



Touching Revolution: Creative Responses to Mass Incarceration
is an ongoing project by Gregory Sale, Mark Strandquist,
and Courtney Bowles.

With amazing support and assistance from:
Catherine Akins , Will Taylor, Linh Lam, and Eric Susser.

Endless thanks and respect to all of our guests and contributors.

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at Carnegie Mellon University, and many many others.

Touchingrevolution.weebly.com



MEET OUR GUESTS
Some New and Old Friends

In 2001, Gregory Sale conducted the first iteration of Touching Revolution at the Phoenix Art Museum. The project involved a series of live telephone interviews with people located around the world and in whose lives the experience of revolution figured prominently.

At the 2015 Open Engagement Conference at Carnegie Mellon University, Courtney Bowles, Sale and Mark Strandquist will host an expansive public conversation connecting with individuals across the United States who are directly involved in some of the most dynamic efforts to transform the criminal justice system.

With only 5% of the world's population, the U.S. incarcerates 25% of the world's prisoners. Since the War on Drugs began in the 1970s, U.S. prison populations have risen 700%. For almost 50 years, this campaign has sought to define and reduce illegal drug trade through the criminalization of drug usage, the militarization of police, and military intervention abroad. Today, after decades of escalating prison spending, high recidivism rates, and devastating disproportionate impacts on communities of color and those living in poverty, people of all walks of life are starting to agree that something needs to change.

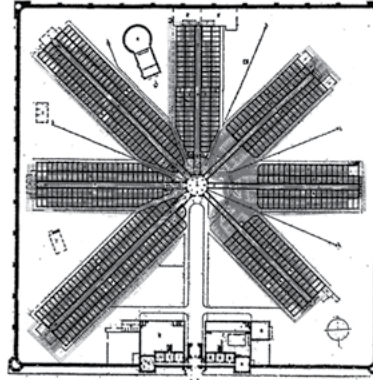
How can we reform a system that continuously invokes notions of warfare?

Touching Revolution: Creative Responses to Mass Incarceration functions as a vehicle for creating a constellation of inspiring efforts to radically reimagine the US criminal justice system. It will operate as a platform for showcasing and performing how 'touch' (connecting two distinct entities through conflict, compassion, and/or solidarity) is implicit and necessary for any revolution. In this way, people engage these serious issues emotionally and immediately.

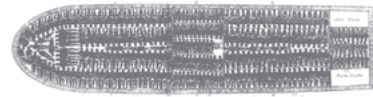
Comprised of conversations, interactive performances, and pre-recorded segments, the event will take place in a mock news/talk show set during a 90-minute live program. Segments will highlight organizations and individuals who use aesthetic gestures and political strategies as a vehicle for sowing the seeds of revolution. **Join the conversation!**

NOW MEET OUR GUESTS! SOME OLD AND NEW FRIENDS!

PRISONS



SLAVE SHIPS



ON DRY LAND

JustSeeds members **Jesse Purcell** (Montreal) and **Mary Tremonte** (Toronto) will discuss JustSeeds portfolio projects around mass incarceration and how these open source advocacy tools present alternative models for printmakers. Thank you to JustSeeds member **Shaun Slifer** (Pittsburgh) for sharing the *Critical Resistance* portfolio.

More prints and incredible projects can be found at: www.justseeds.org

Thanks to Mary Tasillo, of Philadelphia's **Soap Box**, for burning screens so we could help spread these incredible prints! www.phillysoapbox.org

END THE ATTACK ON OUR COMMUNITIES!

BUILD FAMILIES NOT PRISONS!

80% of women in prison are mothers with children under the age of eighteen.



All prints from the *Critical Resistance* and *Migration Now!* Portfolio Projects

Credits (from left to right): Meredith Stern, Kevin Caplicki, Andalusia Knoll, Melanie Cervantes, Kristine Virsis



justseeds.org
 artist's cooperative

ANTI-RECIDIVISM COALITION



As an organization, **Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC)** and its founder Scott Budnick are doing groundbreaking work to help youth and young adults get a fresh start. In California, where recidivism rates approach 75% for 18-25 year olds, all ARC members, comprised of formerly incarcerated men and women, have committed to positive change in their lives, and most attend community college.

