

PRISON EDUCATION NEWS



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PRISON EDUCATION: EMPOWERING CHANGE

ASU PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMMING'S EXPLODING GROWTH

By Naala Brewer

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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY'S PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMMING (PEP) has had many noteworthy developments this past year. Dr. Corri Wells asked me to join her as Co-Director for ASU's PEP starting in the Fall of 2018. This is a great union from core courses at ASU—the Department of English and the School of Mathematics and Statistical Sciences. Top leaders in both units believe in higher education outreach in prisons and offer strong support.

PEP has exploded with new developments and notable awards. This past year with the help of Dr. Albert Boggess (Chair of the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences), Renate Mittelman (Research Professional), and Aneesh Gangadhar (Systems Support Specialist), PEP launched a dedicated server, a standalone website <https://pep.asu.edu/> and a listserv edu for current vol-



Naala Brewer speaks at the 8th Annual Prison Education Conference

unteers prisoneducation@asu.edu. With the help of English and Communication major, Jacqueline Aguilar, and Mathematics major, Troy Gilchrist, pep.asu.edu has morphed into an integrated and modern communication vehicle.

In the Fall 2018 semester, PEP partnered with Mesa Community College (MCC) to provide a weekly physics course at the Eyman State Prison taught by MCC's Dr. Mark Somers. In the Spring 2019 semester, PEP welcomed a startup group of graduate students from the School of Earth and Space Exploration who introduced an Astronomy and Geology course for the first time to an Arizona State Prison.

Not only has PEP expanded the breadth of courses offered to the incarcerated, but it has also increased the number of institutions we serve. Through our collaboration with our community partner Klysia Hand, Program Manager at Rio Salado's Incarcerated Correspondence Program, we began tutoring Mathematics at the Salt River Pima-Maricopa County Indian Community Department of Correction and at the Phoenix Prison. And Lewis Prison was added to our outreach for the Pen Project.

PEP was invited to host a panel at the 2018 Arizona Correctional Educators (ACE) Conference in Phoenix and at the 2018 National Council on Higher Education in Prison in Indianapolis, Indiana. PEP was extremely proud to receive on behalf of the Prison Education Awareness Club (PEAC) the "Most Innovative Program Award"



Increasing OPPORTUNITIES

from the ACE 2018 conference for our work at Perryville, the State Prison for Women.

The most exciting development for me as Co-Director was to follow in Corri's footsteps with the Pen Project and develop the Newton Project where student interns were able to give mathematical support to PEP classes through various volunteering activities. Sixteen interns signed up for the Newton Project in Spring 2019, the first semester it was offered. The interns were eager to get involved and give mathematical support to the incarcerated. They gave their support through various activities—grading PreCalculus/Calculus homework, reviewing chapters of a 300-page investing book written by one of the incarcerated mathematics students, writing up examples and solutions, writing up lecture notes, guest teaching at one of the PEP Mathematics classes, going through tutoring training, and tutoring at Adobe Mountain School (run by the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections), and starting the Newton Project Club.

The Newton Project Club began as Newton Project intern Xavier Bonelli's Barrett Honors Project. Bonelli drafted the constitution and created a club emblem. The club expands the Newton Project by offering not only Mathematics support to PEP but support in all the STEM subject areas (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

What I have found during my first year as Co-Director for ASU's PEP is that we have a huge population of students, faculty, and staff wanting to participate in whatever capacity they can to bring higher education to the incarcerated, and the incarcerated benefit immensely. Moving forward, students and faculty plan on more research with statistics to back the impact of higher education in prisons and to show how this education reduces recidivism and gives incarcerated individuals a meaningful and lasting re-entry as a contributing member of society.



Photo Courtesy of Corri Elizabeth

PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM:

**PRISON EDUCATION AWARENESS CLUB (PEAC)
AWARDED 2018 "INNOVATIVE PROGRAM OF THE
YEAR" AWARD BY THE ARIZONA CORRECTIONAL
EDUCATORS INC.**



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THE FIGHT

By Jimmy Ray O'Kelley, Sr., New Mexico

I fight for those silenced by sadists,
 who strip us and put us in stripes.
 I fight for the fathers of sons who hate us
 and don't know justice flows in thin pipes.
 I fight for the captive in holes
 who starve for a deep breath.
 I fight for the lost souls
 who feel like death is more than what's left.
 I fight for cold, shattered hearts
 who lost love a long time ago.
 I fight for rare, fresh starters
 who are stranded on a dark road.
 I fight 'cuz a man without fight
 is as dead as a winter night.
 I fight 'cuz surrender is death
 in a grave limitless in depth.
 I fight out of rage not fear
 And for all who died in here.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: GROWTH AND CHANGE



By Jacqueline Aguilar
Globe Volunteer Teacher

*Prison Education Programming (PEP) Newsletter, Editor
 ASU Alumna in English (Literature) and Communication*

