Justice Arts Coalition (JAC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that unites artists, art advocates, and allies working in and around the carceral system, harnessing the transformative and liberatory power of the arts to reimagine justice.
JAC launched in 2008 as an online resource for those working at the intersection of the arts and justice. Today, JAC engages with hundreds of organizations, individual artists, and advocates, and provides resources to more than 500 network artists in carceral settings.

Click here to explore our program directory.
Dear JAC Community,

It's hard to wrap my head around how much we've accomplished in the four years since beginning the process of transforming the Prison Arts Coalition, an online resource created 14 years ago, into Justice Arts Coalition. We've developed numerous programs, platforms, and partnerships that harness the unique ability of art to connect us and ignite our collective imagination to further our vision of justice. When we became a 501(c)(3) just over two years ago, our ambition was to develop the infrastructure to sustain these efforts. Our progress has exceeded our expectations thanks to the dedication of our board, interns, volunteers, and supporters and the contributions of resources, time, and trust from our community members.

In FY22 our correspondence programs continued to grow and thrive, reaching more and more people in prison, many of whom are still experiencing increased isolation and a lack of access to in-person programming as a result of the pandemic. CorrespondARTS, our distance learning program, reached people in multiple facilities in Maryland, and more than 40 artists inside and out were paired through the pARTner project, our arts-centered pen pal program. We returned to organizing exhibitions with enthusiasm and resolve, collaborating with over 60 artists to present their work to diverse audiences, and brought together local arts communities and advocacy efforts at seven exhibitions. We continued to build a community of people nationwide to share
resources, stories, and reflections on justice and the arts through our Create + Connect series and weekly network gatherings. Our Art + Agency working group demonstrated the power of dialogue between people on both sides of the walls, developing a set of guiding principles for ethically sharing and selling work by incarcerated artists.

We received generous grants from the Mellon Foundation, the Art for Justice Fund, and Maryland State Arts Council to ensure the continued growth and longevity of our operations and programs.

We are excited to bring this momentum into the new year as we settle into our first headquarters in Takoma Park, Maryland and hire more full-time staff. These significant steps will enable us to expand our capacity for safely storing, exhibiting, and selling more work by network artists and for finding new ways of supporting and encouraging the artists’ ongoing engagement in their chosen crafts. And, we’re looking forward to deepening our engagement with our local community through hosting letter-writing, ArtLinks, workshops, and coalition events.

I’m so grateful for the many ways in which our community members have shown up for JAC, for each other, and for the movement to build a more just, equitable, and loving world.

With gratitude and love,

Wendy Jason
Founding Director
“So many people outside of prison have a preconceived idea of who we are in here. Justice Arts Coalition lets people out there know, through my art, that I am much more than what they believe. Through my art I can show them I am a multi-dimensional person and not defined by my offense.”

Dominique, Network Artist
Connecting Across Barriers

JAC believes art serves as connective tissue, weaving its way through prison walls to foster, embolden, and preserve a generative spirit of universal humanity. Our mission compels us to unite imprisoned artists with a larger community of creative allies through interactive correspondence, events, and storytelling. JAC correspondence programs enliven relationships, encourage reciprocal growth, and directly combat the ills of isolation and stigmatization.

Expanding Remote Arts Programs

2022 saw the expansion of CorrespondARTS, Maryland’s first multi-disciplinary distance learning arts program, from 21 participants in 2 Maryland facilities to 75 participants within 5 facilities. Over 6 month periods, participants diligently worked through packets with themed prompts and creative activities developed by our team of teaching artists before returning their work for feedback. CorrespondARTS continues to provide invaluable connection and learning opportunities that span the vast chasm of in-person programming lost to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“I love this program...thank you for the ways that you have helped me to get to know myself and my potential. It allows me to feel free.”

Lady Bug
CorrespondARTs Participant

Facilitating pARTnerships

Since the pARTner Project’s launch in 2019, JAC has matched over 260 incarcerated artists with free-world collaborators, and this past year we were able to support 20 new inside-out partnerships. The program cultivates connection with artists on both sides of prison walls through written correspondence and the exchange of creative works, thereby catalyzing mutual support and inspiration. For more information, visit the pARTner Project on our website.

