



OCTOBER 28 - 29, 2019

CONVENING ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
IN ILLINOIS PRISONS

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

PROGRAM



Presented by the Illinois Coalition for
Higher Education in Prison

OCTOBER 28 - 29, 2019

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HIGHER EDUCATION
IN ILLINOIS PRISONS

PRESENTED BY THE ILLINOIS COALITION FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

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IL-CHEP Steering Committee

Rebecca Ginsburg, Sarah Ross, Christina Rivers

Conference Volunteers

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Extra Special Thanks

Minute Man Printing, Champaign
Jamie Hines, EJP Director of Operations
Thank you to IDOC for facilitating participation of incarcerated presenters

Contact information

Have a question? Need assistance? Call us!

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Event accessibility

If you will need disability-related accommodations in order to participate in this conference, please Debbie Morgan at morgand@illinois.edu. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.

Land acknowledgement

IL-CHEP recognizes and acknowledges that we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity. As educators, we have a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that that formal education has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

-Adopted from the Native American House, UIUC

IL-CHEP
illinoischep@gmail.com
www.ilchep.org

We invite you to use the following when sharing about this conference:

#ILCHEP
#educationforall
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Table of contents

Welcome	5
About IL-CHEP	6
Tell Your Story	7
Schedule of Sessions	9
Presenter Bios	16

Welcome

Welcome to the inaugural Convening on Higher Education in Illinois Prisons!

On behalf of the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, thank you for attending. We truly appreciate your traveling from far and near. We are delighted and honored that so many--educators, family members, formerly incarcerated students, prison activists, legislators, program administrators, department of corrections personnel, and more--have come together in a spirit of inquiry, fellowship, and action.

We hope that the next couple of days will provide fruitful opportunities for us to grow and deepen in our shared commitment to expanding access to quality higher education to people in prison and creating strong pathways to higher education for those with records. We expect the conversations and presentations to stimulate and challenge us. We also hope that promising new partnerships and collaborations will emerge among the people and organizations represented at this event.

As much as we want this symposium to push us, we also want each of you to be comfortable. Please approach any of the symposium volunteers (identifiable by green IL-CHEP t-shirts) if there's anything we can provide for you to make your experience of this conference better.

We acknowledge that the topics we will be discussing over the next few days--incarceration, educational equity, loss, violence, re-entry, trauma--can be difficult and triggering. Please be aware that IL-CHEP has reserved a "quiet room" on the first floor. It is available to anyone who wishes to get away for some private time.

Thank you again for joining us. Given the attention that carceral systems and higher education in prison are receiving in the media these days, it is timely that we are meeting, and essential that we develop critical clarity around our work. Your engagement in the conference moves us toward that end.

With All Best Wishes,

The 2019 IL-CHEP Steering Committee

About IL-CHEP

The Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison (IL-CHEP) is a coalition of educators, students, activists, universities, and others committed to bringing quality higher education to Illinois prisons and jails and working toward a safer, more just society. Founded in 2016, we operate with the knowledge that higher education programs are among the best ways to offer opportunities and hope to individuals who are incarcerated. Such programs also help all of us imagine alternatives to our current system of mass incarceration.

Priorities and Goals:

1. Support programs and instructors that offer higher education to individuals in Illinois prisons and jails. Ensure that this education is of high quality and that it is delivered in an efficient, sound, and just manner.
2. Educate the public about the value of higher education within prisons and jails.
3. Advocate for the expansion of higher education in Illinois prisons and support universities and community groups that seek to start prison higher education programs.
4. Assist legislators to create policy around prison higher education and incarceration. Disseminate information about higher education in prison in Illinois.
5. Encourage and engage in research on higher education and incarceration. Disseminate information about higher education in prison in Illinois.
6. Work with IDOC and other entities to create consistent rules regarding the administration of higher education in Illinois jails and prisons.
7. Focus on higher education as a significant path toward re-entry for the thousands of individuals released from prison each year. As part of this goal, advocate for IDOC policies that support professional and supportive engagement between programs and students following release.

Post about the conference!