“PRISON EDUCATION: EMPOWERING CHANGE” is the theme for this year’s Prison Education Programming (PEP) Newsletter. ASU’s Prison Education Programming (PEP) Newsletter of Summer 2019 contains articles of new found trust, partnerships, and beginnings. Every year, ASU’s PEP changes individuals’ lives in and out of prison. ASU students, volunteer prison educators, and the incarcerated are all driven to better society when coming together. Whether that is addressing topics of prison reform, prison education, and prison life or teaching and mentoring those who are seen as an undeserving population, PEP creates a place of conversation and innovation towards a system in need of empathy and reformation. The individuals involved with PEP, playing minor or major roles, have all experienced the awareness that comes when interacting with the prison system: we can’t afford a blindfold to stop or change the cruel realities of the world. Being part of PEP as editor for the annual newsletter, a webmaster for their new website, and a prison education volunteer, I have learned that ignorance towards a growing problem such as mass incarceration affects not only the incarcerated but the equality, justice, and morality we in the larger society stand by everyday. With every newsletter, I am proud to hear of the personal stories and accomplishments of everyone connected to PEP, showing me the amount of growth and change this program has offered and will—hopefully—offer for years to come.

-Jacqueline Aguilar

ARIZONA TRANSFER PATHWAYS

ARIZONA TRANSFER PATHWAY: RE-ENTRY (IRE) PROGRAM



Rio Salado College's Program Manager, Incarcerated Correspondence Program Klysia Hand teaching a Peer Mentor session with Red Rock students.

THE [INCARCERATED Re-ENTRY \(IRE\) PROGRAM](#) program at Rio Salado College, one of 10 Maricopa Community Colleges, has partnered with the [Arizona Department of Corrections](#) (ADC) since 1983 to teach incarcerated populations the skills they need to succeed upon release—as well as seamlessly transfer to institutions of higher learning. IRE now offers more than 90 print-based occupational and educational courses to over 20 Arizona and other prisons across the United States, including 7 certificates and 4 associate degrees.

In Arizona, these courses count toward the [Arizona General Education Curriculum](#), a foundation of completed general courses (35-37 credits) that transfer as a block to the state universities—ASU, NAU, and UofA. The

Arizona General Education Certificate (AGEC) and the Associate of Art Degree (AA) offered in the Rio Salado College IRE program are part of the [Maricopa-Arizona State University Pathways Program \(MAPP\)](#), which is designed for Maricopa Community Colleges students planning to transfer to an Arizona state university. While [Rio Salado College's statewide correspondence program](#) is not the only post-secondary prison program, we are the only program that offers MAPP courses to incarcerated students state-wide.

The Arizona Department of Corrections has facilities across Arizona and works with the post-secondary community colleges nearest a prison facility. On-site prison education is generally approved by and paid for by the

Farewell PEN PROJECT: BELOVED FRIEND & MENTOR

ADC and consists of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses: electrical, construction, Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC), plumbing, automotive etc. The skills and preparation in CTE programs can be a good foundation for programs such as [ASU's Construction Management](#).

While helping incarcerated students rethink their identities and see an academic pathway to a university is important, it is not the only goal. We also desire to help students persist in the general population by developing prosocial behaviors and attitudes and preparing students for the workforce. The complexities of growing up in low socioeconomic geographical regions can hinder positive social persistence as demonstrated in the HBO series, [The Wire](#).

Although each prison has different populations and programming, you can help Rio Salado achieve its goals for incarcerated students by providing in-person tutoring for IRE students at participating state correctional facilities through [ASU's Prison Education Programming \(PEP\)](#). Currently incarcerated students in the correspondence program need tutoring in

- math
- English
- parenting
- finances
- re-entry preparation: resume/cover letter writing, job seeking skills
- and other subjects.

Working together as educated citizens, we can help improve our social structures and increase educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals.

For further information, please contact [Klysia Hand](#), Program Manager, Incarcerated Correspondence Program, Rio Salado College, 2323 West 14th Street, Tempe, AZ 85281, 480-517-8112.

FAREWELL TO THE PEN PROJECT: BELOVED FRIEND & COMPASSIONATE MENTOR 2010-2019 R.I.P

THE PEN PROJECT

The Pen Project (ENG484) was a hands-on internship that connected ASU students with incarcerated writers. The interns remotely reviewed incarcerated writers' work and provided critical feedback and related examples. The internship began in 2010 and ended Spring 2019.

“Iron City Magazine and the Pen Project have literally changed and even saved lives. Yes, saved lives! Having a safe and compassionate place for ‘self’ expression has encouraged countless men and women from all religious, ethnic, social, economic, and sexual backgrounds to put down the needle, rope, or razor and pick up their pen or pencil and find release. I’ve seen the artwork and words between the covers of Iron City motivate and encourage men, who have lost freedom, love, family, and hope to smile, believe, and dream again.”

