

INTRODUCTION

I have dedicated this book to Nate Jones and Janie Paul.

I met Janie at the Blue Mountain Center in Blue Mountain Lake, New York, in the summer of 1992. She had grown up in Concord, Massachusetts, was a New York artist, and had recently worked as an artist in communities in South Africa. So much of what has happened in the Prison Creative Arts Project and in my life is a result of our meeting. During my 1993 sabbatical, I moved to New York City to be near her, and at the end of 1994 she moved to Ann Arbor to live with me. She took a position in the University of Michigan School of Art and Design and soon started up an art workshop at the Western Wayne Correctional Facility. In November 1995 we wrote to prisons within a two-hundred-mile radius of Ann Arbor, inviting artists to submit work to an exhibition of art by Michigan prisoners. That exhibition is now in its fifteenth year, and Janie has sent as many as two hundred students to facilitate art workshops in Michigan prisons and juvenile facilities, and many of her students have joined the Prison Creative Arts Project. Behind everything in this book is her spirit, which is both gentle and fierce, her generosity, tolerance, and uncompromising insistence on what is just, and her grounding in nature and in something deep in herself. On September 9, 2007, celebrating our roots in small towns bordering Lake Michigan, we married on a bluff with the lake at our backs. I am not telling her story in this book, but I need you to know at the outset, that she is deeply a part of the story I am telling.

You will read Nate's story in chapter 7 and elsewhere. He died May 31, 2007. His family members say he passed on, which is hopeful. I think of him as having passed away. I knew him inside and outside prison, when he was very alive and while he was dying. Sometimes he was my brother.

And I could have dedicated this book to a thousand other people. Two of them are Ollie Ganz and a boy I'll call DeWayne.

On April 3, 2006, the chapel at Holy Cross Children's Services, Boysville Campus, in Clinton Michigan, was packed with incarcerated boys, some family members of the boys, and a few of us from the university. We listened to poetry readings from Basil and Paulus hall workshops. When it was DeWayne's turn, he slumped over the podium, unable to look up at his peers in the pews. Ollie, one of the student facilitators of the group, might have sat there and watched, moved and hurting for DeWayne, then later been able to tell the powerful story of how his life had kept him from coming through for himself. Instead she rose and stood by him, quietly talking to him and waiting, talking some more and waiting, and slowly—I see it now almost in slow motion—he lifted himself and read his poem.

Afterward, when the poets were celebrating over pop and cookies at the school, I took Mary Heinen, our new coordinator of the Portfolio and Linkage Projects, to meet Gary Coakley, the Boysville residential manager who had committed himself to incarcerated youth for twenty-five years and seventeen years earlier had established the Stop the Madness program there. He was moved, almost in awe, at what Ollie had done. "That's all each of these boys needs," he said, "someone to stand up there with them."

And so now I tell that story, and Ollie tells it too. It changed everything for her and set her on a path she won't leave. Possibly it changed something for DeWayne as well.

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

Because the Prison Creative Arts Project is situated in a university and also in high schools, juvenile facilities, and prisons; because of the values, methods, and goals with which we work; and because we work with others as equal collaborators and peers, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* is a book of public scholarship, a report from the field.

Public scholarship is a reaction against specialized academic language and against academic "overemphasis on critique" and satisfaction with mere "arenas of deliberation." It also rejects professional withdrawal from the public as well as college and university intervention in communities only as advocates, problem-solvers, and volunteers who practice "service learning."¹

Public scholarship opposes to this an "engagement agenda" where people of diverse backgrounds and interests meet in local "enabling" or "free"

spaces to complete specific tasks. When completed, these tasks constitute “public goods” that serve the common good and often link to global efforts and concerns. These spaces are not bestowed, they do not exist simply because someone puts chairs in a circle. They are spaces where people differ and may even be hostile, spaces of contention, negotiation, and struggle, of inquiry, invention, and creativity. Here power balances shift, boundaries are subverted and categories crossed, and people relearn and reorient. They are above all spaces of respect, where people *listen* to each other. Here one finds “high tolerance for complexity and fluidity . . . [and] uncertainty”; evolving, improvised problem-solving; and “relentlessly multiple” civic engagement and practice that teach lifelong democratic behavior.² “Throughout American history,” says Harry Boyte, who is more tough-minded than many about what needs to happen in these spaces, “broad democratic movements have incubated in diverse settings which people own, that have (or in which people can achieve) a significant measure of autonomy from dominant power systems, and that also have public and political qualities.”³

