

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



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DENVER

COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES
& SOCIAL SCIENCES
Prison Arts Initiative

PRISON ARTS INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2020–2021



DU PAI's Artistic Justice Team (L to R): Terry Mosley, Jr., Angel Lopez, George Chavez, Matthew LaBonte, Brett Phillips, Andrew Draper, Dr. Ashley Hamilton.

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William S. Graham, Resident Poet of DU PAI's With(in) Podcast, incarcerated at Denver Reception & Diagnostic Center.

OVERVIEW

The staff, advisory board, affiliate faculty and volunteers at the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) are excited to share with you the outcomes of our second year of programming in partnership with the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC). Through this deepening relationship, we continue to offer high-quality programming to hundreds of incarcerated learners across Colorado.

Despite the many challenges of our prolonged pandemic moment, including weeks of lock-down and modified operations within the CDOC, our incarcerated students showed us and each other nothing less than profound resiliency and creative abundance. With their commitment to arts-based community, DU PAI with the CDOC, was able to push further our collective creative boundaries and goals.

To ensure the creative health of our inside and outside communities, DU PAI established LuxLit Press, a publishing house led by editors from Sterling Correctional Facility; multiple virtual arts-based offerings; the unprecedented event *A/Live Inside: A Virtual Showcase of Artists and Their Stories from Colorado's Prisons*; and other creativity-based rehabilitation practices.

We remain humbled by our supporters—the staff and leadership of the CDOC; DU's College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences; community partners; interns; but mostly by our incarcerated students.

Thank you!

THE DU PAI TEAM

Ashley Hamilton, *executive director*

Julie Rada, *director of programming and lead affiliate faculty*

Shannon Sliva, *director of research*

Tess Neel, *program coordinator and operations manager*

Dan Manzanares, *development and communications manager*

Joan Dieter, *program coordinator*

Jamiylah Nelson, *administrative associate*

Xavier Bird, *administrative assistant*

Ryan Conarro, *creative producer and affiliate faculty*

Emmitt Compito, *program assistant*

JoyBelle Phelan, *program assistant*

Eric Davis, *communications associate*

Danielle Littman, *research assistant*

Nicholle Harris, *Graduate School of Social Work intern*

Caroline Sheahan, *With(in) podcast producer*

Clare Hammoor, *performance and pedagogy consultant*

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Libby Catchings

Emmitt Compito

Jessica Garrett

Jeffrey Lin

Jamiylah Nelson

Kristen Nelson

Shannon Sliva



Image credit: Shiva-Bindu," by Adam Fulford, incarcerated at Denver Reception & Diagnostic Center.

INITIATIVES

JULY - AUGUST 2020

DU PAI staff grew exponentially during our second year of CDOC partnership. Among other additions, **we hired four previously incarcerated individuals to the DU PAI staff**, including Jamiylah Nelson, who along with DU PAI Co-Founder Apryl Alexander and DU PAI Director of Research, Shannon Sliva, was on DU's webinar panel: "From Criminalization to Community: Re-Imagining Justice".

DU PAI **awarded a prestigious Arts in Society grant** for its daily arts practice journal *Sojourn: The Search*, which will be distributed to over 900 incarcerated individuals, as well as dozens of CDOC staff and outside community members.

"Imagining Worlds: Reading & Writing Plays," the first of three virtual arts-based workshops we offered inside as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic was launched. 137 students participated from nine CDOC facilities.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Our CDOC statewide newspaper, *The Inside Report*, published Volume 1, Issue 3, circulating 1,000 copies to all 21 CDOC facilities.

Production meetings begin for what will become DU PAI's *groundbreaking online event* A/Live Inside, taking place in November to an international audience.

OCTOBER 2020

Planning continues for A/Live Inside. The showcase includes the following featured spots: inaugural art show and new partnership Chained Voices; With(in) podcast season two trailer; staged reading from the anthology *Imagining Worlds*; teaser for the interview-based play *If Light Closed Its Eyes*; invitation to participate in *Sojourn: The Search* daily journal; scenes from the play *Antigone* filmed at Limon Correctional Facility; 'Historical Moments' – interludes capturing the history of prison in America; poetry readings from the literary magazine *Reverberations*; and a mini-documentary of *The Inside Report* newspaper.