—*Jimmy Ray O’Kelly, Sr., New Mexico
Pen Project Participant*

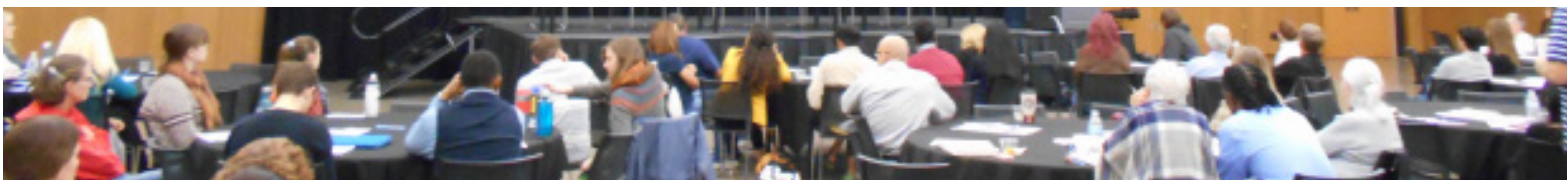
“Before I took the internship, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do with my life, and once I had completed it I knew for sure. I am now a contracted teacher with my state’s Dept. of Corrections in Indiana! All thanks to the Pen Project and all your work on it. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.”

—*Victoria Collins
Pen Project Intern*

“Tragic to hear the Pen Project is canceled. It really changed my life and the lives of those inside. Well, if we take an optimistic view, some lives changed is better than no lives changed. And I’d certainly say the Pen Project changed some lives. It changed mine.”

—*Nathan Young
Pen Project Intern*

8TH ANNUAL PRISON EDUCATION AWARENESS CONFERENCE



HOMEBOY INDUSTRIES: JEWEL OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By Lana Marie Mousa

Globe Volunteer Teacher

Vice President, Prison Education Awareness Club (PEAC)

Majoring in English and Justice Studies



(Left) Tyra Patterson and (Right) Lana Mousa at 8th Annual Prison Education Awareness Conference

CALIFORNIA IS OBVIOUSLY AN ATTRACTION for some of the world's most famous landmarks—Disneyland, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Universal Studios, the Golden Gate Bridge. They attract millions of people every year. But California is also home to another must-see hotspot: Homeboy Industries, the largest gang intervention, rehab, and re-entry program in the world. Located on the outskirts of Chinatown in Los Angeles, Homeboy Industries' bold colors and giant "Homeboy" logo calls to anyone passing by to stop, admire its presence, and bask in the paradise that lies just behind Homeboy's front doors. Or you can just stop in and snack on mouthwatering baked goods and enjoy savory tacos en nopales in the Homegirl Café.

Father Gregory Boyle, founder of [Homeboy Industries](#) and author of the New York Times Bestseller, *Tattoos on the Heart*, envisioned and brought into being this haven where the idea for a complete reevaluation and reinvention of one's life is made possible, specifically for people that have been associated with gangs or incarcerated. First introduced to this organization through *Tattoos on the Heart*, I was struck by the sense of beautifully overwhelming inclusiveness that seemed to define



Gabriel Lopez speaks at 8th Annual Prison Education Awareness Conference

"Such likeable and open people, Donna, Gabriel, and Tyra drew us in with the bravery they showed in sharing their personal truths. It encouraged us, the audience, to do the same with each other, creating safe spaces for us to network and share ideas."



Donna Harati speaks at the 8th Annual Prison Education Awareness Conference

8TH ANNUAL PRISON AWARENESS EDUCATION CONFERENCE



Homeboy's very existence. If you're lucky enough in your life, at some point your heart will feel a tug towards a place, or places, it yearns to go, and that inner calling is one day answered.

Most people feel that tug after watching a television show or a movie with characters chasing their dreams in Rome, swimming through clear waters in Athens, gazing up at the pyramids in Egypt, or falling in love in Paris. Some feel the tug after they visit the place for a day or two and realize they need to go back to see every inch of it. (Friends visiting from out of town have told me they can't wait to come back to Arizona. Aside from its few scenic natural wonders, I don't see the appeal. I think that's just because I have a heavy prejudice against Arizona's predatory heat that I've endured my whole life.) But that tug can also be born from words by a gifted author. Just a few pages into *Tattoos on the Heart*, I began to feel that tug, and because of my generous aunt, who is always willing to take me in whenever I get the urge to come to California, I began to feel my luck coming around.

I must also thank Michelle Obama for my visit to Homeboy. One of the first tour stops for her recently published autobiography *Becoming*, was The Forum, located in Inglewood, California. As a huge admirer of the Former First Lady, I picked up extra shifts and booked a ticket to see her, and since I was going to be in California, I knew my opportunity to visit Homeboy had arrived.

I entered the lobby and sat in the first row of chairs lined up across from the front desk. The lobby serves as a waiting room, where you can watch the Homeboy staff, including Father Greg, at work through large glass windows on every side. I watched men, women, and children filter in and out of the area. People were talking, smiling, hugging, and best of all, laughing. I could even hear laughter from upstairs and the echoes of more laughter down the halls. The bustle seemed boundless. Almost everyone there was wearing Homeboy paraphernalia—T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, Homeboy pins—which made me feel overdressed in my silk blouse and Steve Madden combat boots. Thankfully, however, no one seemed to pay much attention, or care, about how I was dressed. After half an hour of admiring the beautiful chaos, my tour group was called over, and to my surprise, I was the only person in the group. It turned out to be a fruitful one-on-one session, however. Since it was just my tour

guide and I, I felt I could ask him all the questions I had regarding Homeboy, his former gang life, and what brought him to this safe haven, all of which he seemed more than happy to answer. He had a warm and kind spirit. Five minutes into the tour, I felt like we were long lost friends. He started cracking jokes right and left. My laughter was now filling the room.

