



RGOODMAN
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Introduction to the Joint Committee on the Arts

The Joint Committee on the Arts (JCA) was formed to oversee legislative policies regarding the arts and other creative industries throughout the state. The Joint Committee on the Arts is authorized and directed to study, investigate and analyze programs and issues pertaining to the arts in California including arts education and the economic impact of the arts in California. The committee also reviews arts legislation and programs in other states.

What are Prison Arts Programs?

They are creative, arts-based classes, workshops, and projects offered in prison to inmates. They include the following art forms: visual arts, dance, theatre, music, and creative writing (including poetry). Meditation and yoga are also included in this category. Sometimes they are combined into multi-disciplinary programs.

These programs can be facilitated by professional artists, teaching artists, students, professors, prison staff, volunteers and non-profit organizations.

History of Arts in Corrections Programs in California

Prison arts programs are not a new idea, As far back as the 1940's, prison warden Clinton Truman Duffy, son of a former prison guard, decided that San Quentin was in need of reform—both for the sake of the inmates, for those who worked inside the facilities, and to benefit the general population upon prisoner release.

Warden Duffy initiated groundbreaking rehabilitative programs for the inmates. Notably, he authorized the first prisoner developed radio programs and newspaper. Then he expanded prison arts programs to include music, painting, drawing, and creative writing. He also enhanced sports and religious programs at San Quentin. A precursor to the well-regarded arts in corrections programs today, inmates were permitted to showcase their work at prison arts shows and music performances. Recidivism among inmate participants in these programs was reported to have decreased with this increased access to the arts and other programs.

Jump to 1975, with the establishment of the California Arts Council, signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown. Eloise Smith, a Bay Area artist, is appointed to serve as the Council's first director. That year, Arts Council Director Smith meets a prisoner while visiting the Vacaville state prison to view an inmate art show. The inmate asks her whether there would "be a way she could help get professional artists to teach inmates inside the prison". (Ref: Larry Brewster, 2010 Study.) Inspired by this conversation, Eloise Smith and her husband, historian Charles Page Smith, create the Prison Arts Project in California in 1977. Eloise becomes the project director.

The program was implemented in three phases: 1) initially as a three year grant-funded pilot program at Vacaville 2) followed by a Department of Corrections funded project at six state facilities and 3) then expanded to a first-of-its-kind and the largest statewide program in the country. Funding sources included the California Department of Corrections (and Rehabilitation/CDCR), the California Arts Council (CAC) and various foundation grants administered through the William James Foundation.

In 2003, the California Arts Council was forced to eliminate its Artist-in-Residence programs, including those in prison facilities, when its budget was cut by over 90%.

The California Arts in Corrections program continued, although at a reduced level, up until 2010 when CDCR was forced to curtail its state funding of these programs as a result of its own state budget challenges.

Non-profit Organizations Step up Efforts to Fill the Void

Recognizing their demonstrated value and aware of the void in public funding, non-profit community based organizations have continued to deliver programs to inmates in coordination with CDCR.

New Initiatives

The Prison Arts Coalition has identified 43 states with prison arts programs. These programs are implemented in low security to high security facilities. Some noted arts in corrections programs in other states include the Western Youth Institution/North Carolina's music and choir program taught by 86-year old Millicent Gordon; the Prison Performing Arts program in Missouri jails and prisons for adults and juvenile

offenders (featured on NPR's *This American Life*); and the longstanding program created by educator and artist Benny Andrews in New York which became a model for a number of states across the country.

Data from the 1980s demonstrated that arts programs reduced the costs of disciplinary administration and reduced recidivism. For example, research from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) showed that one year after release, arts in correction participants had a "favorable" status rate of 74.2%, compared to 49.6% for state parolees as a whole.