The members not only benefit from ARC's support, they also actively participate in an advocacy network and share their stories with legislators to convince them that rehabilitation is possible. ARC's demonstrable successes include restored budgets for prison college programs and legislation enacted to mandate more humane sentencing for juveniles. This occurs at a particularly opportune time when Californians appear more open to change. In a recent criminal justice ballot initiative, Prop. 47, California reclassified many low-level drug felonies as misdemeanors and reallocated savings to crime prevention and treatment.

ARC's emphasis is on helping its members learn the necessary skills to reenter society in productive and healthy ways. It teaches them how to mine their life experiences to create narratives that speak directly to their audience, be it a politician, a journalist, or the person next to them in line at a coffee shop. In presenting their crafted life stories, they expose the flaws and problems within the system and offer solutions to address them, influencing both policy and public perception.

Dominique Bell (ARC member, activist, and ambassador for change) and Chip Warren (strong ARC ally and advocate, writer and documentary filmmaker) will lead a conversation about how storytelling can not only enlighten and persuade, but also shift public perception about this vastly misunderstood segment of our society.

www.antirecidivism.org

Photos include, in order of appearance: Dominique Bell and Scott Budnick, Alton Pitre with grandmother Nechie Pettie, Calvin King, Barack Obama, and Scott Budnick

*Justseeds Artists' Cooperative is a decentralized network of 30 artists committed to making print and design work that reflects a radical social, environmental, and political stance. With members working from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, Justseeds operates both as a unified collaboration of similarly minded printmakers and as a loose collection of creative individuals with unique viewpoints and working methods. We believe in the transformative power of personal expression in concert with collective action. To this end, we produce collective portfolios, contribute graphics to grassroots struggles for justice, work collaboratively both in- and outside the co-op, build large sculptural installations in galleries, and wheatpaste on the streets – all while offering each other daily support as allies and friends.

*From the JustSeeds website

96 ACRES PROJECT



While he sees trends toward new reform-minded legislation among the state's current leadership, Blackburn observes that the strong predilection for capital punishment does not leave room for creative criminal justice alternatives. In this context, he questions about his ability to have a real impact, both because of how little one can actually accomplish to transformed the entranced system from within and how these efforts end up being co-opted by the system. As Blackburn says, "innocence work is legal gorilla warfare." He contemplates real change occurring through creating powerful imagery with symbolic resonance that can affect people on a visceral level, making them aware and changing their feelings about the justice system.

HOW OUR IDEA OF WHEN WE DECLARE



JEFF BLACKBURN

As founder of and chief counsel to the Innocence Project of Texas, attorney Jeff Blackburn is both an active participant and an astute observer of the legal system. The harsh punitive streak through American criminal justice has deep roots in the American West. Blackburn has made it his life's work to reveal gross injustices in the system and biases against people of color and the poor.

From 2001 until 2005, Blackburn represented thirty-eight people falsely convicted in the infamous 1999 Tulia, Texas drug bust, eventually obtaining full pardons and civil damages for those involved. In 2009, he represented the family of Tim Cole, who was falsely accused of rape and ultimately died in prison.

Blackburn's advocacy resulted in the first posthumous exoneration in Texas history.

“THIS IS A STORY ABOUT JUSTICE GETS CORRUPTED WAR ON SOMETHING.”



96 Acres is a series of community-engaged, site-responsive art projects that involve community stakeholders' ideas about social and restorative justice issues, and that examine the impact of incarceration at the Cook County Jail on Chicago's West Side. 96 Acres uses multi-disciplinary practices to explore the social and political implications of incarceration on communities of color. Through creative processes and coalition building, 96 Acres aims to generate alternative narratives reflecting on power and responsibility by presenting insightful and informed collective responses for the transformation of a space that occupies 96 acres, but has a much larger reaching outcome.

www.96acres.org

Born in Chicago, **Maria Gaspar** is an interdisciplinary artist engaged in practices that individually and collectively mediate and occupy the socio-cultural aspects of given sites. In her community-engaged projects, she creates action-based and performative art experiences with youth and adults that explore the social and political body through long-term processes. Working at the interstices of artist, facilitator, collaborator, and organizer, Gaspar has developed large-scale community arts projects that are multi-layered, long-term, and involve support from local organizations and public participation.