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Tell Your Story

We're pleased to announce that there is a professional videographer on site. We hope that you'll be moved to tell your story about higher education in prison, whether as a student, instructor, administrator, or family member. We know that stories are powerful. We can use them to generate support for our cause of expanding access and quality for higher education in prisons across Illinois.

The videographer will be available from 11 - 2:30 on Monday and from 9 - 2:30 on Tuesday. If you are interested in being interviewed, please sign up for a slot outside the Tap Room on the first floor.

We expect to use the videos on the IL-CHEP website, on different programs' websites, and to support the Freedom to Learn Campaign. Our hope is to share them widely with a broad audience, for maximum impact.

We ask that everyone who attends the conference completes a Release Form. This is especially important for those who will be on video. Please submit the form to the registration table.

Thank you!

Featured session: Progress in Other States



Kyes Stevens

Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project

APAEP is a great example of an education program that has developed strong relationships with wardens and DOC. Its nimble and efficient protocols for clearance allows instructors to enter facilities quickly and to retain their enthusiasm for volunteering in a prison, as it's not necessary for them to wait months to be approved.

Tariq Baiyina
Common Good, Atlanta, GA



The Georgia Department of Corrections allows Common Good to run a post-release college program on the outside, permitting formerly incarcerated students to continue to earn course credit and to engage with some of the same instructors they studied with while inside. The program aims to provide a smooth pathway for continuing education and degree completion.

Schedule

MONDAY, October 28

Time	Governor's Ballroom	Assembly Room	Caucus Room	Session Room
8:00am - 9:00am	Breakfast & Registration			
9:00am - 9:15am	SESSION 1 - Welcome			
	Alice Kim Erica Meiners			
9:20am - 11:00am	SESSION 2 - Advancing Higher Ed in Illinois Prisons			
	<i>We'll set the foundation for the convening by exploring the past and present of higher education in Illinois prisons. Presenters include directors of current programs, currently incarcerated students skyping from Stateville, a program alumnus, and administrators from the IL Department of Corrections.</i>			
	Moderator: Elena Quintana Micheal Tafolla Chris Rivers Rebecca Ginsburg Joseph Dole Jamal Bakr Antonio Kendrick Rob Jeffreys Allysa Williams Rich Stempinski			
11:15am - 12:30pm		SESSION 3 - The Distinctiveness of Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program	SESSION 4 - Exploring Pedagogy	
		<i>This session discusses the history of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at DePaul University and highlights the unique ability of the Inside-Out Program to inspire both inside and outside students. Panelists include instructors and outside students.</i>	<i>What sorts of teaching best support critical learning? Is there a particular pedagogy that is well suited for prison education? What is important to understand about teaching and learning in a carceral space?</i>	
		Xavier Perez Helen Damon-Moore Ginerva Francesconi James Derecskey Alex Bourtons Shelby Klingberg	Johari Jabir Josh Wen Tara Betts Kim Moe	

Time	Governor's Ballroom	Assembly Room	Caucus Room	Session Room
12:30pm - 2:00pm	<p>LUNCH</p> <p>SESSION 5 - Progress in Other States</p> <p><i>The implementation of best practices in other states provides examples for Illinois to learn from.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Sarah Ross Keyes Stevens (AL) Tariq Baiyina (GA)</p>			
2:15pm - 3:30pm		<p>SESSION 6 - "College Behind Bars"</p> <p><i>Screening of the Ken Burns produced upcoming PBS docu-series "College Behind Bars." This series tells the story of a small group of incarcerated men and women struggling to earn college degrees and turn</i></p> <p>Moderator: Rebecca Ginsburg Jessica Neptune Dyjuan Tatro</p>	<p>SESSION 7 - Program Challenges</p> <p><i>Discussion of some of the obstacles that programs encounter. How can programs best prepare for and meet challenges? What can we do to minimize the challenges and the threats?</i></p> <p>Moderator: Timmy Rose Sarah Ross Rebecca Bott Magic Wade</p>	
3:45pm - 5:00pm		<p>SESSION 8 - The University Without Walls Model</p> <p><i>This session explores Northeastern University's innovation of adapting the "university without walls" approach to higher education in prison</i></p> <p>Erica Meiners Alice Kim UWW Students</p>	<p>SESSION 9 - Program Evaluation: EJPs Student-Led Approach</p> <p><i>This session introduces the audience to evaluation frameworks such as Culturally Responsive Evaluation, provides broad highlights into the EJP evaluation planning process and work products (e.g., values framework, intellectual property policy statements), and asks participants to talk to each other about the concepts they heard, so that they begin re-imagining their own measurements of success.</i></p> <p>Nicole Robinson Larry Barrett Michael Harrell Raylan Gilford Raphel Jackson James Wood Rodney Hopson</p>	<p>SESSION 10 - Funding Ideas and Models</p> <p><i>Seeking financial support? This session explores some innovative ways to fund higher education in prison programming.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Emily Powers Lance Pittman Michelle Clifton-Soderstorm</p>
6:00 - 7:15pm	Dinner			
7:30pm - 9:00pm	Continued on Next Page			