I gave him a big hug at the end of our tour and headed downstairs to the gift shop so I could get a Homeboy shirt for my wardrobe. I then met up with Donna Harati, the Director of Legal Services at Homeboy Industries. I had seen her two years earlier via video from the 5th Annual Prison Education Conference at ASU, where she had appeared on a panel. I had admired her poise and confidence. She was incredibly articulate and habitually and unapologetically defended her convictions without ever being harsh, all traits I highly value in people. Before coming, I had extended a lunch invitation for the day of my visit, which she kindly accepted. We dined at Homegirl Café, a delicious hub connected to the lobby. Our conversation teetered between my current studies at ASU and prison education affiliations and her past time as a volunteer prison teacher and student at Harvard Law School. As an aspiring lawyer, I had a range of questions pertaining to law school, Harvard, and life as an attorney, all of which she answered with more information than I could have hoped for. After two and a half hours, I let Donna get back to work. I bid her farewell and headed towards the exit. I took one last look at the Homeboy logo towering boldly over the corner of Bruno and Alameda St., knowing full well that I would be back as a visitor, an intern or, if I were even more lucky, an employee.

That evening I reminisced over the warmth, levity, and laughter that encapsulated the Homeboy atmosphere, especially by Father Greg, who if you so much as passed by, would give you a hug, handshake, or gentle touch on the shoulder expressing his love and appreciation for you, even if he didn't yet know you (I know this because I received that touch of appreciation and we hadn't yet met). The feeling of togetherness that looms in the air and gets passed around with each smile from the Homeboy—"Homie"—family is rare.

8TH ANNUAL PRISON EDUCATION AWARENESS CONFERENCE

Father Greg once said that “Anyone who walks through those doors knows there is a feeling of acceptance, everyone can sense what is really the therapeutic elixir present in this building.” I think you’re a fortunate person if you get to experience that kind of atmosphere at some point in your life, but to find it at just twenty years old gave me hope for a future that will only know, accept, and tolerate a unified world. Because of this, I think of Homeboy Industries as the Jewel of Southern California.

After my California adventure, I returned to Arizona, where we at the Prison Education Awareness Club (PEAC) were discussing potential keynote speakers for the 8th Annual Prison Education Conference*. Of course, Donna was my first suggestion. With all of us strongly in agreement, I reached out to her, and she gladly accepted our invitation. She also recommended Gabriel Lopez, the Senior Navigator at Homeboy, as a speaker, and one of her good friends Tyra Patterson, who had been wrongfully incarcerated for 23 years and was now working as a paralegal at the Ohio Justice & Policy Center. All three of them graced our conference and helped make it, in my opinion, our best conference yet. Such likeable and open people, Donna, Gabriel, and Tyra drew us in with the bravery they showed in sharing their personal truths. It encouraged us, the audience, to do the same with each other, creating safe spaces for us to network and share ideas.

In the world of politics today, where many people insist on creating divides between themselves and others based on illogical prejudices, places like Homeboy Industries and events like the Prison Education Conference prove that for people to come together, all we need is an open heart. We must welcome new environments, new ideas, and new people into our lives to move together upwards and onwards. The greatest consequence of an open heart is that love, compassion, and acceptance become infectious, and the hurdles many of us insist on creating to keep us divided, die before they can devour us. This past year, I witnessed the extraordinary connection and sense of oneness between people born out of Homeboy and the Prison Education Conference. These relationships redefined my understanding of what it looks like when we—simply—open our hearts to each other’s worlds.

[*Watch the 8th Annual Prison Education Conference here.](#)



AZ Department of Juvenile Corrections panel speakers (Left to Right) Frank Burnsed, Dr. Kim Eger, Karen Lorton-Sutter, Clayton Hall

“The greatest consequence of an open heart is that love, compassion, and acceptance become infectious, and the hurdles many of us insist on creating to keep us divided, die before they can devour us.”



Tyra Patterson speaks at the 8th Annual Prison Education Awareness Conference

THE BLACK CROW'S SOUL

By Lindsey Saya, Arizona

What does the black crow know
 of heart and soul
What sadness hides behind
those lonely, feathered eyes

What damaged storm churns
 inside his heart
to make him cry
To whom does he call when he caws
or is it
 a grieving song of immortal loss

How strange
that for the black crow
the sky grows grey

 his ebony pain
 owns the day

His onyx beak and midnight eyes
a somber madness
in disguise

A fragile spirit
 just as mine

SPURRING CHANGE

LETTER FROM PEN PROJECT PARTICIPANT

Dear Pen Project,

What a wonderful ride it's been working with all of you. I think of the immense changes that have occurred in my heart, changes that have set me on a path of self-discovery. They are changes that have birthed a belief that I am capable of creating something worth sharing with the world. And I think we all want to share a piece of ourselves with the world. In the hope that maybe, just maybe, someone out there, if just for a breath of a moment, might understand us. Maybe that's what we're looking for as writers, a connection to each other, to our fellow human beings. I certainly found that with the Pen Project. Thank you for spurring that change in me with your critiques, and your lessons, and your valuable and invaluable advice and technical knowledge. We shared a sort of fellowship of the written word. And it was great. I consider you all guides, holding me by the hand, like a child, leading me into the light of artistic expression. I always knew I wanted to tell stories. But to think that I could ever be able to tell those stories, to think that I'd have the tools to tell them, was a fantasy. You all gave me the tools needed to build and to shape my stories. And what great things we can build with the right tools and a bit of imagination.

