MISSION
The mission of the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project (PNAP) is to build relationships of reciprocity that bring artists, scholars, and writers together with incarcerated people and our communities. We believe that access to education and art is a fundamental human right, with the capacity of transforming people, systems, and futures.

2019 PARTNERS & FUNDERS
Field Foundation
I & G Foundation
IL Humanities
IL Arts Council
Poetry Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
Northeastern Illinois University
Northwestern University: Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
University of Chicago: Civic Knowledge Project, Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, and Pozen Center Human Rights Lab
Woods Foundation

ORGANIZATION
Core faculty make up the PNAP teaching collective. A leadership committee facilitates key aspects of the project including events and fundraising.

Directors of Education: Tim Barnett & Erica Meiners
Directors of Community Building: Alice Kim & Timmy Rose
Directors of Art and Exhibitions: Damon Locks & Sarah Ross
Program Coordinator: Timmy Rose
Bookkeeper: Caroline Reid
Website: Ryan Griffis
Honorary Board: Benny Lee, Danny Davis, Bob Dougherty, Michelle Boone, Walter Burnett

Annual Report Design by Nika Gorini

Cover: image credit Grant Omohundro: Graduates listening to Chance the Rapper at the May 2019 graduation.

Right: block print by Zachary Meeks.
November 2019

Dear Friends:

This year we made history. On May 15th the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project (PNAP) along with the Northeastern Illinois University UWW (University Without Walls) Program celebrated seven students who graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees.

The graduation marked the first cohort of students to graduate from Stateville with four-year degrees in over two decades. The ceremony, which took place inside the prison’s gymnasium, featured remarks by Angela Y. Davis, Professor Emeritus at the University of California-Santa Cruz, and Juliana Stratton, Lieutenant Governor of Illinois. NEIU President Gloria Gibson and Acting Provost Wamucii Njogu presided over the event. To top things off, Chicago’s very own Chance the Rapper gave a musical performance dedicated to the graduates. The ceremony marked a momentous achievement for students, staff, and faculty alike, especially in light of the context, where teaching through a lens of social justice means a constant struggle with strict and always shifting rules and regulations.

Nonetheless, there were highlights to our work all year long. In this annual report, you will read about the work of two think tanks and an amazing guest lecture series at Stateville. Outside the prison, PNAP cultural projects circulated to communities around Chicago throughout the year. Currently, Dominican University is hosting an exhibition and has organized a class on transformative justice, which is using PNAP artwork and our book The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences, Working Toward Freedom as a basis for critical discussion.

What started in 2012 as a creative collaboration to connect the struggles inside the prison to the outside world has led to critical interventions into the political discourse of incarceration. Led by PNAP members--incarcerated students, writers, artists, and scholars--our project has fostered deeper relationships and has helped breathe new life for needed criminal justice reform. From day one, PNAP and collaborators have insisted that access to education and art behind bars is essential for establishing a basis of critical discourse between free and unfree worlds. We’ve remained steadfast to that commitment, and we continue to bear witness to the growth of this project’s liberatory seeds.

Sincerely,
The PNAP Organizers, Faculty, and Staff
EXHIBITS AND EVENTS

Each year, art and writing developed in PNAP classes are included in exhibitions, events, and publications. Through this work we hope to build collaborative and inclusive relationships with people who are incarcerated, their supporters, and all of our communities. Over the past year, PNAP has hosted and co-sponsored events throughout the city, including the following.

**Conditional Citizenship exhibition in Pilsen**
Artists William Estrada and Aaron Hughes led print workshops with incarcerated artists at Stateville to explore ideas of “outsider,” “citizen,” “immigrant,” and “other.” The exhibition, Conditional Citizenship, at Uri Eichen Gallery, featured block prints and flags from these classes. One edition of prints included all thirty articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This work will be included in a forthcoming publication. At the exhibition opening Simone Waller, Audrey Petty and Tara Betts all read from work developed in PNAP writing classes.