MONDAY, October 28

Time	Governor's Ballroom	Assembly Room	Caucus Room	Session Room
7:30pm - 9:00pm		<p>SESSION 11 - Challenges and Opportunities for Incarcerated Students</p> <p><i>Currently and formerly incarcerated students share their perspectives on Illinois' higher education in prison programs.</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Patrick Pursley</i> Eric Blackmon Oscar Parham Monica Cosby Raphael Jackson Eric Watkins Edwin Klemm Angel Pantoja Anthony Olivieri</p>		

TUESDAY, October 29

Time	Governor's Ballroom	Assembly Room	Caucus Room	Session Room
8:00am - 9:00am	Breakfast			
9:00am - 10:15am		<p>SESSION 12 - Beyond the Classroom</p> <p><i>Higher education programs are about more than for-credit courses. In this session, instructors and incarcerated students explore how specific extra-curricular programs support learning and growth. Higher education programs are about more than for-credit courses. In this session, instructors and incarcerated students explore how specific extra-curricular programs support learning and growth.</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Eddie Bocanegra</i> David Sharpe and Ellen Ritter Andrew Dortsch Cragg Hardaway</p>	<p>SESSION 13 - Starting a Program</p> <p><i>"I want to start a higher education in prison program at my university or college. Where do I start?" Attend this session for suggestions and to hear the origin stories of existing programs.</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Oscar Parham</i> Katrina Burlet Rebecca Ginsburg Tim Barnett</p>	<p>SESSION 14 - Session 14 - Writing Across IL-CHEP: Writing Across the Curriculum and Language Ideologies in Higher Education in Prison Contexts</p> <p><i>This workshop will provide attendees with practical measures for ensuring that their HEP programs can work toward cultivating holistic writing pedagogies that not only consider the multiple disciplines, genres, and purposes for which people write but honor their varied and diverse linguistic backgrounds as well.</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Logan Middleton</i></p>
10:30am - 11:45am		<p>SESSION 15 - Wrap Up</p> <p><i>Where next? What are future priorities and strategies for action?</i></p> <p><i>Moderators: Emily Powers and Rebecca Ginsburg</i></p>		
12:00noon - 1:30pm	Lunch			

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Presenters & moderators

Alex Boutros is a recent graduate of DePaul University with a bachelors in Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies. She has been an active organizer in voting rights and the criminal justice system, as well as how those two fields intersect. She is also an alumni of the Inside-Out classes, and participates in a law and policy think-tank at Stateville.

Alice Kim is a cultural organizer, educator and writer based in Chicago. She is Director of Human Rights Practice at the University of Chicago's Pozen Family Center for Human Rights. And teaches with the Prison Neighborhood Arts Project.

Alyssa Williams was appointed as the Acting Chief of Programs and Support Services for the Illinois Department of Corrections on August 1, 2019. Ms. Williams will have oversight of IDOC's Adult Education and Vocational Services, Addiction Recovery Management Services Unit, Chaplaincy, Sex Offender Services Unit, Volunteer Services, Victim Services, Field Services and the Reentry Unit. Ms. Williams earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Bradley University and a Master's degree in Psychology from Chapman University.

