

# RE:ACTION:

## *The Workbook*

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Envisioning  
Justice

# RE:ACTION



*Welcome to Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION,  
an interactive workbook of arts and humanities  
activities that encourage you to think, make,  
reflect, and meditate.*

Built by and for people with lived experience of incarceration,  
the RE:ACTION Workbook brings together the perspectives of  
people across Illinois who see the power of art, writing, and shared  
conversation to create change.

With 10 activities to choose from, the RE:ACTION Workbook is a tool  
designed for individuals or pairs. **Follow step-by-step instructions  
for activities that start conversations, encourage healing, and share  
how you envision justice.**

# Acknowledgements

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or Illinois Humanities?**

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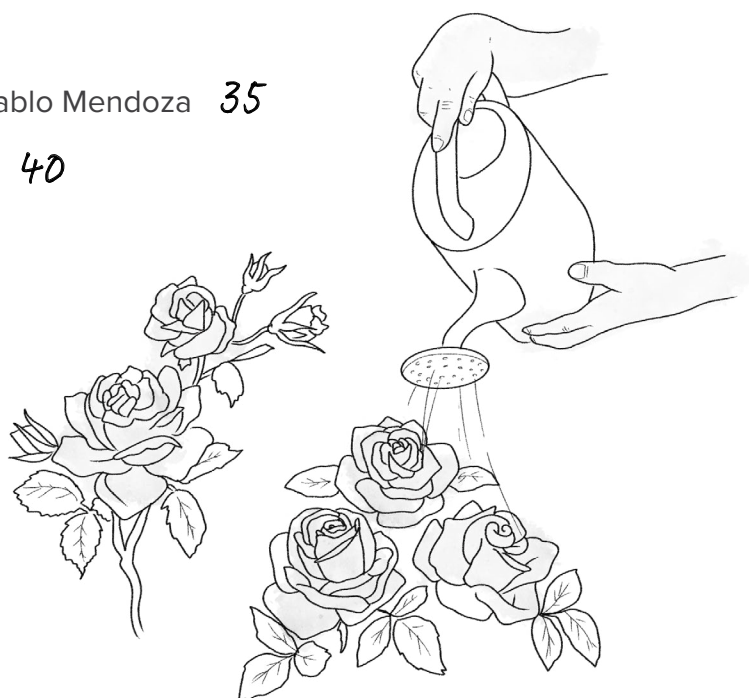
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# Introduction



*The book you hold in your hands is truly one of a kind.*

Built by and for people with lived experience of incarceration, the RE:ACTION Workbook from Envisioning Justice brings together the perspectives of people across Illinois who see the power of art, writing, and shared conversation to create change.

**The activities in this workbook encourage you to think, make, reflect, and meditate.** They offer chances to help others and to create something for yourself. They come from writers, scholars, and artists, not to mention parents, siblings, and friends. And at the end, each activity leads to a final product that can be saved and treasured or shared out and celebrated.

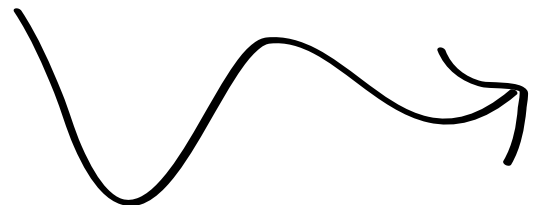
Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION began in 2022 as a website made up of writing, art, music, and videos from 19 Illinois-based creators. In 2021, these 19 creators applied and were chosen to create original projects with support from Illinois Humanities. Each project that came out of this group looked at the issues of incarceration and the

criminal legal system from a different point of view. Some projects examined the Jon Burge era of policing in Chicago, while others talked about ways other countries have been affected by U.S. policies; some looked at the trauma of interacting with the system, and others at the re-entry process. All of them focused on the experiences of people impacted by incarceration.

Many who spend time with art or writing about issues of justice come away with the same question:

*What can I do about it?*

For this reason, all of the people chosen to create a project were also asked to write step-by-step instructions for an original activity. These activities ranged from a conversation with a loved one about mass incarceration to a walking tour of sites in Chicago. Each activity led to a final product, whether a written piece, a drawing, a photo, or a video, that could be sent back to Envisioning Justice and be shared on the RE:ACTION website.



**But the conversation cannot be complete without the perspectives of people who have lived experience of incarceration.** RE:ACTION: The Workbook came out of the desire to create activities by and for people with lived experience that could be used in and outside of classrooms, in pairs or alone, with or without supplies, and with no dependence on technology.

### *To use this workbook:*

1.

**Step 1: Browse the activities shared in the workbook.**

Choose the one(s) that interest you today.



2.

**Step 2: Follow the instructions on that activity's pages.**

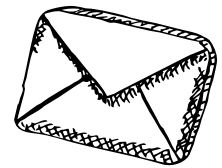
Feel free to use the blank spaces next to the activity or the blank pages in the back of the workbook. Each activity leads to a final product, such as a drawing or a piece of writing, that you can save or share.



3.

**Step 3: If you want, share your finished work with Envisioning Justice using the pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope included in this book.**

Just fill out the release form and mail it with your submission. Work created for RE:ACTION and mailed to Illinois Humanities can be published on the RE:ACTION website and shared out with others as part of a growing community archive.



The future is a community project, and the arts and humanities help to bring it into focus. By engaging with new ideas and ways of being, we can expand our shared understanding and create a new future that is restorative and just for all.

*Thank you for building it with us.*



*Be sure to sign and date the release form at the back of this book and include it with your submission.*



# Key Icons for Activity Pages

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## **Preparation**

Tells you what you'll need in order to complete the activity, including the number of participants, what supplies you might need, and how long it will take to complete it.

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## **Definitions**

Look for this box to find definitions of key words that show up in the activity. Words in the box appear in bold in the activity.

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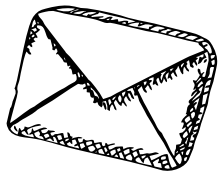
## **Feeling stuck?**

Find optional tips, suggestions, and additional ideas for completing the activity.



Suggests where you can make notes and add drawings to the activity pages and worksheets.

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Points out the final step of each activity: sending in your submission. Look for this icon to see how to submit your work to Envisioning Justice.

# Think, Write, or Draw

#01

By Leanne Childs

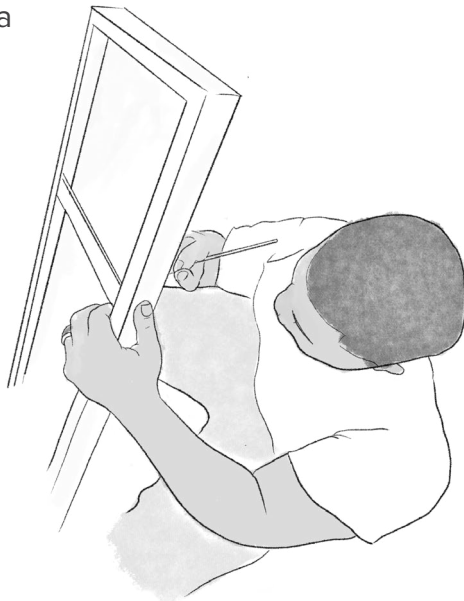
*Have you ever wanted the adults in your life (including a parent) to notice that they pissed you off, made you cry, or let you down?*

I think that no matter how old or young a person is, we have all experienced this. **Everyone is always seeking an apology from you in the name of justice, but they have forgotten that people have mishandled you as well.**

The picture featured in this workbook shows a young boy sitting beside a fence with flowers growing around it. The child faces away from the fence, and it's not clear at first whether he has a connection to the fence.

- What is the first thing your eyes are drawn to when you look at the picture?
- Is this little boy inside the fence or outside of it?
- Does he remind you of a little brother or sister, or maybe yourself or your own baby?
- What do you imagine he's thinking about?