**The Long Term exhibition and events**
Between 2016-2019, artists, writers and PNAP members created a series of thematic works around long-term sentencing policies and the other long terms they produce: long-term struggles for freedom, long-term loss in communities, and long-term relationships behind the prison wall. These projects included a set of miniaturized ‘survival kits’ for the long term, a hand-drawn animation narrated by people serving long sentences, a set of risographic prints, an audio installation, and works on paper. The works emerged from conversations between artists, formerly incarcerated people in Chicago, and students at Stateville, where people are serving extraordinary prison terms (60, 70 and 80 years), often for crimes for which they would have already been released if sentenced 30 years earlier or in a different country.

PNAP members Damon Locks and Sarah Ross organized three exhibitions and events: at the Washington Park Arts Incubator gallery at the University of Chicago; Art on 51st gallery at Precious Blood Ministries; and Compound Yellow, a community space in Oak Park. Panel discussions, teach-ins, and screenings of documentaries all centered around sentencing policies and movements to end “death by incarceration.” Performances by Anna Martine Whitehead and poetry workshops by Tara Betts galvanized viewers and participants to think about the impacts of these policies intellectually and affectively. In addition, our publication “The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences, Working Toward Freedom” edited by Alice Kim, Erica Meiners, Jill Petty, Audrey Petty, Beth E. Richie, and Sarah Ross, and published by Haymarket Press, was circulated throughout the year in readings and discussions around the city.

This fall, Dave Pabellon, a long-time PNAP supporter, and Clinton Nichols, a PNAP member, have been hosting The Long Term exhibition at Dominican University. Students have read from the book and used the artwork as a basis for critical conversations and their own creative projects. NEIU graduate and PNAP supporter Orlando Mayorga has held regular peace circles with students throughout the semester. Sarah, Tara, Anna Martine, Damon and Clinton also contributed to events associated with the exhibition, creating a robust context in which students were immersed in issues around sentencing policy.
From top, clockwise: image credit Sarah Ross, Flags from “Contingent Citizen” Exhibition at Uri Eichen Gallery; Discussion at Art on 51st with Julie Anderson and Marshan Allen on “Learning from the Juvenile Justice Parole Bill”; image credit Billie Carter, Vickie White and Eric Blackmon write letters to criminalized survivors at “Decarcerate!” a workshop and art-making day at Compound Yellow; Block prints from “Contingent Citizen” Exhibition at Uri Eichen Gallery.
LIST OF CLASSES — 2018-2019

PNAP offered 15 classes at Stateville this year. Instructors are independent artists and writers as well as faculty and advanced graduate students from area universities.

### Draw What You See/Draw What You Dream
*Faculty: Aaron Hughes, Independent artist*

### Our Dances, Our Freedom
*Faculty: A. M. “Martine” Whitehead, Independent Artist*

### Art and Empire in the Ancient World
*Faculty: Luke Fidler, University of Chicago*

### The Social Value of Latinas/os/xs
*Faculty: Michael De Anda Muñiz, University of Illinois at Chicago*

### Manifesta for the Future
*Faculty: Claire Pentecost, School of the Art Institute of Chicago*

### Introduction to Writing
*Faculty: Dr. Simone Waller, Northwestern University*

### Poetry Informed by Contingent Citizenship and Being Human
*Faculty: Dr. Tara Betts, Poetry Foundation*

### Emancipation and Abolition in Historical Perspective
*Faculty: Dr. Kai Parker, University of Chicago*

### Afrofuturism: Science Fiction as Social Commentary and Alternative Visions of Tomorrow
*Faculty: Dr. Clinton Nichols, Dominican University*

