PRISON + NEIGHBORHOOD ARTS PROJECT (PNAP) is a coalition of artists, educators, institutions and advocates who offer arts and humanities classes at Stateville prison and host exhibitions and events in neighborhood galleries.

2018 PARTNERS & FUNDERS
Anonymous
Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, Northwestern University
Civic Knowledge Project, University of Chicago
Center for the Study of Politics, Race and Culture, University of Chicago
College of Education, Northeastern Illinois University
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Illinois Arts Council
Illinois Humanities
The Odyssey Project
Poetry Foundation
Seminary Cooperative Bookstore
Woods Foundation
And our generous individual donors, thank you!

ORGANIZATION
Core faculty make up the PNAP teaching collective. A leadership committee facilitates key aspects of the project including events and fundraising.
We are fiscally sponsored by Northeastern Illinois University.

Directors of Education: Tim Barnett & Erica Meiners
Directors of Community Building: Alice Kim & Jill Petty
Directors of Art and Exhibitions: Damon Locks & Sarah Ross
Faculty & Class Coordinator: Tess Landon
Development Coordinator: Asha Iman Veal
Honorary Board: Benny Lee, Danny Davis, Bob Dougherty, Michelle Boone, Walter Burnett
Book Keeper: Debra Williams
Website: Ryan Griffis

2018 Interns: Johnny Thrower, Chris Salapatas, and Marchon Williams
October 2018

Dear Friends:

This year was marked with some big changes and new projects. We started teaching poetry and art classes at Stateville six years ago and we have been expanding our mission ever since.

Over the past year, we brought on a part-time development coordinator, welcomed our first class of students to a new degree program, and started a Think Tank inside the prison. We also created a new structure, with co-directors anchoring three pillars of work: higher education, community programs, and art and exhibitions. Each area includes working both in and outside of Stateville to build knowledge and support movements to end the criminalization of our communities and the reliance on incarceration as a solution to harm.

The end of this year also marks the conclusion of two years of art and writing around the theme *The Long Term*. Since 2016, artists, writers and members of the PNAP collective have been working on projects to visualize and examine long-term sentencing policies and the long terms they produce: long-term struggles for freedom, long-term loss in communities, and long-term relationships behind the prison wall. The projects emerged out of our collaborative work at Stateville prison, where our students are serving extraordinarily long prison terms (60, 70 and 80 years), often for crimes for which they would have already been released had they been sentenced 30 years earlier, or in a different country. A team of PNAP faculty edited an anthology, *The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences, Working Toward Freedom*, published by Haymarket Press and released this fall.

We are planning a series of book events in Chicago and around the country to spur activism and discussions about ending long-term incarceration and building real safety in our communities. We have also organized an exhibition that will travel throughout Chicago, educating communities and policy makers about the impacts of long-term sentencing on incarcerated people as well as their family members and communities who are de facto ‘locked up’ with their loved ones. The traveling exhibition features a hand-drawn animation developed with artists at Stateville about how they experience extremely long prison terms; works on paper; risograph prints by 15 Chicago artists; a newly developed audio installation; and, a series of video interviews with formerly incarcerated people, advocates, and family members.

*The Long Term*, both the book and the exhibition, tells stories about the struggle for justice as we continue to lock up whole communities, leaving people’s statuses as citizens, parents, husbands, wives, and community members, at best, in a kind of limbo for decade upon decade. This work urges us to imagine and enact new strategies to address harm—strategies that do not rely on the confinement of a cage. The stories challenge us to undo policies that expand the reach of the police and prisons and that often crush communities, for the long term.

We hope that you will join us in the coming year as we have these important conversations bringing together communities at Stateville and throughout the city of Chicago.

Thank you for your support,

The PNAP Organizers and Staff
Tim Barnett, Alice Kim, Tess Landon, Damon Locks, Erica Meiners, Jill Petty, Sarah Ross & Asha Iman Veal
EXHIBITS AND EVENTS

Artwork 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 communities. Over the past year, PNAP has hosted and co-sponsored events throughout the city, including those below.

