The PCAP newsletter aims to keep incarcerated artists, writers, and performers informed of what the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is doing and how to be involved. If you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, please have them write to us.
Happy New Year, Prison Creative Arts Project participants, artists, and community! Beginning a new year and a new decade is always a time for reflection for me, and recently I have found myself reflecting on the incredible community of artists, writers, musicians, theater makers, students, facilitators, instructors, art appreciators, community members, families, and other supporters that I am privileged to know through PCAP! It is a joy to be a part of this community and I continue to cherish opportunities to get to know everyone who is connected to PCAP in any way.

We are already in the midst of a very busy semester at the PCAP office. Two weeks ago we trained over sixty new PCAP facilitators who will begin their workshops in the coming weeks. Winter can sometimes offer unexpected challenges for PCAP facilitators, especially with unpredictable Michigan weather, and I appreciate all of your patience as we make sure that facilitators can travel safely. I am very happy to report that this semester we will start a second community workshop in Detroit, which will make it easier for us to reach PCAP Linkage members who reside in the city. The twelfth volume of the Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing has recently gone to print and will be available for distribution in a few months. Thank you to all of our writers for submitting your pieces to the review this year! A special thanks to editor Phil Christman and managing editor Cozine Welch for their leadership of the editorial team and all the work they do to correspond with our authors.

In early January, we completed our final art selection trip for the 25th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners. Since November, our curatorial team has completed fifteen art selection trips and visited a total of twenty-seven facilities. Bravo! I am particularly grateful to Graham Hamilton, PCAP Arts Programming Coordinator and Curator, for his hard work on the art selection process. Every summer, Graham writes and distributes our call for art to new and returning artists. In the fall, he contacts every correctional facility in Michigan to schedule an art selection visit. He plans and coordinates the travel and accommodations necessary for each of those trips, as well. Graham works with curators and other volunteers to process their background check paperwork and creates detailed agendas for every trip. During the art selection visits themselves, Graham tries to speak to every artist and learn more about their artistic process. He has an amazing connection with our community of artists. Once curators have selected pieces for the show, Graham keeps track of all the art to be transported to Ann Arbor and ensures that we have all necessary paperwork. After the teams arrive home, Graham brings all of the art to the PCAP studio where he logs each piece in our records and helps our photographer take professional pictures of every piece. And that is all before the show is even installed! It’s a huge job and we all owe Graham a debt of gratitude for making the Annual Exhibition possible.

I was fortunate to join Graham and our curators on several art selection trips this year. It was truly a pleasure to get to meet many of our artists and to see art being created inside Michigan prisons. The art I saw represented an incredible range of techniques, media, experiences, perspectives, and creativity. Much of the art submitted to the show comprises painting and drawing, while other artists create sculptures, assemblages, abstract work, and mixed media pieces. I particularly enjoyed learning about the innovative techniques many of our artists develop as they create art inside prison. Many have developed a sophisticated range of techniques using a limited set of media, such as graphite or ink. Some use objects they have found or collected to create art. Others take advantage of the community of artists inside to learn from one another. Needless to say, I left every art selection visit feeling inspired!

Finally, the U-M Carceral State Project continues its work on our major research initiative, “Documenting Criminalization and Confinement.” I am incredibly grateful to those of you who have written to our research team expressing your desire to participate in our project and contribute your perspective and experience. Thank you! In the coming weeks, you will receive an individualized response from our research team with further instructions about how to participate. In this newsletter, you will also find another call for interest in participating in the research of the Carceral State Project. We are still soliciting interest in participating in our work and I hope to hear from more of you in the coming months. Please feel free to circulate the call for participation among those who don’t receive our newsletter as well. We are eager to hear from anyone who has experienced incarceration, whether or not they are a PCAP participant. It would be absolutely impossible to do this important work without the help, input, and expertise of all of you. I hope that you will consider participating in the project.
Saturday, December 14, 2019, is certainly a day that will be remembered, as incarcerated students in Adrian, participated alongside PCAP facilitators: Mahnoor, Emmie and Tom, in a stunning performance centered on the theme of Empowerment, which included a compilation of poems, spoken words, songs, and a well presented monologue by Eric, that broke the monotony of prison with his eloquent demonstration of empowerment, and had everyone in attendance bursting with laughter. The morning got underway with Raymond doing the honors of introducing the participants, and Ro, Juan and Q doing a song called ‘Live Again’ to set the tone. Followed by Roman’s reading of an essay by Anonymous, which delved even further into the presentation’s theme. Even highly introverted Darricell pitched in by passing out programs.