Community members, students, and faculty who do this “public work” and practice “everyday politics” grow, change identities, enlarge their perspectives, become aware of ambiguity, make “connections across lines of difference,” and realize “the sense of ownership that develops through commons-building labors by groups of people.” They enter into lifelong habits of engagement and strategy. They work in more diverse occupations and live in more diverse areas. Boyte reports that elementary through high school students in local Public Achievement teams, who are coached by community activists and college students, “often say their experiences in working and fighting for their projects also help them ‘remove masks’ and ‘try out new roles’ and ‘give us freedom to be ourselves’ . . . [E]veryday politics breaks the tyranny of technique that locks people into expert-defined roles and tightly circumscribed identities.”⁴

Judith Ramaley warns that public scholarship will “remain individually defined and sporadic” unless colleges and universities commit to civic engagement on an institutional level. Thanks to the leadership of Julie Ellison and others, *Imagining America* rose to build “a broad movement for cultural democracy tied to . . . civic engagement efforts to change the cultures of higher education” and to “bring academic humanists back into public life through reciprocal partnerships with communities,” where they might “reclaim their public soul and public muscle” and inspire other disciplines to do the same.⁵

The Prison Creative Arts Project originated in a single course at the University of Michigan in 1990. It has grown year by year, has been nourished, and now flourishes thanks to the atmosphere created by remarkable colleagues and administrators. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this support. In what has been variously called our Incarceration Nation or Killing State,⁶ the incarcerated are considered the lowest of the low. They are stereotyped as child molesters, rapists, and murderers. They are imagined by people who have never met them as scruffy, unkempt, dangerous or depressed individuals in prison blues or stripes peering through bars, unconnected to family or other loved ones, completely devoid of aspirations, intelligence, and creativity. In the most segregated metropolitan area in the United States, many suburban parents forbid their middle and high school children to venture into Detroit. The same parents and our students' peers warn our university students against going into "dangerous" high schools, juvenile facilities, and prisons. Yet no official at the university has warned us or spoken against our projects. The university has encouraged us, provided resources, and even rewarded us for what we do.

However, I recall what may have been the first university-called gathering of faculty whose work took them into the community. This must have been in the early nineties. It was a meeting of deeply committed individuals with great projects, and yet, as my colleague Sharon Sutton pointed out at the time, the predominant mode was pipeline: we will help talented young people leave Detroit behind and come to the University of Michigan. No one advocated that they stay vitally connected with their community or return to struggle for change there. And there was little sense that our students were vital partners in the projects.⁷

The growth toward the collaborative, democratic civic engagement that is now so much more possible and prevalent at the university was slow.⁸ It came from faculty members often working alone, then collaboratively, then as leaders: Bunyan Bryant and Jim Crowfoot in the School of Natural Resources, Jim Chaffers, Margi Dewar, and Kate Warner in the School of Urban Planning and Architecture, Barry Checkoway, Larry Gant, and Lorraine Gutierrez in the School of Social Work, Stella Raudenbush in Education, Mark Chesler in Sociology, Pat Gurin in Psychology and Women's Studies, Julie Ellison in English and American Culture, David Scobey in History and Urban Planning and Architecture, John Vandermeer in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Barbara Israel in the School of Public Health.⁹ Under their leadership and that of others, *Imagining America*

came into being at the University of Michigan, as did Arts of Citizenship and the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning, where Jeffrey Howard and Joe Galura from the beginning provided leadership.

In the early 1990s, university president James Duderstadt brought together people from across campus to write the Michigan Mandate, which committed the university to a pluralistic faculty and student body and drew from the faculty and from other institutions administrative leaders like Connie Cook, John Matlock, Paula Allen-Meares, Lester Monts, Marvin Parnes, and Evans Young.¹⁰ It was the University of Michigan, under the leadership of Lee Bollinger that fought all the way to the Supreme Court the most out-front and courageous fight against the forces opposed to affirmative action. Although Michigan voters in 2006 eliminated affirmative action in state institutions, the university, under the leadership of Mary Sue Coleman and provost Teresa Sullivan, continues to struggle in every way to identify and recruit aspiring students from underserved and underresourced high schools and communities across the state. As a faculty member, sometimes only dimly aware of these efforts, feeling my way at my own work, I absorbed the benefits of these efforts and grew in confidence.

