

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black microphone. A red button with the word 'MUTE' in white is visible on the side of the microphone. The background is dark and out of focus.

Sponsored by the Trinity English Department's
Allan K. Smith Endowment

**UNMUTING:
VOICE IN JUSTICE-IMPACTED ART**

A Symposium

Friday, November 4, 2022

Trinity College, Hartford, CT

Mather Campus Center

Trinity College

HARTFORD • CONNECTICUT

Unmuting: Voice in Justice Impacted Art

A Symposium

**Friday, November 4, 2022
Trinity College, Hartford, CT**

Organizers:

Sheila Fisher

Professor of English Emerita
sheila.fisher@trincoll.edu

Judy Dworin

Founder and Executive and Artistic Director, Justice Dance
Performance Project, Professor Emerita in Theater and Dance,
Trinity College
judy@jdpp.org

Joe Lea

Library Media Specialist (retired) York CI, Visiting Lecturer in
Human Rights and Co-Director Trinity Prison Seminar Series,
Trinity College
joe.lea09@gmail.com

PROGRAM

8:00 am-3:30 pm **Registration check-in** -- Foyer outside Washington Room (open until 3:30 pm)

Please check in at the registration desk to confirm your registration and to receive your name tag and, if you registered for one, your experiential workshop assignment.

8:00 – 8:30 pm **Light Buffet Breakfast** – Alumni Lounge and Mather Art Space

PLEASE CONVENE IN RITTENBERG LOUNGE FOR SESSION I

8:45-10:15 **Session I: Writing: "Finding Voice"**

Rittenberg Lounge (Mather Campus Center)

Sheila Fisher: Moderator

Panelists:

Caits Meissner

Director, Prison and Justice Writing
PEN America

Nicole Shawan Junior

Deputy Director, Prison and Justice Writing
PEN America

Spoon Jackson

Artist, Writer
CSP Solana

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-12:00 Session II: Visual Art: "Representing Voice"

Rittenberg Lounge

Joe Lea: Moderator

Panelists:

Wendy Jason

Founder/Co-Director
Justice Arts Coalition

Isaac Scott

Founder and Executive Director of The Confined Arts at
Columbia's Center for Justice and at the Center for Institutional
and Social Change at Columbia Law School

Lisette Oblitas

Administrative Assistant
The Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities
Columbia University

12:00-1:00 pm Lunch for Registered Guests

Hamlin Hall

(Just a few steps away from the Mather Campus Center)

1:15-2:45 Session III: Experiential Arts Workshops: “Where I’m From”

Terrace Rooms A, B, and C (Mather Campus Center)

*You will receive a randomized assignment to one of the three workshops when you check in at the Mather registration desk on Friday, November 4 in order to create an equal distribution of participants among the three workshops.

Experiential Workshop Sessions: 1:15-2:15pm

Workshops leaders:

Diana Aldrete (Terrace Room B)

Assistant Professor of Language and Culture Studies and of Human Rights, Trinity College

Kathy Borteck-Gersten (Terrace Room C)

Associate Artistic Director
Justice Dance Performance Project

Nicole Shawan Junior (Terrace Room A)

Founder and Executive Director of Roots. Wounds. Words and Deputy Director of PEN America’s Prison and Justice Writing

Followed by Group Sharing of Workshop Experience: 2:15-2:45 pm

Joe Lea: Moderator

2:45-3:00 Break

**3:00-4:45 Session IV: Culminating Performance and
Reflection: "Unmuting"**

Washington Room

Judy Dworin: Artistic Director and Moderator

Performance and Reflections from the Performers: 3:00-4:15 pm

"Unmuting": A performance by the Justice Dance Performance Project commissioned for the Symposium

Performers:

Robin Cullen

JDPP Bridging Boundaries Teaching Artist and Guest Performer;
Consultant, Group Facilitator and Artist

Tracy Shumaker

Participant in JDPP's New Beginnings and Stepping Out Programs

Victoria Steele

JDPP Guest Performer, Mental Health Assistant 2 Psychiatric
Youth Unit, Connecticut Valley Hospital

Robin Ledbetter

Participant in JDPP's Stepping Out Program

Yalines Torres

JDPP Fellow in Marketing and Communications, Participant in
JDPP's Stepping Out Program

Tyran Sampson

JDPP Participant in JDPP's New Beginnings and Stepping Out
Program

Suzi Jensen

JDPP Programming Coordinator, Bridging Boundaries and Moving Matters! Teaching Artist and Guest Performer