Adding to the festivities was a spoken word I shared called, “Buried Alive In This Concrete Grave,” a piece depicting what it’s like to be serving a life sentence in Michigan. The crowd was engaged and participated in theater games to loosen everyone up. Also, we had Cozine Welch, PCAP’s Managing Editor of the Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing in attendance, along with Becca Pickus, who runs the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program through UM-Ann Arbor.

Roummel shared with me the following, “The Fall 2019 Creative Writing class was my second experience with PCAP. It was inspirational and encouraging to have the U-M students give their honest and open critiques of our writings. The class also helped establish a sense of camaraderie among participants, who I otherwise may have never spoken more than two words to in passing, through classroom engagement, and collective assignments.”

At the close of the performance I learned the following while interviewing the PCAP facilitators: Mahnoor, a freshman majoring in public policy & social justice found the creative writing workshop very insightful as to the workings of the criminal justice system; Emmie, a recent graduate at U-M has been involved with PCAP for six months, loves writing, and that’s her motivation for being a facilitator; and Tom, another recent graduate has been a part of PCAP for 1.5 years, was motivated to get involved through local activism and political elements. He also continuously encouraged participants to send their writings to the rolling submissions at PCAP.

Literary Review

The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is accepting submissions of creative writing—fiction, poetry, essays, or memoir) of up to 4,500 words (ten typed pages) for The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing. The next pieces selected will appear in Volume 12, appearing in 2020. Writers are notified with individual responses. Submissions will be received at this address throughout the year.

PCAP at LSA Residential College
Attn: Phil Christman
701 E. University Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

Please submit the following information with your written work:

- Your legal name (so we can communicate with you by mail);
- Your name or pen name as you’d like it to appear in the journal, if that’s different than your legal name;
- Your MDOC/BOP ID number;
- Your current address;
- A short paragraph about yourself/your writing that will be published alongside any accepted piece

Thank you for your outstanding pieces of writing that you have submitted thus far. We strongly encourage you to continue in this creative process and send us any and all of your work.
Using art to preserve the community's history and heal: For Alan Compo, art has the power and ability to put a voice into the unspoken
by Fernanda Pires

ANN ARBOR—Alan Compo’s new exhibition, Changing Moons, opened exactly on the same date he returned home three years ago, on October 10, after 16 years in prison.

Among dozens of pieces hanging on the walls, one of his favorites is the acrylic on canvas Message from a Friend. It portrays Compo painting himself and getting stabbed by himself at the same time.

“It looks dark but in reality it is you working hard against time to achieve your goals, because you are the only one who can hold you back,” he said. “It is a motivator and a pusher because you can be your worst enemy or the opposite.”

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Compo is an Anishinaabe artist from the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians. He always tries to put his heritage into his art. Compo started drawing in 2003, inspired by another incarcerated artist who became his mentor.

“Art was basically my life inside there. It was an escape, freedom,” Compo said.

“I started to tell stories through my work. In my first pieces, I would draw things and moments that I remembered being part of a native community, pictures from home.”

From drawing to paintings
Trading ideas and books with other artists inside, Compo discovered his passion for bright colors and canvas. He created dozens of pieces and exhibited in PCAP’s Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners at the University of Michigan for several years. Among his first works shown in 2007 are Pardon Me and Deer and Boy.

“I drew a lot of myself! Many self portraits,” he remembered, laughing. “I was doing art every single day, for hours, to get my mind out of there.”

Since coming home, Compo has continued to be an active member of PCAP. Last September, he painted three murals for ArtPrize in Grand Rapids as part of a project to help preserve Grand Rapids’ and Battle Creek’s history. The murals are a tribute to the Anishinaabe people past, present, and future.

“I painted a whole story line on the Grand River for a community who used to live there,” he said. “And in all the stories I used to hear, there was always a plum tree.”

Compo said these trees were located along the riverbanks and the native women would go there "for sanctuary or just piece of mind." He said the story of the plum orchard is one of those stories that probably got lost in translation throughout time. Now, it is being told through his mural.

“The city liked so much, so they decided to plant the trees back down there, they revamped the whole site. A sculptor created some pieces as well and put them out there. It was incredible.”

“There is a big and drastic evolution from the time when I started, but I am still learning, and still building a lot,” Compo said. “Art is a big part of my life and sometimes I wonder where and how I would be without art.”