I often wondered what stake you all had in the education of convicts like me—ex convict now. I didn't understand why a bunch of college kids, and one great professor would waste their time on someone like me. I suppose you all have your reasons. I'd like to believe it's because you all care about human beings in spite of their mistakes, and if you all can care about the betterment of people like me then maybe I can believe in people too. Kindness is a funny thing that way. It's contagious. I thought my kindness had died a long time ago. The Pen Project helped me realize that it hadn't. I wrote a poem some time ago called "The Forgotten Ones". It's a poem about what it is to be forgotten by the world, about what we become when we are forgotten, and how, when we are forgotten, we accept a state of wretchedness when we shouldn't. The Pen Project let me know I wasn't forgotten. I am far from being a writer, I think. I have a long ways to go, a road wrought with heart breaks and failures, I'm sure, a lonely road perhaps. But I can see the end of that road, and there is a sun rising, waiting for me. Human beings spend their lives searching for meaning and purpose. The Pen Project helped me find mine. So with the all my gratitude and with the warmest of hearts, I say thank you.

Sincerely,
Lindsey

SAME PROCESS, NEW EXPERIENCE



By Jessica Sills

*4 + 1 Student in English and Psychology
Volunteer Psychology Teacher at
Perryville State Prison*

THE PSYCHOLOGY COURSE I co-taught this past semester with Winter Roth was one of my best courses at Perryville. The process was the same as with the other courses I'd taught there: drive an hour, struggle to find a close parking spot, get through security, teach for two hours, go home. Although the process remained the same, the experience was so different. The topic was new, sure (I had taught Creative Writing previously). Perhaps the main difference was the tighter, more scientific structure of the material. I enjoyed having a more structured format. Or maybe that wasn't it—maybe it was the students themselves. From day one, our class was packed—though, like all classes I've taught, it quickly thinned out over the first week. We were left with a class of 15 women, and each of them was a standout in one way or another; they were all so deeply human and complex—funny, quiet, inquisitive: they were all these traits and more. There were challenging thoughts and questions, as well as recurring jokes about everyone's disdain for Freud. Or maybe that wasn't it either—maybe it was their experiences which made the semester so great. It was wonderful to see how much they enjoyed the subject matter. On the day we all took personality tests, we could see the excitement and curiosity in their eyes. Maybe that was it. Maybe all of it was. Regardless, it was a highly rewarding semester of teaching!

THE VITALITY OF PRISON EDUCATION COURSES



By Winter Roth

*ASU Alumna in Psychology and Biochemistry
Volunteer Psychology Teacher at Perryville State Prison*

BECAUSE I AM GOING away for graduate school this coming fall, spring semester was my last time teaching at the Perryville prison—and my first time teaching in a medium/maximum security unit. The previous semesters, I volunteered in minimum security units. This small difference resulted in huge teaching changes. For one, we were turned away at a much greater frequency because of lockdowns. Four times this semester we were unable to teach, versus zero in my previous semesters. The students, however, were no less grateful.

Every time my teaching partner, Jessica Sills, and I entered the classroom, the students showered us with thanks and consistently remained active throughout the two-hour class. The class was Psychology—which partly explains why the students were able to participate throughout the entire class. They were extremely interested in the topics we covered; there was never a shortage of questions. In the final class of the semester, we presented the students with certificates to signify their participation and attendance throughout the semester. Jessica and I asked the students to comment on the most important thing they learned from the course. The comment that stuck with me the most was: "I learned that when I get out of here, I should probably go to therapy." While getting students to realize they have mental health problems and should get help was not my goal, I think it is an important personal discovery for the student and a fantastic example of why such prison courses are vital.

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION



By Steven Hart

Doctoral Student in Civil, Environmental and Sustainable Engineering

Volunteer Biology Teacher at Eyman State Prison

I JUST FINISHED my fifth year of teaching biology in the Eyman State Prison complex. Throughout these years, we've taught in maximum and medium security units, we've evolved our learning goals to become more ambitious, and we've started doing in-class laboratory experiments. I say "we" because one aspect that hasn't changed is our collaborative teaching approach. Our class is taught by a combination of 15 graduate and undergraduate students and Dr. Tsafrir Mor, professor of molecular biology and biochemistry. Each of the thirty lessons presented over the year-long course is led by two teachers. These teachers design the lesson together and present it to the rest of the teachers as a dry run. The group will try out planned activities and provide feedback on the scope and approach of the lesson before it is taught in the unit.

I had never taught a class collaboratively before this program. Compromising with another person's vision of how to best address a topic is hard. Add to this the prospect of presenting your lesson to a roomful of other experts, and it's suitably intimidating before we even get to the prison. It's absolutely worth it though. I can't overstate how much this process has improved my teaching. I've learned so much from the 40 teachers I've worked with the last 5 years. I look forward to seeing how the class evolves as new teachers struggle to compromise and, in the process, create new and exciting curricula.