THE PRISON CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT

The story of the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) will gradually unfold in the chapters that follow. Here is an initial idea of the scope and volume of the work.

Since 1990, incarcerated youth and adults, urban and rural high school youth, University of Michigan students, graduates, and faculty members, and some community members from the Detroit metropolitan area, working in twenty-four prisons, six juvenile facilities, and seven high schools have created 506 original plays, have created art in over one hundred workshops, and have held 179 creative writing workshop readings and produced approximately eighty-seven in-house anthologies. They have collaborated in six music and two dance workshops in prisons, at least ten dance workshops in juvenile facilities, and in workshops in all the arts in the high schools.

Since 1996 the Prison Creative Arts Project has curated fifteen annual exhibitions of art by Michigan Prisoners. In the fourteenth, 229 artists from thirty-nine prisons exhibited 390 works of art, and 4,069 people walked through the gallery. Since 1999, we have curated eleven annual exhibitions

of art by incarcerated youth and since 2005 two biannual exhibitions of art by returned citizens.

Since 1996, PCAP has accompanied the annual exhibition with a total of 141 events, including speakers from around the country. Since 2001 our speakers bureau—composed of PCAP members often accompanied by the formerly incarcerated—has addressed over 130 audiences, including classes at the University of Michigan and other colleges and universities, church groups and community organizations, national conferences, and six Martin Luther King Jr. Forums at the University of Michigan.

In March 2009 we published the equivalent for writers of what the artists had had for fourteen years, our *On Words: Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*. Two hundred ninety-four writers from forty-four prisons submitted 631 pieces. We accepted thirty-seven from twenty-one prisons, with a total of forty-six pieces of poetry and prose.

Since 2001, 148 incarcerated youth, working one on one with PCAP members, have created portfolios of their art and writing. Fifty-four returned youth and adults have been paired with fifty-one community arts mentors through our Linkage Project.

FOUNDERS

My PCAP official title is Founder. Yet at the Florence Crane Women's Facility in January 1990 I met Mary Glover, plaintiff in the famous *Glover v. Johnson* case that won equal access to education for women prisoners. We consider ourselves cofounders. Although she participated in just two plays by the Sisters Within Theater Troupe, it was that lawsuit, and Mary's reputation with the warden, that made the first workshop and PCAP possible. A lifer who after twenty-six years won clemency, she now works as the coordinator of PCAP's Linkage and Portfolio projects.

As Mary would agree, however, the Prison Creative Arts Project is founded whenever youth, adults, and students step forward together in institutions where there is much pain and little trust, to risk collaboration and creativity, to begin to laugh, imagine, and play, and to take ownership of their voices. When DeWayne and Ollie stand at the podium, PCAP is founded. Every time a Gregory Taub picks up a colored pencil and decides not to copy an Elvis Presley photograph, but draw himself and his friends as hard-bitten figures indifferent to everyone, against a city landscape, and realizes, "I can take something I love to do and make something of

it . . . [and be] on top of the world . . . and accomplish anything,”¹¹ PCAP is founded. When Jesse Jannetta, Suzanne Gothard, Rachael Hudak, Chiara Liberatore, Eric Shieh, and Emily Harris step into the PCAP office or into a workshop, when Martin Vargas, Kinnari Jivani, F. Mumford, and Wynn Satterlee pick up a brush or pencil, when George Hall, Chuck English, Toni Bunton, and Brandon Gatson write a poem, when Shar Wabindato, Bernie Mac, Henry O. Smith (Smitty), and Romando Valeroso step onto the stage, PCAP is founded.

NARRATION

On January 23, 2007, Janie gave a School of Art and Design Penny W. Stamps Distinguished Speaker lecture at the Michigan Theater. She spoke about early and continuing influences on her work as an artist and on her work with Detroit schoolchildren, her university students, and the incarcerated. Afterward she and audience members moved to the Screening Room for questions and discussion. Mark Creekmore, an activist professor in the School of Social Work, asked Janie if the Prison Creative Arts Project does narration. I had to think about that.

We have no storytelling workshops, yet we have a culture of narration. Our courses open with full-day retreats to which we bring life stories. Student journals explore how texts, field experiences, and intense class discussion illuminate students' own past and future. In the PCAP workshops we advocate ownership of one's history, one's stories, images, and words. Our annual letter to the artists asks for submissions that come from within, that are unique. And at our best we listen for each person's growth, for what happens because of the work and because we are in rooms together. During the fall and winter terms, depending on the year, PCAP has between fifty and seventy members. It is hard for us in our meetings to get back to our underlying stories, but as we meet in smaller groups during or at the end of each meeting and as we drive in pairs or trios to our sites, we find our way there.