Changing Moons ran through January 10, 2020, at the Detroit Street Filling Station in Ann Arbor and is now on display at Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing (5509 S Pennsylvania Ave, Lansing, MI 48911) until March 1, 2020.
The University of Michigan Carceral State Project is in the midst of a major research initiative entitled “Documenting Criminalization and Confinement.” This initiative is made up of several research teams who study a wide range of topics, including policing, immigration detention, carcerality and visual materials, reentry and surveillance, the conditions inside prisons and other correctional facilities, and the creative expression of those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system.

One of the research teams associated with this project—the Confronting Conditions of Confinement team—is collecting written testimonials about experiences of confinement in Michigan’s prisons. We want to learn about the impact of the conditions of confinement on people’s lives: people who have been inside, their families, and their communities. We want to collect testimonials about life inside and give voice to those stories on the outside. We want to put a face to incarceration and break down the barriers between us. Some of the testimonials we collect will become available to the public.

If you have already responded to this call for participation, you will receive a response from our researchers in the coming weeks with more information about writing your testimonial and details about participating in the project. We are still looking for additional participants, especially incarcerated women.

If you would like to participate in this project, we ask that you send us the following information:

- Your name;
- MDOC/BOP number;
- The facilities where you have been incarcerated;
- The approximate dates you were incarcerated at each facility;
- Questions or ideas you have about the project (optional).

Please send this information to:

The Michigan Humanities Collaboratory
Attn: Carceral State Project
100 North Hatcher Gallery
Hatcher Graduate Library
913 S. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Or to: conditionsofconfinement@umich.edu

Linkage Project

Would you like to stay connected with PCAP after you come home? The Linkage Project offers workshops, cultural field trips, connections to PCAP’s campus community, and the opportunity to build a network with other artists, writers, and performers. If you would like to participate, please write to Vanessa Mayesky when you have a release date or email pcaplinkage@umich.edu after you come home.
Training the next batch of prison creative arts facilitators in full swing: The workshops provide space for creative expression, human connection, and community building.

by Fernanda Pires

ANN ARBOR—It was an intense day of learning, discoveries, testimonials, and discussions about social justice, arts, mass incarceration and life inside prisons.

At the Residential College, classrooms were packed with about 80 University of Michigan students and staff, community members, local artists, all pursuing the same goal: get trained to work with incarcerated people, using creative arts as a tool for mutual learning and growth.

Among the trainers from the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP), a group of former prisoners, who shared their experiences inside and the importance of arts for people in confinement. Artist Martin Vargas—a juvenile lifer, locked up for over 45 years, released two years ago—said there is a great need for facilitators to go inside Michigan prisons.

"Prisoners need to experience firsthand that you care enough to assist us in developing and perhaps mastering a skill that can increase self esteem and self worth; and who knows, maybe this can even help us when we are released," he said.

Vargas is self-taught and mentored many artists inside. He remembers when "an intimidating, 6'2", 230 lb. fighter who didn’t know much about art," quietly watched him work on a painting and said, 'I wish I could do that.'

Vargas accepted the challenge and decided to teach the aspiring artist. After an intimidating beginning and a lot of encouragement, a new artist was born. "I saw and felt his joy because he was painting," he said. "Three or four years later, Merko became, and still is, one of PCAP’s better artists and his impressionistic work is always on demand."

But mentoring inside comes with a lot of responsibility. Establishing boundaries, clear and open communication and keeping sessions focused on the creative work are some of the rules for healthy workshop culture.

Trainees attended different workshops during the day.
"Workshops are at the heart of everything PCAP does—they provide space for creative expression, human connection, and community building. Training PCAP members to facilitate workshops empowers students and community members to take part in all three of those processes—their work is critical," said Nora Krinitsky, PCAP’s Interim Director.

During the training, PCAP’s Program Coordinator, Mary Heinen McPherson, stressed the importance of understanding trauma while workshopping inside prisons. "Trauma manifests itself everywhere in prisons. All the people I knew inside had a serious trauma. It can happen in different ways," she said. "Part of understanding trauma is understanding you are working with folks who have really suffered. You may not get the reaction [to your workshop activities] that you think you might."
Training the next batch of prison creative arts facilitators in full swing cont.