INTERFERENCE

ARCHIVE

With artist, activist and archivist, MOLLY FAIR

In September, 2014 *Self-Determination Inside/Out*, an exhibition exploring the resistance of incarcerated people and their allies opened at Interference Archive in Brooklyn, NY. Through the display of art, publications, audiovisual recordings and ephemera, the show addressed a wide range of issues and events ranging from the Attica Rebellion, political prisoners, AIDS education, prisoners-as-laborers, the struggles of incarcerated women and queer people, to the current wave of hunger strikes in prisons and detention centers across the country. Curated by Molly Fair, Anika Paris, Laura Whitehorn, Ryan Wong, & Josh MacPhee

Why is an archive, specifically an archive like Interference (in both content and methodology), important to the activist struggle against and around mass incarceration?

For myself, and others involved in Interference Archive (IA), one of the main motivations for conceiving of this project as an “archive” is that we—activists, organizers, or politicized cultural workers—could potentially create a space to preserve, organize and make accessible the cultural materials which tell our stories of resistance, on our own terms. There is a tremendous amount of art and media that comes out of movements—banners, leaflets, buttons, etc.— and most people consider the value of this material to be temporal. After its immediate use, ephemera might be discarded, or it might be collected as remnants that serve to remind us of crucial moments of collective power from below.

People who have donated their personal collections of flyers, posters, audiovisual recordings, and other materials to IA, understand the project is a place where these materials will be kept in circulation, and therefore these histories will be kept alive and recounted from the perspectives of people who participated in them. In practice, this relates to how we choose to arrange and describe materials, or the contextual information that is recorded to make them accessible. People with firsthand knowledge of these events often do this work. We also understand that continued access to these materials is one way we can retain control over our representation and narrative—similarly to a ‘people’s history’, we are creating a people’s archive.

AND THAT’S THE KEY ISSUE.



(3) GENDER/QUEER RESISTANCE

High profile cases such as Joan Little (1974), Dessie Woods (1976), the New Jersey 4 (2006), Marisa Alexander (2012), and CeCe McDonald (2012) have highlighted the ways in which the prison system polices gender and how women’s and trans-people’s self-defense is criminalized. Through resistance inside, amplified by support mobilized on the outside, these struggles have reframed public discourse about policing and incarceration, and whose safety the prison system protects.

(4) ABOLISHING CONTROL UNITS

The torturous conditions in control units— or supermax prisons—have led to immense organizing efforts amongst those inside and outside the prisons. While almost entirely isolated, those incarcerated in these units have organized hunger strikes inside, and mobilized those outside to large-scale protests and legislative activism. The most effective has been in Illinois, where a coalition of prisoners, their families, artists, and activists shut down the state control unit at Tamms in 2012.

have undeniably been at the forefront of prison and other social justice movements, even while simultaneously experiencing marginalization and stigmatization within them. By acknowledging these complexities, we were able to portray a more nuanced historical narrative and also move beyond the inside/outside dichotomy.

The collection of materials assembled for this exhibit conveys the stories of people in prison organizing for their lives, along with friends, family and solidarity networks. On display were materials like fliers for AIDS/HIV health fairs created by curator and former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn while she was incarcerated, phone messages recorded by the organization Families for Freedom of hunger strikers describing the inhumane conditions at Etowah County Detention Center, and numerous print publications like jailhouse newspapers and communiqués from political prisoners like Assata Shakur and Sundiata Acoli. All of this media and cultural material serves as powerful evidence that incarcerated people have always been engaged in the work of articulating the ways in which the prison system is working just as it was designed—to oppress, control poor people, people of color, women, queers, migrants, and revolutionaries, all while making a profit. Over the course of the exhibition, the archive became a space for people to convene and share stories of how they have fought back, exploring legacies of past organizing, and envisioning a world without prisons. Likewise, we are transforming the archive into a living breathing space in which to prefigure this future. ■

PRISONS AREN'T SAFE FOR ANYONE, —CeCe McDonald



This is particularly pertinent to telling the histories of struggles around mass incarceration. As curators of Self-Determination Inside/Out, we aimed to center the exhibition on the experiences and stories of incarcerated people. Often these stories are told from the perspective of people outside doing support work, which some might argue is for logistical reasons. There are many state-driven mechanisms to repress, silence and marginalize the voices of people behind bars, but nevertheless, the boundary between inside and outside prison remains permeable. There are numerous instances of incarcerated people self-organizing, both to change their immediate conditions and to reshape society at large, which have greatly impacted, inspired and often been in concert with organizing outside.

