1968: A FOLSOM REDEMPTION
# 1968: A Folsom Redemption

## Programming Guide

Note: This Programming Guide has been created to complement ExhibitsUSA’s nationally touring exhibition 1968: A Folsom Redemption. Only select portions are included in this version of the guide; the complete publication, however, is available to museums and other institutions booking the exhibition. To learn about the exhibition, visit: [https://eusa.org/exhibition/1968-folsom/](https://eusa.org/exhibition/1968-folsom/)

For questions about this guide, contact Stephanie Seber, stephanie@maaa.org

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Description</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources that Travel with the Exhibition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Contact M-AAA/EUSA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Reference Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Text Panels</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Checklist</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography / Johnny Cash</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Connections / Johnny Cash</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Programming Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Ideas</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics for Discussion</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Outreach Toolkit</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Ideas</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Ideas</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Ideas</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Connections</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and Performance Copyright</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Performance Licensing</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Johnny Cash Prison Concerts</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Framework and Lesson Idea: At Folsom Prison Listening Party Workshop</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Cash Trivia Cards</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This ExhibitsUSA programming guide provides educational resources and program/activity ideas for education curators, docents, and teachers. We hope these materials are useful tools to make 1968: A Folsom Redemption a success for your organization and your community.

Please feel free to share your own images and information to promote the success of your exhibition-related programming using the ExhibitsUSA Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/ExhibitsUSA. Follow and like us on Facebook, tag ExhibitsUSA in all related posts, and/or email us photos and links to articles about your museum to post. Contact beth@maaa.org to share your success stories and images.

Exhibition Overview

1968: A Folsom Redemption

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of a landmark event, 1968: A Folsom Redemption is a collection of photographs and memories of two journalists lucky enough to be among a handful of eyewitnesses to the historic Johnny Cash concerts at Folsom Prison. This candid and personal photography exhibition covers a critical juncture in the career of Johnny Cash, one of the twentieth century’s most beloved performers.

In January 1968, Johnny Cash was at a crossroads. His music career, in a slow decline for several years, was in need of a smash hit. He had recently straightened out his personal life, and leadership changes at his record label meant he was able to finally convince them of the merits of a live recording in a prison setting. Cash had been performing for inmates as far back as 1957, when he received a stream of requests from prisoners who identified with the man who sang “Folsom Prison Blues.” This connection developed with prisoners during these concerts had made him increasingly sympathetic to those he would later call “the downtrodden.”

Working as freelance journalists, photographer Dan Poush and writer Gene Beley met with Cash and his family the day before the concerts began, at the invitation of Reverend Floyd Gressett, a friend of Cash’s who ministered to inmates and helped set up the show at Folsom State Prison with Recreation Director Lloyd Kelley. After practicing the set with the Tennessee Three at Hotel El Rancho the night before, on January 13, 1968, Cash, along with opening acts Carl Perkins and the Statler Brothers, performed two separate shows in the dining hall at Folsom. Notable for capturing Cash’s ability to connect with his audience, the recordings crackled with the excitement of an adoring crowd. The resulting album, At Folsom Prison, was released four months later to critical and popular acclaim.
Beley’s first-person account of those days, and his knowledge of the storylines at work behind the scenes, make this a fascinating exploration of the little-known aspects of a well-known event in popular culture. *1968: A Folsom Redemption* takes the viewer right into the heart of this pivotal moment in the life and career of one of the twentieth century’s most important and cherished musical personalities.

For the first time ever, this travelling road show collection of thirty-one photos features a wide range of intimate photos with friends and family to a backstage meeting with country music legend Merle Haggard with the Man in Black. This exhibition highlights Cash’s golden era from the January 1968 Folsom Prison album recording to a March 1, 1969 concert in Anaheim, California when he was getting ready to launch his network television show.

### Exhibition Overview

Several support materials are traveling with the exhibition. They are selected to enhance understanding and appreciation of the content and themes of the exhibition and may be helpful resources to help venue staff and docents prepare. Some of the resources may be useful to educators or presenters as they plan related programming; some may be effective out in the gallery, so visitors can peruse them. The DVDs or CDs included with the exhibition may also be used in a variety of ways, but be sure to follow copyright laws (summarized in the Programming Guide) if playing any media in public spaces. Please enjoy these bonus materials during your hosting period and take good care of them for future venues.