Heinen McPherson also said the work done by PCAP's facilitators inside is healing itself. "We are not in to save anybody, treat or do any type of analysis, but the cathartic process of the art itself is healing and brings light in very dark spaces. You are the gift. You are the one who will bring joy and that is really critically important."

Community member and writer Michelle Webster-Hein is a new PCAPer and took the training for the first time. "I've wanted to get involved with PCAP ever since I stumbled across their literary journal at a U-M event, and since then I've heard all sorts of stories about their impact," she said.

Webster-Hein said the training was efficient and motivating, and she is eager to get started. "I'm a writer, and writing has transformed my life, so naturally I'd love to help bring that power alive in other people, especially those at the mercy of a system that seems set up to bring them down."

Artist Kimiko Uyeda was incarcerated for some years and since then has helped and inspired many prisoners to explore visual art. "You have so many that come and say I can't even draw a straight line, and when they find out that they're actually artists they are just amazed by themselves," she said.

"Seeing the amount of growth and self confidence in so many women is an amazing thing and of itself because of PCAP. They give them outlets that build self-esteem self-confidence and allow them healthy ways of expression."

A new member to PCAP, U-M anthropology student Paul Tabisci took the training and wants to work with photography inside prisons together with the Humanize the Numbers team. They will be facilitating workshops inside a men's prison, making photographs together.

"I saw it as a unique opportunity to offer our services to those who need it," Tabisci said. "We are hoping to make a lasting impact and provide some valuable photography training to the prisoners that might one day change their lives, much like the stories heard during our training."

DIO Press Inc.

Call for Papers/Contributions for Flying Kites: Narratives of Prison Literacy in Essays and Art

Edited by: Mikel W. Cole, Adam D. Henze, Jim Sosnowski, & Stephanie Madison-Schenck
Series Editors: Judith Dunkerly-Bean, Ph.D.; Julia Morris, M.A., Ph.D. (ABD) – Assistant to the Editor

This edited collection will showcase the essays and art of currently and formerly detained individuals wishing to share their stories about literacy learning in incarcerated spaces.

We seek candid and powerfully written articles, creative pieces, and art that serve as windows for readers to access and better understand the literacy practices and lived experiences of incarcerated authors. We invite contributions that tell engaging stories related to literacy practices in prisons, detention centers, and other places of confinement.

Authors are encouraged to share stories about formal education programming in and out of prisons, jails, and detention centers, as well as self-learned literacy practices in non-classroom spaces, such as the library or workplace. We also encourage stories that highlight the perspectives of friends and family members of incarcerated learners. We encourage stories covering numerous themes, such as issues related to immigration, language, employment, and family. Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- literacy practices and theory in incarcerated classrooms
- literacy practices involved in reentry into society
- stories of self-taught literacy in incarcerated spaces
- humanities programs like reading groups, theatre, debate, etc.
- literacy in non-classroom spaces (dorm, kitchen, law library, visiting room, etc.)
- challenges and obstacles of sustaining literacy programs
- digital media literacy learning in incarcerated spaces
- creative essays, poems, letters, and stories about prison life
- stories of using literacy skills to connect to the outside world
- examinations of reading and writing habits of incarcerated people
Primarily, this edited collection will center the work of currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, though each section will contain reflections and scholarly analyses from individuals working with incarcerated individuals. We hope to privilege the voices of literacy learners that often go unheard, so we encourage non-detained researchers to help us “pass the mic” to incarcerated writers by serving as co-authors or mentors. Submissions from all writers will be considered, but preference will be given to works that hold space for the voices of people who have served time in some capacity.

We hope that the book is a source of inspiration and strength for individuals currently incarcerated in jails, prisons, and detention centers across the country. We also imagine this book will support the efforts of those trying to recreate their lives after incarceration. We would also like for the book to be an autobiographical resource for scholars of incarcerated literacies, as well as highlight issues of incarceration in American society for the general public more broadly.

Schedule for Submissions

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Proposal Submission Procedures

**Essays**

Essays should be no longer than 5000 words and should be submitted in .doc, .docx, .pdf format in 12 pt. font with 1” margins. Send proposals to flyingkitesdio@gmail.com (preferred) or by mail (see address below).

**Art submissions**

Original art should be photographed or scanned and saved as a .jpg or .tif file with a minimum resolution of 300 dpi (400 preferable). Send to flyingkitesdio@gmail.com (preferred) or by mail (see address below).

