Envisioning Justice: An Exhibition
August 6 - October 12, 2019
Sullivan Galleries
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

For more information, please visit: www.envisioningjustice.org
Media Contact: Anne Tucker, atucker@mtconsultants.com
(312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216

125 S. Clark St., Ste 650
Chicago, IL 60603
312.422.5580
ilhumanities.org
info@ilhumanities.org
Envisioning Justice Initiative Overview

March 2018 – October 2019

Mission: Envisioning Justice is a citywide initiative that engages Chicagoans of all neighborhoods, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and with a diversity of perspectives, in a citywide conversation about the impact of incarceration in local communities and invites residents to use the arts and humanities to devise strategies for lessening this impact. Envisioning Justice seeks to strengthen efforts to reimagine our criminal legal system and is inspired by the goals of justice, accountability, safety, support, and restoration for all people. The initiative seeks to do this by supporting arts education and public discussions at community hubs, distributing grants, and commissioning artists.

Community Hubs: Envisioning Justice partners with community-based organizations across the city to create arts education and community discussion programs that promote creative solutions by Chicagoans to the negative impacts of incarceration in their community. From March 2018 to June 2019, these hubs have been home to teaching artists, community arts projects, monthly conversations, and open houses that will engage diverse perspectives in identifying those negative impacts of the criminal justice system and imagining ways for transformation. We’re proud to be partnering with organizations working in seven different communities: BBF Family Services in North Lawndale; Bright Star Community Outreach in Bronzeville; Circles and Ciphers in Rogers Park; The #LetUsBreathe Collective in Back of the Yards; OPEN Center for the Arts in La Villita; and Free Write Arts and Literacy and SkyART/Just Art, working within the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and Cook County Jail.

Grants: Through Envisioning Justice, Illinois Humanities gave grants with the goal of contributing to the Envisioning Justice initiative overall goal of stimulating a “citywide dialogue on the state of mass incarceration.” The grants program was based on the notion that creative storytelling can help us to re-examine the criminal justice system in fresh ways; that the arts and humanities are critical to the lives of incarcerated people; and that hosting well-moderated and engaging dialogue can help grow interest and awareness in criminal justice. The grants guidelines focused on three areas that rarely get enough philanthropic attention --- arts programs within jails and prisons, communications efforts and stories meant to grow awareness, and civic dialogue.

Exhibition: From August 6th through October 12th, Illinois Humanities celebrates the work of our Envisioning Justice partners in a free, public exhibition at Sullivan Galleries in downtown Chicago. Envisioning Justice shares the work of Chicago artists and communities as they visualize, actualize, and reimagine strategies, policies, and approaches in the service of a society that is just for all. Featuring artwork, ephemera, and documentation from seven Chicago communities impacted by incarceration and works by artists whose practices respond to such themes, this exhibition interrogates the failures of our criminal justice system while presenting plans toward self-empowerment and communal liberation.

For more information, please visit: www.envisioningjustice.org
Media Contact: Anne Tucker, atucker@mtconsultants.com, (312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216
Envisioning Justice Community Hub Partners

What happens when you center the voices of those most directly affected by the criminal justice system to ask:

How can things be done better?

Between March 2018 and June 2019, Envisioning Justice partnered with seven community-based organizations to envision what justice could and should look like in their neighborhoods through arts education, collective arts projects, community discussions, and open houses.

**BBF Family Services** in North Lawndale (1512 S. Pulaski Rd.) works to improve the quality of life for North Lawndale youth and families by providing safe, stable, and nurturing experiences; [www.bbffamilyservices.org](http://www.bbffamilyservices.org)

**The #BreathingRoom Space** in Back of the Yards (1434 W. 51st St.) is an alliance of artists and activists organizing through a creative lens to imagine a world without prisons and police; [www.letusbreathecollective.com](http://www.letusbreathecollective.com)

**Bright Star Community Outreach** in Bronzeville (4518 S. Cottage Grove Ave.) works to make underserved neighborhoods like Bronzeville livable communities for individuals, families, and organizations; [www.brightstartcomunityoutreach.com](http://www.brightstartcomunityoutreach.com)