Should any of these materials be missing or fail to arrive, please contact ExhibitsUSA Constituent Services at 800-473-3872, and we will locate or replace the missing items as soon as possible. **Please repack these items in the crates before sending the exhibition to the next venue.**

### Books for Adult Readers


**Books for Young Readers**


**CDs and DVDs**


*Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison*. Sony BMG, Music CDs (2 discs); Columbia Pictures DVD (1 disc), 2008. Box set includes an extensive liner notes booklet.


The Programming Guide for 1968: A Folsom Redemption

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Exhibition Overview

If you have any questions or comments, ExhibitsUSA is just a phone call away at 800-473-3872. We can also be reached by e-mail at the addresses listed below. For questions about specific topics, please consult the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently asked questions regarding:</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling an exhibition, exhibition contracts, general</td>
<td>Amanda Wiltse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questions, problems, or requests</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Constituent Services Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:amanda@maaa.org">amanda@maaa.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ext. 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping, installation, or packing</td>
<td>Michelle Wolfe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Registrar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ext. 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational programs or materials</td>
<td>Stephanie Seber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educator</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:stephanie@maaa.org">stephanie@maaa.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ext. 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposing an exhibition</td>
<td>Kathy Dowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Arts &amp; Humanities Programming</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:kathy@maaa.org">kathy@maaa.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ext. 220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mid-America Arts Alliance
2018 Baltimore Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 64108
Phone (toll free): 800-473-EUSA (3872)
Fax: 816-421-3918
http://www.eusa.org/
Prison Partnerships, Service, Awareness—An Introduction

Johnny Cash’s Folsom Prison concerts and his lifelong service to prison inmates and raising awareness of prison reform issues might inspire you to: develop partnerships with arts organizations that serve prison populations in your region, offer outreach programs that support incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, or plan public programs that address current issues in criminal justice reform today.

Johnny Cash: Crusader for Prison Reform

Johnny Cash wrote many prison songs; and he had a few run-ins with the law, resulting in jail, but not prison, time. He performed concerts in prisons, for audiences of inmates, nearly thirty times. And in 1972, he, along with former inmates Glen Sherley and Harlan Sanders, appeared before the United States Senate Subcommittee on National Penitentiaries.

Cash opened his congressional testimony by reading from an 1865 newspaper article:

*When a man is sentenced for a crime he must feel a loss for transgressing the laws of society, but generally the system not only punishes men, it degrades them and, in many cases, that is all it cares to do. It is indifferent whether it sends the man out better or worse. As a consequence, our prisons are full of revolvers, men and women who are sentenced for short terms, then discharged to commit their old crimes or worse crimes. In many cases, the prison is an incubator for crime, a Crime school, crime being well-taught and well learned in the prison suit-culture under the unseen and at times the seeing eyes of the authorities. The true idea of prison is not only to punish, but to reform, to make convicts afterwards the better fitted for society. To effect this there must be an element of hope mingled in the treatment of moral discipline. Should not more philosophers and humanitarians be involved in the prison corrections systems?*

After reading the Civil War-era quote Cash stated:

*...Right now we have 1972 problems and 1872 jails. And like Governor Bumpers of Arkansas recently said, unless the public becomes aware and wants to help and becomes involved in prison reform and really cares, unless people begin to care, all of the money in the world will not help. Money cannot do the job. People have got to care in order for prison reform to come about.*

Cash campaigned for these changes to the prison system: weeding out corruption and abuse; emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment; reclassifying certain offenses, including marijuana possession; separating inmates by age; separating first-timers from repeat offenders; and offering counseling, education, and faith ministry to those behind bars.

For years, Johnny Cash continued to lobby for prison reform when meeting with sitting presidents from Nixon to George W. Bush. While he did not live to see all of the sweeping
reforms for which he advocated, his lifelong efforts shined a spotlight on the humanity of the prison population and raised awareness of failings in the prison system. The Man in Black let prisoners know that he related to them through his music and his outreach, and he gave them a voice.

The liner notes that Johnny Cash wrote to be added to a re-release of At Folsom Prison are produced in this guide on page 65. You can see them written in Cash’s hand in the liner notes of the 2008 Legacy Edition of the record, included with the resources that travel with the exhibition.

The following suggestions and resources are offered for venues who may wish to pursue public programming or outreach around this topic.