**Original art or paper documents**

Essays, art, poetry, etc. may be submitted as a hard copy in the event essays cannot be typed or art cannot be digitized (i.e. currently incarcerated individuals' lack of access). The authors will format and digitize the documents upon receipt of the hard copies or original works. The editors of this volume understand that internet and email access may pose a challenge for some, so we encourage interested writers to submit how they can.

Please mail proposals, original art, or paper documents to the following address:

Mikel W. Cole, Ph.D.
Lead Editor
Clemson University
Gantt Circle Clemson, SC 29634-0705

About DIO Press

DIO Press is a progressive socially just publishing house with a board comprised of academics. We offer superior publishing options for those seeking to publish research based work. Our team will guide authors through the process providing full service and timely publication, making their books accessible to a wide audience. The authors will be at the front and center of our publishing house and are encouraged to think outside of the box. DIO Press is incorporated in New York City. The founders are Michel Lokhorst, CEO and Shirley Steinberg, Executive Acquisitions and Development Editor, who combined have an experience of over 50 years in the academic publishing bringing with them an extensive network in the academic community. https://diopress.com
MQR Call for Writing
Special Issue: Persecution
Submission open Jan 15 - April 15 2020

MQR is seeking submissions to a special issue focused on the struggles people around the world face with correctional, disciplinary, and punitive systems such as criminal justice, incarceration, occupation, immigration regimes, and political and social repression. We want to hear from voices that chronicle, engage and analyze the emergent rhetoric of persecution, and that shed light on its roots and the impact it has had on public discourse and the lives of individuals. We are looking for stories, poems, and essays that probe and narrate experiences of persecution as well as the spiritual, discursive, and political means of resisting social and institutional punishment, oppression and maltreatment.

Submission for Special Issue
Submissions for Persecution are open January 15 - April 15, 2020. Simultaneous submissions are allowed, but please notify us immediately via submittable if the manuscript is accepted elsewhere. Please do not submit previously published work, including work published on apersonal website or blog.

Prose submissions
Manuscripts should be double-spaced, right margins not justified; 1,500 words minimum, 5,000 average, 7,000 maximum. All stories accepted for publication will be passed on to a judge as finalists for the $2,000 Lawrence Prize.

Poetry submissions
Please submit in between 3-6 poems in one document, not to exceed a total of 12 pages.

Previous contributors
Please wait one year after your work appears in the journal to submit to us again.

Submissions for MQR Online
Submit author interviews, book reviews, craft essays, and arts & culture essays (please no poetry or fiction in this category). Submissions should not be longer than 3,000 words. If there are photos to accompany your piece, please make a note in your cover letter.

We accept simultaneous submissions but ask that you inform us when a piece has been accepted elsewhere.

We welcome and regularly publish work from emerging writers. Poems published in MQR by emerging writers (those who have not yet published a full-length collection) will be considered as finalists for our Page Davidson Clayton Prize.

MQR accepts mailed submissions from incarcerated individuals.
March - June

Ongoing
Rolling submissions for *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*
Weekly creative arts workshops in prisons in lower Michigan

March
Fellowspeak: “Prison Theatre: Performance and Incarceration,” Ashley Lucas, March 10th

25th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners, March 18 – April 1, Duderstadt Center
  Opening Reception, March 18, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Duderstadt Center
  Shaka Senghor: Writing My Wrongs, March 19, 5:00 – 6:45 p.m. Michigan Theater
  Artist Panel, March 22, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Duderstadt Center
  *Songs Unsung: Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing, Volume 12* Ann Arbor Reading, March 22,
  2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Duderstadt Center
  Keynote: Crisis and Solidarity, Janie Paul, Senior Curator, March 26, 6 – 8:30 p.m. Stamps Auditorium
  The Sisters Free Performance, March 31, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Keene Theater

April
Linkage Project Workshop Day, Detroit, April date TBD

June
Begin shipping unclaimed artwork from *Annual Exhibition* to customers and artist contacts, June 1

About PCAP

Mission Statement
The Prison Creative Arts Project brings those impacted by the justice system and the University of Michigan community into artistic collaboration for mutual learning and growth.

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PCAP Staff
El Chen, Graham Hamilton, Mary Heinen, Vanessa Mayesky

PCAP Special Projects Staff
Fernanda Pires, Cozine Welch, Jr.

Annual Exhibition Curators
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Alyssa Baginski, El Chen, Dominique Cornitcher, Nelly Emlaw, Graham Hamilton, Charlie Michaels, Jason Wright