I am the storyteller here. You will find me emphasizing theater workshops because they are my main experience. I will talk about my courses, not Janie's, though I will talk about our shared pedagogy and her virtues as a teacher. My story about the annual exhibition will be less fully aware of artistic nuance than what she would give you, though I will quote at length what she says the exhibition means. I will try to ferret out for you the elements, the simple secrets, that have made so much of our work successful,

even while we falter and blunder and run into trouble and don't get it. Yet there have been thousands of stories, storytellers, founders, and creators in PCAP. I wish I could give each person the voice she deserves, the stories he needs to tell.

(RE)SOURCES

In chapter 1 I tell you how this work began for me and for PCAP. What you need to know here is that when I first came *into* the work, I found I had entered a rich, progressive cultural tradition that embraced me as I felt my way. I went to conferences of the Alliance for Cultural Democracy¹² and met Liz Lerman, Lucy Lippard, Susan Perlstein, and so many others who were generous with me. In Ann Arbor we formed our own little branch of the Alliance and sponsored a small conference where, I remember, Michael Moore showed some scenes from his work-in-progress, *Roger and Me*.

Fresh from three years of community-based video practice and my first year of guerrilla and action theater work, I went to Lima, Peru, in the fall of 1985. I met Marta Arce, Olga Bárcenas, and Milena Alva, and became an honorary member of Nosotras, traveling with them to dusty corners of shantytowns and to markets where the actors they had trained in the *pueblos jóvenes* performed original plays for children that informed their parents of the national vaccination campaign and saved lives.¹³ I gulped—I had so few credentials and just more than passable Spanish—and invited myself to the Eleventh Annual *Muestra* of Peruvian Theater in Cuzco. I was befriended by Yawar, a long-standing urban community-based theater group, and by members of Yuyachkani, an internationally recognized community-based theater group, and by the youth of Villa el Salvador. Their play about the founding and values of their city that had grown up out of the sand after a land seizure south of Lima took the *Muestra* by storm. They invited me to visit them and became lifelong friends. Working with my University of Lima colleagues on a video project in Huaycán, another land-seizure city built of sand and rocks, in its first year, I collaborated with the city of Lima to bring theater groups there to perform in the large woven-cane structure they had erected for public events.

Back in the States in 1986, with a year free for research thanks to a Guggenheim Fellowship, I read about the people's theater explosion of the late 1960s and 1970s, about the "Gathering" in Mankato, Minnesota, about Luis Valdez and Teatro Campesino, read all the numbers of *Theater-*

work Magazine I could get my hands on, read Ross Kidd's essays about his people's theater and theater for development work in Kenya and Bangladesh and drove to his town in Canada to learn from him.¹⁴ Overcoming my perennial shyness, and ignoring my awkwardness as an actor, I participated in a workshop led by Robert Alexander of the Arena Theater, then watched his actors enable a group of mentally and physically challenged Detroit children to create their own characters and improvise a wonderful play set on a train. I participated in two workshops led by Augusto Boal, one on theater of the oppressed and one on theater and therapy: I risked my own stories as problems to be worked on and experienced the power of having my peers work *for* me as we improvised those stories.

Having been inspired and taught by the men and women I interviewed for *Film on the Left*, my 1981 book on 1930s American documentary film,¹⁵ I began to travel to meet my peers who, though younger, were my elders in community-based work. I went to the Highlander Research and Education Center to meet John Gaventa, who had given video cameras to miners and textile workers for documentation and organizing. I went to Nicaragua to meet Alan Bolt at his *finca* and learned that a community's culture includes its method of planting as well as its music or theater. Nidia Bustos, director of Mecate, the nationwide peasant theater movement that based its plays in local issues and created musical instruments out of materials at hand, told me that her most important acting experience was pretending to be a hysterical pregnant woman in a truck loaded with grenade-filled pineapples in the war against Somoza.

In Omaha I had long conversations with Doug Paterson, cofounder of the Dakota Theater Caravan and professor of community-based theater at the University of Nebraska. In a Los Angeles skid row storefront law center I watched John Malpede, who turned out to be a high school classmate of my younger brother Ted, work with a homeless woman. She wrote down what made her happy ("It would be so much easier to write what hurts," she said), then acted out walking on the beach. I sat in on rehearsals and performances by John's Los Angeles Poverty Department over the next years and interviewed its homeless members. They taught me more than anyone the processes of working from scratch, building something brilliant out of chaos, and enjoying the improvisation that occurs right up through the performance.