### UWW Capstone Experience Course
*Faculty: Dr. Timothy Barnett & Dr. Erica Meiners, Northeastern Illinois University*

### Race and Politics
*Faculty: Dr. Cathy J. Cohen, The University of Chicago*

### Make Your Mark & Fly Your Flag
*Faculty: Aaron Hughes, Independent Artist*

### From Civil Rights to #Black Lives Matter
*Faculty: Dr. Martha Biondi, Northwestern University*

### Movement: Dance and Liberation
*Faculty: Anna Martine Whitehead, Independent Artist*

### PNAP Lecture Series at Stateville

In addition to weekly classes, PNAP partnered with the Human Rights Lab at the University of Chicago to present a guest lecture series featuring scholars, cultural workers, and community leaders, including Lisa Lee, Eve Ewing, Jason Lydon, Erica Meiners, Deana Lewis, Yanilda Gonzalez, and Evan Lyon. The series was available for all PNAP students and explored the following themes: democracy and culture, gender and identity, immigration and health, and race and citizenship.

From top to bottom, image credits:
Block prints by Marshall Stewart, Carlos Ayala and Aryules Bivens
A QUICK QUEER QUIP
Martine Whitehead & Erica Meiners

Martine: At Stateville I’ve taught “movement” classes (aka dance classes), involving a mix of things including conditioning and stretching, lessons in choreography and composition, technique class and associated critical theory. Every dancer must learn to develop an intimate relationship with their body and its relationship to both interiority and the external world, so we spend each class meditating as a group and watching each other (or: being an audience, or: bearing witness).

Erica: I have worn too many hats with PNAP – from teaching classes including a women’s and gender studies class the first “official” semester we offered classes, in 2012!, and before that working with others to organize a lecture series. The last few years I have co-coordinated the pilot degree program. I have also been doing varied “behind the scenes” tasks – including the super sexy work of processing our invoices so people get paid! A question I think about in relation to this work that I always want more time to talk...about with smart people like you is How is this work abolitionist?

Martine: For me this work is abolitionist because students in my class are practicing what it feels like to be a whole human, [by considering] for example: What does it feel like when someone looks at you without judgement? What does it feel like to accept caring critique? What does it feel like to share memories of childhood physical activity? What does making collective joy with our bodies feel like? In addition, we practice meditation and movement work as means of journeying, which is a practice we inherited from our enslaved ancestors. We learn the praise dances they invented on plantations as a way to travel away from the plantation for an afternoon, evening, or lifetime. So we practice getting free via movement.

Erica: Yes, but at the same time like most hard & useful work this is always contradictory. The learning/teaching you facilitate with PNAP in particular reminds me, as the radical geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore wrote, that abolition is about radical struggles for place making. What could be more abolitionist that trying to be present alongside people moving to make freedom at the site of the prison? Others with PNAP have mentioned this as well over the years, but working and learning with others at the prison continues to make me a sharper abolitionist – to see its depth and tentacles, and also, even in a refracted way, to bear witness.

Martine: This is also queer abolitionist work, in the sense that it hinges on radical sensitivity, care, and consent. This is critically queer work because it is foremost about developing an availability to vulnerability. In my classes we spend a lot of time getting to know which of our impulses feel authentic versus reactive, and equal amounts of time looking at each other.

Erica: I love this! The most electric moment I have recently experienced, anywhere, is when your class performed at Stateville - I think it was to a Beyonce song! In this space of the prison – to watch that group move lit up and, yes, queered the room. Everyone was whooping in joy. Such a powerful intervention, a collective joyful moment.
UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS

The first Bachelor Degree program at Stateville in decades

In 2017, with the support of a generous private foundation, Northeastern Illinois University, in partnership with PNAP, initiated the first bachelor’s degree program in an Illinois state prison in decades through its University Without Walls (UWW) program. UWW is a non-traditional program that serves adult students who have professional, community, political, and life experiences that have resulted in significant college-level learning. PNAP members Tim Barnett and Erica Meiners, both NEIU faculty, began the program with a UWW class at Stateville where students established an advisory team and developed portfolios of prior learning, learning goals, and a learning contract. Each graduate was assigned a community advisor with expertise in the students’ area of study and a faculty advisor from NEIU. Over the next 2 years, students took classes and independent studies and consulted closely with advisors to complete their degree. Students graduated in May 2019, marking a milestone in Illinois for the advancement of educational programming behind bars. The graduation ceremony featured remarks by Angela Y. Davis, Professor Emeritus at the University of California Santa Cruz, and Juliana Stratton, Lieutenant Governor of Illinois. The ceremony also featured a musical performance by Chancelor Bennett, popularly known as Chance the Rapper.
UWW Graduates

Each graduate was assigned a community advisor with expertise in the students’ area of study and a faculty advisor from Northeastern IL University.