A renewed effort is underway to re-evaluate and potentially rebuild the infrastructure of the CA Arts in Corrections programs. A new \$65,000 Arts in Corrections pilot program initiative was recently launched, funded by the NEA, the California Arts Council and several private foundations. The CA Lawyers for the Arts in partnership with William James Association will coordinate a series of 8 to 12 week courses at five CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitative sites across the state. Larry Brewster, professor of public administration at the University of San Francisco School of Management, is leading a formal evaluation of this demonstration project.

"We are well aware of the benefits of the arts as part of the matrix of rehabilitation programs in our State correctional facilities, and have made a commitment to offer the services of sponsors to assist with arts programs," wrote C. Elizabeth Siggins, Director of Rehabilitative Programs, CDCR.

Tim Virga, Warden at CA State Prison, Sacramento stated: "I believe the new demonstration projects give the men who live in this institution a way to use their time in a constructive manner. When I started in this department in 1983, it had a lively and robust hobby craft and arts in corrections program. Over the years budget cuts hit and those were some of the first programs to go. We've always worked to keep arts programs up and running here at New Folsom. They lead to less violence and fewer problems with staff. When outside instructors come to listen and help inmates refine their skills, they always appreciate having access to these classes because they know how rare they are."

"Our project goal is to facilitate the development of a plan with key state and local agencies to restore these valuable programs," noted the

application from California Lawyers for the Arts, "including art programs at the state penal institutions and county jails, as well as artist residencies coordinated with community organizations that prevent juvenile delinquency"

Overincarcerate/Undereducate: Can the Arts Make a Difference in At-Risk Youth?

Arts-based programs for juvenile offenders are highly empowering and transforming for the participants. They offer youth a way to express themselves in positive ways and have also been shown to have a positive impact on self-image and self-esteem.

In 1988, a Ross, Fabiano and Ross study over an 18-year period bore this out and concluded that introducing youth to the arts can be effective in promoting positive youth development. This study, and the more recent study authored by James Catterall, "The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth", support the premise that participation in arts programming reduces risk factors that cause youth to be more susceptible to problem behaviors and crime. Instead, arts engagement can lead to higher levels of positive outcomes (social/civic participation, increased academic progress, and higher high school graduation rates).

Can the arts help to pave a path of promise not punishment for our youth in our underserved communities?

2013 Arts Related Legislation (a representative sampling/other bills also pending in current legislation)

AB 580 (Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian)

This bill would continuously appropriate \$75,000,000 annually from the General Fund to the Arts Council to be used for grants as currently authorized by law, thereby making an appropriation.

SB 571 (Senator Curren D. Price, Jr.)

Arts for Kids Fund. The personal income tax law authorizes taxpayers to contribute amounts in excess of their tax liability for the support of specified funds. This would allow for voluntary contributions on the personal income tax form to support the California Arts Council and its programs.

SB 789 (Senator Curren D. Price, Jr.)

This bill would act to amend Section 5074 of the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles. It would bring the use of funds and reporting of the Arts Specialty Plate in parity with the other specialty plates.

Resources for Further Information

California Arts Council

www.cac.ca.gov

The Actors Gang/Prison Project

Email: prisonproject@theactorsgang.com

www.artsforla.org

www.Williamjamesassociation.org

<http://www.inner-cityarts.org/>

<http://www.calawyersforthearts.org/>

www.homeboyindustries.org

www.INSIDEOUTWRITERS.org

www.jailguitardoors.org

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April 23, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Carol Hinds. I am the parent of an inmate at CSP ~ SAC. I am also the Secretary of the Inmate Family Council at the prison and have been involved with that board for the past 9 years.

I am here today to address the importance of Arts in Corrections and to encourage the efforts to reinstate this as part of the regular programming for inmates.

My son was only 18 years old when he entered prison. The bad path he had suddenly chosen in his life was fortified by the environment he found inside the walls. The gang mentality was there to greet him and foster further bad choices on his part. I knew this was not what was at the core of my son, but it was the only choice that a frightened, impressionable 18 year old with no street smarts thought he could make if he wanted to survive. This is too often the scenario that vulnerable, young inmates like him, face.