In the Hodson Senior Center in the South Bronx, Susan Perlstein of Elders Share the Arts, three women, and I repeated over and over a sound

and motion that represented our work lives—one woman placed a wig on a doll, her factory job—and later I saw their play about a hat factory strike. Susan and Peggy Pettitt brought me to their workshops at the Queens VA Hospital, where I watched World War II veterans dance in their wheelchairs and tell stories of war and recreation in the Pacific and of segregation in the South when they returned home. I watched barely wired-together inpatient men and women act out their invention of a 1940s nightclub. These men and women were recognizing and honoring their own participation in the history of their times.

In Atlanta I interviewed men and women living with AIDS and others connected to people living with AIDS and spent hours at rehearsals of Rebecca Ranson's *Higher Ground*. I then watched my interviewees perform their stories as Rebecca had shaped them, watched this keep them alive a little longer. They taught me what laughter and imagination may do when the grim reaper approaches and more about the powerful aesthetic of people who venture and perform their own lives and issues.¹⁶

Pregones, a Puerto Rican theater group based in the South Bronx, took me under their wing. It was my great privilege to witness in Spanish East Harlem their forum theater play, *The Embrace*, in a church, schools, and a drug rehabilitation center. Audience members came to the stage to replace the “most oppressed person” in two-scene scenarios about AIDS, trying to “change the history” and find solution to a scourge that was only minimally addressed in their community. The Pregones actors faced tense, emotional, improvisation situations. Afterward Magali Jimenez from the Boriken Health Center shared information and led charged discussions.

On May 31, 1990, in Union Temple Baptist Church in Anacostia, southeast Washington D.C., youth from a local halfway house on their way home from Oak Hill, the Receiving Home, and other juvenile facilities, completely disrupted Everyday Theater's performance of *The Lost Prize*. This play about AIDS had been underwritten by the Centers for Disease Control. Afterward I listened as Mustafaa Madyoun, one of the youth troupe directors, gave notes to the distraught performers:

Remember that what you saw tonight was this country, the effects of slavery on our people. These kids came from the shelters and halfway houses. You may have been offended and hurt by how they acted, but remember it isn't their fault. They are not in control of their situation or themselves.

What happened insults us, but remember it is their self-hatred, that they

are actually doing it to themselves. It is hard for them to see someone doing something good or positive when it is not happening to them. So it is easier for them to steal the show, to get power, to upset you, to draw the attention from you—it is the only chance in their lives. . . . We must figure out how to get our point across. If we lose control, we can pause—and they’ll see nothing is happening—or we can intensify what we are doing, the volume, or the action. Or we can address our monologue to them directly. You have to do something, not let it just throw you.

They haven’t won—they may think so—but they lost, we all lost. They weren’t really able to get what was there for them to get. They need to see a success. If they are successful in knocking us down, they just put themselves back further into their self-hatred. If we are successful, they have a chance to see what they’re capable of, see hope. No one really wants to be that unresponsive.¹⁷

CONTEXT

The context of *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* is the mass incarceration of American citizens and its devastating effect on countless neighborhoods, families, and millions of American- and foreign-born children. The context is the “invisibility” of this incarceration for most Americans and the silence in our suburbs and in our schools, colleges, and universities. When millions of people were criminalized through new laws and taken from their homes and disappeared in Germany of the 1930s, when the United States continued to brutalize slaves and split slave families apart in the 1840s and 1850s, when the South through new laws and lynching imposed segregation until far into the last century, there was the same invisibility, and the same silence in safe places, including the academy. Dostoyevsky says you can tell the nature of a civilization by looking at its prisons. The context is the damage done to us all by the torment perpetrated in our name. I am writing this chapter at the Lillian E. Smith Center for the Arts in Clayton, Georgia, and reading Lillian Smith’s *Killers of the Dream*. She writes,

Even its children knew that the South was in trouble. No one had to tell them; no words said aloud. To them, it was a vague thing weaving in and out of their play, like a ghost haunting an old graveyard or whispers after the household sleeps—fleeting mystery, vague menace to which each responded in his own way. Some learned to screen out all except the soft and the sooth-

ing; others denied even as they saw plainly, and heard. But all knew that under quiet words and warmth and laughter, under the slow ease and tender concern about small matters, there was a heavy burden on all of us and as heavy a refusal to confess it. The children knew this “trouble” was bigger than they, bigger than their family, bigger than their church, so big that people turned away from its size . . .