Joseph Dole is a writer, artist, activist, and one of the co-founders of Parole Illinois. He is actively involved in criminal justice reform legislation and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a concentration in Critical Carceral-Legal Studies.
- Community Advisor: Dr. Chris Rivers, Associate Professor, DePaul University
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Timothy Libretti, Associate Dean, Northeastern Illinois University

Raúl Dorado is an incarcerated student, author, and prison education advocate. His major is Justice Policy Advocacy. His goal is to foster healthy relationships within his prison Community.
- Community Advisor: Audrey Petty, Director, The Odyssey Project, Illinois Humanities
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lance Williams, Associate Professor, Northeastern Illinois University

Darrell Fair’s studies have focused on Social Justice, Community Organizing, Business Entrepreneurship, and Community Relations. For Darrell, social justice means equal participation and distribution of resources to all members of society. Darrell chooses to organize and educate the community to work toward the eradication of inequality.
- Community Advisor: Mollie Dowling, Executive Director, Opportunity Advancement Innovation, Inc.
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Erica R. Meiners, Professor, Northeastern Illinois University

Antonio (T.K.) Kendrick’s depth areas are Criminal Justice Administration and Transformative Justice. He selected those depth areas because his interests are individual and social transformation. UWW has given him the skill set he needs to be a positive force and change agent wherever he goes.
- Community Advisor: Dr. Beth Richie, Professor, University of Illinois Chicago
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Troy Harden, Associate Professor, Northeastern Illinois University

Marshall Stewart is a Native American raised by a Mexican-American family who fostered his love of service and led him to choose Organization Communication and Resource Development for Non-Profits as the depth area for his baccalaureate degree. His degree builds upon his previous education in the medical field, as well as his work in the paralegal profession.
- Community Advisor: Dr. Megan Bang, Professor, Northwestern University
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Brett Stockdill, Professor, Northeastern Illinois University

Devon K. Terrell was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago and grew up with Hip Hop. His UWW depth area is Poetic Justice in Black Culture, which focuses on the use of poetry and art to transform youth culture and society.
“My life’s work is making my life work.” – Devon K. Terrell
- Community Advisor: Dr. Lasana Kazembe, Assistant Professor, Indiana University
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Isaura Pulido, Associate Professor, Northeastern Illinois University

Eric Watkins’ depth area is Urban- American Jurisprudence and Transformative Justice Education. Eric chose this social science field of study to better serve the needs of his community.
- Community Advisor: Dr. Olivia Perlow, Associate Professor, Northeastern Illinois University
- Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kim Moe, Lecturer, DePaul University
“Good morning friends, family, and distinguished guests. Let me start by thanking Raúl, Joe, TK, Eric, Marshall, and Devon for a remarkable two-year journey in which we’ve developed respect for and learned to support one another. Although it fluctuated from class to class who was the smartest, I was always the oldest.

What you see here today shouldn’t be happening, but it is happening. It was made possible by the galvanized, concerted efforts of a plethora of philanthropists, educators, politicians, IDOC staff, volunteers, and family. Words cannot adequately convey how grateful we graduates are for your support, service, and sacrifice.

[In 1994], President Bill Clinton signed a new crime bill. This bill gave states $9,700,000,000 in federal money to build shiny new prisons and hire new police to lock up more people. This was deemed the ‘get tough on crime’ bill, which included ‘truth in sentencing’ and ‘three strikes and you’re out.’ This particular bill led to mass incarceration. And, tragically, this crime bill ended all federal Pell Grants for prisoners. Before that, Pell Grants made possible what we’re celebrating here today. [As I said]... this graduation shouldn’t be happening....