***This activity is all about reflection: think, write, or draw.***



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** Drawing supplies or pen/pencil, paper

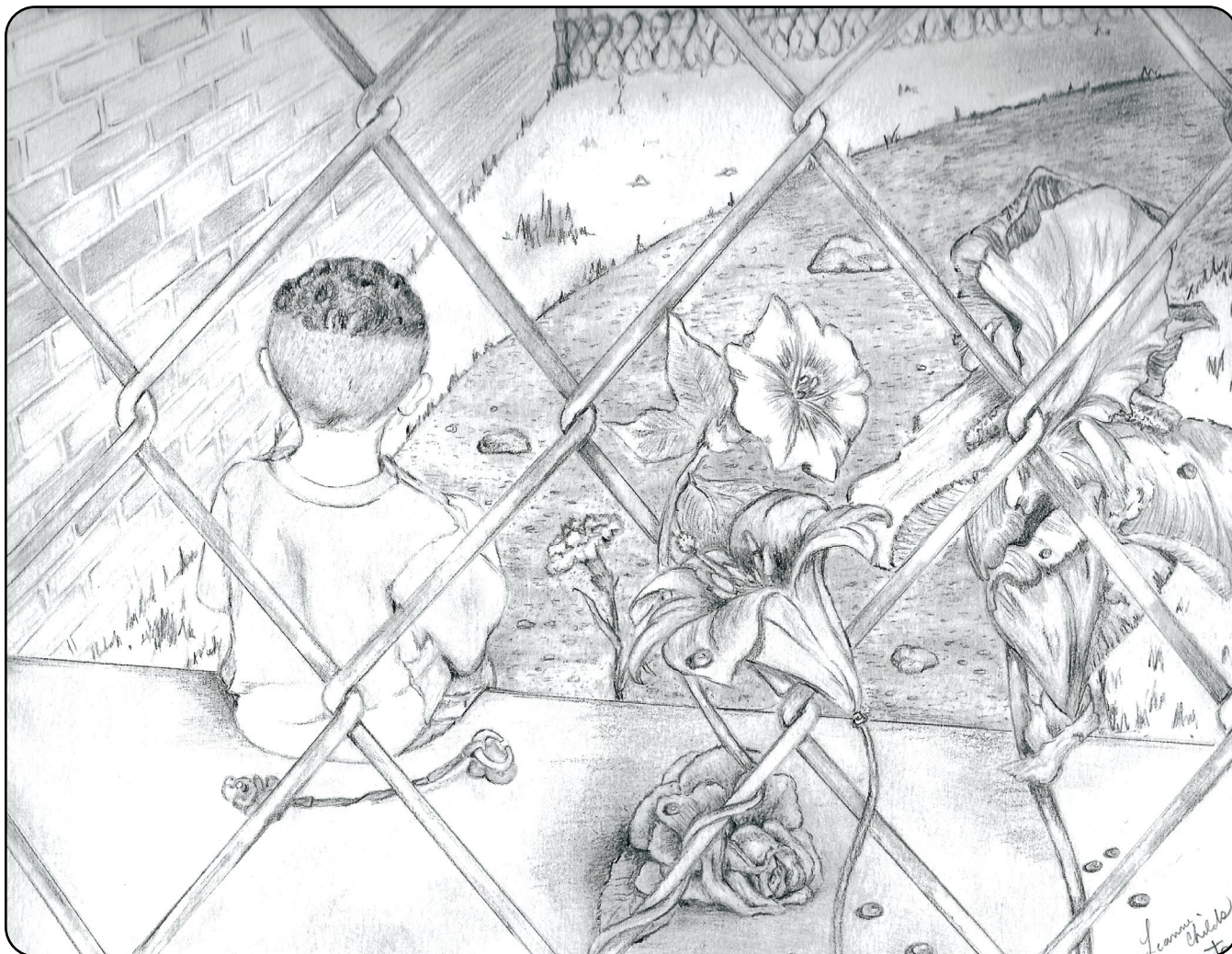
**Estimated time:** 30 minutes



## Feeling stuck?

*Close your eyes. Pretend that you're the child in the picture, not yet jaded by hurts, loss, and trauma. Now open your eyes. How has your understanding of the picture changed?*

## The Activity Picture



*My notes:*



## The Activity



1.

**Look at the picture for at least 15 seconds.** Try to see the whole picture and the specific details.

2.

**Pick out any details that catch your eye from the picture and find meaning in them.**

- Where is the road leading?
- What is the razor wire about?
- What about the binky that the child keeps close?
- Did you notice the droplets of water on flowers?
- Are you looking out or looking in on the child?

3.

**On a blank piece of paper, draw the diamonds of the fence.** Draw what you see or your version of whatever is on the other side of it. If you can't draw, then write down some ideas.

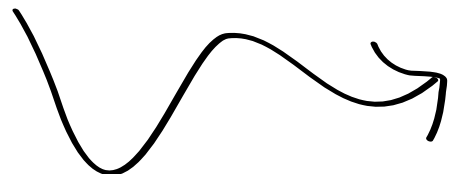
4.

**What do the different flowers represent?** Some are inside the fence and some are outside of it. We all should own the things we've done wrong and think about the people we've hurt.

- Imagine one of those flowers, or the little boy, is someone you hurt.
- Write down some of the things you'd say to them if you could beneath your drawing/ writing from Step 3. You can write a list, a poem, a rhyme, or even just make notes.

5.

**How did you end up in the situation you are in now?** What wrongs do you want people to recognize and apologize to YOU for? What would you say if you had a kid someday who went through what you have in your life?



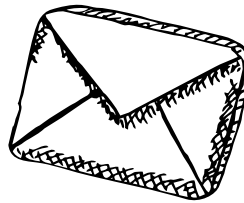
## The Activity Continued

- Using your ideas from your writing or drawing, on a blank page, write an apology letter from those people to yourself. Tell yourself what you wish they would have told you.
- Begin with “I’m sorry,” but remember to be true to your feelings in this moment (e.g., anger, sadness, love, regret, pain).

6.

**Send your finished writing or drawing to Envisioning Justice using the envelope included in this workbook.** Your response may be added to a growing community archive of responses on the Envisioning Justice website.

*Time to create! Flip to page 43 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*



*My notes:*

# Every Voice Matters

#02

By Renaldo Hudson

*I believe that it is **imperative** that people understand that every voice matters.*

As we look at our criminal legal system, we know that it muzzles voices all the time. It is my hope that we begin to help people understand that when you hear people's stories, it gives you more **insight** as to how they landed where they landed. We want to help people who are stuck get out of the mud and have real conversations about why their voice matters.

For me, what it means to value all voices is that regardless of my opinion about what you feel or think, I will stop and listen to you. *I have an acronym that I use, S.T.D.: it says **Stop, Think, and Decide** — do you want your voice to matter? So make sure you extend that same courtesy to everyone else. That's why it's important.*



## Preparation

**Meant for:** 2 people

**Needs:** Something to write with, attached worksheet

**Estimated time:** 30 minutes to 1 hour



## Feeling stuck?

*With your partner, talk about what you both have in common. Did anything surprise you?*



One of the things that I learned through my incarceration is that many times with people who think different than you or look different than you, we have a tendency to minimize them as not being able to appreciate or even understand what you're trying to say. But it is equally important that you reach out to them to hear them, to give ear to their experience.

It's really connected for me to a sad experience: A young man that was on a 30-day hunger strike in a facility I was in ultimately lost his life, and I wrote a response to my feelings about it through the email system. My email was **intercepted** by the internal workings of the facility, and then they called me into their office and, in my opinion, attempted to emotionally badger me for expressing what I expressed. And I thought to myself, *"How dare you? How dare you try to muzzle me for being willing to speak toward the pain? Y'all are embarrassed by my words and that young man is dead."* That's why he no longer had a voice, but I still had a voice, and as uncomfortable as it was, I knew it was vital that every voice matters.



## Definitions

**Imperative:** Important, very necessary

**Insight:** A look inside, a deeper understanding

**Intercepted:** Blocked, prevented from reaching its destination

**Suppressed:** Pushed down, prevented from succeeding or being heard



*My notes:*



## The Activity

1.

**Find a quiet space to gather with one other person.**

2.

**Next, seek out someone whose voice you would not otherwise have heard and ask them to engage in a group conversation.** This could be anyone or include people from anywhere (a friend of a friend who you don't always see eye-to-eye with, someone from a group or population you have not devoted time to listening to, etc.).

3.

**As a pair, reflect on the questions below.** Make notes on the worksheet included at the back of this book with your answers.

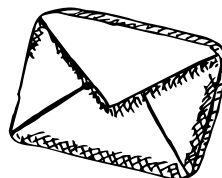
### *Reflection questions (found on page 45, too):*

- What does it mean to value all voices?
- What are some challenges involved in listening to all voices?
- Why is it important to support and consider voices you do not always hear or listen to?
- Reflect on experiences when your voice was heard/included. How did that impact your life/experience?
- Reflect on experiences when your voice was **suppressed**. How did that impact your life/experience?
- Reflect on a time when you uplifted or sought out the voice/perspective of another person. How did that impact you? How did that impact the other person?
- Reflect on a time where you ignored the voice of another. How did that impact you? How did it impact the other person?

