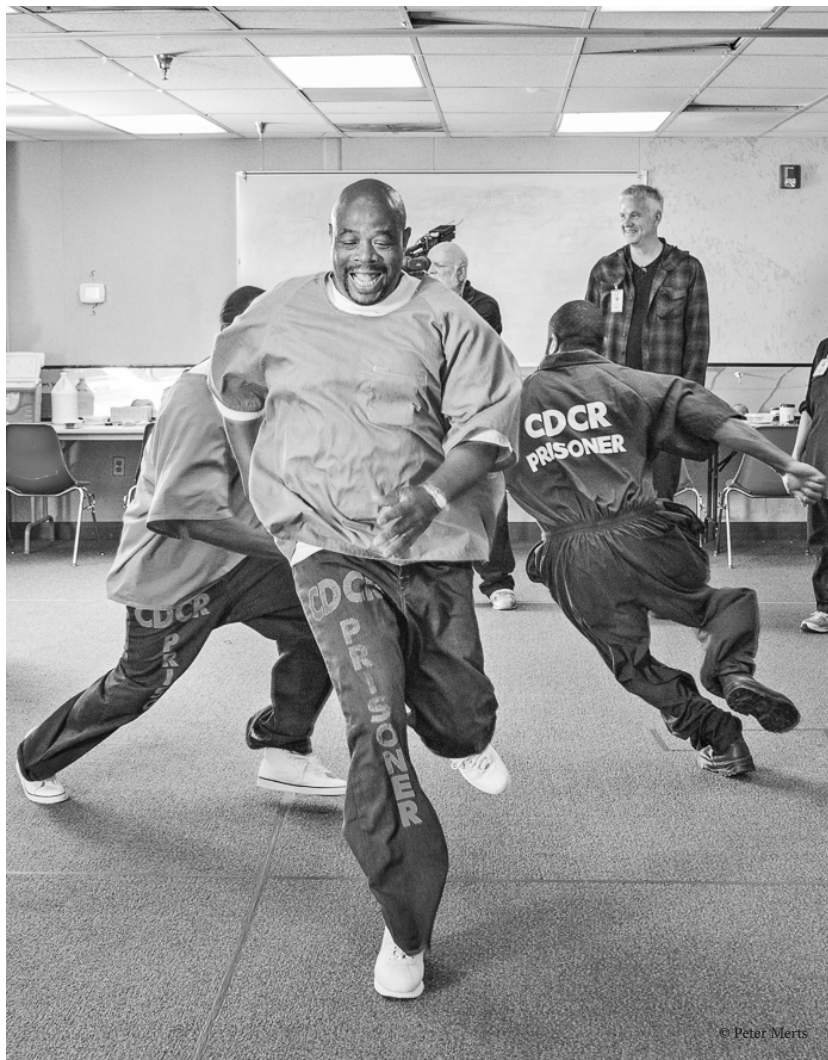




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THE ACTORS' GANG

PRISON PROJECT

I am master of my mind, not a victim of my thinking...

FACT: Research institute, Impact Justice, reports an **89% decrease in disciplinary incidents**, known as 115's, for participants who have completed our program.

FACT: According to CDCR preliminary analysis, people who have completed our program have a **10.6% recidivism rate**.

Launched in 2006 at the California Institution for Men (CIM), in Chino, CA, The Actors' Gang Prison Project will conduct programs in eight California Prisons in 2016, as well as Juvenile and Reentry programs. Workshops are held either weekly or as a seven-day intensive with 20 to 25 participants working with four actors from The Actors' Gang, including Artistic Director, Tim Robbins and Director of The Prison Project, Sabra Williams. During final presentations students, prison staff, elected officials, and Prison Project supporters are invited to witness the work first hand.

To date more than 600 incarcerated people have participated in The Prison Project.

Sabra Williams proposed the idea of The Prison Project to Tim Robbins when she became aware of the extreme overcrowding in prisons, the high recidivism rates, and the cycle of negative impact on our communities by offenders and re-offenders.

The Prison Project is our response.

**TO GIVE UP
ON A PERSON IS TO
GIVE UP ON
OURSELVES**



© Bob Turton

**“All the folks who put this program together,
you are on the front lines of what we are
trying to do in the Justice Department...We
have seen the positive impact of this work
duplicated again and again.**

**Cutting the recidivism rate keeps our country
safer, lets us spend less money....
we need to look at creative ways to prepare
people to live better lives...”**

Eric Holder,

Eric Holder, Former United States Attorney General

FACT: Since the 1980's, California has built 22 prisons but just one University of California campus.
- The California Endowment

FACT: Every dollar invested in prison education and arts programs will save taxpayers between \$4 and \$5 in re-incarceration costs.
- Rand Corporation

OUR WORK is extremely physical and uses four heightened emotional states: happy, angry, sad and afraid. Recent scientific evidence suggests these are in fact the only four base human emotions. This work aims to unlock human potential in the interest of effective rehabilitation. The Prison Project uses the Actors' Gang's theatrical techniques to foster self-esteem, empathy, and non-violent expression. We aim to reduce recidivism rates and prepare people for life beyond bars by giving them the emotional tools they need to return successfully to our communities.

OUR WORK is based on the transformative approach of Commedia dell'Arte, a culture of theatre that began in 16th century Italy. By the people, for the people, this theatre was performed in village squares, without the trappings of the theatrical elite, exciting emotion and illuminating the world in new ways.