The Long Term Exhibition Opening at the Arts Incubator at Arts + Public Life

Notes on Territory Performance with Anna Martine Whitehead and Damon Locks at the Arts Incubator at Arts + Public Life

Book Release for The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences, Working Towards Freedom at the Arts Incubator at Arts + Public Life

Teach-In on Reversing Long Term Sentencing at the Arts Incubator at Arts + Public Life

It’s Now Mural Unveiling Celebration at the Washington Park Field House

Washington Park Community Paint Day at the Washington Park Field House

The Long Term Print Release Party and Reading at In These Times

Passing Time: (In)Significant Moments Exhibit at the Sullivan Galleries

PNAP Friends and Family Day at the Sullivan Galleries

Challenging Electronic Monitoring in Cook County with the Chicago Community Bond Fund

Building the Prison-to-School Pipeline with Danny Murillo at In These Times

Women Behind Bars: A Discussion with Victoria Law with the UIC Social Justice Initiative

South Side Weekly 2018 Lit Issue Release Party at the Smart Museum

Letter writing event at Hyde Park Art Center with UIC Museum and Exhibition Studies Program

Mom’s Day Cards Against Prisons with Moms United!, Chicago Books to Women in Prison, Black & Pink, and the Illinois Deaths in Custody Project at the Read/Write Library

Design + Abolition with Dr. Shana Agid and #NoCopAcademy at Gallery 400

Day of Reflection on Mass Incarceration with Justice Studies Club and Formerly Incarcerated Students Together at Northeastern Illinois University
POETRY: “WHERE I’M FROM”

Creative writing from students in the Mapping the Self in Community (Spring 2018) workshop at Stateville was featured in South Side Weekly’s annual Literature Issue. Included in this special issue were a series of “Where I’m From” poems by Kevin Betts, Bryant Isom, Jason Muñoz, Robert Ornelas, Andre Patterson and Lonnie Smith, as well as a nonfiction essay (“The Basement”) by Naja Triplett. Excerpts from these works were read aloud by PNAP faculty Tara Betts and Audrey Petty at a release party at the Smart Museum in August.

Lonnie Smith

I am from gym shoes, from Converse and Adidas.
I am from the industrial complex of blood, sweat and tears. Vintage, placid, refuge of refuges.
I am from mother-in-law tongues, daisies and apples trees, abrasive, plentiful and challenge.
I’m from potluck and dysfunction. From Theola and Imogene. I’m from the judgmental and bourgeois. From make friends and be a friend.
I’m from Antioch, baptized in the spirit of being mindful.
I’m from St. Elizabeth, that smelled like ammonia and new birth, and all the blood of my clan passed through these corridors.
Collard green accented the fried chicken that snaps, crackles and pops in the black cast iron skillet. From mystic Uncle Ernest who died way too soon. He was a man of honor.
The empty void of cousin Kelley who got lost in the fire, his spirit hovers around the lot that was once called home. Windex shined under the decor of every table adjacent to plastic-covered furniture, where warm eyes and smiles met you, in custom frames of all shapes and sizes, they’re the heirlooms of our roots. Life softens the strength of family ties, but a home stays in the heart.

Robert Ornelas

Donde eres?
I’m from where Mexican and American culture crash and clash into a new culture.
Yo se donde musica is Motown, Ranchera romantica, Rock-n-Roll, Disco, Metal and Pop are intertwined. Projects next to the houses are all one until the gangs came. I’m from where drugs destroyed our imagination and families where t.v. had cartoons worth racing home for.
I’m from pancakes and bacon at breakfast, tacos of chicken at dinner.
I’m from where you can have a Black or Mexican or white girlfriend.

Jason Muñoz

I am from plantain steak sandwiches, from Tapatio sauce and Champ’s Cola.
I am from the building whose walls are covered in spray paint, “Viva Puerto Rico,” “Maria’s a slut.”
I am from where marigolds only bloom in the hearts of a special few.
I’m from Friday night Capricou, and Saturday night bar-room brawls.
From Papa Miguel, and Mama Chave.
I’m from good intentions and procrastination.
From “Jesus loves you” and “So help me, God!” I’m from “real Christians,” the kind whose women can’t wear lipstick.
I’m from Humboldt Park, home of Puerto Rican pride. From arroz con gandules and seven seas soup. From the love-at-first sight of my mother and father. I am from love.
FACULTY PROFILE: TARA BETTS

Dr. Tara Betts recently began her second year as PNAP’s resident Poetry Teaching Artist in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. Dr. Betts is an accomplished poet and educator. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Break the Habit* and *Arc and Hue*. Here, she is interviewed by PNAP faculty member and Co-Director of Community Building, Jill Petty.

Why do you love Chicago? (Or, what do you love about Chicago?)
Chicago is my adult home, like the rhythm of my breath. I could say that I love the food, riding down Lake Shore Drive, its rich legacy of writing, music, and art, and how people tell you what they think with direct sincerity, but Chicago is the place where I feel the most at home.