4.

**At the end of your conversation, finish filling out the worksheet and send it back to Envisioning Justice.** Your response may be posted to the Envisioning Justice website as part of a growing community archive.

*Time to create! Flip to page 45  
to start your creative work,  
then tear and send!*



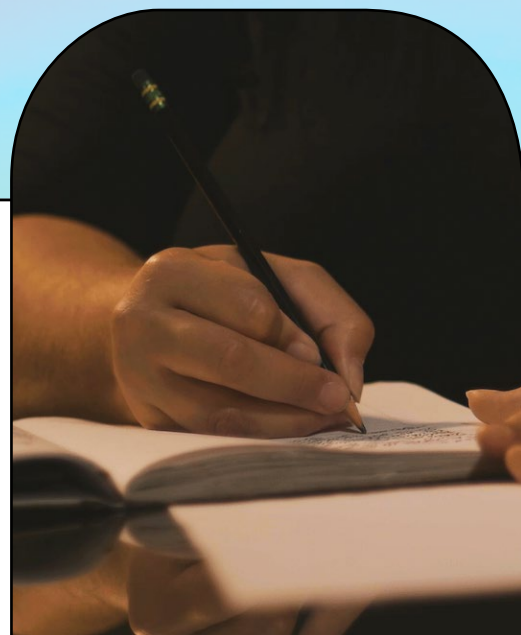
# Freedom Within: Writing for Freedom

#03

By Erika Ray

*Writing can be a **foundational** element for healing, recovery, and **reformation**.*

Writing takes many different forms, including essays, free-writing, journaling, poetry, and others. For this activity/writing session, you will pay attention to the words and phrases that come up for you through the act of meditation, then use them to create a free verse poem.



## The Activity

1.

**Find a place to meditate, then spend time in meditation for 1-3 minutes.** This meditation can be done through silence (focusing on your breath), using sounds of nature, or a song that has a special meaning to you.

2.

**If you've chosen to do a silent meditation, write down whatever words come to you first on a blank piece of paper.**

Examples: *Understanding* | *Life* | *I am*

If you chose to listen to a song, pull out words/phrases that strike you as powerful from the song, and write them on a piece of paper as they come to you. If possible, listen to the song while you do this.

For example, in Jhene' Aiko's song "Frequency," these words include:

*We are* | *Release* | *Speak to me* | *Bless* | *Free/ free my city/free my seed* | *Love/ know you can love*



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** Paper, pen or pencil, (optional) access to music

**Estimated time:** 15 minutes

## The Activity Continued

3.

**Think about what the words/phrases you've written down mean to you.**

Do they make you think of someone, and if so, who? What would you say to the person using the words or phrases, or what would you say to someone about the power of the words/phrases you pulled out?

4.

**Now that you have thought about what the words/phrases mean and who or what they make you think of, start writing whatever comes to your mind for 3 minutes.**

This exercise is called free-writing. Free-writing allows you to write worry-free. You are writing from your heart, without pausing or stopping to correct yourself. You may choose to include your words/phrases from step 2, or you may not.

Do not stop until a full 3 minutes have passed.

Once you are finished you have created a beautiful piece of poetry to keep for yourself or share with someone.

*Poetry can be a living reality of healing. It is art, and through art we can/will heal, recover, and find redemption.*

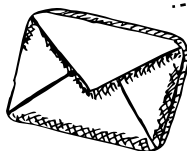
This can be a daily or weekly practice, whatever you choose will be perfect for you.

5.

**Send your finished poem to Envisioning Justice using the envelope included in this workbook.**

Your work may join a growing community archive of responses.

*Time to create! Flip to page 49 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*



## Definitions

**Foundational:** Core, essential

**Reformation:** Rebuilding

**Redemption:** Redeem = Doing something that makes up for past actions

**Adorned:** Decorated

**Vibrant:** Bright, lively, colorful



## Feeling stuck?

*Think of a song you've memorized over the years. Consider why those words never left your memory. Why do they mean something different now than when you first heard the song?*

*Today we fight  
For freedom  
The one that hides within  
But hopes to be found  
Believing  
For tomorrows  
Peaceful welcome  
**Adorned** with all colors  
**Vibrant**  
And breath...taking...*

by Erika Ray

# Visual P.I.E.S.

#04

By Heather Canuel

*The images we see in society — on television, in magazines, in the news — often reflect who we may become and who we **aspire** to be.*

These images may not represent current images of your body; they're your ultimate body, what you want to possess, the home you want to live in, the family that is pictured in those photos above the fantasy fireplace. It takes work to get where you want to go, whether it's the degree you want to earn, the job you want to have, or the social spaces or new places you want to visit.

**Every person is like a pie made up of several ingredients. "P.I.E.S." stands for some of the categories that make up our individuality.** For this activity, you'll spend up to one hour searching for images that you want to reflect your future in each of the categories below:

*P-Physical*

*I- Intellectual*

*E- Emotional*

*S- Spiritual/Social*

*In doing so, you'll create a notebook/folder that helps you build a vision board for the future.*



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** Magazines, newspaper, ads, markers, nail polish, any coloring device/method, notebook/folder, glue/toothpaste, laminate/tape (if possible, to create protection/laminated surface)

**Estimated time:** 1 day



## Definitions

**Aspire:** Direct hopes and wishes toward achieving

## The Activity

1.

**Divide a blank piece of paper into four columns: Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, and Spiritual/Social.** Spend at least 15 minutes brainstorming, drawing, or free-writing your life goals under these categories. What are your goals for your physical body? Your emotional well-being?

2.

**Spend at least one half-hour searching for images (in magazines, books, etc.) in each of these categories.** Fold or cut these images out, then put them to the side.

3.

**How will you make your vision a reality?** Map out your plan in a visual layout on a flat surface, fitting a vision board together in any fashion that is appealing to your eye.

- Design the vision board with a clear and open mind, and with the images that you want for your future. This is where you get to fill in the blanks: choose the boat, personalize a check, or name the salon.
- The layout is totally up to you: you can fit the images together like a puzzle, overlap them, stack them, line them up, or any other arrangement that pleases you.
- Remember, there is no way to get from point A to B without a plan. As many have said, ***"The only plan that ever failed is the plan that was never made."***



### Feeling stuck?

*Close your eyes and imagine your future using all of your senses.*

*What's the sight you want to see for your future? The smell you want to be able to smell? What's the feel of the material you are wearing now versus the material you wish to feel in the future? Examples: "A winding staircase," "smells of Chanel #5," or "silk sleeves that rub my delicate wrist."*



## The Activity Continued

4.

**Transfer your vision board to the outside cover of a notebook or folder.**

You're encouraged to use this notebook or folder as a daily gratitude journal so the images are visually present in your life every day.

5.

**Let the notebook or folder dry overnight.**

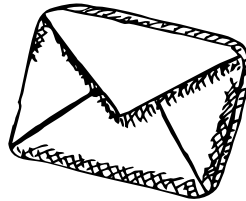
6.

**Return to your vision board in the morning with a second coat of tape, nail polish, or laminate.**

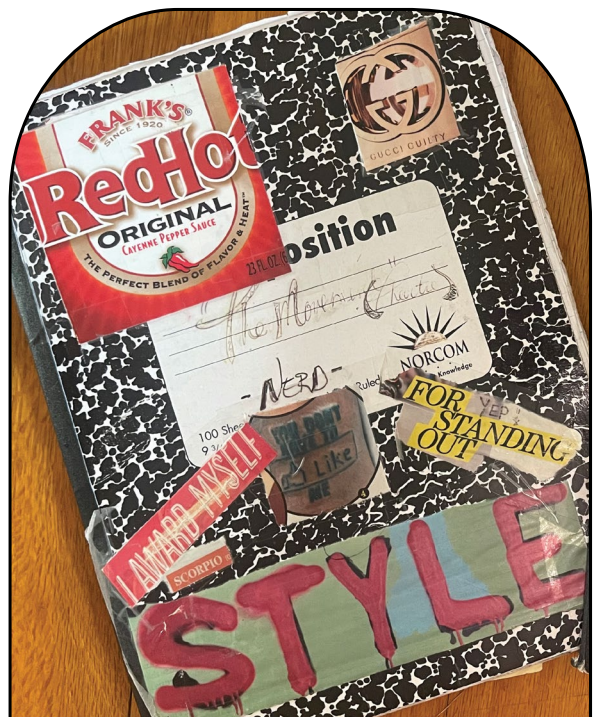
7.