Prison Outreach Toolkit

Arts Programs in Prison
Johnny Cash understood the value of music to raise the quality of life for prison inmates, and he performed in prisons in service to this community. Around the country, organizations and individuals are providing arts programs—music, visual arts, theatre, dance, creative writing and more—in prisons and jails. Partner with these individuals and groups in your region and invite them to present their work at your site, or find ways to become engaged with their programming on the inside. A variety of suggested resources follow.

Prison Issues Today Panel
Assemble a group of individuals who work with prison reform and recidivism reduction to introduce museumgoers to your state’s or America’s correctional system today. Possible participants could include corrections officials, former inmates, chaplains, educators, art or music therapists, vocational supervisors, social workers, probation officers, advocates for prison families, attorneys, and representatives of organizations in this field.

Suggested topics could include: solitary confinement, felony disenfranchisement, the death penalty, life sentences, health care, women inmates with young children, nutrition, the cash bail system and pretrial detention, reintegration programs/strategies, prisoner strikes, education/training, racial disparity, collateral consequences, juvenile justice, prison privatization, trans and gender variant prisoners, overcrowding, mandatory minimums, alternatives to prison...

Documentary Film + Discussion
Screen a documentary about arts in prison programs, prison issues, or the American prison system today (several are suggested herein, along with guidelines for securing rights for public performance). Offer a post-screening discussion led by a facilitator who works in the field.
Behind Bars Book Club + Discussion
Partner with your local library to host a community read of an inmate’s memoir or a book chronicling life behind bars today. Include a post-reading discussion led by a facilitator with firsthand experience.

Lecture or Prison Services Fair
Invite representatives from organizations that serve incarcerated persons, formerly incarcerated persons, or their families to speak at your museum or to man a table at a prison services fair, to share information about what they do.

Inside/Outside pARTner(ships)—Artist Exchange
Encourage local artists to exchange art and correspondence with incarcerated artists through the pARTner project. The pARTner project is a collaborative effort between The Justice Arts Coalition and Prisoner Express that provides artists on the outside an opportunity to foster connection with artists in prison, through letter correspondence and the exchange of creative works. Unlike typical penpal programs, the pARTner project’s focus on the arts provides an immediate point of connection — a common ground shared by all who have felt the power of creative expression in shaping who we are, how we see the world around us, and how we see ourselves. For those participating in the pARTner project, art and creativity become the catalyst for mutual support, encouragement, and inspiration. The pARTner project invites artists and individuals with a working interest in/passion for the arts who are interested in being paired with an artist in prison to use the embedded form below to register.
https://thejusticeartscoalition.org/the-partner-project/

Books and Journal Articles for Adult Readers—Prison Reform and Arts Outreach

*The New Jim Crow* is an account of the rebirth of a caste-like system in the United States, one that has resulted in millions of African Americans locked behind bars and then relegated to a permanent second-class status—denied the very rights supposedly won during the Civil Rights Movement. Today, it is no longer socially permissible to use race explicitly as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt; yet as civil-rights-lawyer-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander demonstrates, it is perfectly legal to discriminate against convicted criminals in nearly all the ways in which it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once labeled a felon, even for a minor drug crime, the old forms of discrimination are suddenly legal again. In her words, “we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.”
An organizing guide, multiple study guides, and a high school curriculum have been developed as companions for this book. For more information: http://newjimcrow.com/study-guides


For six years, Iowa City–based writer Andy Douglas has volunteered with the Oakdale Community Choir, a performing chorale composed of both volunteers and inmates and directed by University of Iowa associate professor of music education Dr. Mary Cohen, based in a correctional facility in Coralville, Iowa. Taking readers inside the walls of this medium-security prison, the book offers a glimpse at how music and the arts are offering second chances to the incarcerated. In addition to exploring the role of singing as a rehabilitative tool, the book examines some of the pressing issues facing the criminal justice system. In doing so, it reflects on several questions: How can music and the arts inspire prisoners to change? Should the underlying philosophy of our penal system be one of retribution or restoration? What can restorative justice offer to all those touched by crime and the criminal justice system?