**Circles & Ciphers** in Rogers Park (1545 W. Morse Ave.) is a hip-hop infused restorative justice organization led by and for young people impacted by violence; [www.circlesandciphers.org](http://www.circlesandciphers.org)

**Free Write Arts & Literacy** (1932 S. Halsted St.) provides programming inside the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and Cook County Department of Corrections that engages incarcerated and court-involved youth and young adults in the performing, visual, and literary arts; [www.freewriteartsliteracy.org](http://www.freewriteartsliteracy.org)

**Just Art** provides programming inside the Cook County Department of Corrections through which detainees, teaching artists, correctional officers, jail staff, and others are collectively reimagining and reshaping the carceral experience; [www.justartnow.org](http://www.justartnow.org)

**OPEN Center for the Arts** in Little Village (2214 S. Sacramento Ave.) works to educate, inspire, and promote artistic expressions in emerging and aspiring artists as well as to bridge the gap between artists and the community at large; [www.opencenterforthearts.org](http://www.opencenterforthearts.org)

For more information, please visit: [www.envisioningjustice.org](http://www.envisioningjustice.org)

Media Contact: Anne Tucker, [atucker@mtconsultants.com](mailto:atucker@mtconsultants.com), (312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216
Envisioning Justice Exhibition

Sullivan Galleries, August 6th through October 12th

As a part of an ongoing initiative of the same name, Illinois Humanities is producing and presenting an exhibition titled Envisioning Justice at the School of the Art Institute’s Sullivan Galleries from August 6th through October 12th. The exhibition is designed to create an environment to facilitate conversations about the harmful impact of Illinois’ criminal justice system on Chicago communities and to reflect and inspire visions of a society that is more just for all.

This one-of-a-kind exhibition showcases an extremely wide array of work from community members and artists who are at the forefront of movements towards justice and who use art as a powerful tool to cultivate positive change. Centering the voices of impacted individuals and activists rather than policymakers, the exhibition is free and open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 am to 6 pm, starting Aug. 6.

The exhibition features a variety of genres and media ranging from 2D materials to textiles to “Resistance Architecture” to a community “headquarters” that showcases the pedagogy of activist teaching artists and features a library of relevant materials. Several free public programs, including a day-long “Activation Day” on Saturday, September 7th, are also going to be offered at Sullivan Galleries during the course of the exhibition.

The Envisioning Justice exhibition features

- Artwork, documentation, and ephemera from Envisioning Justice Community Hubs: Circles & Ciphers (Rogers Park), BBF Family Services (North Lawndale), OPEN Center for the Arts (Little Village), The #BreathingRoom (Back of the Yards), Bright Star Community Outreach (Bronzeville), Just Art (offering programming inside the Cook County Department of Corrections) and Free Write Arts + Literacy (offering programming inside the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Cook County Department of Corrections, and in Pilsen).

- New works from seven commissioned artists: Adela Goldbard, Dorothy Burge, Jim Duignan, Kirsten Leenaars, Nicole Marroquin, Project Fielding and Sonja Henderson. More information on these artists and their projects here.

- The immersive short-video series “We Are Witnesses: Chicago” created by The Marshall Project in partnership with Kartemquin Films as a part of the Envisioning Justice initiative.

- A wide variety of borrowed works by Maria Gaspar, Tonika Johnson, the Prison + Neighborhood Art Project (PNAP), and many more.

For more information, please visit: www.envisioningjustice.org
Media Contact: Anne Tucker, atucker@mtconsultants.com, (312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216
Key Programming Dates
during the Envisioning Justice Exhibition

**Tues, Aug. 6, 2019**
Envisioning Justice Press Preview
Contact atucker@mtconsultants.com for more information.

**Sat, Aug. 17, 2019 | 2-5pm**
Envisioning Justice Exhibition Reception
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Wed, Aug. 21, 2019 | 6-8pm**
Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshop #1
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Sat, Aug. 24, 2019 | 2-4pm**
Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshop #2
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Wed, Aug. 28, 2019 | 6-8pm**
Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshop #3
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Sat, Sept. 7, 2019 | 10am-6pm**
ACTIVATION DAY
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Thurs, Sept. 12, 2019 | Exact time TBA**
We Are Witnesses: Chicago - Screening and Discussion
Harold Washington Library | 400 S. State Street