**Submit a copy of your P.I.E.S. brainstorming page to Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION using the return envelope included in this book.** Your work may join a growing collection of creative responses to these Activities on the RE:ACTION website for the general public to see, view, and participate in.

*Time to create! Flip to page 51  
to start your creative work,  
then tear and send!*



*My notes:*



# Recentering Youth Voices

#05

By Denzel Burke

*There are many conversations around how we handle, treat, and place youth in Illinois when it comes to them being in contact with the criminal legal system.*

Some push for **heftier** sentencing, adult convictions, and harsh punishment while inside; others call for lighter sentencing, no adult convictions, and a restorative approach while locked inside. No matter which way you approach it, none of the policies, laws, or overall treatment of youth within these systems were created or designed by people who have spent time inside a juvenile locked facility.

*Today, we will use our imagination to recreate the juvenile system through a new lens, one which hasn't been explored before.*



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Pairs

**Needs:** Pen / pencil, paper, post-it notes, timer (if possible)

**Estimated time:** 45 mins – 1 hour



## Definitions

**Heftier:** Stronger, heavier

**Implementing:** Putting it into practice



## Feeling stuck?

*Imagine you're preparing to lead a workshop. What message do you want the workshop participants to leave with?*

## The Activity

1.

**Find a quiet place to sit with a table or desk to write on.**

2.

**Identify a partner you can work with.** Ask them to complete the steps for this activity with you.

3.

**Independently, close your eyes and imagine you are each the governor of Illinois.** Your plan is to wipe out the current system (Juvenile Temporary Detention or the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice) and install a new system that works to help youth when they come into contact with the law. Your goal will be creating systems that will deter or prevent harm, and that put something in place when harm does occur.

4.

**Once you have a few ideas flowing, grab two post-it notes for you and two for your partner,** and begin separately jotting down bullet points of ideas around “Preventive programs / activities / housing / etc.,” and “After harm occurs, programs / activities / housing / etc.”

5.

**Next, on a blank piece of paper, free-write for 10 minutes on your ideas to give more context around your plan.** Write whatever comes to mind, and give as many details as possible. Also include any key people to help assist with **implementing** your justice plan and potential names for it.

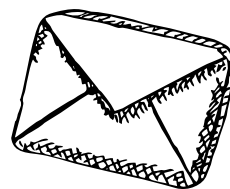
6.

**Once the free-write is complete and 10 minutes have gone by, stop what you're doing and collaborate with your partner on the new justice plan.** Review what each other has written, then create a final plan with your partner.

7.

**Edit, critique, and make final changes.** If you'd like, submit your written out plan to Envisioning Justice using the envelope in this workbook, where it may join a community archive of responses on the Envisioning Justice website.

*Time to create! Flip to page 53 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*





# Final Thoughts: A Literary Envisioning Exercise

#06

By Sandra Brown

*This activity seeks to capture the experience **commensurate** with **oppressive entities** on **marginalized populations**.*

From slavery to Reconstruction, from Jim Crow to the Prison Industrial Complex, two major strategies **implemented** in successful oppression entail the process of **(1) identicide**, or the killing of one's true identity through the **imposition** of **societal** labels and **misconceptions**; and **(2) disempowerment**, or denying target populations **agency** in creating and defining who they choose to be.



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals or pairs

**Needs:** Participants will need paper and a writing utensil. Coloring/art utensils are optional, but not required.

**Estimated time:** 1 hour



Participants will read a poem written by the writer of this exercise. Then, through a series of self-generated responses, they will create a piece of their own that reflects their vision of themselves and the **systemic adversities** that they have experienced or seek to overcome.

## The goals of this activity are:

- **To express through art** and the written word how others' visions alongside various **carceral** institutions, practices, and policies have shaped participants' experiences and perceptions of themselves.
- **To express** how others' visions and various carceral institutions, practices, and policies have shaped participants' experiences and perceptions of others and the world in which they live.
- **To develop a narrative** that voices participants' experiences in a powerful and liberating way.
- **To reinforce** the importance of agency and ability to live out our true authentic selves.

The activity can be completed by participants of all educational levels. This is a free, abstract creative exercise. Responses and artistic pieces developed by participants are about what they feel, think, and **envision** about themselves and the subjects discussed.

*The end product will be an artistic piece — written or drawn — that depicts participants' visions for themselves and their experiences.*



## Definitions

**Commensurate:** In proportion to

**Entities:** Things with an independent existence, beings

**Marginalized:** Pushed to the margins of society, oppressed

**Implemented:** Put into practice

**Imposition:** To force something on someone, to put something into place forcibly

**Disempowerment:** Taking away someone's power;

**Agency:** The ability to act and make decisions for yourself;

**Systemic:** Something that's central to or part of a larger system;

**Adversities:** Obstacles, disadvantages that get in your way;

**Carceral:** Buildings or institutions that incarcerate people



*My notes:*

## Final Thoughts // Sandra D. Brown

I am the sum total of the World.  
She disguised me in labels, lies,  
And stereotypes.

I am the One about which  
They all have something to say.  
As if they really know me.

I am the purest blue beating  
At the heart of burning candles  
Moving in the stillness.

In the beginning  
I reinvented my Self.  
And the Mind was without form  
And void.  
So I said, "Let there be thought,"  
And there was thought.  
The Angel in the House  
Tried to seduce me with Silence:  
Like the Big, Bad Woolf,<sup>1</sup>  
I killed her, too.  
Blank canvas

Gave birth to Words,  
Birth to Lines,  
Birth to Verse.  
Voice in hand  
Put form to thoughts,  
Round,  
Living like a full womb.

*I am the difference  
No one wanted me to make.*

Woman, Black Phoenix,  
Infinite holder of the stars.  
I reinvented my Self.

I am the One about which  
They all still have something to say.  
My heart still beats  
In the stillness of the Night.  
My Mind labors and gives birth  
Loudly, daily, freely.

And it is good and very good.

### The Activity

1.

**To the best of your ability, find a quiet, comfortable place to sit. This will allow for concentration and creativity for the steps listed below.**

2.

**The poem "Final Thoughts" emphasizes the power of words and how we can use them to either create or destroy.** I used the power of words to become "*The difference no one wanted me to make.*" My speaker describes herself as "Woman" and "Black Phoenix."

Take a minute to write down a few thoughts on how your words shaped who you have become.

## The Activity Continued

- What have you created or destroyed with your words?
- How can you reclaim your power through the words you use to describe yourself?

3.

### Transformation takes time and work.

While the speaker describes her transformation process as similar to giving birth, transformation happens in so many other ways.

Think about a step you took that transformed your life in a major way.

- Was your transformation quick or was it a process that took some time?
- What would you compare the experience to?

4.

### Now, pen your power! We can often relate, connect to, and understand what we are going through when we can think of those things as part of the human experience.

Create a new piece of writing based on your reflections and 3-5 images. You may create a poem, as I did, or you may write a few sentences or even a short paragraph. Should you choose to draw, this is perfectly fine too. This is your piece (peace), your pen, and your power. Create how you will!

5.

### Send in your work to the Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION website using the envelope included in this workbook.

Your piece may join a growing community archive of responses.



## Definitions

**Speaker:** The narrator of a poem, the person implied to be speaking the poem, which may or may not be different from the poet



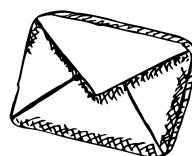
## Feeling stuck?

*How would you describe your obstacles? Use these descriptive words to help you "personify" the obstacles that came to mind.*

*Personification is when writers give human traits to an object or concept (e.g., "Mother Nature").*

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, 19th Century writer and essayist: from "Professions for Women."

*Time to create! Flip to page 55 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*



# Help Change the Narrative #07

By Joseph Dole

*For nearly five decades tough-on-crime rhetoric and popular media have so thoroughly **demonized** and **dehumanized** anyone who commits a crime that the label “criminal” or “prisoner” has become the sole defining characteristic for millions of people.*

These labels completely erase all of a person’s humanity — their personality, their relationships, and their connections to community and society. These labels also have deeply racist roots and have **facilitated** the over-incarceration and **maltreatment** of people of all races.

To have any hope of **eradicating** mass incarceration, we need to **dispel** the myth of the “criminal,” acknowledge our shared humanity, and bear witness to each other’s individuality.



