

SERVING LIFE: REVISIONING JUSTICE

ORIENTING YOURSELF FOR THE JOURNEY

This is a journey with no goal other than the walking of it. There are many bridges here, the most important is the one between two human hearts. We invite you to join us on this journey and discover for yourself what (and who) has been hidden from view.

This moment is not the beginning, but it is where we, as a society, find ourselves now. Look around. The United States incarcerates a greater portion of our population than any country in the world. More than 10 million children have parents who have been in prison or jail. Imagine. Can you? Ten million? Half these children are younger than 10. The effects of this massive prison population stretch to the very foundations of our society.

Incarceration is a “*growth industry*.” But why map a journey to death row?

Death row is a microcosm of our over-incarcerated nation. Almost every resident is low-wealth. They are disproportionately racial and ethnic minorities. Mental illness is rampant. Many have been executed who were innocent. Yet, even if these men are not “guilty,” they’re easily perceived as “not innocent enough.”

“Turning mass incarceration around is going to require not only policy analysis but also a shift in public opinion.” –Prison Policy Initiative

How do we encourage such a shift? As Bryan Stevenson reminds us in *Just Mercy*, “*Proximity has taught me some basic and humbling truths, including this: Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.*”

Clearly, proximity is key. But what does proximity mean when we are talking about men for whom visitors are a rarity and phone calls simply a memory?

SERVING LIFE PROJECT COMPONENTS:

For many years, Hidden Voices has collaborated with men on death row or sentenced as children to die in prison, in order to create a community call and response between the public (you) and these most hidden members of our society. The project includes:

- * **SERVING LIFE ON DEATH ROW:** A full-length play co-created and performed by residents of death row.
- * **RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW:** A cycle of 30 monologues sharing stories from death row and designed as a community reading for installation openings, conferences, classes, and events.
- * **COUNT:** Stories from America’s Death Row. A full-length play written by Lynden Harris and directed by Kathryn Hunter-Williams, premiered by PlayMakers Repertory Company.
- * **COUNT: THE CONVERSATION.** A “digital tour and toolkit” created in partnership with PlayMakers Repertory as an avenue for venues to participate in an evening of conversation and community readings of **RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW**.
- * **A GOOD BOY:** An opera/ music theater work-in-progress sharing stories from the families of those on death row.
- * **STANDING ON LOVE** exhibit. Portraits and reflections from family members living with a loved one on death row.

THIS CALL AND RESPONSE MATTERS. As one listener responded after hearing these stories, *“Gentlemen, THANK YOU. For your story, your vulnerability, your willingness to remind ignorant and selfish people like me how beautiful each and every life is. Your legacy will stay with me for the rest of my life . . . The power and witness of your stories have resonated within this room. May we hear you, may you know how deeply your humanity is felt here. You are not invisible.”*

Together, we will find the personal and civic will to revision justice through our willingness to walk this path of sorrows, to be challenged, connected, and transformed by these stories.

WAYMARKERS:

Each waystation is marked by a number. These numbers correspond to:

- * A Life Map created by a resident on death row. We invited men to choose an aspect of their life journey and visually share their current perspective on that pathway. Some men had access to art supplies; some did not. Regardless, the maps are detailed and specific. Many are a testament to the men’s inventiveness in the face of very limited materials -- toilet paper to form 3-D items, nondairy creamer with a drop of water for glue, recycled cardboard. Please handle gently.
- * An element from each map, brought to life by a collaborating artist. We invited the artists to engage with the maps and then to highlight an aspect of the map they felt was critical for our understanding. From ceramics to assemblage to sculpture, the artistic interpretations offer much to ponder.

At four waypoints, you’ll find phones. Lift the receiver and connect with men from around the country who now live on death row. They have recorded these stories specifically for you.

The journey ends with the visitation booths. Take a moment to rest, reflect, and, most critically, record your own response. Pick up the phone. Or write – a short note, a full-out letter, a prayer. And while you’re in the booth, notice the prayers sent by the men. Prayers for you, the exhibit viewers.

