Justice Arts Coalition

2021 Annual Report

Fiscal Year July 2020 - June 2021
Justice Arts Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that unites teaching artists, arts advocates, artists who are or have been incarcerated and their allies, harnessing the transformative power of the arts to reimagine justice.

Initially formed in 2008 as the Prison Arts Coalition by longtime teaching artists seeking to create an online resource hub for those working at the intersection of the arts and justice, Justice Arts Coalition (JAC) is now a national network and resource for those creating art in and around the criminal legal system. Our network now consists of over 400 artists impacted by the carceral system, their loved ones, teaching artists, and allies.

www.theJusticeArtsCoalition.org
Dear JAC Community,
When the pandemic hit in the spring of 2020, we knew it would create an even more urgent need to nurture the relationship-building at the heart of JAC’s mission. We listened to the courageous artists in our network, their families and advocates, and what we heard was just how much more vital the arts had become to their wellbeing and sense of connectedness. Thanks to the ingenuity of our interns, the unwavering support of our Board and volunteers, the trust of our ever-expanding network of artists—and your engaged investment—we have been able to help meet this need.

We shared the creative work of hundreds of incarcerated artists, collaborated with dozens of peer organizations, and supported countless community members. We strengthened our online presence, hosting nearly 100 online events, including our first national convening, Art for a New Future, weekly gatherings for teaching artists, Create + Connect workshops, and ArtLinks, each providing new opportunities for connection through creative expression, and for the arts to serve as a bridge between people inside and outside of prison. We also transitioned away from fiscal sponsorship after becoming an independent 501(c)3 organization, enabling us to exercise full agency over our financial decisions and qualify for more funding opportunities.

We can’t be certain of what the coming year holds, but one thing is for sure: JAC will continue to be resilient and responsive to the needs of our community. And with your ongoing support, we hope to advance our work through opening a headquarters in the DC area, hiring more staff, and realizing our dreams to create an archive for incarcerated artists’ work and a mutual aid fund for incarcerated and recently returned artists. We have much to be proud of and thankful for, and we will never stop letting our hearts lead the way.

With gratitude and love,

Wendy

Wendy Jason
Justice Arts Coalition Founding Director
Fellow JAC Community Members,
This last year has been filled with such pain and confusion. Although it is never a good time to be incarcerated, this has been some of the most difficult time I have ever done in prison. Thankfully there is Justice Arts Coalition, a bright spot in a landscape filled with monotony, sickness, and institutional abuse. I am proud at how JAC has continued to provide its absolutely necessary programs during this time while also exploring new and exciting opportunities for system impacted artists.

When I found myself locked in my housing unit, watching friends rushed out to military tents erected in our rec yard because they were CoVID negative, watching other friends rushed to the hospital because they were near death, not knowing if I would see any of them again, I had never been so scared or alone in over a decade of incarceration. During this time, JAC’s communication with me never faltered and even provided challenging Calls for Art that kept me focused on creating. When our phones and email access were cut off because of our government’s fear of the protests taking place across our country, I was reminded that the system sees the expression of my voice as only a threat. In that moment, I had never been so removed from society, unable to communicate, but I knew there was a community in JAC that placed value in my voice, treated it with care, and was waiting for me on the other side. And when my only taste of fresh air was an hour at a time, every few days, my art found fresh air in online exhibits hosted by JAC. Sitting in my room, I knew a part of me was entering into the world and that bit of freedom was enough to keep me going.

This year is looking much the same in our carceral system. Most of us are still under lockdown, still denied the few programs we found solace in, and still uncertain of our futures. JAC is working hard to provide new opportunities for our voices to be heard and connections to be made.
Justice Arts Coalition is there for over 400 artists across our country, including me, and all of that would not be possible without your support. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. JAC is supported by a collection of institutions that provide grants, and, of course, our individual donors. I am so grateful to all our volunteers, interns, and everyone who has participated in an event or plan to do so this year. With your continued support, we look forward to connecting artists inside and out for the purpose of creating connection, community, and art with our pARTner Project, hosting engaging in-person art exhibits that invite people to think about the true nature of incarceration and the people inside and helping to create opportunities for system impacted artists to be seen as artists and people through publication. That and so much more is possible because of you. Your care and dedication is felt by artists who find themselves incarcerated and together, we are making real, substantive changes in our world.