Reflecting Together With ArtLinks

This year, JAC hosted community members at 9 ArtLinks events in an effort to showcase the talents of network artists and provide an avenue for them to receive feedback. Over 150 people viewed artists’ new work and shared their reflections with the artists through letter writing.
Amplifying

"So much of a person goes into the things they create, and in here you are dealing with a lot; each piece becomes a way to escape, a way to process and overcome the adversities in their lives. I've felt alone and abandoned for so long, and knowing that I have found a way to reach people, and to know that I'm seen and acknowledged by someone is the best thing that has happened to me."

Shaun, Network Artist
Amplifying the Voices of Incarcerated Artists

In a system that suppresses free speech and denies humanity, amplifying the voices of those impacted by incarceration is essential to reclaiming narrative control. Through our online platforms and strategic partnerships with media, cultural, and advocacy organizations, JAC connects incarcerated artists with opportunities to share their work and wisdom with the public.

Building a Digital Archive
Our website features more than 280 portfolios of visual and written work, curated online galleries, interviews with artists, a national program directory, resource library, and blog posts by artists and advocates inside and out.

Launching the Recording Project
Our Recording Project invites artists and writers to share their stories, sources of inspiration, and creative processes through recorded phone interviews with members of JAC's community. Through the interviews, artists can contextualize their work in their own voices and contribute to public discourse despite barriers to communication within the carceral system.

JAC's First Inside Newsletter
2022 also saw the production and mailing of our first semi-annual newsletter, ArtConnects Us, to network artists who are incarcerated. Our newsletter ensures artists receive regular updates on JAC news and programs, exhibition and submission opportunities, along with other relevant resources, while creating a cohesive sense of community between network artists and the JAC team.

“It’s gonna do something, whether they’re looking at it from an aesthetic [or] for its beauty. Whether they get upset...it’s gonna do something to you. It’s gonna ignite some type of emotional response. And I think that’s the beauty of art.”

Harry Ellis, Network Artist
JAC organized 7 exhibitions with partner organizations this year, introducing the work of more than 60 network artists to diverse new audiences and venues. From adding QR codes to the wall text linking to online portfolios and playing soundtracks curated by artists, to teaming with local musicians and advocacy groups at our receptions, we continue to strengthen the bonds between artists and advocates across prison walls.
Partnerships

In addition to hosting many of our own vibrant exhibitions, JAC also serves the community by connecting artists to other opportunities. Artists can then advance their works through publication, advocacy, and events.

Curating the Art of Grief

JAC partnered with the Institute for the Development of Human Arts in an effort to unify the voices of artists in prisons, jails, psychiatric facilities, nursing and group homes around the theme of grief. Artists submitted works about the myriad shapes grief can take and the ways that we can tend to our grief. By collecting and sharing art around this central concept, our hope was to transmute collective grief into new narratives which celebrate the power of mutual support and community action.

Artists Featured in Marking Time

"Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration," a landmark traveling exhibition featuring work by JAC network artists, was exhibited at the Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts in Alabama and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Ohio. The exhibition, organized by Nicole R. Fleetwood, explores the impact of the carceral system through the visual work of system-impacted artists and events with artists, performers, and advocacy groups.

Advocating to End the Exception

End the Exception is a public art project that tells the story of the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution — which abolished slavery except in the case of a crime — from the deeply personal viewpoint of those in prison.

We worked with Mural Arts Philadelphia, Worth Rises, and California Lawyers for the Arts to bring this vision to life by commissioning incarcerated artists to create visual, written, or recorded accounts detailing their labor. The commissioned works were displayed in a traveling exhibition and teach-in in a powerful call for the complete abolition of slavery across the country.

JUSTstories Screening

JAC partnered with the DC-based social impact production company Unchained Stories to bring their curriculum, JUSTstories, to 8 system-impacted artists, building their capacity for dynamic visual storytelling and content creation. This exciting partnership culminated in a screening and discussion of participants’ moving short films.
"Teaching artists working inside the prison system need all the support they can get. It’s a lonely job, and a heartless environment to experience, week after week, year after year... JAC has been helpful in keeping our spirits up, keeping us connected and better-informed."

Julie, Teaching Artist
Convening Artists and Allies to Transform Justice

Transformative justice approaches envision a world where structures of violence are eradicated and responses to harm are non-punitive, repair-focused, and community-led. Making and sharing art is a form of storytelling that can challenge dehumanizing perceptions of people who are incarcerated and ignite collective action against punishment. We bring together those involved in this vital work for resource-sharing, reflection on best practices, and opportunities for mutual support.