THIS IS THE PROXIMITY THAT WILL SHIFT THE NARRATIVE.

THANKS TO THE COLLABORATING ARTISTS

Billy Dee

Carlyn Wright-Eakes

Catherine Edgerton

Jessie Gladdek

Jodi Hart

Joseph Amodei

Kelly Baker-Trapp

Kofi Boone

Lamar Whidbee

Hossein Saedi

Michael Betts II

Michelle Preslik

Nureena Faruqi

Rachel Campbell

Robyn Kelly

Stephen Hayes

Sufia Ikbal-Doucet

William Paul Thomas



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Bridging these divides may seem daunting, but simple gestures make a difference. We invite you to step forward.

Consider writing once a month to a prisoner. A simple online search will turn up many pen pal organizations. You may be someone's only contact with the free world.

Send a book. Often, prison libraries are woefully under-resourced, particularly with African American history, Spanish language books, etc. Again, a simple search for prison book programs will turn up appropriate choices.

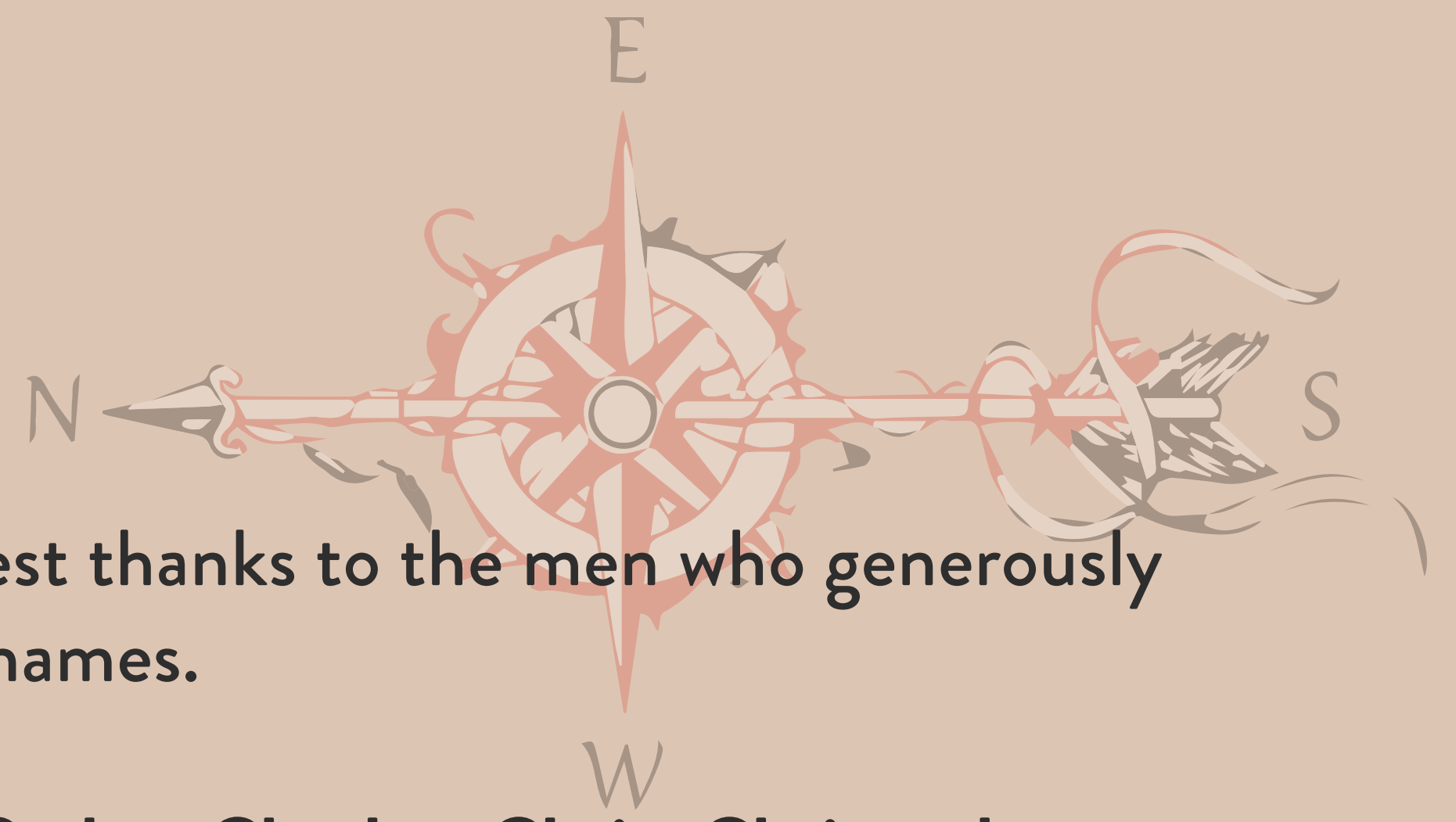
If you have a talent to share, contact a local facility. One study conducted by the Educational Testing Service determined that 75% of adult prisoners are illiterate and 85% of juveniles. Some facilities welcome volunteers to share skills as varied as literacy, cooking, finance, and art.