PARENTING FROM PRISON



By Sarah Curci

Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology

Volunteer Parenting Teacher at Perryville State Prison

"BEING AWAY FROM my children in prison has brought out insecurities as a mother I never had before, because I did not set a good example for them."

When we think of life in prison, mothering from prison is certainly not the first experience that comes to mind. Yet more than 60% of women in state prisons have children under the age of 18. Most of them are the primary caretakers of their children. For the 50 women in my parenting classes, parenting from prison was reality. Every Saturday morning, in two back-to-back sessions on separate yards, I joined 50 motivated and curious women in discussions of various topics related to child development, parenting practices, and maternal mental health. Most importantly, women were given the space to share their stories, their fears, and their hopes for themselves and their children. Like any parent, they joked about messy toddlers and moody teenagers and showed me pictures of their children. For many of my students, this was not their first time in prison. Women frequently expressed how guilt related to feeling like a bad mother was ultimately the catalyst for actions that returned them to prison. On the last day of class, one woman shared that this class was the first time she felt like someone saw how hard she was trying to be a good parent, solidifying my belief in the importance of empathy, human connection, and self-forgiveness. I am forever grateful to my students for expanding my understanding of the power of community and non judgment within education.

TEACHERS IN THE TRENCHES

INCREDIBLY HUMBLLED: WHO KNEW?



By Elizabeth Sheets

Graduate Student in Narrative Studies

*Volunteer Visual Narratives Teacher at Florence
State Prison*

THIS SPRING WAS MY first semester teaching at Arizona State Prison Complex–Florence. I taught a Visual Narratives class to the students in North Unit. Before I started, I was told in part what I could expect: tight security and attentive students. I filled in the blanks with my imagination, anticipating that I would feel afraid and stumble through my lesson plans, all the while wondering if I could recall radio protocol should things go awry. As it turns out, standing at the head of a classroom full of incarcerated students is far less intimidating than standing at the podium in my graduate class giving a presentation in front of my professor and five of my peers. Who knew?

Travelling the 45 minutes from my home to Florence every Friday morning, guiding the students in my class through the journey of developing a graphic memoir, was the highlight of my week, a welcome reprieve from the heavy course load on my plate. I took great delight in seeing the progress students were making toward their final projects. Not until I asked them to write about what finishing that project meant for them did I realize the impact this work was having on them. In the words of my students: “During the time I have been enrolled in this class I have changed my life completely in a different direction. The way I live my life, my thoughts, my associations have all changed. It is for the better” (SW) and “Finishing the project means I displayed an ability to suit up and show up (half the battle in life). Needless to say, my life has not been characterized by such displays and it feels good to have had an opportunity to practice these basic adult traits” (JVK).

I am incredibly humbled by their feedback. I look forward to teaching this class again next semester to a new group of incarcerated students.

ASU PRISON EDUCATORS 2019 COURSES:

EARTH & SPACE EXPLORATION, WORLD HISTORY,
VISUAL NARRATIVE, POETRY, PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
RHETORIC, SPANISH, PSYCHOLOGY,
PHILOSOPHY, ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR,
MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTING, LITERARY
ANALYSIS, CURRENT EVENTS, LAW, CULTURE,
AND COMMUNITY, HUMAN LANGUAGE, GOTHIC
LITERATURE, PHYSICS, ART, CHINESE,
CREATIVE WRITING, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING



THE RIGHT TO LEARN



By Aubrey Spivey

Doctoral Student in Philosophy

Volunteer Philosophy Teacher at Eymann State Prison

I'M A FOURTH YEAR PhD philosophy student in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies at ASU as well as in the School of Criminal Justice and Social Work, earning a graduate certificate in Criminal Sentencing and Sentencing Advocacy. My dissertation concerns disproportionate harms faced by inmates who deviate from the "standard" inmate (specifically, women, trans persons, and persons with disabilities). Prison policies assume a "kind" of person, and those who deviate from assumed features can experience severe negative impact on their lives from those policies. For example, women's uniforms are still frequently cut to fit the male body. This increases harms for women who face sanctions for having clothes that are too tight or too baggy and which they cannot (due to prison policy) modify in order to improve the fit. This leads to additional sentence time and internal loss of privileges for a failure to follow policy that they are incapable of adhering to.

In addition to my research, the last two and a half years I have had the opportunity to teach at the Arizona State prison in Florence for men. My teaching at the prison has impacted me both as an academic and as a person. In teaching people on the inside, I've become a better educator by becoming more attentive to my assumptions about skills and knowledge that I had always treated as a given, such as standard grammar and critical reading abilities. This allows me to better teach the course material. I have also improved as a philosopher because my students have raised non-mainstream objections and arguments in class and in their papers. I am pushed to think more critically by my prison students just as I push them to think critical-

ly about their beliefs and the world around them. I have also been lucky to have worked with amazingly supportive correctional officers who value my class and the impact it has on my students. In addition to dates, names, definitions, and critical thinking, I also emphasize reflection, writing and oral expression, as well as logic and argumentation.