NOVEMBER 2020

After months of meetings and countless hours of rehearsals, *A/Live Inside: A Virtual Showcase of Artists and Their Stories from Colorado's Prisons* was broadcast live on YouTube, the DU PAI website, as well as on all televisions inside the CDOC. Over 2,000 people tuned in the night of the show. As of this writing, almost 12,000 people have watched A/Live Inside globally. The show included a roundtable discussion facilitated by Mary Clark, DU's Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor, and featured Dean Williams, CDOC's Executive Director, Ashley Hamilton, DU PAI's Executive Director, and incarcerated speakers, performers and producers, Denise Presson, Travis Barnes, Michael J. Clifton, and Billy J. Edwards-El.

DECEMBER 2020

Evident Change announces the With(in) podcast Season 1, Episodes 1 and 2 has won a *Media for a Just Society Award for Best Radio Show*.

A/Live Inside was given a *True West Award* presented by the Arvada Center.

On December 16, *Sojourn: The Search - A Daily Journal from the University of Denver's Prison Arts Initiative* was published. Readers may purchase copies on Amazon or download a PDF for free on the DU PAI website. Also published was *Imagining Worlds: An Anthology of Plays by Artists from Colorado's Prisons*, the culminating project from the virtual course "Imagining Worlds: Reading & Writing Plays."

JANUARY 2021

Online galleries for the **Chained Voices art show**, featuring 400 pieces of art from 17 CDOC facilities, closed January 7. Almost \$10,000 worth of artwork was sold, the money from each purchase being sent to the individual contributing artists.

"The Walls Came Down: A Mixed-Methods Multi-Site Prison Arts Program Evaluation" was published in the **Justice Evaluation Journal** by DU PAI research team members Shannon Sliva and Danielle Littman.

Our second COVID-19 response arts-based workshop, "**Tell It Slant: Reading & Writing Creative Nonfiction**" was offered. 184 students from 10 CDOC facilities participated.

FEBRUARY 2021

For our new publications of The Inside Report newspaper, Reverberations literary magazine, anthologies, and journals, **LuxLit Press** was founded. The new literary wing of DU PAI is headed by an editorial team residing in Sterling Correctional Facility.

DU's Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning awarded DU PAI a **Public Good Fund Bridge Grant** for the supporting documentary of our production *If Light Closed Its Eyes*.

MARCH 2021

DU PAI staff and our GSSW intern, Nicholle Harris, along with professional photographer, Salvador Armendariz, co-lead our **first reentry workshop, "Photography & Community."** This four-week course helps returning citizens explore their self and surroundings.

Creative Producer, Ryan Conarro, assembled team for **new CDOC statewide radio station—Inside Wire: Colorado Prison Radio**. Inside Wire awarded a Creative Arts Material Funds grant and is also selected to be a part of DU's crowdfunding day **1Day4DU**.

"**Learning to See Through Drawing,**" our third and final virtual arts-based course we conducted in response to COVID-19, took place in 11 CDOC facilities with 201 participants. A mural of "Learning to See Through Drawing" exercises were showcased at the DU Community Commons Gallery in the fall.

APRIL 2021

DU PAI's program team, Julie Rada and Tess Neel, sent art call-outs and media release packets for the **2021 Chained Voices art show**, taking place in August.

A virtual reading of selections from the course, "**Tell It Slant: Reading & Writing Creative Nonfiction,**" was performed and recorded by "Tell It Slant" facilitators, responders and graders. The reading was broadcast on the CDOC's education channel.

MAY 2021

Out of 34 1DAY4DU sponsored projects, DU PAI's 'Inside Wire' came in 3rd place for number of donors at 126. Only 'DU Law' and '5280 Together Athletics COVID Relief Fund' received more individual donations. Inside Wire raised almost \$10,000.

DU PAI's inaugural Inside Out College Course, "Restorative Justice & Performance" wraps up. This class, co-taught by Ashley Hamilton, Shannon Sliva, and Joan Dieter, DU PAI's program coordinator, included 10 DU students and 10 incarcerated learners from Buena Vista Correctional Facility.