**Sat, Sept. 14, 2019 | 2-4pm**
Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshop #4
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Fri, Sept. 20, 2019 | 6-9pm**
Sullivan Galleries Fall Season Reception
Presented as part of EXPO Chicago’s Art After Hours program
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th floor

**Sat, Sept. 28, 2019 | 2-4pm**
Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshop #5
School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries | 33 S. State Street, 7th Floor

**Sat, Oct. 12, 2019 | Starts at Dusk**
The Last Judgment by Adela Goldbard and Collaborators
La Villita Park | 2800 S. Sacramento Avenue

For more information, please visit: www.envisioningjustice.org
Media Contact: Anne Tucker, atucker@mtconsultants.com, (312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216
Envisioning Justice Photos

Download all photos

For more information, please visit: www.envisioningjustice.org
Media Contact: Anne Tucker, atucker@mtconsultants.com, (312) 795-3556 or (312) 961-0216
Chicago Exhibition Illuminates Failures of the Criminal Justice System Through Diverse Community Art and Media

Note to Media: A press preview of the exhibition will occur on Tuesday, Aug. 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries, 33 S. State St. in Chicago.

Chicago (July 8)—Dorothy Burge is making a quilt – but not of floral squares to spread across a bed. Her quilt reflects depictions of police violence. The Bronzeville resident is one of seven commissioned artists whose work is featured in a first-of-its-kind exhibition designed to catalyze conversations about the negative impact of Illinois’ criminal justice system on Chicago communities and inspire ideas for a re-imagined justice system.

"Envisioning Justice," the exhibition, opens August 6 and runs through Oct. 12 at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries, 33 S. State Street. Created by Illinois Humanities, the free exhibition and related public programming features works by professional and community artists from neighborhoods including Rogers Park, Bronzeville, Little Village, Back of the Yards, and North Lawndale among others in Chicago. The gallery is open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The exhibition is part of Illinois Humanities’ larger Envisioning Justice initiative, designed to engage diverse Chicagoans in imagining a system that fosters justice, accountability, safety, support, and restoration for all people affected by the criminal justice system. During the past two years, the initiative has cultivated and strengthened a network of community organizations that have held community conversations, art education classes, and skill-sharing sessions about incarceration and its impact on local communities. These activities highlighted the voices of youth and community residents impacted by incarceration; some of these are reflected in the exhibition.

The Envisioning Justice exhibition, curated by visual artist and independent curator Alexandria Eregbu, with support from assistant curator Jameson Paige and curatorial consultant Danny Orendorff, features diverse media and art forms, including fiber-based works and textiles, audio, sculpture, performance video, animation, a “Resistance Architecture” structure, and community and activist ephemera such as posters and drawings. Contributors include seven artists commissioned by Illinois Humanities, as well as youth and adults who have been participating in Envisioning Justice programming. The exhibition also features borrowed works of art with criminal justice themes from local and nationally-known artists such as SAIC faculty member Maria Gaspar, Tonika Johnson, Prison + Neighborhoods Art Project, and Gabriel Villa, who is producing an original site-specific mural.
“The Envisioning Justice exhibition presents a powerful composite of viewpoints and experiences from Chicago and beyond,” said Gabrielle Lyon, executive director of Illinois Humanities. “This exhibition not only illustrates in intimate and personal terms the injurious effects of mass incarceration and the criminal justice system on local communities, it calls on all of us to imagine other possibilities.”

Although violent and property crimes in the U.S. have declined by nearly half since a peak in 1991, the prison population has climbed for two decades, according to research by FBI Uniform Crime Reports and The Sentencing Project. In the 1970s the total prison population was about 200,000 people; in 2017 the population was 1.5 million. Seventy-five percent of people in jail, whether they are serving sentences or are being held before trial, are behind bars for nonviolent traffic, property, drug, or public order offenses, according to The Sentencing Project.