So what do they do to survive? It's true, that there are the mandated education and self-help programs, but that's not always the right fit for everyone. Since the closure of Arts in Corrections, CSP~SAC has been fortunate to have volunteer-based music and creative writing programs in place. These programs have provided everything positive, and I truly believe are responsible for saving the life of one 18 yr old, young man who finally learned that "invincible" no longer defined him.

There will never be any doubt in my mind of the positive affect that both the music and creative writing programs have had on my son as well as others like him. Music ignited a talent for classical guitar and song writing that he never knew he had. Creative writing has been an enormous therapeutic tool allowing him to connect to personal issues that he otherwise would not be willing to address.

In November 2012, the inmates, along with their guitar teacher, performed a 2 hour long recital in the visiting room. Their personal connections with the music, pride in their work and sense of accomplishment was palpable.

One inmate shared with me that it's been 17 years since he has done something that he loved...with people he cared about this much...and with people who cared for him. Emotions were alive in him for the first time in years. They have all embraced this opportunity 110% and value it more than we all know.

We're fortunate at SAC that the current administration supports programs of all kinds. The Rec Therapist, Jim Carlson, has been key in bringing this music and writing in. However, when key people are no longer in place, and the programs are volunteer-based, the music and creative writing could easily slip away if we're not looking, and this is my fear. Arts in Corrections must be put back as part of the regular programming for inmates.

I cannot emphasize enough the need to preserve these programs at SAC as well as expand them statewide. Do not change a thing or re-invent this wheel. CSP~SAC and the Rec Therapist serve as a perfect model for other prisons in order to continue this amazing process of healing and positive growth.

It is not acceptable to watch prisons implement mandatory programs under the guise of "rehab" and then whittle them down to a bare minimum. The opportunities are then few, and our expectations of inmates then become unrealistic when measuring their successes.

If we do not create more good examples via positive programming, we will end up with more horrible warnings in the form of prison violence.

Rehabilitation stands a chance if done correctly. This is the perfect opportunity to move in the right direction and provide the rehabilitation that our prison system touts. All inmates deserve this chance.

I thank you for this opportunity to share my comments and am hopeful that you can appreciate my personal experience as useful and valuable information in moving forward with this very important fight.

Sincerely,

Carol Hinds
Parent of an inmate
Secretary of the Inmate Family Council
CSP~SAC

86-Year-Old Music Teacher A Hit Among Jailed N.C. Youths

by Briana Duggan

March 27, 2013

From WFAE



"I try very hard not to be judgmental and offer these guys understanding," says Millicent Gordon, the music teacher at Western Youth Institution. "They desperately need someone to listen to them."

Briana Duggan/WFAE

Prisons are notoriously difficult places to work in for obvious reasons. But one prison in North Carolina has an employee who is indispensable: a grandmother.

Millicent Gordon is not a guard or doctor — she's a music teacher. And she not only brings her warmth to the state's only youth prison, but her popular butterscotch candies, too.

Only one person at Western Youth Institution has a reserved parking space, and it's not the warden. Smack dab outside the front door of the 16-story youth prison, halfway between Charlotte and Asheville, is a small sign. It reads, "Reserved for Millie Gordon" — the music teacher.

Her music classes and choir are made up of the state's youngest offenders, but she says she's never been scared.

"Some of them have done murder. Some of them have done rape, just any crime you can think of, somebody there has done it. And the best way to handle them is to treat them all like grandchildren," Gordon says.

She doesn't ask about her students' crimes. Her secret to success, she says, is not judging them. That and the butterscotch candies don't hurt.

"Although there are a lot of disrespectful people in this facility, nobody disrespects Ms. Gordon.

"When you finish a paper in her class you get butterscotch and everybody love[s] butterscotch," says Kaseim Anderson, one of her students. "When you get the butterscotch you have to say thank you. Although there are a lot of disrespectful people in this facility, nobody disrespects Ms. Gordon."