JUNE 2021

Eight performers residing in La Vista Women's Correctional Facility gave a reading from their new play "Universe Within" in front of a live audience. This project, to be performed in full in March 2022, is inspired by *Sojourn: The Search*.

"Learning to See Through Drawing" concludes. The course introduced students to the drawing concepts of contour lines, line weight, value, contrast, gradation, perspective, color theory and more.

FACILITIES

This year, DU PAI provided arts-based programming in 10 CDOC facilities.



Buena Vista
Correctional Complex



Colorado State
Penitentiary



Colorado Territorial
Correctional Facility



Denver Reception and
Diagnostic Center



Denver Women's
Correctional Facility



Fremont
Correctional Facility



Four Mile
Correctional Center



La Vista
Correctional Facility



Limon
Correctional Facility



Sterling
Correctional Facility

NUMBERS

PROGRAMMING

1,500

Total hours of programming

697

Total unique participants



AUDIENCES AT PUBLIC PERFORMANCES (VIRTUAL)

11,949

A/Live Inside--A Virtual Showcase of Artists and Their Stories from CO Prisons



WITH(IN) PODCAST

35,496

First season listens (SoundCloud, Spotify & iTunes)



THE INSIDE REPORT READERSHIP AND DISTRIBUTION

7,200

Total Newspapers printed

6,951

Website page views



NON-CONTRACTED FACILITIES WITH SIGNIFICANT CONTACT

San Carlos (SCCF)
Arkansas Valley (AVCF)
Trinidad (TCF)

Delta/Rifle (DCF/RCF)
Youth Offender Services (YOS)
Camp George West (CCC)



The Inside Report newspaper team in the newsroom at Fremont Correctional Facility

EVALUATION

A/Live Inside Shifts the Conversation about Prison

We asked those who tuned in to DU PAI's A/Live Inside 3-hour virtual event several questions before and after, including how close they felt to incarcerated people and experiences of incarceration, their attitudes towards incarceration, and whether they intended to take action in some way around issues of incarceration. 142 people took our survey both before and after the event. After attending A/Live Inside, attendees felt significantly closer to incarcerated people. Those who felt closer were also more likely to say they had changed their views on incarceration – namely, that it was less necessary and more harmful than they had thought before – and reported increased desire to act on issues of incarceration. These changes were felt most keenly among attendees who have never been inside prison before, suggesting that virtual prison arts events can be a vehicle for connection and catalyst for change among the general public.



For a more in-depth look at the impact of A/Live Inside, please read the article published by DU PAI's research team

[READ NOW](#)



The team from DU PAI's production Antigone: A Post-Apocalyptic Adaptation at Limon Correctional Facility.

TELL IT SLANT

The DU Prison Arts Initiative collected and analyzed feedback from the participants in the Tell It Slant workshop, which was conducted via correspondence during Winter 2021. When asked what the course was like for them overall, participants shared that they felt a sense of connection amidst an isolating time, like they could creatively express themselves, and experienced personal growth. When asked what stuck with them from the course, participants said they found their artistic voice, gained confidence, and developed new skills.

“

It's okay to be me.

Tell It Slant participant incarcerated at Buena Vista Correctional Facility

“

I really enjoyed the variety of techniques I learned and the ability to receive feedback on my own application of the techniques. It provide[d] an outlet that was really needed and appreciated during all this isolation.

Tell It Slant participant incarcerated at Sterling Correctional Facility

“

[It was] a beautiful struggle. I learned how to better get what I needed with what I had, and although COVID created great resistance I really felt a sense of accomplishment from pushing through.

Tell It Slant participant incarcerated at Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility

“

The feedback from responder for surely sticks with me... It's super rad to share our stories in a very creative, un-traditional way.

Tell It Slant participant incarcerated at Buena Vista Correctional Facility



Inside Wire: Colorado Prison Radio Producer, Cynthia Gonzalez, and participant, Sarah Berry, both incarcerated at Denver Women's Correctional Facility

CONNECT

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FOLLOW

 @DUPrisonArtsInitiative

 @duprisonarts

GIVE

To learn more and give to DU PAI, visit bit.ly/GIVE2PAI

DU PAI is supported by the Colorado Department of Corrections, Arts Affinity Group, Arts in Society, and the the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences Center for Innovation in the Liberal & Creative Arts.



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