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Pairs

**Needs:** Pen and Paper

**Estimated time:** Several hours over several days



## Feeling stuck?

*What are three misconceptions that others have had of you? How can those be changed — or can they?*



*My notes:*



## The Activity

1.

**Spend 15 minutes making a list of misconceptions people have made about you** simply because you are in prison or because you have been convicted of a crime.

2.

**Now spend 15 minutes free-writing about the societal view of “criminals”** and what stereotypes are connected to people who have committed crimes or are in prison.

3.

**Identify someone you are incarcerated with who is the antithesis, or polar opposite,** of the stereotypical “criminal” or “prisoner.”

4.

**Interview that person about who they are today.** Also, if possible, try to **obtain** positive quotes about that person from others who interact with that person on a daily basis.

5.

**Make a list of adjectives and nouns that describe that person in a humanizing way that shows their connections to family and community** (for example, a father, mother, writer, artist, social justice activist, college graduate, loving, caring, kind, etc.).

*The remaining steps for the “Help Change the Narrative” activity can be found on the next page.*



## Definitions

**Demonized:** Made someone seem like a “demon” or a bad person

**Dehumanized:** Denied someone their humanity

**Facilitated:** Made something possible or easier to accomplish

**Maltreatment:** Poor treatment

**Eradicating:** Ridding a place of something, wiping it out of existence

**Dispel:** Make something disappear

**Misconceptions:** A view or opinion that is incorrect based on faulty thinking or understanding

**Societal:** Having to do with the larger society

**Obtain:** Gather, collect

**Adjectives:** Words that describe things, concepts, places, etc.

**Nouns:** A person, place, or thing

**Humanizing:** Restoring someone’s humanity

## The Activity Continued

5.

**Use your notes to write a general character reference letter for that person.**

Your letter should essentially be your own testimony about the quality of human being that person is.

### *Tips:*

- Focus on who the person is today.
- Give a few concrete examples of support.
- Don't talk about what they are incarcerated for.
- Keep the letter to 1000 words or less.

6.

**Let your letter sit for a day or two, edit and revise it, and then allow the**

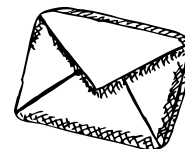
**person to review it.** Then ask that person for permission to submit a paragraph from the letter to be posted on the Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION website.

7.

**Once you have that person's permission, copy your favorite paragraph from the letter onto a blank piece of paper and remove the person's**

**name from it.** Then, mail it to Envisioning Justice using the envelope included in this workbook. Your submission may join a growing community archive of responses on the Envisioning Justice website.

*Time to create! Flip to page 57 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*



*My notes:*



# Dayroom

#08

By Brandon Wyatt

## The significance of the “dayroom” in jails and prisons cannot be understated.

People are let outside of their cells to **congregate**, get on the phone, take showers, play leisure activities (chess, cards, etc.), and walk around or exercise. Recently, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) has made it their business to pass along more dayroom time to the masses, as it has the psychological benefit of giving people more space to move around, be social, and thoroughly wash themselves.

If we break it down, the word “dayroom” can be seen from the **linguistic** angle of “day-”, where the sun usually shines light on us (meaning truth and understanding can be experienced), and when we are at our most productive. Then “-room” **signifies** space and opportunity. So combine the two, and you have the room/opportunity to be productive and gain some understanding.

*These instructions ask you to use your “dayroom time” to become engaged in three activities and then reflect on the experience.*



### Preparation

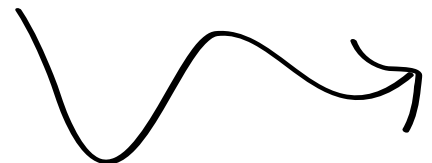
**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** Access to the dayroom, phone access, paper, pen or pencil

**Estimated time:** 1-2 hours



The “Dayroom” activity can be found on the next page.





# The Activity



1.

**SHOWER:** Take 10 minutes out of your day to thoroughly evaluate your ideas on criminality, criminal justice, and corrections. Examine whether or not you need a cleansing, or a “shower,” on any of these deeply-rooted ideas.

- What old ideas or **misconceptions** are you still holding on to?
- How can you “clean” your own habits of misunderstanding, **indifference**, and **misinformation** when it comes to corrections?
- What will you do to change the “dirt” of confusion?

2.

**PHONE TIME:** How can we best speak truth to power about what changes should be brought about surrounding the criminal justice system?

- Spend 20-30 minutes communicating with someone — via email, phone call, or letter — who plays a part in this mass incarceration structure, whether it be a lawmaker, appointed official, nonprofit organization, or the family of an incarcerated person.
- Then, discuss your experience of incarceration with them. Use this time to “activate” the person you’re speaking with around change in these policies and facilities.

3.

**LEISURE:** Being an activist cannot be all work and lemon-faced action. Take up to 30 minutes out of your day to do something pleasing and **amusing** that is done in the spirit of making a change. Find ways that are joyful and personal, but that still serve the mission of reducing the destructive nature of warehousing disadvantaged people. You can change the world with a smile on your face.

*Some examples include:*

- Having lighthearted conversations with others about these weighted issues, and **refraining** from allowing destructive or **detrimental** energies in these discussions. You could do it while playing chess, watching basketball games, or playing spades or casino.

## The Activity Continued

- Planning cooking sessions with other people to share your desires to change the present-day dynamics in these institutions. Nothing brings people together like a good meaty burrito (smile).
- Observing nature when you are on the walk to eat in the kitchen or on the yard — whether it be trees, breezes, or small animals — seeing its **inherent** freedom and liberated essence, and allowing that to soothe or motivate.

4.

**REFLECTION:** In one or two paragraphs, reflect on how you spent your dayroom time. Be specific about what you are seeing and experiencing that needs the most immediate attention and change.

- What old beliefs were you able to cleanse with your “shower,” and how did that process impact your experience of your dayroom time?
- What are the area(s) of incarceration that are the most worthy of discussion with other **stakeholders**, and therefore deserving of urgent change?

Examples include: *sentencing* | *education* | *healthcare*.

- What possibilities did your conversation or writing open up for yourself and others?
- What leisure activity did you choose, and how did you feel after you’d finished it?



## Definitions

**Congregate:** Come together

**Linguistic:** Linguistics = the study of language

**Signifies:** Means, implies

**Misconceptions:** Things you don’t fully understand

**Indifference:** Not caring

**Misinformation:** Information that isn’t real or isn’t correct

**Leisure:** Down time, time for relaxing

**Amusing:** Fun or funny

**Refraining:** Holding back, stopping yourself

**Detrimental:** Harmful

**Inherent:** Part of someone or something that’s permanent and central

**Stakeholders:** People who play a role or have a part to play



## Feeling stuck?

*Write down three things that make you smile.*

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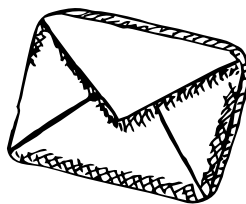
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5.

**Submit your work to Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION using the return envelope included in this book.** Your work may join a growing collection of creative responses to this activity on the RE:ACTION website.

*Time to create! Flip to page 59  
to start your creative work,  
then tear and send!*



*My notes:*

# Understanding Your Environment

#09

By Pablo Mendoza

*This reflection exercise encourages you to **contemplate** the social components that placed you at your current station in life.*

For this activity, I invite you to reflect on the conditions that created your current life circumstances, and to consider what role lawmakers and people in power have played in shaping those conditions. Many of the choices people thought they were making were actually false choices; they were destined to fail. Our leaders are aware of this problem and refuse to care.

In a 1993 speech that Joe Biden delivered before the Senate, he stated that people of color are “beyond the pale,” too far gone, lost! In this very same speech he acknowledges responsibility for the conditions people of color find themselves in and **proclaims** “it doesn’t matter that they were victims of society.” He continues to reason that people of color are “deviant” because they are “born out of wedlock.” I want you to sit with that and reflect on what all this means for you.

**The purpose of this activity is to reflect on the fact that we are all in this together, hurting each other because we are ourselves hurt and jaded by past traumas.**

*People judge us in this way; people in power often throw us away to hide their past mistakes.*



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** A place to meditate, something to write with, something to write on

**Estimated time:** 30 minutes over several days



## Definitions

**Contemplate:** Think about, consider

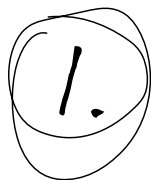
**Components:** Aspects, parts that make up a whole

**Proclaims:** Announces, states

**Meta-cognitive:** Having an awareness of your own thought processes

Using this exercise has led me to realize that the strict standards I was holding people up to were not mine to begin with — they were social constructs coming from people in positions of power. **Meta-cognitive** exercises and meditation have helped me move towards a less judgmental space and into a more accepting and loving space. I hope this activity will provide a similar experience for you.

