they have a place in society, they will be more likely to be civically engaged and become change agents in their community. In this presentation, I will describe my outreach to increase diversity in my HEP program by recruiting minority professors as well as instructors who have had legal system involvement. This topic fits well with the scope of the conference which is to center the voice of systems impacted individuals and decolonize and eradicate the racism that exists in the field of higher education in prison.

Session 3B: Advocacy Track

Earn Your Seat at the Table

Sheryl Recinos, MD

Formerly incarcerated people need access to educational opportunities to give them an opportunity to live freely, independently, and reduce their chances for re-incarceration. This talk will focus on ways to increase educational access for juveniles and adults during and post-release. The importance of mentorship and networking will be discussed. Current advocacy issues will be addressed, including “ban-the-box” and restoration of Pell Grants.

Is Our Job Finished after the Four-Year Degree? A Community Discussion

Jarrod M. Wall, Tulane University, Ph.D. Student; Justice Policy Fellow, EdTrust

This presentation would be a community discussion about what our mission in HEP should be. The mission, of course, is to provide quality education and equitable opportunity for retention, success, and completion of a four-year degree. Yet does our mission end with the four-year degree? Some individuals earn their degree right before release; others have years remaining to serve. Should we accept responsibility for further programming opportunities post-graduation? Former students discuss how their “bid” changes after college, both for good (able to procure better paying clerical positions; able to enjoy better reading and the life of the mind) and for bad (a return to the ennui and doldrums of prison after the continual barrage of new ideas, challenges, and attainable goals; the lack of opportunity to use their education). Should we only be concerned about new and current crops of students? What about those who graduate and remain incarcerated? If time allows, we could consider other forms of social justice, such as Occupational Therapy’s “Occupational Justice,” which provides “occupational enrichment”—meaningful activities, roles, and relationships—as an antidote to “occupational deprivation” (lack of meaningful activities, roles, and relationships), commonly suffered by prisoners and other populations as noted in the OT literature. Rather than returning individuals to occupational deprivation, how can we provide occupational enrichment with further post-degree opportunities? As educators, is it our responsibility to continue to provide opportunities for our former students? What current examples exist? Some are: History Project, Think Tank, Participatory Action Research. What are others?

Frontiers of Justice: Men and Women Proposing Policies during COVID

Carlos Ivan Calaff, Wilfredo Laracuenta, Deb Soule, and Charles Watson, Columbia University Center for Justice

The presentation will feature policy proposals developed by students (four women and four men) participating in college-in-prison classes offered by Columbia University in partnership with Hudson Link during COVID. Students identify issues that they care deeply about and over the course of the semester develop these ideas into concrete proposals for policy change. This conference provides the opportunity to demonstrate how the lived experience of incarcerated students can and should inform the policies that shape their lives and those of their families and the justice system more broadly. While the focus will be on showcasing students' policy proposals, examples of how this educational approach promotes policy and pedagogical innovation beyond the prison classroom will be discussed.

Concurrent Paper Session 4

3:00-4:00PM

Session 4A: Programming & Information Education Track

Rites of Passage for Reentry

Alexander Anderson, Stella Adler Studio of Acting

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/Laney College

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, Graterford Think Tank

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.

Session 4B: Equity & Inclusion/Programming Tracks

Living in Prison is Not Free: College Affordability and Cost of Attendance (Prison Worker Wage vs. Student Pay) Jarrod M. Wall, Ph.D. Student, Tulane University and Justice Policy Fellow, EdTrust

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 Non-Profit Inside and Outside the Walls

Charles Moore, Rehabilitation Through the Arts

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, University of New Mexico



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.