The mother who taught me what I know of tenderness and love and compassion taught me also the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their “place.” The father who rebuked me for an air of superiority toward schoolmates from the mill and rounded out his rebuke by gravely reminding me that “all men are brothers,” trained me in the steel-rigid decorums I must demand of every colored male. They who so gravely taught me to split my body from my mind and both from my “soul,” taught me also to split my conscience from my acts and Christianity from southern tradition.¹⁸

It is visible enough, in its own way. We have in our heads what an adult told us as we drove past a prison or jail. We have our images of morose, scruffy, violent prisoners. We are bombarded with stories and images from newspaper and television inordinate focus on violent crime. The death penalty, abolished in most other countries, and recent laws that give us the longest sentences in the world imply the nature of the offender. And our complicated contemporary sex panic abolishes distinctions between dangerous repeat offenders and those who will not err again, ruins lives, and scares us all to death. *Such* visibility makes it easy for us *not to know* and makes it easy for us to condemn forever the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. They are someone else’s relatives, not ours.

When we mention our work in the prisons, it turns out that others have experiences they don’t normally share. Director Nancy Fichter at the Lillian E. Smith Center writes to a man on death row. A Center resident remembers a great musician who was suddenly arrested and convicted of child molestation and is now coming home. She tracks his location on the Internet and wishes, cautiously, to help him out. And I drive down to the crossing of Routes 76 and 441: dark men in brown wearing orange City of Clayton pullovers, Georgia prisoners, are cutting a plot of grass. I have seen them on the highways of Michigan, seen them chipping ice in the city of Chelsea, cleaning the cemetery in Saline. In Santa Fe I stop in for a haircut at Super Cuts. My barber had the penitentiary contract for a year or two. A prison artist drew a portrait of her cutting hair, but the prison would not

allow her to keep it. I bring her a catalog from the Tenth Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners. In Cordova, the drunken man who falls off his motorbike has been in and out of the penitentiary and is on parole. So Paula is wary of calling emergency services for help.

It is a deep shame in us, a wound below the surface. Sixty-two percent of the youth at Boysville are African American. Seventy-five percent of the youth sentenced to adult prisons are youth of color. Forty percent of prisoners in state prisons and jails are African American and 20 percent are Hispanic.¹⁹ But we are told by those who do not think, or who wish desperately not to see, that we are in a postracist era. The *New York Times* exclaims in a front-page story that now for the first time one in one hundred American adults are in prison,²⁰ and Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain don't even pause. The incarcerated—2.3 million of them, 25 percent of the prisoners in the world—and their children do not appear in their speeches. Do they not know them?

Harry Boyte writes that “conventional definitions of politics, as a struggle of the forces of good against the forces of evil, offer little hope that America will see a broad revitalization of public life and democracy.” He understands and is uncomfortable with the Saul Alinsky organizing model, which

divided cities into two systems, the neighborhood and the “enemy” power structure outside. Poor, minority, and working class communities, in his analysis, were victimized by the affluent, powerful, downtown-connected interests who bestowed social services and economic largess on the already privileged areas of the city.

A few pages later, having recognized the effectiveness of citizen organizing efforts that build upon and alter the work of Alinsky, Boyte observes that “anger at injustice runs as a central thread through this organizing, which makes it disciplined, directed, and constructive.” Yet “anger at economic and social injustice is insufficient to tap hidden discontents—the self-interests—of suburban, professional, and other middle class or upper middle class communities.” In order for public work to take place, for engagement agenda and public scholarship to be effective, for developmental organizing to happen, participants must work past economic barriers, must not think in terms of evil, enemies, and anger. Boyte quotes Simanga Kumalo from the University of Natal in South Africa: “The movements against colonial-

ism produced a great generation of liberation leaders. What we need now is a new generation of development leaders.”²¹ The great, necessary era of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress On Racial Equality, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, and Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton is over. We are in the era of Barack Obama, of leaders who can negotiate and unite, who understand the workings of power and bring constituencies together.