## The Activity



**Read and reflect on the image and the following speech from then-Senator Joe Biden, delivered before the U.S. Senate to support the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act.** The passage of this bill established Truth in Sentencing and Three-Strikes laws on the federal level, and provided \$30 billion for the expansion of the prison system and law enforcement. Pay attention to the way he says “my mother” or “your sister” — who’s the audience for these statements?

*We must take back the streets. It doesn't matter whether or not the person that is accosting your son or daughter, or my son or daughter, my wife, your husband, my mother, your parents — it doesn't matter whether or not they were deprived as a youth. It doesn't matter... whether or not they had no background that enabled them to... become socialized into the fabric of society. It doesn't matter whether or not they're the victims of society. The end result is they're about to knock my mother on the head with a lead pipe, shoot my sister, beat up my wife, take on my sons. So I don't want to ask what made them do this.*

*They must be taken off the street. That's number one; there's a consensus on that. Unless we do something about that cadre of young people — tens of thousands of them born out of wedlock without parents, without supervision, without any structure, without any conscience developing, because they literally...have not been socialized, they literally have not had an opportunity. We should focus on them now. If we don't they will, or a portion of them will, become the predators 15 years from now. And Madam President, we have predators on our streets that society has in fact, in part because of its neglect, created. Again, it does not mean because we created them that we somehow forgive them or do not take them out of society to protect my family and yours from them. They are beyond the pale, many of those*



## The Activity Continued

*people, beyond the pale. And it's a sad commentary on society. We have no choice but to take them out of society.*

*And the truth is, we don't very well know how to rehabilitate them at that point. That's the sad truth. I'm the guy that said rehabilitation, when it occurs we don't understand it and notice it, and...even when we notice and we know it occurs, we don't know why. So you cannot make rehabilitation a condition for release. That's why in our system, the federal system, you serve 85% of your time. It's a shame, but we don't know how to rehabilitate. But there is a consensus...: We must make the streets safer. I don't care why someone is a malefactor in society. I don't care why someone is antisocial. I don't care why they've become a sociopath. We have an obligation to cordon them off from the rest of society, try to help them, try to change their behavior.*

*That's what we do in this bill: we have drug treatment and we have other treatments to try to deal with it. But they are in jail away from my mother, your husband, our families. But we would... be absolutely stupid as a society if we didn't recognize the conditions that nurtured those folks still exist, and we must deal with that.*

— Sen. Joe Biden, November 18, 1993



## The Activity Continued

2.

**In my experience, I've learned the most about myself when in quiet reflection.**

Here, like me, you will sit with and process those emotions. After reading Joe Biden's speech, silently meditate for 2 minutes.

Reflect on where you currently find yourself. Look around you and take inventory of your immediate surroundings. Consider all the hardships that you faced because of racism, or other forms of institutional barriers (school, medical facilities, state agencies, etc.) you may have encountered because you don't fit societal standards or norms.

*Ask yourself:*

- How did you end up in this position?
- Is this where you want to be?
- Where do you deserve to be, if everyone were treated equally?

3.

**On a blank piece of paper, draw or free-write on these questions at the center of the paper for 5 minutes.**

I have seen people want to jump straight into action without even questioning which action they'd like to take. All they know is that something needs to get done. Channel that energy into creating a drawn or written piece of your design.

4.

**Silently meditate on the following questions for another 2 minutes:**

- How have lawmakers impacted your position in life?
- How would your life choices have changed if you felt more supported by lawmakers?

Around or to the side of your original drawing/writing, record your thoughts on this question by drawing or free-writing.

## The Activity Continued

5.

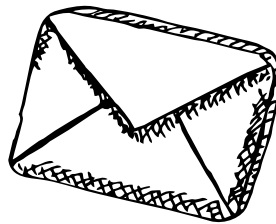
**Once you've finished your drawing or your free-write, take a step back and reflect on how your experiences have affected those in your life who play supporting roles.** Who is part of the current cast of characters surrounding you? How have the choices you made affected them?

Once again, on the margins of your page around your drawing or writing, add additional images or text about people in your life who have supported you.

6.

**Submit your finished work to the Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION website using the envelope in this workbook.** Your piece may be added to a growing archive of community responses.

*Time to create! Flip to page 61 to start your creative work, then tear and send!*



*My notes:*



### Feeling stuck?

*Aside from yourself, who's had the biggest influence on your life? Free-write on the people coming to mind and how they've impacted you.*



# Voting Rights For All

#10

By Omar Johnson

*Judging from the record-shattering turnout in the 2020 national and state general elections, we may reasonably **infer** that more US citizens than ever know/believe in the democratic power contained in the right to vote.*

The vote is a citizen's power; it's our civic voice.

Currently, nearly 5 million US citizens are denied use of their **civic** voices due to felony **disenfranchisement**, or state laws that prevent people with felony convictions from voting while they're in prison, on parole/probation, or for life. These laws are a **vestige** of our Jim Crow-era past and even trace back to British colonial concepts from before US independence.

These millions of disenfranchised citizens are the faces of the new **suffrage** movement, a **collective** of citizen-organized activities aimed at giving the civic voice to the last remaining class of voting-age, disenfranchised citizens. The increasingly known and published surveys on this topic each reveal that **about 98% of incarcerated people would vote while incarcerated if that were an option for them** (as in Vermont and Maine), and studies on anti-recidivist forces show that returning citizens who vote have a "feeling of belonging" in their society "because they are included in the development of law and public policy" and "are less likely to commit crimes against it."



## Preparation

**Meant for:** Individuals

**Needs:** Phone access, something to write with, something to write on

**Estimated time:** 30 minutes



## Feeling stuck?

*What are ways that restoring voting rights to people with felony convictions could change the country? Make a list of your ideas.*

Why shouldn't this last remaining group of disenfranchised citizens be delivered from that **archaic** and un-American practice of "civil death" and have their civic voices **revived**?

## The Activity

1.

Find contact information for your local lawmakers, whether on the state or federal level, and find out where they stand on the voting rights of people with felony convictions.

2.

Contact these lawmakers by telephone or letter.

If they support felony disenfranchisement and/or restrictions on the voting rights of people who are incarcerated, ask them to give you their best reason(s) why incarcerated citizens should be denied the vote.



## Definitions

**Infer:** Draw a conclusion, figure out

**Civic:** The duties or responsibilities of a person in relation to their town, city, or local area

**Disenfranchisement:** To disenfranchise = to take away someone's right to vote

**Vestige:** A trace or remainder, something left behind

**Suffrage:** The right to vote

**Collective:** A group that shares their work

**Archaic:** Old, out of date

**Revived:** Brought back to life

**Circular reasoning:** Reasons that seem to go around in circles



*My notes:*

## The Activity Continued

Do not accept **circular reasoning** such as “because they’re prisoners.” We already know that part, so urge the lawmakers to give other reasons.

If they believe in the right of people with felony convictions to vote, ask them what they’re willing to do to expand or protect that right.

3.

**Take notes on their response (with respect to everyone’s privacy).**

Pay attention to the points you feel strongly about.

4.

**Spend at least 10 minutes writing down your own comments to their answers.**

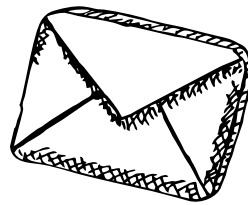
What did you agree or disagree with? What do others need to know about these elected officials’ beliefs around felony disenfranchisement?

5.

**Submit your work to Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION using the return envelope included in this book.**

Your work may join a growing collection of creative responses to this activity on the RE:ACTION website.

Time to create! Flip to page 63 to start your creative work, then tear and send!



01

## Think, Write, or Draw *By Leanne Childs*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



01

## Think, Write, or Draw *By Leanne Childs*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# 02

## Every Voice Matters *By Renaldo Hudson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose who is Partner 1 and Partner 2. Use the squares below to record your thoughts.

<b>What does it mean to value all voices?</b>	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers
<b>What are some challenges involved in listening to all voices?</b>	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers



# 02

## Every Voice Matters *By Renaldo Hudson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose who is Partner 1 and Partner 2. Use the squares below to record your thoughts.