If there are no opportunities for or access to higher education, marketable trades, or transferable skills, how has ...[an]offender been restored to useful citizenship? Do we really expect ... [the formerly incarcerated] to navigate the rough waters of reintegration with no education?

Thankfully, Stateville has improved in this area. When I arrived here in November of 2003, there were only twelve programs—ten religious, one lower college, and a GED program.

Now there are many more programs, and several different colleges offering classes here, two of which offer BA degrees, and one that offers a master’s degree. Education changes the trajectories of lives and families and communities. Education is transformative and empirically proven to reduce recidivism. Whenever and wherever a person goes through the dehumanizing process of conviction, the opportunity for restoration through education presents itself. For that opportunity the seven of us will be forever grateful.”
Devon Terrell’s poem read at graduation

“For Youth Sake”

when you hear them
and you know who they are
when you hear them asking
and begging you to come join
the circus or carnival
where the truth is warped
by a maze of funny mirrors and
the fool has a moment of fame

For Youth Sake

don’t entertain exchanging
your youth and all
the magic that
sprinkle your dreams
for the flash and fancy
of today, for trends
you will abandon tomorrow
understand my son

For Youth Sake

there’s a difference between
you living life and life
living you, and when on
that iffy-trippy road that’s
waiting to be trailblazed by
the fire in your feet
understand the difference between
where you from, where you are
and your destination

For Youth Sake

know that previous generations
loved you before your conception
your family lineage, your parents
men and women you’ll never know
who both consciously and ignorantly
paid the price with their youth
to help you navigate around
the tricks and scheme
to clear the way of truth
to help you become
a leader for us

Image credits Grant Omohundro:
Top: Devon Terrell; Middle: Olivia Perlow, Antonio (T.K.) Kendrick and Beth Richie;
Bottom: Darrell Fair waves to families.
FEAT. RAYON SAMPSON FOR ART AND POETRY

About Art & Poetry

Over the last year we have offered more art, art history and poetry classes than in previous years and had an opportunity to meet new artists and poets in our classes. Together we have developed a sense of shared (creative) language to think about the theme of citizenship, a project we will continue to work on in the coming year. Through discussion, movement, writing and image making we are reminded again and again that where there are people who are deemed not fully citizen, cultural work shapes new forms to articulate the struggle. This is made clear in the words of Rayon Sampson, a student in last year’s movement class and long-time PNAP student in writing and art classes.
Social Dance, by Rayon Sampson

The freedom of movement that is used for expression or communication between one another is my idea of a social dance. Although this freedom of movement may not always lie within the larger context of freedom, they may arise out of a situational or social need. For instance, Capoeira developed out of slavery in Brazil. Another example is how some people feel as if they have to act in order to maintain certain employment or status. Social dances not only rely on our abilities to be creative, we use or move our bodies in ways that our imagination takes us. Social dances also rely on the simple everyday movements that we may take for granted, our mannerisms, the way we walk, the way we look at each other or our styles of dress, of hair, or make-up. Our social dances may portray who we want people to perceive us, but also maybe betray us in showing who we really are. Even though social dances are physical expressions, they are also a way of expressing our emotional, spiritual, financial, cultural and social dispositions in a nonviolent way. Social dances can speak for our urges or desires our wants and needs, they speak for our conflicts both inner and outward, or for our need to fit in or just be heard by a specific audience. I think of Michael Jackson’s “Beat It” or some of the dances in Grease, or the art of breakdancing, particularly because these were more than just dances, they conveyed messages. They conveyed a way of thinking or battling with a person or group in a peaceful, yet creative manner.