Lisa Matias

Founding Member of JDPP Ensemble, JDPP Teaching Artist for Bridging Boundaries and Moving Matters! Visiting Lecturer in Theater and Dance, Trinity College
Founding

Audience Talk-Back: 4:15-4:45 pm

Judy Dworin: Moderator

4:45-5:00 **Break**

5:00- 5:45 **Wrap up: "What Have We Heard?"**

Sheila Fisher: Moderator

Rittenberg Lounge

Respondents and discussion leaders:

Babz Rawls Ivy

Editor-in-Chief of the Inner-City News
Host and producer of LoveBabz LoveTALK show.
103.5 WNNH-LP Community Radio

Adam Morse

PhD in Cultural Geography, University of Oregon, Instructor of Geography at Western Connecticut State University

5:45--6:30 Closing Reception for All Registered Audience Members, Panelists, and Performers

Terrace Rooms A-C

Book sale and signing for panelists' books

Participants, Panelists, and Performers

Diana Aldrete (she/her) is Assistant Professor of Language and Culture Studies and Human Rights. She is a scholar of human rights in Mexican and Latin American literature, including transnational feminist and queer studies. Her current book project, *Between Land and Death*, examines how literary texts by contemporary Mexican women writers have become part of the political dialectic on (anti)feminicidal violence, and in turn present notions of imagining justice. She is a visual artist, whose work has been exhibited at the Free Center (in Hartford and Middletown, CT), Hartford's Charter Oak Cultural Center, and Trinity College's Austin Arts Center.

Robin Cullen (she/her) is an Artist, Contractor, and Consultant working in the field of Trauma and Recovery. Robin has published an essay in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* (2003), a volume of writings by women at York Correctional Institution, edited by Wally Lamb. She is currently in her seventeenth year with the Judy Dworin Performance Project, working as a Teaching Artist and performer. Robin is a certified trauma, recovery, and writing group facilitator and the House Manager at Journey Home Recovery Living, a sober sanctuary for recovering women. In 2020, she received statewide recognition as an inductee into the Connecticut Hall of Change for decades of reentry and recovery work.

Judy Dworin (she/her) is a dance/theater artist and educator committed to inspiring social action through her work with the Justice Dance Performance Project (JDPP). She founded JDPP in 1989 and serves as Executive and Artistic Director. Since 2005, JDPP's yearlong performance residency at York CI for women has catalyzed a comprehensive arts residency program for York mothers and Cybulski CI fathers and their families; Greater Hartford youth with parents in prison; women and men returning home from prison; and young men in juvenile detention centers. Judy is a Professor Emerita in Theater and Dance at Trinity College and recently received an honorary doctoral degree of Fine Arts from the college.

Sheila Fisher (she/her), Professor of English Emerita, specializes in late fourteenth-century English literature and medieval women writers. She has published on Chaucer, the Gawain-poet and medieval romance and translated selected Canterbury Tales in a volume published by W.W. Norton (2011; 2021). She is completing an historical novel on the medieval mystics, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. Sheila is co-founder and former co-director of the Trinity Prison Seminar Series, which, since 2012, has offered credit-bearing college-level courses at the York Correctional Institution in Niantic, Connecticut. She regularly offers a Community Learning Initiative course, "Prison Literature," in Trinity's English Department, which has inspired the generous Allan K. Smith Endowment Grant for this Symposium.

Kathy Borteck Gersten (she/her) has been working with JDPP since 1986 and as a performer traveled to theaters and colleges in Massachusetts, New York, Florida, Ohio, and Bulgaria. She is the Associate Artistic Director of JDPP and the Director of the residency Moving Matters! Kathy is part of the teaching team at York Correctional Institution in Niantic, CT for the performance-based project with its residents and of a Dads & Kids program at Cybulski Correctional Facility in Enfield, CT. She has been involved in the creation and planning of the programs for Youth with Incarcerated Parents.

Babz Rawls Ivy (she/her) is Editor-in-Chief of the Inner-City News, an award-winning weekly print publication by Penfield Communication (New Haven), a Black-owned legacy publication based in New England. Babz also hosts and produces "LoveBabz LoveTALK," a show at 103.5 WNNH-LP Community Radio, which showcases newsmakers in the Greater New Haven area. She is a nationally recognized popular blogger and social media thought leader and podcaster. The many boards on which Babz serves include: Planned Parenthood of Southern New England; Co-Chair, Common Ground High School, Urban Farm and Environmental Education Center, Chair, Arts Council Greater New Haven. Babz is the founder/creator of The Freed Woman Fund, to aid Black Women exiting prison and returning to community.