This collection of provocative essays offers an ideological and practical framework for empowering prisoners instead of incarcerating them. Experts and activists who have worked within and against the prison system join forces here to call attention to the debilitating effects of a punishment-driven society and to offer clear-eyed alternatives that emphasize working directly with prisoners and their communities. The volume offers rhetorical and political analyses of police culture, the so-called drug war, media coverage of crime stories, and the public-school-to-prison pipeline. The collection also includes case studies of successful prison arts and education programs in Michigan, California, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania that provide creative and intellectual resources typically denied to citizens living behind bars. Writings and artwork created by prisoners in such programs are featured throughout the volume.


This resource guide was inspired by “Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism,” a multi-component project whose goal was to bring together scholars, writers, artists, and activists from across the nation and from overseas to explore the cultural aspects of imprisonment through a focus on art produced by prisoners and in response to mass incarceration. Organized by the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University (IRW), the project included a conference on prison art and activism and an art exhibition. This collection of essays and an extensive resource list is published here.


Since 1999, Wally Lamb has facilitated the writing program for incarcerated women at the York Correctional Institute in Connecticut. In addition to these two anthologies of his students' autobiographical writing, a third collection is due to be published in October 2019: *You Don’t Know Me: Incarcerated Women Voice Their Truths*.


This is the story of lifelong musician Buzzy Martin—music teacher to the hardened criminals inside the walls of San Quentin Prison—and what he learned, note by incredible note. The book was adapted as a motion picture, *Guitar Man*, directed by Rocky Capella in 2018. A book-based lesson plan (by high school educator Jens Oetiker) that parallels the curriculum of Santa Clara University's Character Based Literacy Program, may be downloaded here: https://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/dont_shootTG.pdf


In the 1970s, the United States had an incarceration rate comparable to those of other liberal democracies, and that rate had held steady for over 100 years. Yet today, though the US is home to only about 5 percent of the world's population, we hold nearly one quarter of its prisoners. Mass incarceration is now widely considered one of the biggest social and political crises of our age. How did we get to this point? Written by a scholar who has spent fifteen years studying the data on imprisonment, *Locked In* investigates the root causes of mass incarceration. John Pfaff takes apart the reigning consensus created by Michelle Alexander and other reformers, revealing that the most widely accepted explanations—the failed War on Drugs, draconian sentencing laws, an increasing reliance on private prisons—tell us much less than we think. Pfaff urges us to look at other factors instead, including a major shift in prosecutorial behavior that occurred in the mid-1990s, when prosecutors began bringing felony charges against arrestees about twice as often as they had before. He describes a fractured criminal justice system, in which counties don't pay for the people they send to state prisons, and in which white suburbs set law and order agendas for more heavily minority cities. And he shows that if we hope to significantly reduce prison populations, we have no choice but to think differently about how to deal with people convicted of violent crimes, and why some people are violent in the first place.
Most prisons and jails across the United States do not allow prisoners to have access to cameras. At a moment when 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the US, 3.8 million people are on probation, and 870,000 former prisoners are on parole, how can images tell the story of mass incarceration when the imprisoned don’t have control over their own representation? Organized with the scholar Nicole R. Fleetwood, an expert on art’s relation to incarceration, the Spring issue of *Aperture* magazine addresses the unique role photography plays in creating a visual record of a national crisis.


While serving nineteen years in Michigan prisons for second-degree murder, Shaka Senghor discovered redemption and responsibility through literature, his own writing, and the kindness of others. He is the author of six books, a former Director’s Fellow at the MIT Media Lab, a Community Leadership Fellow with the Kellogg Foundation, and the founder of The Atonement Project, which helps victims and violent offenders heal through the power of the arts. He currently serves as the Director of Strategy and Innovation with #cut50, a bipartisan initiative to safely and smartly reduce the US prison population in half by 2025, and speaks regularly at high schools, prisons, churches, and universities around the country. To inquire about a potential speaking engagement, visit his webpage: [https://www.shakasenghor.com](https://www.shakasenghor.com)


**Films / DVDs—Prison Reform and Arts Outreach**

*Beyond the Wall*. Directed by Jenny Phillips and Bestor Cram. Passion River Films, 2016. 76 minutes.

*Beyond the Wall* follows five formerly incarcerated men who are attempting to rebuild their lives on the outside with little support from our criminal justice system. Their stories revolve around one central figure, a former prisoner named Louie Diaz, who works with each man to help him maintain his sobriety and his freedom. Through compelling and intimate scenes, the film vividly captures the struggle for survival outside prison walls. Much of the filming takes place on the streets of Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts. Through personal stories of reentry, relapse, recovery and redemption, *Beyond the Wall* puts a human face on the social, economic, and emotional barriers encountered by returning citizens. In bearing witness to their struggles, we are offered insights and hope for ways prisoner reentry can be more successful.
Director Bestor Cram’s credits include the documentary, *Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison*.