Since 1985, the population of female prisoners in the U.S. has risen at nearly double the rate of males. The majority have minor children. Programs that help connect moms in prison to their kids are critical.

Like male prisoners, many incarcerated women have very abusive histories. If you work with trauma, consider offering a monthly group. Mindfulness meditation, yoga, stress reduction are all deeply positive skills to share.

THIS CALL AND RESPONSE MATTERS.

THANK YOU



From Utah to Florida, Arizona to Maine, we offer our deepest thanks to the men who generously participated in this project, many of whom share the same names.

We are grateful to each of you: Andre, Bill, Blake, Brian, Carlos, Charles, Chris, Christopher, Chuck, Clinton, Darrell, Demetrius, Duane, Dewayne, Ding Dong, Don, Donald, Doug, Duck, Face Man, Georgio, Greg, Gregory, Henry, Ivan, James, Jamie, Jimmy, John, Johnny, James, Juan, Junebug, Kenny, Kenneth, Kentay, Kevin, Kokomo, Lump, Marcus, Melvin, Michael, Mike, Mitch, Norman, Paul, Phife, Phillip, Pooh, Pressley, Raheem, Rainbow Man, Richard, Robert, Romeo, Scientific, Sergio, Shawn, Stephen, Steve, Terry, Will, William.

As one man wrote about his contribution, *“WE MUST ASPIRE TO INSPIRE BEFORE WE EXPIRE.”*

WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THESE VISIONARY ORGANIZATIONS, SERVING LIFE WOULD NOT EXIST:

Church of the Holy Family - Compassion Magazine - North Carolina Arts Council
Department of Dramatic Arts, University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill
North Carolina State University - Playmakers Repertory Company
Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University - The Fund for Southern Communities
The MAP Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon
Foundation - The Mothership - The Paul Green Foundation -
The Process Series - Triangle Community Foundation

And finally, to the generous donors and supporters who have helped design, guide, and fund the many moving parts of *Serving Life*, thank you for joining us on this incredible journey.
YOU WALK THE TALK.

ABOUT HIDDEN VOICES

Hidden Voices is a radically inclusive, participatory, and co-creative collective committed to creating a just, compassionate, and sustainable world. Our core values are simple: All lives have meaning. All stories matter.

Since 2003, we have collaborated with underrepresented communities to create award-winning works that combine narrative, mapping, performance, music, digital media, animation, and interactive exhibits to engage audiences and participants in explorations of difficult issues. The Hidden Voices process--engage, empower, envision, enhance –facilitates a dynamic exchange between documentary, art, and community that allows for a multiplicity of voices and a multiplexity of understandings.