Which practices feed your creativity and writing?
Walking, sleeping, reading. Sometimes, movies and television to think about storytelling. I look at visual art or listen to music. At this point, I ask what strong feelings that subjects elicit for me? What is my personal connection to them? Honestly, I feel that I’m growing as a writer and trying to take good care of myself. That feeds writing too.

What has been a surprising thing about teaching at Stateville?
Stateville reminds me of why I wanted to teach. Oftentimes, university students are only concerned about grades. My students at Stateville consider how classes relate to life and better understanding the world. They express the kind of intellectual curiosity that I appreciate from students.

What has been a challenging thing about teaching at Stateville?
One of the challenges about teaching at Stateville is not really the prison. It takes a lot of energy to make the commute and go through the various gates after being searched, but it’s part of the process. The difficult part for me is hearing how people perceive teaching there. They either look at you with awe or express abject fear, as if they don’t understand that people make mistakes, and are still capable of critical thought. Yes, some people have committed crimes. Some people were in the wrong place at the wrong time, or they are dealing with an overtly unjust system. I wish people who know I teach there approached it with less judgment and considered what we need to do so people don’t end up in prison.

What are you hoping to accomplish with your students this year?
I’m hoping to pull together another anthology. I would also love to record their work at a Chicago venue and hopefully bring it back so they can see it. Last year, we did audio recordings of poems for the PNAP website, completed an anthology, and some students submitted poems for publication.

Who have been your most important teachers?
Some of my most important teachers have been women. When I was in undergrad, I was deeply influenced by Dr. Ayana Karanja who headed Black Studies at Loyola University Chicago. Dr. Susannah Cavallo who is the head of the Rome Center in Italy now. I worked with Paula McClain and Anne Waldman in my MFA program, and Maria Gillan and Jennifer Stoever in my Ph.D. Outside the academy, it’s been Lisa Alvarado and other women that remind me of my whole self. One of my closest mentors is the poet and semi-retired professor Afaa Michael Weaver. He is like family. He reminds me of how mentorship is a long-term commitment. I’m also blessed to have encouraged some amazing young women. My students are always teaching me.
PNAP offers 13 classes a year at Stateville in a range of topics across the arts and humanities. Instructors are independent artists and faculty from area universities. This year, we welcomed 10 new faculty members and more than 20 visiting guest speakers and artists to classes.

Introduction to Environmental Justice  
Faculty: Dr. Antonio Reyes Lopez, DePaul University

Writing Workshop: Creating Character  
Faculty: Tess Landon, PNAP Staff

Printmaking: Developing a Collaborative Portfolio  
Faculty: William Estrada, Independent Artist

Art and Animation (a two semester course)  
Faculty: Damon Locks, Independent Artist  
Sarah Ross, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

A Survey of Black Writers (a two semester course)  
Faculty: Dr. Tara Betts, Poetry Foundation Poetry Teaching Artist

American Public Schools  
Faculty: Dr. Eve Ewing, University of Chicago  
Dr. David Stovall, University of Illinois at Chicago

Justice and Politics in Shakespeare’s Plays  
Faculty: Dr. Wendy Wall, Northwestern University

Black Women in History, Politics and the Law  
Faculty: Dr. Cathy Cohen, University of Chicago  
Dr. Barbara Ransby, University of Chicago  
Dr. Beth Richie, University of Illinois at Chicago

Critical Education: Power, Knowledge, and Change  
Faculty: Dr. Tim Barnett, Northeastern Illinois University  
Dr. Erica Meiners, Northeastern Illinois University

Mapping the Self in Community  
Faculty: Audrey Petty, Odyssey Project  
Jill Petty, Northwestern University Press  
Dr. Miriam Petty, Northwestern University

Introduction to Criminology  
Faculty: Dr. Clinton Nichols, Dominican University

Guests at The Long Term exhibition opening view artwork created in the Art and Animation course.
THE LONG TERM

Implemented in the 1990s and 2000s, long-term sentencing policies were ushered in as bipartisan reforms and an extension of the “tough on crime” logic. Recent state and federal efforts to reduce mass incarceration have focused on “non-violent drug offenders.” However, if the United States were to free all people incarcerated for what are called “non-violent offenses,” mass incarceration would still stand at just over 700,000, and the racial disparities of criminalization would be even more evident. While freeing people is cause to celebrate, these proposed reforms neglect half of the nation’s state prison population and forget that at one time, long-term sentences were not the norm. The advocacy organization Families Against Mandatory Minimums reports that people released from prison in 2009 served sentences that were, on average, 36 percent longer than those released in 1990. The Sentencing Project reports that one in nine people in prison are serving life sentences, and one in seven have sentences of fifty years or more. No other country locks people up for the amounts of time that we do in the United States. People locked in, or headed to, maximum security prisons are marked for death by incarceration.