To host a screening, contact filmmakers here:  
[https://beyondthewallfilm.com/host-a-screening/](https://beyondthewallfilm.com/host-a-screening/)

An extensive discussion guide created for the film may be downloaded here:  


*Follow Me Down* is a feature-length documentary film about music in prison. Shot over the course of two years in three Louisiana prisons, Georgetown University ethnomusicologist Ben Harbert weaves together interviews and performances of extraordinary inmate musicians—some serving life sentences, some new committs, and one soon to be released. The result, in essence, is a concert film, but instead of bright lights and big stages, these musicians rap in the fields while picking okra, soothe themselves with R&B in lockdown, and create a cappella gospel harmonies. With unprecedented access and Harbert's insistence on letting the music speak for itself, the film offers an unexpected look at prison life, pushing viewers to reach their own conclusions about criminality, regret, redemption, and the humanity in us all.

To purchase this film with public screening rights ($169.95), visit Films Media Group:  
[https://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=28242](https://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=28242)


Like almost any prison in America, San Quentin is marked by racial tension and violence. Filmmaker Joe De Francesco convinced reluctant prison officials to let him direct inmates in a production of “John Brown’s Body,” a verse play about slavery, freedom, and the Civil War. Within prison walls, the production had the potential to be as incendiary as the eponymous abolitionist leader whose violent raids polarized pre-Civil War America. After a grueling two and a half years, the adaptation of this American masterpiece was mounted, to great acclaim, by a mixed-race cast of nine inmates, all but two of whom were convicted murderers. The documentary combines key excerpts from the play with revealing interviews with the actor-inmates, who tell of their often brutal crimes. Startling parallels emerge between the play and the real life drama of the men's lives in prison. The story is one of transformation and offers a new glimpse at how those torn by bad choices and the legacy of racism might be able to begin again.
In addition, the entire performance of the play John Brown's Body is available for free viewing (1:51), and an extensive discussion guide and background narrative is available for download.
http://www.johnbrownsbodyfilm.com

To inquire about public screening, contact (415) 632-7485 or jbbsqp@gmail.com


*Inside the Walls of Folsom Prison* is a 1951 American film noir crime film starring Steve Cochran and David Brian. Set in Folsom State Prison in California, the film was seen both in the United States and Europe. Set during the 1920s, before the 1944 California prison reform, the story follows a sadistic prison warden who rules with a ruthless hand and the prison guard who crusades to stop him. Johnny Cash saw this movie while serving in the United States Air Force in West Germany in October 1951; and the film inspired him to write what would become his hit song "Folsom Prison Blues."

To inquire about public screening rights, contact SWANK Motion Pictures. Phone: (800) 876-5577; Fax: (314) 289-2192; www.swank.com


For more than a dozen years, the Connecticut Department of Correction has been working with Judy Dworin Performance Project on innovative arts projects that help people in and out of prison heal and re-enter society. This documentary short follows teaching artists as they partner with social workers to use movement, song, and the spoken word in the rehabilitation process. The creative projects open pathways to self-discovery. They develop hidden skills and talents. They build communities. They press home the power of choice. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, their children and families, prison staff, teaching artists, and social workers share their insights, hurdles, and triumphs. It’s a compelling look into a humane and successful approach to rehabilitation.

https://www.pbs.org/video/making-me-whole-prison-art-healing-lhiqbj/

To inquire about public screenings:
https://help.pbs.org/support/solutions/articles/5000673755-how-do-i-obtain-public-performance-rights-for-a-show-

Winner of eleven festival awards and a Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury nomination, Shakespeare Behind Bars follows a year in the life of the renowned Shakespeare Behind Bars troupe at Luther Luckett Correctional Facility in Louisville, Kentucky. Led by director Curt Tofteland, whose innovative work with Luther Luckett inmates began in the mid-1990s, the prisoners cast themselves in roles reflecting their personal history and fate. Their individual stories, including information about their heinous crimes, are brilliantly interwoven with the plot of Shakespeare’s The Tempest. As the inmates delve deeply into the characters they portray, they are forced to confront their personal demons. The result is an extraordinary story about the creative process and the power of art to heal and redeem—in a place where the very act of participation in theatre is a human triumph and a means of personal liberation.