“For long term successful rehabilitation we need to have programs like this one that involve personal transformation of individuals on an internal level. Simply educating someone, or giving them a job skill, or even treating an abuse problem doesn’t guarantee success unless they have chosen to see who they were when they came in, and change who they will be going forward.”

- Robert Barton,
Inspector General of Prisons, CA

“I wonder, if they did fund more of these programs, what would the yard be like? Imagine if more prisoners were involved in this. There wouldn’t be as many tough guys, as many killers. Because in here, it’s not about where you’re from or your race – We’re in here being together. I wish lawmakers did know about this. Everybody has something on their mind, but when you come in here it starts to tear away. When I leave, I’m a different person.”

-Class Student

“This is Anger Management in practice!”

- Class Student

“...the experience was a pivotal moment in my life. The ingenuity and motivation that the actors brought us inspired me to change my life around, and pursue my dreams. Your program laid the foundation for my dreams and since then I have been able to build my life based on the core values you taught me...I wanted to inform you, that you helped me change my life. I have beat the odds, and also am planning to beat recidivism and help change the prison system.”

- Paroled Student

“I have seen a real change in the Inmates since they started the program with The Actors’ Gang. They aren’t as ready to snap. They used to get real excited and now they seem very in touch with how they are feeling. They seem to be experiencing more patience with themselves and with the other inmates. We are starting to see more empathy amongst the other inmates as well”.

- Captain

California Department of
Corrections & Rehabilitation





Sabra Williams, *Director of Outreach*

“Why do you go to prison to entertain these bad people?”

This is the question I have heard the most since we created The Prison Project back in 2006.

We started this work because as artists, we believe that the power of the arts has the potential to fundamentally transform our lives and teach us how to live more creatively. We continue it because we have seen this happening, on a regular basis, in front of our

No matter how often I have the privilege of teaching in our Outreach programs, I never cease to be amazed at how deeply and quickly humans can change when they're given the tools and apply some courage. Especially in prison, where the culture is such that they are warehoused and forgotten and then expected to come out and become valuable members of society, often without any rehabilitation or tools.

Quite simply, people in prison usually survive by numbing their emotions, and when people are numb, they have no empathy and they can continue to commit crimes. When inmates are given the tools and have the opportunity to work in a team, they develop empathy and are able to create healthy relationships with people of all races and start to see the world through others eyes.

So to answer the most frequently asked question, we don't entertain the people society has left to rot, we teach them to be able to take responsibility by starting to see themselves through the lens of the characters they play, to manage their emotions and to be able to work creatively with others so when they come out (and almost all of them will) they can create value instead of destruction in the communities in which we all live.



Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

“Every man is worth more, every woman is worth more than their worst hour. Yes, they’ve made mistakes, yes they should be in jail for these mistakes, but It doesn’t mean their life is over, it doesn’t mean that they are not coming out at some point, and if they are coming out don’t you want them coming out with better tools to deal with their emotions than when they went in?”

I’ve seen in our ten years of work, transformative change. I’ve seen the emotional truth in our workshops dissolve years of inbred hatred. I’ve seen men and women transform from cynics to dreamers, embrace compassion as a fundamental part of their personality. They’ve gone from people with no hope to leaders who mentor others. This is what’s possible if we accept that Arts programs are not leisure time, they’re programs that create fundamental change and can create profound shifts in an person’s consciousness.

Until we find a way to change our laws, give a broader education to our kids and raise up the neglected and struggling communities around us, we will continue to need a wide-ranging, creative approach to rehabilitation and reentry for those who will be rejoining us. And in order to take into account that humans are not just a brain, but also emotions, we continue to require a way to harness and mend that part of the life of the incarcerated people.

We know that our work can do that and we ask that you join us in supporting this work by donating and advocating so that it can continue at this crucial time.



**“I began to think about myself.
I have had a life changing experience.
I may be a broken vessel but I’m not destroyed.
I understand the light within me.
Some of my afflictions are cured.
I like when I am a Master of my Mind
not a Victim of my Thinking.
I want to change and do good.”**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Albert", with a stylized, cursive script.

Albert, California Institution for Men 2014

An open letter of encouragement from our student-led class at California State Prison Los Angeles County, Facility C, to our student-led class at the California Institution for Men.

All of us here at Lancaster wanted to send all of you at CIM some words of encouragement and support. Our personal self development, both individually and as a community, is paramount to committing to the work, buckling down and working the process. The work has taught us to be responsible to ourselves and to those in our community; we do this by showing up on time, holding ourselves and each other accountable for our actions, both within the group and on the yard. We support each other when we are going through 'things', whatever those 'things' may be.

Lets be frank the work is exhausting, when the work is done correctly. It should leave you drained and somewhat relieved. This process helps us to shed our skins and we look at the shedding of our skins as a way of letting go of old habits, that's not to say that we don't face controversies, disagreements, and some arguing, but what it does mean is that we are able to find non violent, productive, and fulfilling ways to communicate, regulate our emotions, prevent undesirable outcomes and find creative ways to problem solve.

To finish we all want you to know that you are not in this alone. Remember, "The harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph."

THANK YOU

“This class really gives the tools to change. Myself, I’ve been wanting to change for a while and a lot of guys in here want to change, but we don’t have the tools. Its like we are standing on the ground wanting to find a way to get up on the roof and then here you guys come with a ladder.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Israel".

**Israel, Class Participant 2015
Former Student**

Donate Here.

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