Over the past two years, members of the PNAP community both in and outside of Stateville have created work around the theme of the long term. The results of this collaborative project are a book of collected essays and a travelling exhibit designed to educate and engage the public around the crisis of long-term sentencing.

-Sarah Ross, Co-Director of Art and Exhibitions
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: ELTON WILLIAMS

Co-Directors of Art and Exhibitions, Damon Locks and Sarah Ross, in conversation with PNAP student Elton Williams.

Damon Locks and Sarah Ross: Tell us a little about yourself.
Elton Williams: My name is Elton Williams. I’m 47 years of age, father to three sons (one currently serving in Afghanistan) and ‘grandpa’ to two gorgeous granddaughters. I am an artist who paints mainly because of my appreciation of the craft. I was born in Chicago but spent my developing years between Kankakee, Pembroke Townships and Joliet.

DL and SR: When were you first introduced to art or art history and when did you start making art?
EW: I imagine I was first introduced to art while in school making ‘palm-print turkeys’ for Thanksgiving. My brother and I spent many hours making war against one another by drawing tanks, airplanes and soldiers on paper, with explosion effects from successful attacks. My 22-year-long interest in art began on Illinois’ Death Row. Back then, in 1996, I wasn’t really interested in art, it was just the thing to do on the Row. Everyone was producing some form of artwork and I decided I’d continue the tradition. Needless to say, I grew to enjoy it—creating something out of nothing appealed to me.

DL and SR: Who taught and mentored you to make art?
EW: I was taught by some of the best artists the IL Department of Corrections had to offer: William T. Jones, William Brody, Willie Enoch, Anton Brown and others. These guys, also condemned individuals, took the time to share with me the wealth of their artistic knowledge. And they watched over my shoulder to make sure that I made the best use of it.

DL and SR: Do you have favorite artists that you look at for ideas?
EW: I don’t know that I have a favorite artist. Currently I’m studying the paintings of Eugene Delacroix. Something about his style makes me want to pick up a paintbrush. For ideas, I look at magazines, photographs, etc. I also engage in conversations with people and sometimes a peach is plucked from the air and a picture comes to life.

DL and SR: What’s your favorite medium to work in?
EW: Oil paint. I just really like the ease with which it flows and blends, allowing me to create or emulate some of the most fantastic effects.

DL and SR: What drives you to make art?
EW: First, is the realization that I was created in order to create. The second reason is my need to redeem as much of this perceived ‘lost time’ as I possibly can and painting allows me to do that.
THINK TANK: CHALLENGING DEATH BY INCARCERATION

In the fall of 2017, PNAP initiated a Think Tank at Stateville to work with a group of students in community building efforts and to get input on our courses and programs. Over the last year, we have been meeting once a month and hope to begin meeting twice a month in 2019. Since our inception, the Think Tank has evolved into an initiative examining long-term sentencing policies in Illinois and nationwide. We are exploring and developing strategies to challenge policies that effectively mean death by incarceration for many PNAP students and others facing life or virtual life sentences.

To foster connections between PNAP students and community leaders on the outside, we have a number of guests lined up to meet with the Think Tank including: Janae Bonsu, BYP 100; Timmy Rose, People’s Response Team; Aislinn Pulley, Black Lives Matter Chicago; Jason Lydon, Black and Pink; Jeff Deutsch, Seminary Books Coop; and Dayo Harris, Village Leadership Academy. The Think Tank is currently working on creating educational materials about sentencing policies that can be used to help educate our communities about the devastating consequences of Truth-in-sentencing laws, mandatory minimums and other law and order statutes. Facilitated by PNAP faculty Alice Kim and Jill Petty, the Think Tank is comprised of eight PNAP students: Lester Dobbey, Joe Dole, Raul Dorado, William T. Jones, Howard Keller Jr, Andre Patterson, Michael Simmons, and Devon K. Terrell. They are poets, published authors, visual artists, fathers, brothers, pro se litigators (aka jailhouse lawyers), a barber, and an aspiring youth minister; all are survivors of long-term incarceration who are actively working toward freedom for all.