Working with people on the inside breaks down assumptions based on media representations of prison life. Listening, discussing, and learning with these students helps dismantle preconceived views about criminality and promotes an understanding of inmates as people. People on the inside have made mistakes but are still worthy of dignity as individuals who aim to improve and learn from their mistakes. Despite incarceration, they remain curious, insightful, and able students both in and out of the classroom. Teaching in prison has only reaffirmed my views that people deserve dignity, second chances, and the opportunity to grow.

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OUTGOING PEAC PRESIDENT

A WORD FROM THE OUTGOING PEAC PRESIDENT

By Winter Roth
*ASU Alumna in Psychology
and Biochemistry
Volunteer Psychology Teach-
er at Perryville State Prison*



ASU volunteer teaching panel speakers (Left) Nathan Hui, (Middle) Sarah Layon, (Right) Winter Roth

THE PRISON EDUCATION AWARENESS CLUB (PEAC) is an important student-run organization that puts on events throughout each fall and spring semester, from hearing talks by special guests (such as law interns, former prisoners, and prison educators) to watching award-winning documentaries on mass incarceration. PEAC also hosts an annual conference to hear from national experts on prisons and prison education.

This year we focused on building a strong base that future PEAC officers can stand upon for securing funds and enhancing student involvement. One of the most influential meetings this semester was a panel of student teaching volunteers within the prison system who discussed their experiences with the incarcerated population. There was a solid turnout at the meeting, and we procured a few more student volunteer teachers from this event.

Additionally this year, one of our goals was to grow the number of attendees, especially students, at the annual Prison Education Awareness Conference (the 8th), which we did, our largest turnout ever. The keynote speakers were Donna Harati, a civil rights attorney and Gabriel Lopez, a former gang member—both from Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles—and Tyra Patterson—an Ohio woman wrongly incarcerated for over 23 years for a murder she did not commit. The Prison Education Awareness Club seeks to eradicate carceral injustice. To join, visit sundevilsync.org.

WHAT IS PEAC?

The Prison Education Awareness Club (PEAC, pronounced like *peace*) is a student organization at ASU dedicated to fostering action-oriented discussions on prison reform and education. PEAC knows, “The higher the degree, the lower the recidivism.” PEAC’s members have diverse voices and backgrounds, but are unified in their commitment to promote education in the hardest to reach places. www.facebook.com/prisoneducationawarenessclub



PEAC meeting panel at ASU (Left to Right) Winter Roth, Anh Tran, Vivian Chen, , Jessica Sills, Chandler

STATES OF INCARCERATION: STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

By Jacqueline Aguilar



Panel speakers at the States of Incarceration: Storytelling Workshop Event

ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2018, the national traveling exhibit from States of Incarceration sponsored an event with [Mass Story Lab](#) at Phoenix's Burton Barr Public Library. The storytelling workshop included a panel of individuals who have suffered in incarceration and immigration detention centers. Five undocumented members of the panel let the audience submerge themselves in stories of hardship, such as a daughter whose father was detained and separated from the family for four years while they tried to find ways to stay afloat financially while remaining undocumented; a transgender woman who was incarcerated in "900 days in hell," suffering from sexual and emotional abuse from officers leading to suicidal thoughts; a mother separated from her five children when incarcerated, her rights of motherhood severed, even after now being released and receiving a green card; a man who thought America was the land of the free but realized the truth through the inhumanity of immigration detention centers and the oppression of an undocumented status; and a transgender woman sharing her story of detainment, including the violation of her rights, worry about her aunt's own detainment case, and the discrimination she still feels as an undocumented transgender woman in America. After the panel discussion, everyone was asked

to reflect, then to write notes or words of encouragement onto large poster papers on the wall for those suffering in immigration detention centers. The posters also included questions asking for observations on and solutions for the system of U.S. immigration. The event concluded with statements of encouragement, with realizations of truths and hurts, and with open support.

[*Please visit Mass Story Lab for full viewing of panel discussion.](#)

STATES OF INCARCERATION: ALIENTO

By Jacqueline Aguilar



Singer-song writer at States of Incarceration: Aliento Reading Event

ON OCTOBER 05, 2018, the national traveling exhibit from States of Incarceration sponsored an event with [Aliento](#) at Phoenix's Burton Barr Public Library. Aliento, an undocumented and youth-led community organization based in Phoenix, Arizona. They focus on healing through art, specifically for those impacted by the system of immigration detention and deportation. The event was an open mic reading of community members coming together to share their stories of immigration detention and incarceration. The audience showed support by snapping their fingers proudly for the brave performers struggling with the words of a painful memory. Men and women came to the mic and told their hardships through spoken word, music, and song regarding how the system of immigration and incarceration has caused them separation, identity loss, and many other harms. Their words sent a consistent message to those in the room: do not give up. At the end of the event, Aliento members had everyone join in a circle, hold hands, and share aloud something they are leaving behind and what they now seek, a tradition they do at the end of each program, creating a sense of unity and relief. The open mic reading was a form of heal-

ing and support for anyone traumatized by immigration policies and practices, a demonstration that they are not alone. Aliento's motto "Transforming Trauma Into Hope & Action" represents the healing and comfort this open mic program brought to the audience and the performers.