Sincerely,

Brett Tomás Gonzalez
Justice Arts Coalition Board Chair

Desire, Tomás
JAC's Programs

JAC seeks to increase public awareness around the impacts of mass incarceration, affirm the dignity of people who are or have been incarcerated, and engage artists in envisioning new possibilities for collective care through all of our programming.

ArtLinks

ArtLinks events offer community members opportunities to engage with new work created by JAC network artists and share their reflections with the artists through letter writing.

Portfolios and Exhibitions

JAC hosts in-person and online exhibitions and provides technical assistance to organizations seeking to exhibit the work of artists impacted by the carceral system. JAC’s website hosts individual portfolios for many of the artists in our network, as well as curated galleries of works by multiple artists.

pARTner Project

The pARTner Project 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 pen pal 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. For more information, reach out to partnerproject@thejusticeartscoalition.org or visit pARTner Project FAQ. To become a pARTner, fill out this registration form.

Holiday cards for JAC network artists

My gratitude can’t be expressed enough...praise from the outside world is especially encouraging and an impetus to create more art. Inspirational words add high-octane fuel to our motivation.”

— James, artist

Letter from artist Joshua Earls
Create + Connect

Create + Connect workshops feature artists, restorative and transformative justice practitioners, advocates, and activists. Reaching over 300 attendees since the launch of the series in the summer of 2020, these workshops promote JAC’s mission and demonstrate how the arts can foster dialogue, ignite change, and create connection. One workshop participant described it as a “perfect blend of inspiration, wise content, active participants, creative time, sharing.”

Weekly Network Gatherings

Since the onset of the pandemic, JAC has hosted weekly virtual gatherings to strengthen our community, provide learning opportunities for JAC network members, and build a bridge of understanding between those inside and outside of the carceral system. Weekly gatherings alternate between group dialogue, guest presenters, and activities that deepen our sense of connection with one another and across JAC’s network. These offerings have also served as a source of support for artists in our network who have been incarcerated.

Find out how to join the next network gathering here!

CorrespondARTS

CorrespondARTS is JAC’s multidisciplinary, distance learning arts program, a response to prison lockdowns in 2020. Through the CorrespondARTS pilot, the first of its kind in MD, participants at Maryland Correctional Institution for Women received packets with themed prompts and activities in creative writing, poetry, theatre, and visual art every two weeks for six months. Now, CorrespondARTS includes participants at three Maryland prisons. Participants can send their responses back to CorrespondARTS teaching artists Lori Pitts, Carien Quiroga, and Leslie Bumstead for feedback and reflections.

“There’s a collective consciousness of kindness here.”
— Bob, pARTner project volunteer, on JAC’s Wednesday night network gatherings
By the Numbers
How JAC supported artists in 2020-2021

600+
Letters Exchanged
Artists and allies inside and outside of the carceral system connecting through JAC

390+
Artworks Received
Artwork entrusted to JAC every year by artists inside and outside of prison

230+
pARTner Project Pairings
Uplifting relationships cultivated between inside and outside artists in 2021

110+
Virtual Events
Weekly Network Gatherings, Create and Connect Workshops, and more!
FY 2021 Highlights

Overcoming barriers, and celebrating achievements

Art for Justice Grant
Art for Justice Fund, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, awarded Justice Arts Coalition a grant of $100,000 toward general operating support in FY21.

501(c)(3) Status
In October 2020 JAC became an independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and in January 2021 we began receiving funds directly through donors. Thank you to our former fiscal sponsor, the William James Association, for two years of support and encouragement.

Maryland State Arts Council Grants
Justice Arts Coalition is grateful to have received two grants from the Maryland State Arts Council in 2020: one providing operational support and one supporting the CorrespondArts Program.

In-Person and Virtual Exhibitions
JAC’s first exhibition in 2020, Iron Cages, took place at President Lincoln’s Cottage in DC and featured over 100 works by 25 artists in our network. Though many exhibitions planned for that year had to be canceled due to the onset of the pandemic, JAC was able to hold our first online exhibition in winter/spring 2021, Inside & Out, featuring work by artists inside of and returned from prison, and teaching artists in our network.