When I think of incarceration, I think of all these things. I think of the concept of freedom of movement sitting within the larger context of freedom being restricted. I think of the creativity that is embedded in the minds and souls of the men and women behind bars. I think of our emotional, spiritual, physical, financial dispositions, and our wants and needs to express them in this non-violent way. A social dance has no ceiling or floor and cannot be contained by time or the restrictions of a social structure. A choreography made while incarcerated can represent so much more than just dance, it can help represent our means of communicating, it can be a way of expressing the freedom that is provided by the limitless movements. It can be a way of channeling the strength and character that others in harsh social situations have utilized in order to endure.
The PNAP Think Tank started in the fall of 2017 as a way to support community building and as a space to reflect and refine PNAP’s programming. This year it has grown into a hub of strategic knowledge production around issues of criminal justice reform and long-term sentencing policies. Through discussions with community advocates, educators, artists, and cultural workers, relationships have deepened and networks have proliferated. The Think Tank, facilitated by Alice Kim and Timmy Rose, now meets twice a month and continues to host and connect with well-known thinkers and movement makers around the state and nation. Below is an excerpt from an essay by Raul Dorado printed in the online publication Truthout Aug. 2019.

Raul Dorado [excerpt]

I wake up each morning with the burden of having to serve another day of a life sentence in prison. This debt to society is not measured in years, but in breaths. All life sentences in Illinois are without the possibility of parole (LWOP). So my debt will be paid, in full, with my last breath.

Just as fractions can be converted into decimals and decimals into fractions, there must be a mathematical formula to convert breaths into years and give me a sense of what percentage of my life is leveraged against me. Perhaps I can get there by counting the number of breaths I take in a single day, multiply that number by 365 and divide the result by the life expectancy of an incarcerated Latino male. It’s important to adjust for life diminishing factors such as being male, a minority and incarcerated. It’s estimated that each day in prison diminishes a person’s life expectancy by two days.

I can’t help but to feel upended in this equation. I learned the meaning of the word upended during the housing market collapse of 2008. Homeowners who owed more on their mortgage than the actual value of her home were “upended.” Many people lost their homes.

Considering that I was sentenced to two life terms and an additional thirty years, I fear I may be upended and my life already lost. Do I really owe a bigger debt to society than the actual value of my life? Surely a human life, my life, our lives have some value.

People like myself who are serving lengthy prison sentences are considered to be reaping our “just desserts.” We got ourselves into this mess. I certainly must shoulder much of the burden. At a young age I joined a street gang and embarked on a life of crime. I was convicted of a horrific crime: the murder of two rival gang members ages 20 and 21. I was 19 at the time. I was young, but certainly old enough to understand that the destruction of human life is permanent.

Someone once asked me, “If you took a human life, why should society give you a second chance?” Initially, I struggled to come up with a good answer. It’s not that there are no genuine arguments in response to this question. Every case is different and should be afforded individual consideration. That said, I was put on the spot and admittedly, it’s a difficult question to answer. But I did. There are few times when a good question can be appropriately answered with another good question, but this was such an occasion: “Okay, you tell me, if I didn’t kill anyone, why should I spend the rest of my life in prison?”
Illinois has a criminal liability law on the books that allows for people to be charged and convicted for the conduct of others. This law is known as the law of accountability. Those of us familiar with it know what it really is—guilty by association. Law enforcement officials routinely use it as a dragnet to round up as many people as possible into the criminal justice system, to disappear them into prison.

In practice, however, people who were merely present at the scene of the crime, but not involved, and people who became accessories after the fact by providing a means of escape, are regularly held accountable for conduct not their own. In an article featured in the Illinois Bar Journal, Cook County Public Defender, Brendan Max, put it this way: “...accountability allows a defendant to be prosecuted for murder without having fired a shot, for robbery without having taken any property, or for narcotics possession without having touched drugs” (May 2001/Vol. 89).

This is not just a theoretical exercise. There are people in prison today serving life sentences for first-degree murders they did not commit, while the actual triggerman was only found guilty of second-degree murder, was acquitted, or was never charged and prosecuted. I, and many others like me, are serving life and de facto life sentences for conduct not our own. If we never hurt anyone, why should we spend the rest of our lives in prison?