Spoon Jackson (he/him) is a poet surviving a life sentence without possibility of parole. His poems are collected in *Longer Ago*. He is a radio producer at *Uncuffed: Stories from Solano State Prison*, a columnist for the Swedish newspaper *Global Oxygen*, and frequent contributor to the *Good Men Project*. Spoon and Judith Tannenbaum cowrote the memoir *By Heart: Poetry, Prison and Two Lives*. He most recently contributed to *The Sentences that Create Us* and co-edited *The Book of Judith, Opening Hearts through Poetry*. Jackson has won four PEN Prison Writing Awards and been featured in four documentaries, as well as Michael Man's new book, *Heat 2*. He facilitates college writing workshops (by phone) in the US and UK. He also plays the native flute.

Wendy Jason (she/her) is Founder/Director of the Justice Arts Coalition (JAC). She received her BA in Sociology from Eastern Connecticut State University, studied Transformative Language Arts at Goddard College, and completed her MA in Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis University, where her thesis was based on a year facilitating creative writing and peace education groups within a county jail. Wendy taught courses on social justice and conflict transformation at Georgetown, researched and reported on issues related to restorative justice and the arts for *Change.org*, and served as the manager of the Prison Arts Coalition website for nine years.

Suzi Jensen (she/her) began working with JDPP in 2008 as a guest performer. As the daughter of a former resident at York Correctional Institution in Niantic, CT, she spoke for the often-forgotten children of Connecticut's prison population. Suzi continues to work with this population in a comprehensive in-school outreach through JDPP's *Bridging Boundaries* program as well as being the lead teaching artist for the *Moms & Kids* program at York C.I. Suzi also works in several facets of JDPP's *Moving Matters!* programs, from scripting culminating stories to teaching visual art classes. Suzi is JDPP's Programming Coordinator.

Nicole Shawan Junior (they/them) is an arts administrator, community builder and justice-involved counter-storyteller. Prior to joining PEN America as deputy director of Prison and Justice Writing, they founded Roots. Wounds. Words.—an organization that provides literary arts pedagogy, publication and performance opportunities to BIPOC writers. Nicole's writing appears in *The Sentences That Create Us*, *Oprah Daily*, *Guernica*, *The Rumpus*, *The Feminist Wire*, *ZORA*, *Gay Mag* (Roxane Gay's magazine), *SLICE*, and elsewhere. Learn more at www.NicoleShawanJunior.com.

Joseph Lea (he/him) holds a BA in Economics, a JD in law, an LLM in International law, and Connecticut Teaching and Library Media Specialist Certificates. He began his education career at the York Correctional Institution for women (YCI) as a teacher in 1995 and became the library media specialist in 2003. He also coordinated arts programming at YCI. In 2006, he earned an MA in Applied Theatre at the University of Manchester (UK). On returning to YCI, he helped establish its college education program. In 2015, he retired from Department of Correction. Currently, Joe is a Visiting Lecturer in the Human Rights Studies Program at Trinity College, where he teaches both on campus and at YCI through the Quinnipiac/Trinity College Program, TPSS (Trinity Prison Seminar Series), which he co-directs with Anna Terwiel, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Trinity.

Robin Ledbetter was born in Hartford and was incarcerated for 25 years. She experienced her rebirth in August 16, 2021. She is a published author.

Lisa Matias (she/her) graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Trinity College as the President's Fellow in Theater and Dance. She has performed with several dance companies, led the dance program at St. Joseph College, and taught extensively at the Hartford Conservatory. At Trinity, she teaches in both the Theater and Dance and Human Rights Studies Depts. Her dance studio, Lisa Matias Dance Centre, is in its 39th year. Lisa is a founding member of JDPP, working as a performer and teaching artist in many JDPP programs, including Bridging Boundaries, New Beginnings, and Moving Matters! Lisa believes in the power of the arts to heal, inspire, and transform.

Caits Meissner (she/her) is the Director of Prison and Justice Writing at PEN America, where she edited *The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting A Writer's Life in Prison* (Haymarket Books, January 2022), of which the Mellon Foundation funded 75,000 copies to reach readers in United States prisons free of charge. Her poems, comics, essays, and curation have appeared in *The Creative Independent*, *The Rumpus*, [PANK], *Harper's Bazaar*, *Adroit*, *Literary Hub*, *Split This Rock*, *Bust Magazine*, *The Normal School*, *Hobart*, and *The Guardian*, among others.