Angel Pantoja is an EJP student and member of Language Partners.

Andrew Dortch is an EJP student.

Anthony Olivieri is a new student with the EJP program. I have been incarcerated for approximately 20 years and will be released in 2025. I have taken part in anger management, lifestyle redirection programs, college classes and relearned algebra and trigonometry on my own, I have not given up. The reason why I submitted a paper to the IL-CHEP conference is because I want to bring attention to some of the challenges I have experienced in obtaining an education in prison.

Antonio Kendrick is a University Without Walls graduate.

Bryan Dean has been an EJP member since 2015. In addition to his affinity for math, he has immersed himself in the worlds of computer programming, ESL instruction, and tutoring. He is dedicated to his continued education and growth.

Christina Rivers teaches political science at DePaul University. She also teaches at Stateville Correctional Center as part of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program, and coordinates a think-tank there on law and public policy. Her research focuses on

voting rights and representation, voting for pre-trial detainees, felony disenfranchisement, and prison-based gerrymanders.

Cragg Hardaway is originally from Chicago. He believes that education (formal or informal) should promote agency, advocate equality, and empower all students. My interests are vast, but I'm most passionate about Gender and Womens's Studies with a keen interest in ending oppression for all women.

David Sharpe is a retired SUC faculty in Geography and Environmental Planning. Early in his career he taught General Education courses at Marion federal prison and Menard and Vienna Correctional Centers. Since 2015 he has volunteered with the Education Justice Project at UIUC as co-coordinator for the Mindfulness Discussion Group at Danville Correctional Center.

Dyjuan Tatro is the Government Affairs & Advancement officer at the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI). He is a BPI alumnus, class of '18, and one the students featured in College Behind Bars. He is committed to expanding access to higher education in prison through public investments into the field.

Eddie Bocanegra is the Senior Director for Heartland Alliance, READI Chicago.

Edwin Klemm is currently incarcerated in Big Muddy River Correctional Center. He uses his MA in Education to serve as an educational assistant for the GED program at the prison

Elena Quintana is the Executive Director of the Institute on Public Safety & Social Justice at Adler University. Her work entails creating trauma-informed programs, research, and events that promote socially just solutions to public safety challenges. She has served on the State of Illinois Commission for Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform and currently serves on the Oversight Board for the City of Chicago Police Department Consent Decree.

Ellen Ritter is the Co-Coordinator of the Mindfulness Discussion Group within the Education Justice Project (EJP). She has been a member of EJP since 2015 and has a deep passion for providing individuals access to meditation through building communities of meditators, both inside and outside of the incarceration setting. She works from a trauma-informed lens and seeks to provide safe spaces for self-discovery.

Eric Watkins lives in Chicago.

Eric Blackmon is a Chicago native who is an artist, poet and paralegal at the MacArthur Justice Center, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. He spent more than 15 years in Illinois state prisons for a crime he didn't commit. He was represented by the Northwestern Center for Wrongful Convictions who has played an instrumental role in his release. Eric works diligently to reform the system that once wrongfully incarcerated him. He is a member of the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project and a student at Northeastern IL University.

Erica Meiners teaches classes in justice studies, education, and gender and sexuality studies at Northeastern Illinois University and is a member of the Prison Neighborhood Arts & Education Project.

Ginevra Francesconi is a current undergraduate student at DePaul University studying Sociology and Peace, Justice and Conflict studies. She is a teaching assistant for the Inside-Out program through DePaul University, certified circle keeper and restorative justice facilitator.

Helen Damon -Moore is the Associate Director of the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning at DePaul University. She coordinates the Inside-Out program at DePaul, Stateville and Cook County Department of Corrections to provide transformative learning experiences- including courses, think tanks, an advocacy group, and a book group--for all involved students.

Jamal Bakr is a North Park University student at Stateville. He formerly took Inside-Out classes through the DePaul University program.