PEAC RE-ENTRY EVENT

By Jacqueline Aguilar



Klysia Hand and ASU prison educators at the PEAC Re-Entry Event

ON NOVEMBER 28, 2018, ASU's Prison Education Awareness Club held a Re-Entry: Academic Pathways from Prison to Rio Salado College to Arizona State University event at ASU. Klysia Hand, Program Manager of the Incarcerated Correspondence Program at Rio Salado College, gave a talk on the impact of prison education, how it prepares and earns student prisoners academic degrees, and what courses Rio Salado College offers that transfer to ASU. Ms. Hand discussed her upbringing in the foster care system and her brother's incarceration. This segued into an activity highlighting what the community college credits earned by prisoner students meant for their futures. Many prison education volunteers, teachers, and the directors of the Prison Education Programming at ASU attended. The room was impressed and excited about the Rio Salado-ASU partnership. Prison educators shared stories about their prison students higher education for prisoners, and the event quickly became an openly rich discussion.

BY JACQUELINE AGUILAR, MANAGING EDITOR



IRON CITY MAGAZINE: CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS BY AND FOR THE INCARCERATED successfully launched issue 3 in the fall of 2018, and we are now preparing for the launch of issue 4. The 2018-2019 year has made many contributions to the future growth of *Iron City Magazine* such as participating in ASU's Desert Nights Rising Stars literary book fair, gaining support from partnerships, and receiving grants for further publishing.

At the DNRS conference, *Iron City Magazine* ran a book fair booth and gave a panel discussion called "Reading Between Lines, Writing Behind Bars: Creative Writing & Incarceration with *Iron City Magazine* and University of Arizona Poetry Center." The panel discussion centered on prison education and the positive impact creative writing creates for the incarcerated. The event helped *Iron City Magazine* spread the word of "validating inmates' humanity through writing and art," bring conversation to social issues, and support those interested in volunteering with the magazine or with ASU's Prison Education Programming.

Iron City Magazine Issue 4 is being made possible by generous grants from both [Arizona Humanities](#) and [The Ibis Foundation of Arizona](#). *Iron City Magazine* as well has built an informal partnership with Laura Peceno, Founding Director of [Project PAINT: The Prison Arts INiTiative](#), to publish art from prisons in San Diego. We at Iron City are thankful for this support. Iron City Magazine will host a public launch party of issue 4 on Saturday October 19, 2019 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at Changing Hands, Phoenix, AZ. We hope the event will draw in many readers and provide conversation on the literary and the social justice world, regarding the incarcerated and the basic human right of freedom of creative expression.



HUMANITIES

EXPLORE. SHARE. EXPERIENCE.



The Paint Project Inc.

IRON CITY MAGAZINE: CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS BY AND FOR THE INCARCERATED

The first issue of *Iron City Magazine* was published in print and online in 2016. The magazine's fourth issue will be available October 2019.

<http://ironcitymagazine.org>

That's what *Iron City Magazine* is all about: reminding the world that there's humanity – valuable humanity – behind every story, if only we take the time to read them.



TOGETHER WE TEACH; TOGETHER WE LEARN

ABOUT PRISON EDUCATION



BEFORE RELEASE, ALL ARIZONA INMATES MUST HAVE AT LEAST AN 8TH GRADE EDUCATION.



INCARCERATED STUDENTS CAN TAKE GED PREP CLASSES. TO TAKE THE GED TEST, STUDENTS MUST PAY THEIR TESTING FEES.



SELECT STUDENTS WHO CAN PAY TUITION MAY ENROLL IN DISTANCE LEARNING CLASSES THROUGH RIO SALADO COLLEGE.



INMATES MAY PARTICIPATE IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMS.



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS IS IN THE PROCESS OF INSTALLING ACCREDITED HIGH SCHOOLS IN ITS STATEWIDE FACILITIES.



STUDENTS MAY OPT TO TAKE NON-CREDIT CLASSES LED BY VOLUNTEERS LIKE THOSE FROM ASU.

“Somewhere in the world, there is someone wondering if anyone else feels the same way they do. Maybe they’re across the globe, maybe they’re five feet away, or maybe they’re a Pen Project participant like myself. Wherever they may be, they seek to encounter that expression that resonates with their experience. It is for that reason that every piece of art you make is vitally important. Each of your voices is vitally important. Never hesitate to speak out, even if only to one isolated soul. Someone will hear you.”

-Pen Project Intern

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

This *Prison Education News* was compiled and edited by Jacqueline Aguilar and Dr. Cornelia “Corri” Wells.

Prison Education News is the annual publication associated with Prison Education Programming at ASU. This publication would not be possible without support from the ASU Department of English.

Thank you to each of the contributors, who took great care in submitting meaningful pieces and sharing their experiences. This publication was a collaboration among many voices. We hope that those voices echo powerfully.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

ASU students and faculty can apply to volunteer teach in prisons. Students receive internship credit for teaching. We also collect books to donate to prison libraries.

For more information visit pep.asu.edu or contact Cornelia “Corri” Wells, director of Prison Education Programming (PEP) (cornelia.wells@asu.edu), or Naala Brewer, PEP co-director (nbrewer@asu.edu).

ASU Department of English
Arizona State University