Gordon always wanted a career in music. She even took classes at Juilliard. But when marriage and kids came around, music became a side item.

Then her husband left her. Not long after, Gordon says, she had a dream of young men reaching through prison bars. When she woke up, she remembered a call she had received two years prior — a man asking her to start a music program at the prison down the road in Morganton.

She called him back.

"As soon I said, 'This is Millie Gordon.' The man who had called me said, 'Are you ready to start that music program?' And I said, 'You mean in two years you haven't found anyone?' And he said, 'I guess we've been holding it for you,' " she recalls.

Now 86, Gordon still teaches three classes a day, about 10 students each class.

On the chalkboard in a beginner's music class, above several scribbled music notes, Gordon had written her own note: "You can if you think you can."

She dismissed class early, but not before she concluded her other lesson.

She passed out a poem called "I Am Special." Amid some chuckles, the students took turns reading.

"I am beginning to realize that it's no accident that I am special," a student read out loud.



For many inmates, Gordon's music class is their first. "But when they discover they have some talent, it's very exciting," she says.

She said they're actually lucky to be in prison.

"And that's what's kept me here all these 30 years, is that you guys are special, that God has chosen you," Gordon told her class. "If you'd stayed out on the street you might be dead now, and you know some of your friends are deceased."

She rarely hears from students once they get out. She's not allowed to contact them for a year and by then they've usually gone on somewhere else.

"But I turn them over to God and say, 'He's your child now, you know what to do,'" Gordon says.

"I never thought in my youth, when I was studying for a career in music, that in my old age — in my 80th decade — I would be doing the work that I'm doing behind bars. Thank you, father," she laughs.

April 28, 2013

Young Inmates Find a Voice Through Short Films

By DANIEL E. SLOTNIK, NEW YORK TIMES

An expectant hush fell over more than 300 young adults packed into a theater at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center as a screening of short films was about to start. Amirah Harris was palpably excited — this would be not only her first time seeing her work on the big screen, but also her first time seeing it outside of jail.

As her 90-second short began last week, Ms. Harris started mouthing the words to the score she had chosen, “Complicated,” by Nivea. Then the script began unfolding, with Ms. Harris nodding her head as the audience digested her words.

She beamed when the audience applauded at the end of her film, which she made while incarcerated on Rikers Island.

“I was blunt, I was being me,” she said moments later. “I felt loved.”

Ms. Harris, 20, is a graduate of Tribeca Teaches, a program that instructs young people in 21 schools in New York City and Los Angeles on how to make movies. She was part of the inaugural class of about 40 female inmates at East River Academy, an alternative high school at Rikers.

Administrators do not consider such instruction indulgent or frivolous. They hope that mastering a difficult computer program and creating a work of art will raise inmates’ self-esteem and confidence, familiarize them with computers and prepare them for their eventual release.

Dora B. Schriro, commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction, called Tribeca Teaches “spot on” and an invaluable addition to the Rikers curriculum.

“We were focusing in particular on creating a robust after-school program, first to reduce idleness because that keeps the kids safer,” Ms. Schriro said, “but not just to fill the time but to provide opportunities that might enrich their lives and help them find something to pursue.”

In November, Flonia Telegrafi, a teaching artist from the Tribeca Film Institute, which facilitates the program, began joining classes at East River Academy twice a week. She said she showed the Peter Sollett short film “Five Feet High and Rising” to the inmates and had each create video responses titled “Letters to Donna,” among other activities.

“I got a great response from the students because they’ve seen it in their communities, or in their lives,” Ms. Telegrafi said. “They were earnest in a way I hadn’t really experienced.”

Two of the video letters, including Ms. Harris’s, were shown at the screening last Tuesday, which featured short films by Tribeca Teaches’ students from all the schools.