This makes so much sense, is so hopeful, optimistic, dug in, and true. It speaks to the processes and work of the Prison Creative Arts Project. At its best in the universities and colleges, such practice is tough-minded, analytic, reflective, and highly responsible. It has motivated colleagues, students, and community members across the country and is a great vision. And yet for me in most of the practice and most of the theory something is absent, something is potentially a little soft.

MORE RE(SOURCES)

As I finished *Film on the Left* and came *into* this work, I also found voices that resonated for me. Because they are in me and in most of those I engage with, the work of PCAP, *underneath*, has something a little edgier, a little more angry and combative than other forms of public scholarship.

I found Jonathan Kozol’s outraged descriptions of American schools and the conditions in which so many urban school children live. I found, in *The Night Is Dark and I Am Far from Home*, his powerful analysis of the way so many of us are trained in our schools to be “good citizens,” ethically indifferent to what is done to others in our name, his insistence that the reader quit reading if unprepared to take such matters seriously.²²

I found Paulo Freire’s clarity about what a member of the oppressor class who wishes to join the struggle of the oppressed must do. I found his insistence that participants in “true dialogue” will have committed to change the world, to be co-teachers and co-students, to de-code their situation, then to act and to reflect on their action.²³

I found Myles Horton’s insistence on appropriate and channeled anger, his advice against wasting words with those unprepared to act, and his recommendation to put people in places where they have to make decisions. I found his willingness to risk his life for economic and social justice, his creation of the Highlander Folk School, that profound educational space where music, dance, and storytelling play key roles, where Martin Luther King Jr.,

Rosa Parks, and so many many others would prepare to enter into or develop community organizing, passive resistance and nonviolent action.²⁴

Miguel Ayala took me into peasant communities to hold posters while he taught agronomy, then talked all night and sang *buaynos* and political songs in peasant homes. Marta Arce resolved on a torture table in Brazil to commit her life to being the opposite of the torturer. Javier Mujica left his home at different hours and in different directions to thwart death squads and Shining Path because workers' rights were too important to cease struggling for. Nora came from Ireland to train paramedics, and Father Jeronimo Olleros came from Spain to practice liberation theology at Cencape CCAIJO at a time when progressive priests were threatened. Martin Luther King Jr., wrote from Birmingham jail. With so many others he marched across Pettis Bridge. Rosa Maria Puma Roca, abused by her parents, bounded across the fields of Antapampa to greet me.

ENEMIES

In chapter 3 I tell how powerful interests chose to carry out the greatest experiment in social control through mass incarceration in the history of the world. They, the legislators who voted for and continue to vote for the laws that make this possible, the media professionals who spread fear, the special interests that block universal health care, and the economic planners who scheme out dangerous streets, rotting schools, and beleaguered teachers *act* as enemies and *are* enemies to the millions of children who will drop out, get caught up in the criminal justice system, and end up in prison. And those children *experience* in their bodies and souls that they have such enemies. And those of us who are safe and pay no attention, those of us who give handouts, and those of us who give something without rattling our worlds, if the truth were to be told, if the truth were to be admitted, we are also enemies to those children, if beneficent and well-intentioned ones. And if DeWayne and Nate have enemies, then those enemies are mine as well.

In Marcel Ophul's brilliant film *Memory of Justice*, Albert Speer—I see him standing on a hill—declares, “I didn't know [about the deportations and death camps], but I could have known and chose not to know, and therefore I am guilty.”²⁵

Noam Chomsky argues that those with the most access, affluence, and training to know what is happening bear the most responsibility for what happens.²⁶

We must name things for what they are. But we also must not engage in public work thinking of and treating others as enemies, seeing them narrowly and denying them their full, complex humanity. We must enter the “free spaces” and other arenas with the kind of grit and determination, the kind of generosity, the kind of willingness to negotiate and move forward that Boyte speaks of so eloquently.

Elie Wiesel has helped me think about this. His “An Appointment with Hate” puzzles and troubles my students. He returns to Germany for the first time since he was a child in Auschwitz. He is to give some lectures. But he cuts his trip short and flees, having discovered that he has left his hatred for the Germans behind. Grappling with this, he comes to a new place: one must have a healthy, virile hatred for that thing *in* Germans that might allow them to act again as they once did.²⁷

Myles Horton urges us to trust others in a world where human beings have not proven themselves worthy of trust.²⁸ If we accept this, as I do, it makes sense for us to have a similar alertness. Our country’s history of violence and history of racism continue to play themselves out in individuals and in many places, certainly in our schools, juvenile facilities, and prisons. Who are the people we have put there? *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* is a story of limited, inadequate success.