https://www.shakespearebehindbars.org/documentary/

To inquire about public screenings and talkbacks with the filmmakers or cast, contact: jilann@philomathfilms.com


The title of Ava DuVernay’s thought-provoking documentary refers to the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which reads, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States.” The progression from that second qualifying clause to the horrors of mass criminalization and the sprawling American prison industry is laid out with a potent mixture of archival footage and testimony from a wide array of activists, politicians, historians, and formerly incarcerated women and men, interspersed with powerful music and surprising infographics.

https://www.netflix.com/title/80091741

Netflix permits one-time educational screenings of 13th under the following terms and conditions:

- The documentary may only be accessed via the Netflix service, by a Netflix account holder.
- The screening must be non-profit and non-commercial. The venue can’t charge admission, solicit donations, or accept advertising/commercial sponsorships in connection with the screening.
- Don’t use Netflix’s logos in any promotion for the screening, or do anything else that indicates that the screening is “official” or endorsed by Netflix.

For questions contact Nicole Player at nplayer@netflix.com.
**What I Want My Words To Do To You.** Directed by Madeleine Gavin. PBS, for the *POV* series, 2003. 90 minutes.

*What I Want My Words To Do To You* offers an unprecedented look into the minds and hearts of the women inmates of New York's Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The film goes inside a writing workshop led by playwright Eve Ensler, consisting of fifteen women, most of whom were convicted of murder. Through a series of exercises and discussions, the women, including former Weather Underground members Kathy Boudin and Judith Clark, delve into and expose their most terrifying realities, as they grapple with the nature of their crimes and their own culpability. The film culminates in an emotionally charged prison performance of the women's writing by acclaimed actors Mary Alice, Glenn Close, Hazelle Goodman, Rosie Perez, and Marisa Tomei.

To inquire if public screening rights are available for this film, contact PBS, (844) 870-5278 or visit: [https://help.pbs.org/support/solutions/articles/5000688114-i-want-to-screen-a-pbs-program-at-a-public-event-can-i-do-that](https://help.pbs.org/support/solutions/articles/5000688114-i-want-to-screen-a-pbs-program-at-a-public-event-can-i-do-that).


This video showcases art by prisoners who participate in the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) at the University of Michigan, a program founded in 1990, with a single theatre workshop. Each year since 1996, PCAP has presented a major, curated exhibition of works by Michigan inmates. The 2019 exhibition featured the work of 574 artists from twenty-six facilities—670 paintings and three-dimensional works. It is one of the largest prison exhibitions in the world.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=SnpWkYntXmg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=SnpWkYntXmg)  
[https://lsa.umich.edu/pcap](https://lsa.umich.edu/pcap)
The resources listed in this Prison Outreach Toolkit are just the beginning. For far more comprehensive resource lists on related topics, visit the Justice Arts Coalition and Marking Time webpages below.

**The Justice Arts Coalition**
Established in 2008 by a group of veteran teaching artists, the Justice Arts Coalition (or JAC; formerly the Prison Arts Coalition) serves as an online network for prison arts in the United States. Through extensive online outreach and organizing, JAC provides support, information, and partnership opportunities within the prison arts sector. As a coalition, JAC brings together a consortium of artists, organizations, facilities, students, researchers, and advocates to build collaboration and strengthen partnership. As an advisory body, JAC provides ongoing, personalized guidance to people who are working to develop arts programs or looking to support incarcerated and formerly incarcerated artists. As a resource, JAC compiles publications, artistic works, research, events, and job postings to share with the public. One of JAC’s most notable resources is a list of prison arts programs around the country, organized by state and region. The site also includes extensive bibliography lists, galleries of artwork, and blog posts.

[https://thejusticeartscoalition.org](https://thejusticeartscoalition.org)

**Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Resource Guide**
This resource guide was inspired by “Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism,” a multi-component project whose goal was to bring together scholars, writers, artists, and activists from across the nation and from overseas to explore the cultural aspects of imprisonment through a focus on art produced by prisoners and in response to mass incarceration. Organized by the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University (IRW), the project included a conference on prison art and activism—the first of its kind—which was held in 2014. This downloadable guide is a directory of Prison Arts Organizations in music, performing arts, visual arts, literature, and education, as well as organizations that support incarcerated people and their families.