"The students are ecstatic" about their work being shown to peers outside of jail, Ms. Schriro said. "The whole school is quite jazzed about this."

Of course, teaching at Rikers involves challenges unlike those in even the most troubled public schools. Video cameras are forbidden, so footage for the films either had to be archival or shot off the island, by volunteers from the Maysles Institute. All media had to be approved by the Department of Correction before it was allowed into the classroom. The roster of students changed regularly, as inmates were released or transferred to other institutions and 50-minute class periods were occasionally truncated by alarms (Ms. Telegrafi emphasized that she had never been concerned about her safety while teaching there).

Ms. Telegrafi said the most important attribute for a teacher at Rikers was patience, both with the time-consuming procedures of a disciplinary institution and with students of different ages, skill and comfort levels. She said the program served several purposes like giving the young women a sense of control over their futures, and that perhaps the films created would help the outside world face its prejudices against former inmates.

"It ultimately brings up their confidence and validates their experience," Ms. Telegrafi said. "It's important to show that just because they're inside Rikers doesn't mean they don't have a voice."

Ms. Harris was sent to Rikers last summer and released in February. She is taking classes toward the General Education Development test, known as the G.E.D., and lives in Brownsville with her mother and one-year-old son, Divine. She would not discuss why she went to jail.

After the show, Ms. Harris said she thought Tribeca Teaches was a wonderful experience and hoped it continued at Rikers.

"Being in there, it's like you don't really get to do things and you're bounded to certain activities," she said.

Moments before the screening Ms. Harris met the actress Taraji P. Henson. She posed for photos on the red carpet with Ms. Henson, then gushed "That's so going on Facebook." She immediately began tapping away on her smartphone, star-struck, then walked in to take her seat in the theater.

In Italy prisons, conditions are poor, but theater is thriving

Though Italian prisons struggle amid overcrowding and underfunding, 110 prison theater groups have formed, including an acclaimed troupe of mobsters and drug traffickers at Rebibbia.

February 10, 2013 | By Tom Kington, Los Angeles Times



Italian film director Matteo Garrone, shown in 2008, cast a convicted Naples... (Michael Robinson Chavez...)

ROME — "For our next play, it's either Xenophon, Aristophanes or 17th century French comedy — and I would like some opinions," said the director to his troupe.

The actors sitting around a theater in Rome had just settled in to discuss future projects — and to mull over how the last production they participated in became a film that had narrowly missed out on being an Oscar nominee.

Keeping an eye on proceedings was a guard, since every performer was a convicted mobster or drug trafficker and the theater was in Rome's high-security Rebibbia prison.

The inmates are part of an extraordinary reservoir of acting talent in Italian prisons — 110 theater groups have sprung up behind bars — which has overshadowed the country's professional thespians even as prison conditions plummet amid overcrowding and underfunding.

"Italy leads Europe in prison theater, and without it the situation in jails here would be much worse," said Carmelo Cantone, the head of prisons in the Italian region of Tuscany.

Film director Matteo Garrone used real-life Naples gangsters in his acclaimed 2008 mafia drama, "Gomorrah." Then he went further, casting Aniello Arena, a former Naples hit man doing life in a Tuscan prison, in his film "Reality," a lead role that won rave reviews at Cannes last year.

At Rebibbia, theater director Fabio Cavalli has pulled in 30,000 spectators since 2006 to watch plays staged by three theater groups he runs.

"That makes the prison one of Rome's top 10 theaters," said the former actor, who was first asked to direct inmates in plays a decade ago.

Cavalli's rehearsals for and production of Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," using convicts from the prison's high-security organized crime wing, were the basis for "Caesar Must Die," directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, which won the Golden Bear award at the 2012 Berlin International Film Festival. The film was Italy's candidate for the foreign-language Oscar this year, but failed to make the short list. It's scheduled for release in Los Angeles on Feb. 22.

For Cavalli, who appears in the film, not a whole lot separates the violent gangsters he works with from professional actors.