James Derecskey is a current undergraduate at DePaul University studying Sociology, Philosophy, and Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies. He has participated in the Inside-Out program for three years and will be one of the Teaching Assistants this year.

James Wood is an EJP student and an artist.

Jessica Neptune is Director of National Engagement for the Bard Prison Initiative, an organization she helped start as a Bard undergraduate. She served as an ACLS Public Fellow with the Obama Administration's Federal Interagency Reentry Council.

She holds a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Chicago. Her scholarship is on the making of the carceral state.

Johari Jabir is a musician and scholar. He is currently a professor of Black Studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and director of music for St. George & St. Matthias Episcopal Church in Chicago. His first book, *Conjuring Freedom: Music and Masculinity in the Gospel Army of the Civil War* (Ohio State University Press, 2017), is a cultural history of the nation's first Black regiment, the 1st South Carolina Volunteers.

Joseph Dole is a University Without Walls graduate. He participates in think tanks at Stateville and was formerly on the debate team there. He is the author of *A Costly American Hatred*.

Josh Wen is a sixth-year PhD student in mathematics at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has been involved with the Education Justice Project since Fall 2016, beginning as a Writing and Math Partner, following that with a sequence of calculus workshops, and finally teaching a sequence of calculus courses.

Katrina Burlet is the founder/director of the Justice Debate League. This is a non-profit organization which coaches debate teams in prisons across the country.

Kimberly Moe is a veteran educator with over thirty years of experience. She is a Lecturer at DePaul University and specializes in teaching Philosophy, particularly Ethics, and Service Learning courses. Kim teaches from the heart with the aim of unlocking students' abilities to be thinkers within an academic and correspondingly communal context.

Kyes Stevens is the founder/director of the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project. Since 2001, Stevens built an innovative program for education inside prisons. Stevens works with peers to develop strategies for arts and higher education in prisons. She was awarded the 2019 Governor's Award by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Lance Pittman serves as the Director of Academic Programs as well as the Coordinator of the Math, Science, and Business Workshops for the Education Justice Project (EJP) based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and serving men at Danville Correctional Center. He got involved in

EJP as a tutor and math workshop facilitator in 2012 while he was a graduate student studying math and math education.

Larry Barrett has been a member of the Education Justice Project (EJP) since 2013, during which he was a part of most of the programs offered, including the EJP Evaluation Advisory committee and Chicago Anti-Violence Education (CAVE). He is the proud recipient of the John Dewey for leadership in education within the community and a published author.

Logan Middleton is a coordinator and facilitator of writing workshops with the Education Justice Project. He is a PhD student in the Center for Writing Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

M. Sean Lawless has been an EJP student since 2015.

Magic Wade is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Illinois Springfield. She has been affiliated with the Education Justice Project since the spring of 2019, when she taught the course "Urban Communities and Public Policy" to incarcerated men at the Danville Correctional Center. She currently serves as the for-credit course coordinator for the Education Justice Project, assisting in the recruitment, hiring, and training of instructors to teach inside the prison in Danville.

Mario Rubio has been a member of EJP since 2014. He is in many extra curricular activities for EJP including: The Amplifier, Python/C++, Library Crew, and Evaluation Committee. He plans to leave EJP and DCC towards the end of 2020. He just received his Associates in Engineering Science from D.A.C.C.

Michael Harrell is a 40 years old man from the Westside of Chicago. He has participated in EJP since 2010 and identifies himself as an Incarcerated Scholar. Mr. Harrell works as a teacher's assistant in Construction Occupation while moonlighting as a Literacy tutor for aspiring College students. In addition to this he teaches ESL (in Language Partners) and is a facilitator in C.A.V.E. (a trauma informed care program). Among many other things he enjoys STEM courses but also has a strong predilection for the Social Sciences.

Michael Tafolla is an EJP alumnus. He was released

in 2018 and currently works as a case manager for Precious Blood Ministries of Reconciliation in Chicago.

Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom is Professor of Theology & Ethics at North Park Theological Seminary and director of the School of Restorative Arts at Stateville Correctional Center. Michelle is a passionate advocate for people and groups who are marginalized in society and in the church. Her interests include virtue ethics, children, women's participation, antiracism organizing, and education for persons who are incarcerated.