"JAC offers my students a place to transcend their confinement and appear in our society, not as an inmate, or offender, but as an artist."
– Peggy Rambach, Teaching Artist
Art for a New Future National Convening

In the Fall of 2020, when the thought of a national convening was still a budding dream, we knew we wanted to take a forward-looking and unique path. After many months of planning, we welcomed over 400 attendees from across the country and abroad! Over the course of the 3-day online event, participants had the opportunity to learn from and engage with over 85 speakers across 28 sessions. Our team of organizers were guided by 4 core values:

- **Art as Abolition**: the arts as a pathway for communities to imagine and build worlds beyond policing and incarceration; art as a tool for advocacy, nurturing community.
- **Art for All**: increasing access to creative opportunities within carceral institutions; pedagogy; funding; trauma-informed arts education.
- **Solidarity and Community**: building and nourishing connections and resilient relationships across our network.
- **Participatory Learning**: learning through and within community, through embodiment, through creative practice; artistic practice as a tool for healing, growth, connection, and fueling our radical imaginations.

“I feel so lucky to have been a part of this experience and want to thank you for bringing all of these incredible people, creators, and sources of inspiration together! Each panel and workshop was so unique and REAL, it is hard to express how moved I felt by each one.”

–Convening attendee

Read more reflections on the Art for a New Future National Convening on JAC’s blog

“There are limited resources dedicated to helping inmates and it means a lot knowing there are extraordinary people out there who haven’t cast a blind eye to us behind bars.”

— Corey, artist
Partnerships

Highlights of the many collaborative projects central to JAC’s work

PEN America's Prison + Justice Writing Program

In 2021, PEN America’s Prison and Justice Writing Program was awarded a grant through the Art for Justice Fund to develop a partnership with JAC, leveraging important knowledge from each organization in building volunteer communities. JAC has worked closely with PEN to cultivate an active, engaged community of advocates and volunteers, and bring more creative work from behind prison walls into the public. Last summer, PEN partnered with JAC to commission original art from artists in prison within JAC’s network to accompany the awarded literary works in their 2020 Prison Writing Awards anthology.

MoMA PS1

In 2020, JAC partnered with MoMA PS1 to facilitate connection to and correspondence with seven artists in prison within JAC’s network whose work was selected to be featured in Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration. As described on MoMA’s website, “This major exhibition explores the work of artists within US prisons and the centrality of incarceration to contemporary art and culture.” Read more about the exhibition on MoMA’s site.

"Maybe my work can inspire something great in someone else, if that is the case I feel that I am doing my part to make a better community that I will be released back to."

— Conor, artist
Support for Justice Arts Coalition

FY21 Financials

Major Funding Sources

Revenue: $88,866

- Individual & Corporate Donations: 39%
- Grants: 48%
- Art Sales: 6%
- Events: 7%

Expenses: $76,232

- Program Operating Costs: 74%
- Fundraising & Development Costs: 9%
- Administrative Costs: 17%

Donate Online at theJusticeArtsCoalition.org.
Institutional Supporters

Fiscal Year July '20-June '21

Art for Justice Fund

Cornelia Bessie Memorial Foundation

Fringe Foundation

Maryland State Arts Council

Wenig Family Fund

nil database
Sustaining Members

JAC’s generous monthly donors

Michael Faithful
TJ Mathews
Julia Mascioli
Jessie Glover
Allison Kirkegaard
Corina Dalzell
Robin McNulty, Project PAINT
Anderson Smith
Louis Postel
Elisha Caterisano
Sam Nelson
Bruce Levitt, Phoenix Players
Susan Paul Johnson
Kate Kenney
Cathy Nugent
Hannah Viederman
Leia Squillace
Anthony Peyton Porter
Tsukumo Niwa
Rosita Hopper
Nancy Yamahiro
Bridget Barrigan
David Jolliffe
Susan Russell
Lisa Cashion

Peter Merts
Jack Bowers
Poetic Justice Project
Youth Arts: Unlocked
Mid-City Community Music
Bachtler Museum of Modern Art
Oakdale Community Choir
Leslie Bumstead
Treacy Ziegler
Niel Rosen
Penny Earls
(no name) Art Group

Museum for Black Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Paul Critz, Pelican Bay Unlocked
Nathalie Applewhite
Gregory Sale
Whitney Wakimoto
Judy Dworin Performance Project
Dede Lillian Fox
Corina Dalzell
Ethel Feltham
Adele Williams
Jason Chung

Layne Garrett
Catherine Futter
Matt and Jenni Malyon
Shehara W
Christopher Dum
Spencer Reinhard
Micaela Foreman
Charlyn Moss
Cherie Hacker
Kamran Afary
Quincy Struss

Become a Sustaining Member at theJusticeArtsCoalition.org
Members of the Board of Directors, FY21