THE AGE OF IRON

In J. M. Coetzee’s novel *The Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren, a retired white South African history teacher, has disliked but never actively opposed apartheid. As the novel begins, she has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer and begins a journal in the form of a long letter to her daughter in the United States. She has decided not to tell her about her illness: the daughter might come to South Africa to smother her mother with care, and Mrs. Curren prefers to embark on an adventure of self-examination and new risk. She writes a long, unflinching, day-by-day letter exploring her pallid self and her complicity, by inaction, in apartheid. She is flaccid alongside black South Africans like her housekeeper Florence and youth like Florence’s son Bheki and his friend John, who have left school and become hardened and determined representatives of the age of iron as they combat the government. At the novel’s heart is Mrs. Curren’s gradual realization that in order to truly love her daughter, she must love John, who treats her with insolence, and

Vercuil, the drunk, homeless Afrikaner who appears on her property the day of her diagnosis and attaches himself to her. John, “unthinking, inarticulate, unimaginative . . . stolid,” a believer in “blows and bullets,” his “neck stiff as a poker,” is her son. Vercuil, “an insect . . . emerging from behind the baseboards when the house is in darkness to forage for crumbs” is, in the end, her husband.²⁹

WILLIAM MARTINEZ

One April morning in 1989, William Thomas Martinez left his cell and walked to the pie-shaped exercise yard 4A–4L in the Secure Housing Unit (SHU) at California State Prison at Corcoran. An armed robber from Oakland and member of the northern Nuestra Familia gang, two weeks before in the same yard he had “stood toe to toe” with Pedro Lomelli, a member of La Eme, the Mexican Mafia gang in Southern California. They had fought, Giles Whittell implies, because “feuds between the state’s prison gangs are, if anything, older and more intense than between its street ones. Gang lore dictates that an inmate from La Eme . . . if thrown together with one from Nuestra Familia, has no choice but to fight. . . . Not to do so would be still more dangerous since it would shame his ‘homeboys.’”³⁰

Prison policy dictated that during SHU yard fights, the officers overseeing the yard from above should first shout a warning to stop. If that didn’t work, they were to fire from a riot gun a round of nonlethal wooden pellets; everyone in the yard would fall to the floor. If the fight continued, the next step was the firing of a 9 mm rifle, “which came with hollow-tipped ‘safety slugs,’ cruelly misnamed since they were chosen for their tendency to explode in a target’s body rather than go through and ricochet off the yard’s high concrete walls.” Martinez and Lomelli “had signed forms pledging they had no known enemies in their SHU quarters [but] everyone on the tier knew this was a lie.”³¹

Taking advantage of the integrated yard policy of mixing rival gangs, intended in theory to prepare prisoners for free society, the officers of yard 4A–4L were setting up fights between rival gang members and often betting on the outcome.

One excitable officer, a Sergeant Pio Cruz, often took the role of fight announcer, turning 4A–4L into his little piece of Vegas. When a fancied

combatant lived up to his reputation, he could be thanked by the guards for “making them a bit richer.” When things turned bloody, they could blame it on the book.

And things did turn bloody. Corcoran was built in 1988, and in its first year prisoners were fired on 735 times, and it is estimated that 4A–4L saw “more than a thousand serious fights, not all of them reported. It was, a former head of the prison system said, ‘absolutely the highest rate that I have ever seen in any institution, anywhere in the country.’” By 1995, five prisoners had been killed and many more wounded. After each of the fifty most serious shootings there between 1988 and 1995, a review board of senior officers sat round a large table on high-backed blue chairs and discussed it. Every time they managed to agree that the purpose had been “to save life or prevent great bodily injury.” This made it a “good shoot,” with no need to discipline the guard even if an inmate had been killed or wounded by mistake.

William Martinez, after passing through the metal detector and being subjected to a strip search, entered 4A–4L. When he saw Lomelli, he went after him and thirteen seconds later was dead. The review board after watching the video claimed that Martinez had kicked Lomelli six times in the head and was shot while preparing to kick again, endangering Lomelli’s life. In fact, a careful review of the video reveals that Martinez did not kick Lomelli, that the fight had concluded, and that Martinez was shot in the back when he was walking away.³² A tough violent kid from Oakland. Or not. When his parents, video in hand, tried to sue the prison authorities, a federal judge threw the case out.³³ Is he *not* our brother, husband, son?