**A Sampling of Additional Websites That Could Inspire Programming:**

**The Actors’ Gang Prison Project**
In California, six out of ten people will return to prison within three years of release. More than 90% of people currently housed in California prisons will eventually be back in their communities. Many of these men and women lack the vital skills to help them succeed on the outside. The Actors’ Gang Prison Project is working to change that by conducting acting workshops inside the California prison system; workshops that help inmates develop emotional and social skills that aid in a positive return to society.

[https://theactorsgang.com/prison-project/#top](https://theactorsgang.com/prison-project/#top)
**Arts in Prison**

Arts in Prison, with offices in Overland Park, Kansas, provides opportunities for inmates to prove that they are more than the sum of their crimes. By providing arts education and experiences for inmates in Kansas state prisons and detention centers, these members of society who have been locked away, and often forgotten, are given a chance for self-reflection and an opportunity to create something beautiful. Whether it is a song, a stage performance, a photograph, or a painting, they can create something that brings joy to others. A positive experience allows an incarcerated person to begin to hope; and hope is what allows them to believe that they will get out of prison and lead a positive and productive life on the outside. The recidivism rate among former East Hill Singers—Arts in Prison’s long-running chorus program at Lansing Correctional Facility—is 18 percent, compared to 32 percent for the state of Kansas and greater than 50 percent for the United States.

http://www.artsinprison.org

**Brothers in Pen/San Quentin Creative Writing Class**

The creative writing students in Zoe Mullery’s class, which has been meeting for three hours every Wednesday evening at San Quentin State Prison since 1999, tried on the name “Brothers in Pen” somewhere along the line, and it stuck. The class is structured as an ongoing workshop, a place to experiment with fiction, memoir, creative nonfiction, or some hybrid—the common denominator being story. Ten anthologies have been produced in the class since its inception, seven of which are publicly available for purchase. The website also features additional stories created by men in the class that are not published in the anthologies.

https://brothersinpen.wordpress.com

**California Arts in Corrections**

Arts in Corrections is a partnership between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the California Arts Council designed to have a positive impact on the behavior and attitudes of people in incarceration, promoting interpersonal and social transformation both inside and outside of the boundaries of their institutions. Services provided span the full spectrum of art disciplines, with organizations offering instruction in visual, literary, media, performing, cultural, folk, and traditional arts.

https://www.artsincorrections.org

**Each One Reach One—Transforming Kids Behind Bars**

Since 1998, EORO has remained dedicated to its mission to divert incarcerated youth from a life in prison to become productive community members through mentor-based performing arts and academic tutoring and health and life skills programs. EORO—which serves over 1,850 youth and engages over 3,500 community members—was founded as an arts advocacy organization whose roots were planted in the exploration of theater-based strategies that could effectively break the cycle of violence and divert youth, particularly young men of color, from the adult prison system. EORO serves high risk youth in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Francisco counties of California.

https://www.eoro.org
Hearings Before the Subcommittee on National Penitentiaries of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session  

Jail Guitar Doors  
Jail Guitar Doors is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization providing musical instruments and mentorship to help rehabilitate prisoners through the transformative power of music. Using the medium of collaborative music and songwriting for everyone, the organization strives to achieve measurable rehabilitative outcomes and to advance new solutions to diminish prison violence and recidivism. The organization offers Songwriting Programs at several facilities in California, plus Detroit and Boston.

In 1978, The Clash released the song, "Jail Guitar Doors," telling the story of the imprisonment of their fellow musician Wayne Kramer. In 2007, Billy Bragg launched an initiative to provide musical equipment used to rehabilitate inmates serving time in Her Majesty’s Prisons in the United Kingdom, naming the effort after that very same song, “Jail Guitar Doors.” In 2009, Wayne Kramer partnered with Billy Bragg to found Jail Guitar Doors USA. Together, their combined effort continues the mission for prisoners in America. Their website features an interactive map of places around the US where they have provided guitars; and they conduct songwriting programs in a number of correctional facilities in California, as well as the Detroit and Boston areas.  
https://www.jailguitardoors.org

“Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison” by Molly Law  
This article published in the January/February 2019 issue of Corrections Today (a publication of the American Correctional Association), examines how the prison reforms for which Johnny Cash lobbied are faring today.  
http://www.aca.org/ACA_Prod_IMIS/DOCS/Corrections%20Today/2019_Articles/CT_Jan-Feb_2019_Law.pdf

National Institute of Corrections, United States Department of Justice  
The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) is the only federal agency with a legislative mandate to provide specialized services to corrections from a national perspective. NIC is unique because it provides direct service rather than financial assistance as the primary means of carrying out its mission. It responds directly to needs identified by practitioners working in state and local adult corrections, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Department of Justice, other federal agencies, and the United States Congress. NIC staff provides leadership to influence correctional policies, practices, and operations nationwide in areas of emerging interest and concern to correctional executives and practitioners, as well as public policymakers. NIC provides practical assistance in planning and implementing improvements
at the federal, state, and local levels. These efforts contribute to cost efficiency and
effectiveness in such areas as planning, design, and operation of new jails, prisons, and
community corrections programs, offender workforce development programs, and offender
classification and risk assessment.
https://nicic.gov

The National Prison Project, ACLU
The American Civil Liberties Union’s National Prison Project is dedicated to ensuring that the
nation’s prisons, jails, and detention centers comply with the Constitution, domestic law, and
human rights principles. Current issues include medical and mental health care; solitary
confinement; cruel, inhuman, and degrading conditions; rights to free speech, freedom of
religion, and access to courts and counsel; and the rise of women and girls in the criminal
justice system. Facts presented on this site include:

• The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world—a rate five to ten
times higher than those of countries like Canada, France, and the United Kingdom.
• A black man is six times more likely to be incarcerated in the United States than a white
man.
• The United States is the only democracy in the world that has no independent authority
to monitor prison conditions and enforce minimal standards of health and safety.
https://www.aclu.org/issues/prisoners-rights#current

Prison Performing Arts
Based in St. Louis, Prison Performing Arts is a multi-discipline, literacy, and performing arts
program dedicated to enriching the lives of youth and adults in Missouri’s criminal and juvenile
justice systems.
http://prisonartsstl.org

Prisoner Express
Prisoner Express (PE), in Ithaca, New York, creates opportunities for incarcerated men and
women to have information, education, and a public forum for creative self-expression—
bringing hope and fostering a sense of community among the prisoners who participate.
PE collects and distributes books to inmates and offers distance learning programs in history,
culture, creative writing, poetry, and art. Twice a year, the Prisoner Express Newsletter is
published containing art, writing, and poetry submitted by incarcerated men and women. The
newsletter is then sent free of charge to inmates around the country.
https://prisonerexpress.org

Send Musicians to Prison
Send Musicians to Prison is a 501(c)(3) organization of singers, songwriters, and musicians from
around the country who hold monthly residencies at prisons in Nashville, New York, and
California, to share hope, healing, and forgiveness with the imprisoned through music.
http://sendmusicianstoprison.com
The Sentencing Project
Founded in 1986, The Sentencing Project works for a fair and effective US criminal justice system by promoting reforms in sentencing policy, addressing unjust racial disparities and practices, and advocating for alternatives to incarceration. It is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC. There are 2.2 million people in the nation's prisons and jails—a 500% increase over the last forty years. Changes in law and policy, not changes in crime rates, explain most of this increase. The results are overcrowding in prisons and fiscal burdens on states, despite increasing evidence that large-scale incarceration is not an effective means of achieving public safety. The website offers downloadable criminal justice fact sheets and infographics slides, state-by-state data compiled from a variety of sources, publications and news stories, and opportunities for advocacy.
https://www.sentencingproject.org

Shakespeare Behind Bars
Shakespeare Behind Bars (SBB) offers theatrical encounters with personal and social issues to incarcerated, post-incarcerated, and at-risk communities, allowing them to develop life skills that will ensure their successful integration into society. According to the National Institute of Justice, the average national recidivism rate is 76.6 percent. In Kentucky, where SBB has programming, the rate is 40.7 percent (Kentucky Department of Corrections statistic). For participants in the SBB program, the rate is 6 percent. In addition to programs in Kentucky prisons, Shakespeare Behind Bars also serves inmates in Michigan and has an office in Macatawa, MI.
https://www.shakespearebehindbars.org
Pages 54–74 are omitted from this preview

Contact Stephanie Seber with questions about this Programming Guide
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