"Convicts in the high-security wing, who hail from the Neapolitan Camorra, Sicilian Cosa Nostra, Calabrian 'Ndrangheta and other clans, may not be cultured, but they are intelligent, have something to say and have great memories, leadership and powers of seduction," said Cavalli. "So it is like working with professional actors."

If Cavalli is extracting acting gold at Rebibbia, he believes that he is also giving something back.

"On average, 65% of Italian prisoners go back to committing crimes after their release, but for those who have acted in jail, it's nearly zero," he said.

That does not mean they can put their past behind them. One extra from "Caesar Must Die," a Neapolitan *camorrista*, was shot dead after his release last summer.

Before the first meeting of the inmates in late January to pick their next play in the wake of the success of "Caesar Must Die," Cavalli confided that tension in the group had risen.

"People lost their heads a bit thanks to the film's success. Then some actors were transferred to other jails, including lead actor Cosimo Rega, and there has been a reshuffling of leadership in the acting group, which has a consequential effect on the hierarchy in the jail itself," said Cavalli.

When the meeting kicked off, Cavalli sought to relax his stars by having them discuss their approach to acting. Many played down the idea that brash mobsters automatically make great actors.

"It's more a Neapolitan thing. Stepping into a role comes naturally for Neapolitans," said Giacomo Silvano, 40, one of the many Naples *camorristi* in the group, who was dressed fashionably in white jeans and blue polo neck, bore a passing resemblance to Richard Gere, and had the steady, unnerving stare typical of mafia members.

"It's simple," added Antonio Frasca, 33, also a Neapolitan, who is in his eighth year of a 26-year sentence for mafia crimes. "We are good because some of us have now been doing it in jail for years."

Silvano also cited the deprived upbringing of many of the inmates and their long years behind bars as sources of inspiration. "People asked if we made the murder of Julius Caesar convincing because we'd killed people ourselves, but it is actually down to the suffering we have experienced," he said.

Ten years after Cavalli set to work, Rebibbia now boasts Italy's biggest prison theater program, including a group of otherwise isolated sex offenders, police informers and corrupt police officers.

In January, the European Union condemned overcrowded conditions in Italy that have included three convicts packed into one-man cells at some prisons, the legs of their bunks sawed down so they could be triple-stacked. More than 700 inmates have committed suicide since 2000.

To keep them busy, prisoners are now offered a wide range of cultural activities, including restoring ancient Roman ceramics dug up near Rebibbia and cooking at the in-house restaurant open to the public at Volterra prison in Tuscany, which uses guest chefs from Michelin-starred restaurants.

"Theater is the most visible because it draws the crowds," said Assunta Borzacchiello, a spokeswoman for the Italian prison system. "It started in the 1980s and has multiplied since, with the encouragement of governors, because it gets prisoners feeling involved."

Italy's oldest theater programs, which launched in 1988, is at Volterra, where "Gomorra" director Garrone was electrified by Arena's acting talent. Arena is serving a 20-years-to-life sentence he received after he joined a five-man Naples mafia hit squad in 1991 that killed three rival clan members in a drug dispute.

After filming Garrone's "Reality" while on day release from Volterra, Arena impressed critics, who likened him to Robert De Niro, and he has received offers for more film parts. With the possibility of being moved to house arrest in a year, Arena said he might nonetheless stay close to Volterra to carry on working with Armando Punzo, the director who set up the prison's theater program.

"Acting has taken the blinders off me," he said. "Now I am always thinking about why people react in certain ways."

Like other Italian convict-actors, Arena lists De Niro among his favorite actors. He also names "The Shawshank Redemption," the 1994 prison escape story starring Tim Robbins, as one of his favorite movies.

"That's not because Robbins escapes from jail in the film," he said, "but because he sets up the library at the jail. He fights for culture, just like Armando Punzo has done at Volterra."

Kington is a special correspondent.