Why is it important to support and consider voices you do not always hear or listen to?	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers
Reflect on experiences when your voice was heard/included. How did that impact your life/experience?	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers

## 02

**Every Voice Matters** *By Renaldo Hudson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose who is Partner 1 and Partner 2. Use the squares below to record your thoughts.

**Reflect on experiences when your voice was suppressed. How did that impact your life/experience?**

Partner 1's Answers

Partner 2's Answers

**Reflect on a time when you uplifted or sought out the voice/perspective of another person. How did that impact you? How did that impact the other person?**

Partner 1's Answers

Partner 2's Answers

# 02

## Every Voice Matters *By Renaldo Hudson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose who is Partner 1 and Partner 2. Use the squares below to record your thoughts.

<b>Reflect on a time where you ignored the voice of another. How did that impact you? How did it impact the other person?</b>	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers
<b>Extra space if needed.</b>	
Partner 1's Answers	Partner 2's Answers

03

## Freedom Within: Writing for Freedom *By Erika Ray*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



03

## Freedom Within: Writing for Freedom *By Erika Ray*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_





04

## Visual P.I.E.S. *By Heather Canuel*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



04

## Visual P.I.E.S. By Heather Canuel

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



05

## Recentering Youth Voices *By Denzel Burke*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



05

## Recentering Youth Voices *By Denzel Burke*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



06

## Final Thoughts *By Sandra Brown*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_





06

## Final Thoughts *By Sandra Brown*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



07

## Help Change the Narrative *By Joseph Dole*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



07

## Help Change the Narrative *By Joseph Dole*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



08

## Dayroom *By Brandon Wyatt*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



08

## Dayroom *By Brandon Wyatt*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_





09

## Understanding Your Environment *By Pablo Mendoza*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



09

## Understanding Your Environment *By Pablo Mendoza*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



10

## Voting Rights for All: *By Omar Johnson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



10

## Voting Rights for All: *By Omar Johnson*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



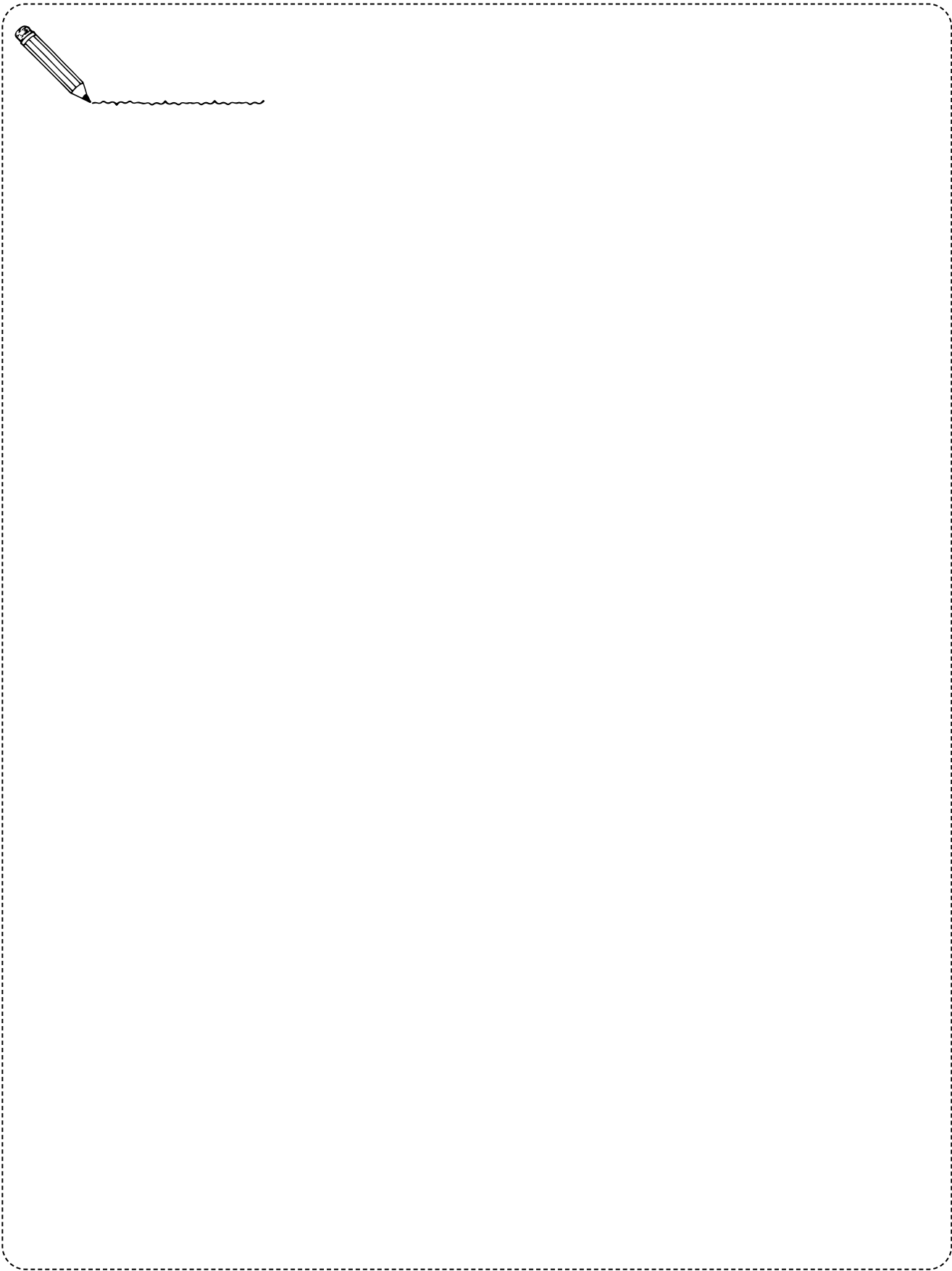

**Extra Worksheet Page:** *Activity:* \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



**Extra Worksheet Page:** *Activity:* \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_





**Extra Worksheet Page:** *Activity:* \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# About Us



## What are the humanities?

The humanities are a set of academic subjects that explore what it means to be human. They encourage us to discuss and interpret all forms of thought, interest, and expression. These subjects include history, philosophy, cultural and gender studies, and the study of language and literature.

*At Illinois Humanities, we believe that the arts and humanities have the power to connect thought to feeling, to challenge and refresh our assumptions, to reimagine possibilities, and to bring people together.*



## *About Illinois Humanities*

Illinois Humanities is a statewide nonprofit organization that activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that foster reflection, spark conversation, build community, and strengthen civic engagement. We provide free, high-quality humanities experiences throughout Illinois, particularly for communities of color, individuals living on low incomes, counties and towns in rural areas, small arts and cultural organizations, and communities highly impacted by mass incarceration. Founded in 1974, Illinois Humanities is supported by state, federal, and private funds.



## *About Envisioning Justice*

Envisioning Justice uses the arts and humanities to envision alternatives to the ongoing injustice of mass incarceration. This Illinois Humanities program works with communities and people impacted by mass incarceration to spark conversation and make visible community-based strategies that address our racist and unjust criminal legal system.

# Contributor Biographies

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## **Leanne Childs**

Leanne Childs is the mother of one son, who was seven months old when she went to prison. Since being incarcerated shortly after her 18th birthday and sentenced to natural life, Leanne has been in prison for 24 years. She has earned an associate's degree in liberal studies and over 100 college credits, and she is currently in the process of earning her master's degree in restorative arts with a focus in Christian ministry through North Park University. Her master's work focuses on repairing harm, building relationships, and developing communities through active conflict resolution practices. An advocate and activist by nature, Leanne has participated in countless programs such as sporting events and competitions, talent shows, creative writing classes, art contests, painting projects, and tutoring programs. Over the years Leanne has put a lot of effort into her intellectual, emotional, and spiritual maturity. She encourages all young people who are incarcerated to be self-aware and try to be better than they were yesterday.

## **Renaldo Hudson**

Renaldo Hudson is an educator and a community organizer with the Illinois Prison Project, and has focused his work on ending perpetual punishment in Illinois. After being sentenced to death row, he worked for 37 years while incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections to change the mindset of people who are incarcerated, as

well as staff, regarding what rehabilitation should look like and how to focus attention on true rehabilitation. Renaldo is responsible for founding the groundbreaking Building Block Program, a transformational program run by people who are incarcerated within the Illinois Department of Corrections. Renaldo's work has been in Beecher and media outlets throughout the state, and he was the subject of the documentary *Stateville Calling*.