Monica Cosby works for the Westside Justice Center and Women's Justice Institute, and is co-director of Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration. Her life and work have been shaped and informed by the communities to which she belongs, including the community of artists & scholars with whom she was incarcerated and whose survival was and is an act of resistance against a system that would dispose of them.

Nicole Robinson has been practicing social justice-infused evaluation for the past 14 years to help organizations, governments, and foundations engaged in systems change build their evaluative power. Nicole has conducted numerous program evaluations in many styles (e.g., participatory, developmental) and formats (e.g., mixed-methods) through NNR Evaluation, Planning, & Research LLC.

Oscar Parham is the father of four daughters and one son. He is the proud grandfather of six. He is a godly man and has been a person of great faith since 1998. Mr. Parham was recently released from prison on August 5, 2019, after serving a thirty year prison term of what was initially a "natural life" sentence. Since being released, he's become a student in North Park University in the master's degree program. Mr. Parham is also an advocate for prison reform. Mr Parham has goals of impacting the recidivism rate by mentoring youth in hopes that they don't go down the same path that he did..

Patrick Pursley was wrongfully convicted and spent twenty-four years locked up in Illinois prisons. From behind bars, he helped to create a new law around ballistics testing that eventually won him a new trial. He is the founder of I Am Kid Culture <https://www.iamkidculture.org>.

Raphel Jackson My bio entwines with a multitude

that has found solace in the halls of academia. The difference: my academia comes enveloped in intersectional layers of deception, marginalization, and obstacles. However, because allegiances were forged, spaces were developed. Because escapes were charted, minds were liberated. Because voice is celebrated, walls crumbled. As a result, we stand.

Raylan Gilford is an EJP student and award-winning author.

Rebecca Bott is a rare book librarian-turned-bookseller and the Assistant Librarian for the Education Justice Project.

Rebecca Ginsburg is the director of the Education Justice Project, a college-in-prison program based at the University of Illinois that offers educational programs at Danville Correctional Center and produces reentry guides for people returning to Illinois or being deported to Mexico or Central America. She is editor of *Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison* (2019).

Rob Jeffreys serves as Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Jeffreys is a nationally-recognized criminal justice expert with correctional experience spanning more than two decades. He spent 21 of his 24 years in corrections management at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. He began his career as a corrections class specialist in ODRC's Bureau of Research. Jeffreys received both his Master of Science and Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia.

Rodney Hopson, is a Ph.D. who serves as Professor of Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. Together with his wife, Deborah, they are committed to the work of the EJP through their philanthropic, advocacy, and educational/outreach efforts.

Sarah Ross is an Assistant Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a co-founder of Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project, an arts and Humanities program at Stateville prison. She is a Soros Justice Media Fellow and an inaugural recipient of the Leaders for a New Chicago award.

Simone Sisneros-Thiry is a PhD candidate in mathematics who has been a part of EJP through for-credit courses, workshops, and reading groups since Fall 2016.

Tara Betts is author of *Break the Habit* and *Arc &*

Hue. She teaches poetry at Stateville Prison and as a MFA faculty member at Stonecoast - University of Southern Maine. A poetry editor at *Another Chicago Magazine* and *The Langston Hughes Review*, Tara also covers books as Lit Editor at *Newcity*.

Tariq Baiyina is a Board Advisor for Common Good Atlanta (CGA) and a Community Organizer at IMAN (Inner-city Muslim Action Network) Atlanta. He served fifteen years in Georgia's prisons. During this time, he was a student in CGA's college-in-prison program and went on to become the founder and director of his own Islamic Studies program. Upon release he immediately became involved with IMAN's reentry work and continues to be a strong advocate for criminal justice reform in GA, tackling issues that impact returning citizens and impede their access to employment, housing, education, voting and healthy lifestyle.

Xavier Perez is the co-founder of the Criminology program at DePaul University. He is an advocate for critical and inclusive perspectives in Criminology. Dr. Perez's research interests address two broad areas of study: Criminology and Latinx crime.