Chicagans who have been incarcerated live in roughly 851 of Chicago’s 21,000 city blocks and are concentrated in just 13 of Chicago’s 77 Community Areas. These areas, on the West and South sides of Chicago, are primarily comprised of low-income African-American and Latinx residents, according to Dan Cooper, research director at the Metropolitan Planning Council and co-creator of Chicago’s Million Dollar Blocks project (examines incarceration trends in Chicago).

“The phenomenon of mass incarceration is concentrated economically, racially, and profoundly geographically, and so are its consequences,” Cooper said. “Its effects are felt by all the residents of communities with high-incarceration rates. These communities experience more health, economic, education, emotional, and family traumas because of it.”

“We hope the exhibition will drive conversations about how to improve our criminal justice system and create a more equitable society,” Lyon said. “One thing the Envisioning Justice initiative has taught us is that equity and justice look different depending on what community you live in. We need more diverse, more complex, and more locally-informed solutions.”

Here are some features of the exhibition:

- Art, ephemera, and documentation from Envisioning Justice hubs: Circles & Ciphers (Rogers Park), BBF Family Services (North Lawndale), OPEN Center for the Arts (Little Village), #BreathingRoom (Back of the Yards), Bright Star Community Outreach (Bronzeville), Just Art and Free Write Arts + Literacy (providing programming inside the Cook County Department of Corrections and Juvenile Temporary Detention Center).

- Works from seven commissioned artists: **Dorothy Burge**, (who has worked within the Bronzeville community to create quilts speaking out against police brutality, life sentences without parole and wrongful convictions); **Adela Goldbard** (working with Little Village community residents to create a multimedia installation consisting of sculpture and indigenous history); **Jim Duignan** (creating a publication and installation on visual art and literary content from artists and organizations that work with incarcerated people); **Sonja Henderson** (working with North Lawndale residents to create a justice-themed multimedia structure incorporating textiles); **Nicole Marroquin**, (in partnership with Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, through the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Lumpen Radio, creating audio recordings and ceramic amplifiers made by system-involved young people); **Kirsten Leenaars**, (creating a movement and performance video of youth leaders from Circles & Ciphers in Rogers Park); and **Project Fielding**, a collective of female-identified and nonbinary builders (working within Back of the Yards to create “Resistance Architecture” structures).
A variety of “expanded perspectives” works from nearly 20 additional local artists and collectives, including an immersive short-video series entitled “We Are Witnesses Chicago,” produced by The Marshall Project in collaboration with Kartemquin Films.

Complementing the exhibition is a series of free public programs at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries that include:

- Grand opening and public reception on Saturday, Aug. 17, 2 to 5 p.m.
- Activation Day on Saturday, Sept. 7, 10 a.m. to 6 pm: workshops on re-entry simulation, prison abolition movement, and de-escalating techniques to avoid police intervention; and youth performances
- Five Odyssey Project Envisioning Workshops that include facilitated small group discussions and artmaking activities (Wednesdays: Aug. 21, Aug. 28 from 6-8pm; Saturdays: Aug. 24, Sept. 14, Sept. 28 from 2-4pm)

The Envisioning Justice exhibition is presented at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Sullivan Galleries in partnership with SAIC's Department of Exhibitions. Envisioning Justice is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails, along with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Art for Justice Fund. Additional support comes from The Robert R. McCormick Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Presence Health, and the City of Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

Illinois Humanities works to build dialogue across all sectors of society to examine issues important to democracy in the focus areas of public policy, media & journalism, economy, and art. Using the humanities as a tool to stimulate discussion, Illinois Humanities creates experiences across Illinois through programming, events, and grantmaking to engage a diverse public on ideas and issues that matter.

Learn more at https://envisioningjustice.org, and follow #EnvisioningJustice on Facebook at @EnvisioningJustice and on Twitter at @EnvisionJustice. Learn about Illinois Humanities on Facebook and Twitter at @ILhumanities.

###