## **Erika Ray**

Erika Ray is a Chicago native, mother, activist, and advocate for women's rights. She is currently a student in Northwestern University's bachelor's program and an advocate for restorative justice through Northwestern and the Moran Center's restorative justice team. She is a graduate of the Lakeland College associate's degree program, and she holds a paralegal certificate from Blackstone Career Institute. Erika is a certified doula and has worked with Chicago Volunteer Doulas. Also a poet, she is currently awaiting the publication of her children's book *Yasir's Idea*.

## **Heather Canuel**

Heather Canuel is an activist, mother, and stylist who is often referred to as "the last woman to give birth cuffed to a bed" while incarcerated in the state of Illinois. She is currently a member of the Envisioning team at Illinois Humanities and the founder of

Art from the Heart, which creates a safe space for youth who have experienced the loss of a parent to incarceration. She has developed resources and advocated for policy change around the country in her roles at the Women's Justice Institute (WJI), the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison (IL-CHEP), and the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. Heather is dedicated to redefining the narrative around the carceral system and impacted individuals through the arts and healing.

### **Denzel Burke**

Denzel K. Burke is a community builder, facilitator, organizer, and the director/founder of REAL Youth Initiative, a program which develops revolutionary consciousness and community among currently and formerly incarcerated youth in order to work towards the abolition of prisons and the conditions that (re)produce them. He is a consultant for the Justice 20/20 Network and an Ambassador Fellow of the Illinois Prison Project. Upon his release from the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in July of 2019, Denzel began studies at Chicago State University and co-facilitated 32 convenings inside Illinois state youth prisons for the Bluhm Legal Clinic at Northwestern University. Denzel collaborated with Northwestern's Children and Family Justice Center and a collective of abolitionists to launch the Final 5 Campaign, which he served on for a year before launching the

REAL Youth Initiative. Today, the REAL Youth Initiative runs programming for youth in facilities across the state of Illinois. Denzel currently lives in Northbrook and plans to receive a PhD in Africology and African American Studies.

### **Sandra Brown**

Sandra Brown holds an MA in humanities and is a doctoral student at California Coast University. Barriers to accessing higher education have spearheaded Brown's work as an educator, activist, and writer. She served 22 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections as an incarcerated survivor. Brown became the first incarcerated woman in Illinois to earn an academic master's degree and gain acceptance into an academic doctoral program. Brown earned the Davis-Putter Scholarship and Marilyn Buck Awards twice. Her poetry collection *Odyssey in Progress* depicts portions of her lived and learned experiences. Today, she works as a Senior Advisor with the Women's Justice Institute.

### **Joseph Dole**

Joseph Dole is a writer, artist, and activist. He is also a cofounder and Policy Director of the nonprofit organization Parole Illinois. Incarcerated since 1998, Joe spent nearly a decade of his life in complete isolation at the notorious Tamms Supermax Prison, before intense pressure led to its closure in 2013.

Joe is currently serving life without parole at Stateville Correctional Center and continues to fight his wrongful conviction. He has written numerous articles, essays, research papers, reports, and policy papers. Joe has also successfully litigated dozens of civil lawsuits against public bodies under Illinois' Freedom of Information Act. He has won several writing awards. His artwork has appeared in numerous publications, and has been exhibited around the country. In 2018, Joe earned his bachelor's degree with a depth area in critical carceral-legal studies from Northeastern Illinois University's University Without Walls.

### **Brandon Wyatt**

Brandon V. Wyatt is a "Universal Truth Seeker" who welcomes any involvement and indulges in progressive, productive, and peaceful affairs and developments. He continues to defy the assumptions that come with age, race, and gender. Despite being incarcerated for a significant amount of time, he has made notable achievements in the realms of academics, social understanding, and personal development, which stems from his ability to be firm in knowing that his identity is established in a substance of unconditionality and infinite possibility. He has been a contributor to Envisioning Justice and many other programs and ventures, and has walked away each and every time with a heightened sense of accomplishment and an appreciation for being able to lend a voice to such weighty and urgent issues as mass incarceration and social inequities.

### **Pablo Mendoza**

Pablo Mendoza is an artist, researcher, educator, and lifelong student. He dedicated his 22 years of imprisonment to educating himself and others. His educational journey began with helping individuals to attain their GED while awaiting trial in the Cook County Jail, and culminated with a five-year stay at Danville Correctional Center, where he was a student with the Education Justice Project (EJP) through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As an EJP alum he became an English as a Second Language instructor through the Language Partners program. He continues giving back by volunteering his time with organizations like the Freedom to Learn Campaign, where he strives to make higher education more accessible. His efforts to change the narrative around scholars who are incarcerated have led him to co-author several publications and assist with doctoral research. His praxis of critical pedagogical principles wear on his trauma-damaged psyche, which he treats with mindfulness, meditation, and oil painting.

### **Omar Johnson**

Omar Ashanti Johnson is a social justice activist specializing in anti-racism and civic empowerment. He is a law clerk, peer educator, humanitarian, and unapologetically rehabilitated human becoming. He is also a spoken-word and hip-hop artist.



# Participant Survey

**Thank you for using the Envisioning Justice RE:ACTION Workbook!** To help us structure and organize our future projects better going forward, please fill out the following questions around your experience. Your responses will help us achieve our goals to amplify the voices of individuals and communities most impacted by the carceral system.

Is this the first time you've heard of Illinois Humanities?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Is this the first time you've heard of Envisioning Justice?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

If no, how have you engaged with Envisioning Justice and/or Illinois Humanities in the past?

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How did you find out about RE:ACTION: The Workbook?

- ☐ A class or program ☐ Word of mouth from peers  
☐ A staff member, CO, or other employee  
☐ Direct contact from Envisioning Justice or Illinois Humanities  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in learning more about Illinois Humanities and/or Envisioning Justice in the future:

☐ Yes ☐ No

What was your main takeaway from your experience using RE:ACTION: The Workbook?

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What are some things you would add or change in the next edition of the RE:ACTION Workbook?

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Would you recommend RE:ACTION: The Workbook to others? Why or why not?

- ☐ 1 - Not likely   ☐ 2 - Slightly likely   ☐ 3 - Maybe, neither likely nor unlikely  
☐ 4 - Probably will   ☐ 5 - Definitely will

Additional comments:

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Demographic questions:

Please respond to the following optional questions regarding your demographics.

What is your race/ethnicity (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Black or African American   ☐ Latinx or Hispanic   ☐ Native or Indigenous American  
☐ White   ☐ Middle Eastern/North African   ☐ Asian  
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander   ☐ Not listed: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female   ☐ Male   ☐ Nonbinary   ☐ Prefer not to answer

Prefer to self describe:

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# Release Form

Illinois Humanities will review all submissions and select excerpts and/or complete stories or images to be shared. Illinois Humanities will not share any stories/images that contain abusive language or hate speech/imagery. All individuals referenced within a piece should be made anonymous or have their names changed to protect their identities unless they give express permission to the contrary.

By submitting a response to RE:ACTION: The Workbook, users give Illinois Humanities permission to store and publish select contents of their submission, e.g., images and written responses. This includes publication on the RE:ACTION website and other Illinois Humanities-owned domains, in non-commercial educational programming and materials, social media, and in publicity materials associated with Illinois Humanities and RE:ACTION.

By signing below, I give Illinois Humanities permission to publish my work on the RE:ACTION website:

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Name of creator

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Date

**Please sign, date, and tear out this release form to mail along with your submission. Work received without a release form cannot be published on the Envisioning Justice website.**

Your submission may be considered for publication on the RE:ACTION website at [envisioningjustice.org](http://envisioningjustice.org).

## *To use this workbook:*

1.

**Step 1: Browse the activities shared in the workbook.** Choose the one(s) that interest you today.



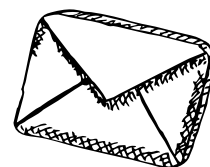
2.

**Step 2: Follow the instructions on that activity's pages.** Feel free to use the blank spaces next to the activity or the blank pages in the back of the workbook. Each activity leads to a final product, such as a drawing or a piece of writing, that you can save or share.



3.

**Step 3: If you want, share your finished work with Envisioning Justice using the pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope included in this book.** Work created for RE:ACTION and mailed to Illinois Humanities can be published on the RE:ACTION website and shared out with others as part of a growing community archive.



The future is a community project, and the arts and humanities help to bring it into focus. By engaging with new ideas and ways of being, we can expand our shared understanding and create a new future that is restorative and just for all.

*Thank you for building it with us.*



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