Create + Connect

More than 250 people attended our virtual Create + Connect workshops facilitated by artists, restorative and transformative justice practitioners, advocates, and activists. These workshops foster dialogue, galvanize change, and create connection through hands-on activities, presentations, discussions of creative and academic works, and reflections on transformative arts efforts.

Art + Agency

JAC brought together a group of system-impacted artists to develop guiding principles intended to combat the exploitation of incarcerated artists by empowering them in the marketing, publication, exhibition, decision-making, and sale of their artwork and writing. This project will result in the distribution of a zine to artists inside and will be available online for those working with artists in confinement.

Wednesday Night Gatherings

We continued our weekly virtual community gatherings featuring group dialogue, guest presenters, and activities that deepen our sense of connection with one another and across JAC’s network. These gatherings have also been a source of support for artists who have returned home following incarceration.

"It’s so critical for these voices to be put forward, and for people to be compensated and elevated and not feel like we are just required to do things for free in order to have any visibility.”

Carole Alden
Art + Agency Contributor
Our primary purpose was to create a space where people could express their disenfranchised grief ... I see memorialization as liberatory in that not only does it free up space for people to grieve, but it also is a resistance to the ways that mainstream ideas about people who are in the carceral system are supposed to be talked about.”

Susie Bannon
Mourning Our Losses

"You look at this piece, and the only thing that has color is the crane because Moyo uses his art to impact others out here, and that beautiful crane is how he uses art as a medium to connect with us out here, to let us know that we're together as one."

Ryan "Flaco" Rising
Underground Scholars
Dear JAC Supporters,

It’s been remarkable to see the impact that the team has achieved on an extremely limited budget. Last year, our budget was less than $100,000; in FY22 – our first full year as a 501c3 – we grew our top line to $376,000 and increased programmatic spending to $200,000.

We were fortunate to receive multiple grants from the Art for Justice Fund, who has become a key supporter of JAC and many network artists, to launch two new projects and provide operational support. Near the end of the fiscal year, we were awarded a 3-year grant from the Mellon Foundation.

This growth is a tremendous accomplishment and enables us to begin making several key staff hires. Still, our budget does not yet meet the demands of expanding programs. Our current focus is on shoring up infrastructure for our existing programs.

Overall, we were grateful to finish another year in good financial standing and with resources to grow. I know I speak for the entire board when I say we’re incredibly proud that JAC has started to receive substantial grants, especially our first multi-year grant. It’s a testament to the strength of JAC’s staff, volunteers, and network artists. Thanks to all of you who contributed to JAC this year – we feel the impact of every dollar donated, letter written, and hour volunteered.

Sincerely,

Theo Mendez
Board Treasurer
Our Supporters

Donations of money, talent, and time from our community members are essential to ensuring sustainability. We are so grateful to our donors and volunteers for your contributions and belief in our work.

Sustaining Members
Sustaining members make recurring contributions, ensuring reliable support to sustain our work. Become a sustaining member here.

Corina Dalzell
Christopher Dum
Diana Friedman
Arlene Thorner
Catherine Futter
Layne Garrett
Jessie Glover
Allison Kirkegaard
Matt Malyon
Julia Mascioli
TJ Mathews
Sandra Miller
Chris Shira
Shehara Wickramarachchi

Major Donors
Major donors who make contributions of over $500 allow us to build a strong foundation to bolster our programs.

Joseph Furey
Linsley Heiser
Meredith Jason
Robert Manning
Stephen Milliken
Craig O’Brien
John Sener
Theodore Sitther
Cindy Sullivan
Seekers Church
Our Supporters continued

Volunteers

Our volunteers enhance our programs and exhibitions by generously sharing their time and skills. Fill out our volunteer form here.

Chloe Anderson      Caitlin Cowan      Aidan Ibrahim      Joslyn Lapinski      Allison Parker      John Sener
Vivian Bauer        Bailey DeSimone    Meredith Jason     Jennifer Martinez    Louis Postel        Sarah Shin
Ann Bracken         Christine Hippeli  Rebecca Kenaga     Deborah Menke       Cat Quinlan         Emma Sutton

Individual Supporters

We feel the collective impact of every contribution in support of our mission. Donate here.