Brett Gonzalez*, Chair  
Julia Mascioli*, Vice Chair  
Theo Mendez*, Treasurer  
Tiffani Bolden  
Jaren Crump  
Shiloah Coley  
Patrick Burns  
Alison Dunn*  
Savannah Kumar*  
Anderson Smith  
Becca Pickus  
Carla Allison  
Katie Owens-Murphy

*Current Board Member

Staff & Volunteer Leadership Team, FY21

Wendy Jason, Founding Director  
Jayme Epstein, Volunteer Coordinator and ArtConnects  
Team Advisor  
Cat Quinlan, Communications + Network Engagement  
Robin McNulty, Events Team Advisor  
Cait Campbell, Web Team Advisor

Advisory Council

Spoon Jackson  
John R. Whitman, PhD  
Aimee Wissan  
Matt Malyon  
Laurie Brooks  
Marc Mauer  
Lateef Mtima  
Carole Alden  
Chris Wilson  
Judy Dworin  
Annie Buckley

Learn more about Volunteer Opportunities at JAC
Intern Staff
Highlighting the Intern Staff for Fall 2021

Web + Fundraising Team
Clare Walker
Hunter Isenstejn
Ian Trawinski
Quincy Hoff
Rene Spiewak

ArtConnects Team
Iris Lin
Jesse DeMeglio
Jake Pilsbury
Kambria Lockett
Maia Pramuk

Events Team
Janie Ritter
Katherine Frost

“I felt like I was seeing and understanding something I’ve usually studied in abstract about the power and impact of art in creating change.”
– Jhenna, Intern

“I working with this team has been like an artistic collaboration. Every part fits together to create a beautiful whole.”
– Rene, Intern

Learn more about Internship Opportunities at JAC
**Summer 2020**
Joslyn Lapinski, Ally Beljan, Jhenna El-Sawaf, Adam Kluge, Emily Kombe, Mya Steir, Adeena Syed

**Fall 2020**

**Web Team**
Isa Berliner  
Melissa Wang  
Molly Wooliver  
Anna McGuire

**ArtConnects Team**
Joslyn Lapinski  
Ava Dennis  
My Nguyen

**Events Team**
Hailey Lanford  
Norah Chapman

**Spring 2021**

**Web Team**
Isa Berliner  
Melissa Wang  
Hailey Lanford  
Hannah Teich  
Absa Fall  
Kanyinsola Anifowoshe

**ArtConnects Team**
Joslyn Lapinski  
Ava Dennis  
Maia Pramuk  
Jenan Cameranesi

**Events Team**
Katherine Frost  
Katie Wilhelm

**Summer 2021**

**Web Team**
Hunter Isenstein  
Isa Berliner  
Melissa Wang  
Hannah Teich  
Hailey Lanford

**ArtConnects Team**
Joslyn Lapinski  
Ava Dennis  
Maia Pramuk  
Jenan Cameranesi

**Events Team**
Katherine Frost  
Alden Eckman

"It was, and continues to be interns' determination, ingenuity, and care that keeps JAC’s engine running."
— Wendy Jason, Founding Director
Glossary of Artworks Featured

In Order of Appearance

- **Cover:**
  - *Lost at Sea*, Mark Parsch

- **Page 1:**
  - *My African American Stuck Dream*, Moyo

- **Page 4:**
  - *Desire*, Tomás

- **Page 5:**
  - Letter by Joshua Earls
  - *Strawberries*, Cuong “Mike” Tran

- **Page 6:**
  - *Untitled*, Kenneth Reams
  - *Free Bird*, Shaka
  - *Untitled*, Christopher M. Garza

- **Page 8:**
  - *American Dream*, Gary Harrell
  - *Untitled*, Danny Ashton

- **Page 9:**
  - *The Bridge*, Conor Broderick

- **Page 10:**
  - *Life or Just Living*, William B. Livingston III
  - *Pair of Eastern Bluebirds*, Joshua Earls

- **Pages 12-14:**
  - Untitled pieces by Amber Daniel

- **Page 16:**
  - *Untitled*, Chris Trigg

- **Back Page:**
  - *Not My Brush*, Brian Hindson

View all JAC Network Artist portfolios
Justice Arts Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that unites teaching artists, arts advocates, artists who are or have been incarcerated and their allies, harnessing the transformative power of the arts to reimagine justice.

www.theJusticeArtsCoalition.org

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