-Alice Kim, Co-Director of Community Building

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: DEVON DANIELS

Co-Directors of Art and Exhibitions, Damon Locks and Sarah Ross, in conversation with PNAP student Devon Daniels.

Damon Locks and Sarah Ross: Tell us a little about yourself.
Devon Daniels: My name is Devon Daniels. I am a son, grandson, brother, uncle, a father, and grandfather. I grew up on the west side of Chicago, in Austin.

DL and SR: When were you first introduced to art or art history and when did you start making art?
DD: I was first introduced to art by a family member. Also my mom used to design clothes so I watched her work. I first started making art in 2007. One of my cellmates has a Lee Hammond drawing book and I decided to mess around with drawing eyes and noses. My mother encouraged me and a few brothers [in prison] gave me advice on how to bring pictures to life.

DL and SR: Do you have favorite artists that you look at for ideas?
DD: There are a couple of artists that inspire me. The first one is Kerry James Marshall and a second would be Chuck Close. I go everywhere for ideas but I love looking at other artists.

DL and SR: What’s your favorite medium to work in?
DD: Graphite.

DL and SR: Have PNAP classes shaped your experience as an artist?
DD: I can go on and on about what I’ve learned from my PNAP family but I’ve most learned how to expand my creative process...A PNAP class that really helped me a lot was taught by Ryan Griffis. That class taught me how to see!
UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS

I'm excited about my future and the future of these men who struggle for academic education. We are the community. Disgraced, shamed, and forgotten. But we are still the community and a part of the human family. Even with this death sentence a lot of us find our way home. I hope all Americans ask themselves, what type of neighbor do I want? Educated, skillful, healed with hope? Or uneducated, unskillful, broken, and hopeless? -Devon Terrell

With generous support from an anonymous donor, in September 2017, PNAP partnered with Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) to offer the first secular degree program in an Illinois prison in decades at Stateville Prison. Last summer we admitted eight students into the University Without Walls Program from a pool of 48 qualified applicants.

The University Without Walls (UWW) program, established in 1975, is a competency-based, accredited program at NEIU that leads to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. UWW programs are in operation at other colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and there are a small, but growing, number of degree programs that emphasize learned competencies across the United States.

Designed particularly for returning adult students with an exceptional array of formal and informal learning, UWW’s mission is to empower adult students by providing individualized and flexible paths to baccalaureate degrees to prepare our diverse community of adult learners for leadership, service, and lifelong learning. Like any undergraduate students, all UWW students—including those incarcerated—demonstrate competencies across all the typical liberal arts areas (fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional studies), and in their depth (or major) area.

Each student has a different profile: transferrable academic credits from a cluster of post-secondary institutions, portfolios of writing and scholarly work, prior learning in college level classes that were not credited in the prison, and more. This program started by working to assess all prior learning and to make an individualized plan for each students’ pathway through the degree program. For example, one student in our cohort, Antonio, has a significant amount of prior learning including university level credits in math and engineering prior to being incarcerated. While in prison he has taken a number of social science, humanities and writing classes. During his degree program he will strengthen his writing skills through coursework and study, and also work to deepen his knowledge base around his area of interest—community based violence prevention strategies.

Currently, all of our students—Devon Terrell, Joseph Dole, Eric Watkins, Raul Dorado, Phil Hartsfield, Marshall Stewart, Darrell Fair, and Antonio Kendrick—are on track to graduate in May 2019. We are currently assessing the possibility of supporting another cohort. With your support, this may be possible!

-Erica R. Meiners, Co-Director of Education

The program has allowed me to validate the 15 years that I've spent amassing knowledge, reading, learning, researching, writing essays before I knew how to write an essay, getting a few credits here, a certificate there, trying to get my works published, getting all the education I could, and show that it means something now—and that my possibilities are limitless. -Phil Hartsfield

Even if I never get out, my voice will carry further because I now have credentials (by societal standards) to back up what I am saying. This will make it easier both to get published and be accepted to speak at professional/academic conferences. -Joseph Dole

As children we were taught that our level of education determines our future success and that our social standing will be proportionate to our level of engagement with our community. This holds true for prison communities as well. Those few of us fortunate enough to receive college level education are the elders and leaders of our communities. We are sought out for spiritual guidance, legal and educational advice, to settle disputes, and much more. Education helps me improve my personal relationship with my family in many ways. For instance, I have a younger sister serving our country as a nurse and captain in the US Army. For her, I’ve become her wise older brother. -Raul Dorado