Gail Baker          Katharine Black    Kim Burgess        Emily Daroga        Patrice Ficklin
Vivian Bauer        Anna Blautzik     Kate Campbell Stevenson Helen Castleman    Melissa Fiori
Erika Berg          Deborah Bloch     Scott Clugstone    Gabriela DeAnda     Dana Fronczak
John Berman         Tiffani & Gregory Bolden Jason Cohen      Robin Driscoll      Linda Ganister
Maya Bernstein      Jack Bowers       Brett Wilson Cook  Judy Dworin         Alan Ge phart
Barbara Beynon      Ann Bracken       Sarah Craven       Hanzal Egator       Brett Gonzalez
Beth Bienvenu       Sarah Broderick    Brian Daldorph     Carolyn Ellison     Todd Gordon
Jerrilyn Black      Lesley Rae Burdick  Ethel Feltham      Jayme Epstein       Busy Graham
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Our 2022 Interns

JAC Interns are essential team members; they actively contribute to daily operations and have helped launch several initiatives.

Andy Arias  
Isa Berliner  
Jenan Cameranesi  
Ava Dennis  
Jesse DiMeglio  
Alden Eckman  
Katherine Frost  
Quincy Hoff  
Hunter Isenstein  
Hailey Lanford  
Joslyn Lapinski  
Iris Lin  
Kambria Lockett  
Sara Medwin  
Maia Pramuk  
Jake Pilsbury  
Janie Ritter  
Sarah Shin  
Rene Spiewak  
Hannah Teich  
Ian Trawinski
Organizational Support

JAC is deeply grateful for the support we receive from foundations to create meaningful impact.

- WENIG FAMILY FUND
- THE FRINGE FOUNDATION
- MELLON FOUNDATION
- ART FOR JUSTICE FUND
- CORNELIA BESSIE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION
- THE TAKOMA FOUNDATION
- CHRIS WILSON FOUNDATION
Looking Forward

This year we are taking big steps to ensure the sustainability of our operations, continue our growth, and increase our advocacy efforts, starting with a few exciting projects.

1. **Settling Into Our New Home**
   We recently moved into our first-ever headquarters in Takoma Park, Maryland! The space will enable our team to work more collaboratively and root ourselves within our local community through on-site exhibitions, ArtLinks events, and volunteer engagement opportunities.

2. **Growing the Team**
   As JAC's creative network flourishes, we hope to build our team to further foster this growth. Thanks to support from the Mellon Foundation and Art for Justice Fund, we're excited to begin hiring more part-time and full-time staff, beginning with an Operations Director in late 2022. This expansion in personnel will be invaluable as we work towards increasing our programming capacities and deepening our impact.

3. **Building a Coalition**
   Our national coalition building efforts amplify and unite the voices of those working at the intersection of the arts and abolition. We are currently assembling a team of organizers to develop a more formal structure for the coalition to bring more people into the fold. By bringing our national network of artist-activists into a shared virtual space beyond professional or regional silos, we hope to stimulate much-needed action inspired by the integral role of arts in abolitionist efforts.
Who We Are: JAC's Team

Board of Directors
- Johnsenia Brooks, Interim Chair
- Victoria Siciliano, Vice Chair
- Theo Mendez, Treasurer
- Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario, Secretary
- Keisha Ann Lopes
- Brett Gonzalez
- Julia Mascioli, Former Vice Chair

Staff
- Wendy Jason, Founding Director
- Erica Gaines, Operations Director
- Clare Walker, Program Assistant

Volunteers
- Robin McNulty, Fundraising & Communications Advisor
- Jayme Epstein, Volunteer Coordinator & Art Connects Advisor
- Marilana Rufo, Communications Advisor
- Melissa Wang, Inbox Volunteer

Interns
- Isa Berliner
- Norynne Caleja
- Courtney Daub
- Tessa Delgo
- Jesse DiMeglio
- Alden Eckman
- Liz Fieschko
- Liv Galbraith
- Olivia Hochstadt
- Lucy McAuliffe
- Sara Medwin
- Janie Ritter
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<td>Applejack by Harry Ellis</td>
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<td>Grief #1 by Brian Hindson</td>
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<td>Chameleon Hogle Zoo 2018 by Carole Alden</td>
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<td>To Be Free Again by Rick Spooner</td>
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<td>Shipping on the Long Island Sound by Jon Jay Arnold</td>
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