Adam Morse (he/him) is a cultural/political geographer and educator. Adam received his PhD in geography from the University of Oregon in 2022, his MA from Oregon in 2016, and his BA in geography from Clark University in 2013. He has published on the role of the arts in carceral spaces as tactics of agency and resistance for incarcerated populations and has also completed work in the subfields of economic geography/border studies. Adam continues to collaborate with colleagues at Oregon in a project examining Kurdish cross-border laborers in the Iran-Iraq border region. He has taught at Middlesex Community College in Bedford/Lowell MA, the University of Oregon and most recently at Mount Holyoke College and Western Connecticut State University.

Lisette Oblitas (she/her) is the Administrative Assistant at the Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities at Columbia University. She took courses towards her BA Degree at Wesleyan University through the Center for Prison Education. In 2016 she became a Columbia Justice-In-Education scholar. She intends to major in Psychology and the Arts. Lisette's visual art work has been displayed at the Brooklyn Museum; the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, and the Maier Museum of Art in Lynchburg. She was as an Art Panelist for "State of Denial: The Illegal Incarceration of Women, Children and People of Color" at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Feminist Art Center/ Brooklyn Museum and "The Vision of Confinement: A Lens on Women in The U.S. Prison System" at Hunter College.

Tyran Sampson (he/him) was a participant in the Justice Dance Performance Project's (JDPP) Dads & Kids program at Cybulski CI Reintegration Center from 2017 to 2019, where he connected to the arts in deeply important ways. Since his release from prison, he has participated in JDPP's New Beginnings Arts Program with Trinity College students and returning citizens, finding his voice and telling his story through the arts and performance. He has also performed in JDPP's "A Response and A Call," an online performance series created in 2020 as a platform for Black artists following the murder of George Floyd. Tyran is an active member of Connecticut's ACLU working for change at the local and state level.

Rev. Isaac I. Scott (he/him), Founder & Executive Director of The Confined Arts at Columbia University, is a Multidisciplinary Visual Artist, Journalist, and Ordained Minister, who created Isaac's Quarterly, a socially concerned faith-based company to foster culturally representative aesthetics. Isaac is a Fellow at the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School and is the Founder of The Confined Arts at the Center for Justice at Columbia University. He has written a column for the Columbia Spectator, and his research at Columbia investigates dehumanization in the justice system as well as the role of strategic arts engagement to mitigate the imprint of the criminal legal system.

Tracy Shumaker (she/her) has recently returned to the community. While at York CI she was a dedicated participant in JDPP's Performance and Moms & Kids Residencies. She also became certified in Braille and earned her Associates Degree from the Wesleyan/Middlesex Community College Program. She worked in the Hospice Program at York as well. She has been and remains a devoted mom to her three wonderful children, building relationship with them throughout and in the present.

Victoria Steele (person) works as a Mental Health Assistant for DMHAS. She completed (CCAR) Recovery Coach Academy training program and was a CCAR ambassador, volunteer, and outreach speaker for many years. She has worked with JDPP since 2013, performing with the singing group Women on our Own, participating in New Beginnings, and performing in JDPP's prison-related professional performances. She was a panelist at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center with Michelle Alexander discussing her acclaimed book, *The New Jim Crow*. Victoria is a proud board member of Community Partners in Action. She is excited about the work she is doing in her life, giving back to others sharing her experience, strength, and hope while offering herself as living proof that recovery is possible.

Yalines Torres (she/her) is a JDPP Fellow in Marketing and Community Engagement and has worked with JDPP in the Bridging Boundaries year-long Performance Residency at YCI as well as the Moms & Kids Program there, before she returned to the Greater Hartford community. Yali earned her Associate's Degree while at York from the Wesleyan/ Middlesex Community College Program. She now works in JDPP's Stepping Out program, a professional mentorship with the JDPP Ensemble. She has performed in several JDPP performances in the community including Emergence 1 and Emergence 2 at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center. She is the proud mom of Luis and Angiebel.

We Wish to Offer Special Thanks to Everyone Who Has Made This Day Possible

But Especially To:

The Trinity English Department's Allan K. Smith Endowment, Anita Baker, Blu, Ben Carbonetti, Phil Duffy, John Dlugosz, Robyn Genzano, Chris Hager, Jessica Henning, Ilda Ramos, Ethan Rutherford, Jennifer Thomas, Ritz Ubides, and Chloe Wheatley.

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