While some of the more infamous prison rebellions (such as Attica) have rightly received attention from both mainstream and independent media as well as being more widely historicized, other rebellions and modes of organizing which are less visible, or sensational tend to be under-recognized in both dominant and alternative historical narratives. Throughout the process of organizing the exhibit we were very much aware of how our own subjectivities—whether as feminists, queers, people of color, prison abolitionists or as a former political prisoner—would affect our curatorial choices. Our own and other people's experiences fighting for justice, not just visibility within the broader movement against mass incarceration, impacted and informed decisions to center the exhibit around issues like women fighting for health care, liberation for trans* and queer people imprisoned for acts of self-defense, and AIDS/HIV self-education groups which formed in prisons even before groups like ACTUP were organized. We were able to explore how people organizing around these issues

(1) The Attica Rebellion Sparks Widespread Resistance: On September 9, 1971, one thousand men incarcerated in the penitentiary at Attica, NY seized control of the prison. They proclaimed, "We are men! We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such," announcing that the battles for human rights and freedom crosses prison walls—and that leadership for those battles often emerges from within those walls. On the heels of Attica, countless rebellions, small and large, took place in other prisons (including women's prisons) around the country.

(2) POLITICAL PRISONERS: The US government has consistently denied that it holds any political prisoners, yet has long used incarceration as a means to control political dissent. The repression of political prisoners in 60s and 70s such as George Jackson, Angela Davis gained massive media and outside attention. The government continued to lead an attack to repress Puerto Rican, Black nationalist, Native American, Chicano, and white anti-imperialist movements, resulting in an increase in political prisoners. Beginning in the early 2000s, an increasing number of activists from environmental and animal rights movements along with Muslims have been imprisoned for their political associations.

THE PEOPLE'S PAPER CO-OP

The People's Paper Co-op (PPC) is an ongoing initiative by the Village of Arts and Humanities that brings artists, civil rights lawyers, and returning citizens together to clear barriers for thousands of Philadelphia residents. Through a highly collaborative and multidisciplinary process, the PPC and an incredible array of city-wide partners, work with individuals directly impacted by the criminal justice system to develop the tools, skills, and networks to advocate for themselves, their families, and residents across the city.

Lead co-op member Faith Bartley and Michael Lee, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) will speak with artist Courtney Bowles about the collateral consequences of criminal records and how their collaboration is engaging with these issues on personal, economic, and systemic levels.

Beginning in August 2014 as part of the Village of Arts and Humanities' SPACES artist and residency program, Mark Strandquist and Courtney Bowles worked to develop an incredible core team of formerly incarcerated co-op members.

Every month the PPC partners with PLSE to organize and facilitate free legal clinics across Philadelphia. In each clinic, participants work with lawyers to clear or clean up their criminal records. Participants then print out their records, tear them up, and put them in blenders to create new, blank sheets of handmade paper. Each participant then writes and creates a polaroid portrait in response to the prompt: "Without these records I am..." and embeds them in their new sheet. These sheets are being sewn together to create a giant paper quilt. Working with PLSE and local policy activists, we will use the quilt as an advocacy tool to pressure state senators to pass legislation that would make it more accessible and affordable for individuals to clear their records; which, in turn, will help clear barriers to employment, housing, healthcare, education, and other services while lowering the risk of recidivism.

Beyond organizing the clinics and producing the paper mural (an anti-discrimination, the PPC employs individuals in reentry. Co-op members develop skills in paper-making, business, teaching, public speaking, community organizing, critical thinking, and journalism. By merging art, legal advocacy, and social entrepreneurship, we hope to showcase how communities and practices that are typically siloed, can come together to create change on personal and systemic levels.

www.peoplespaperco-op.com

