



*Illuminating
the Darkness*

Our Carceral
Landscape



"Mass incarceration is the most pressing racial justice issue of our time"

– *Michelle Alexander*

Illuminating the Darkness

Our Carceral Landscape

UCF Art Gallery
August 27, 2020 – October 1, 2020

Curated by Keri Watson



FLORIDA PRISON
EDUCATION PROJECT

NATIONAL
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Cover: video still from *Proliferation* by Paul Rucker. Courtesy of the artist.

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Associated Programming

For Freedoms Town Hall on the Carceral Landscape and Art as Activism

Wednesday, September 9, 12–1 p.m.

Sponsored by For Freedoms, the Cornell Fine Arts Museum, and the UCF Art Gallery and featuring Omari Booker, Gisela Carbonell, and Keri Watson

Panel Discussion on Racism and Mass Incarceration

Wednesday, September 16, 12–1 p.m.

Featuring formerly incarcerated artists and activists Ruben Saldaña, Gale Buswell, Jhafis Quintero, Marquis McKenzie, Jason Fronczek, Daniel McCarthy Clifford, Christopher Etienne, and Terrell Blount

Staged Reading of Dominique Morisseau's Blood at the Root

Saturday, September 26, 7 p.m.

Based on the Jena Six in Louisiana, Dominique Morisseau's bold and striking play examines racial and social injustice and the power of individual and collective voices to speak up against racism and prejudice.

Acknowledgments

The exhibition, catalog, and programming for *Illuminating the Darkness: Our Carceral Landscape* were made possible by the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Laughing Gull Foundation, and the Florida Prison Education Project, as well as the dedication and assistance of many individuals.

I would like to thank the Orlando Museum of Art for loaning the works by Purvis Young and Al Black. Special thanks to the individual artists who contributed their work: Omari Booker, Courtney Bowles, Keith Calhoun, Daniel McCarthy Clifford, Baz Dreisinger, Christopher Etienne, Valada Flewellyn, Jason Fronczek, Maria Gaspar, Shaun Leonardo, Chandra McCormick, Jhafis Quintero, Paul Rucker, Mark Strandquist, Hank Willis Thomas, Matt Watson, and our incarcerated students. Without your hard work, dedication, generosity, and patience this exhibition would not have been possible.

Thank you to the Florida Prison Education Project board members and volunteers who contributed to this project: Sean Armstrong, Marc Consalo, Nicholas DeArmas, Steffen Guenzel, Wadad Kantor, Meghan Mitchell, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, Terry Ann Thaxton, and Demond Washington. Special thanks to Connie L. Lester and the RICHES team for archiving the project, to Julia Listengarten and the School of Performing Arts for collaborating with us on *Blood at the Root*, and to Gisela Carbonell and the Cornell Fine Arts Museum for partnering with us on the For Freedoms Town Hall. This exhibition and its associated programming would not have been possible without you.

I am grateful to the UCF Art Gallery staff: Shannon Lindsey, Larry Cooper, and Jean-Claude Rasch, for your tireless assistance in planning and installation. Appreciation also extends to Jason Fronczek, Matthew Dunn, and Myranda Elkin for your hard work and dedication to this project.

I also would like to thank the faculty and staff of the UCF College of Arts and Humanities and School of Visual Arts and Design, especially Dean Jeffrey M. Moore, Director T. Rudy McDaniel, grant managers Kristin Wetherbee and Kara Gajentan, accountants Denise Matias and Christine Michel, and marketing directors Heather Gibson and Hannah Estes. A project such as this one is not possible without supportive and generous colleagues.

This exhibition is dedicated to the 2.3 million people incarcerated in the U.S. today.

Thank you for sharing your stories.

How to Get Involved

Vera Institute of Justice www.vera.org

The Marshall Project www.themarshallproject.org

The Sentencing Project www.sentencingproject.org

Equal Justice Initiative eji.org

Prison Policy Initiative www.prisonpolicy.org

For Freedoms forfreedoms.org

Incarceration Nations Network www.incarcerationnationsnetwork.com

Families Against Mandatory Minimums famm.org

The Innocence Project www.innocenceproject.org

American Civil Liberties Union www.aclu.org

Southern Poverty Law Center www.splcenter.org

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition floridarrc.com

Florida Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform www.betterjusticefl.com

No Place for a Child www.noplaceforachild.com

Community Outreach Enterprise communityoutreachenterprise.yolasite.com

Florida Prison Education Project cah.ucf.edu/fpep

Community Education Project www.stetson.edu/other/cep

Exchange for Change www.exchange-for-change.org

Institute for Educational Empowerment www.mdc.edu/educational-empowerment

We Got the Vote wegotthevote.org

Art Equity www.artequity.org

Illuminating the Darkness: Art is Activism

Keri Watson

Over 2 million people are incarcerated in the United States today, yet the prison system remains largely invisible to the majority of Americans. *Illuminating the Darkness: Our Carceral Landscape* presents the work of twenty-five artists whose practice is informed by their experiences with the criminal justice system to shine a light on the ways in which mass incarceration affects us all. The culmination of a two-year project sponsored by the Florida Prison Education Project, National Endowment for the Arts, and Laughing Gull Foundation, the collected pieces—in sculpture and installation, drawing and painting, video and photography, and printmaking and book arts—explore racism, oppression, and the immutability of the human spirit.

Art plays an important role in education, activism, and community building. It provides a transformative language that gives voice to minoritized individuals and marginalized communities, and it is accessible to people across social boundaries. The artists included in this exhibition are activists who create socially-engaged work that raises awareness about the prison-industrial complex and its relationship to structural inequality. Paul Rucker's haunting video visualizes the proliferation of prisons after emancipation and illustrates the ways in which the carceral state re-enslaved thousands after the Civil War. The 13th Amendment allowed slavery to continue “as punishment for crime,” and during Reconstruction African Americans were arrested by the thousands as vagrancy laws and Black Codes criminalized “mischief,” “loitering,” and “curfew breaking.” Chandra McCormick's and Keith Calhoun's photographs, taken over the last forty years at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, expose the result of these laws and the continuation of slave labor at the nation's largest prison. Calhoun's *Who's that man on that horse, I don't know his name but they call him boss* (1980)—eerily reminiscent of nineteenth-century photographs of plantation overseers—shows a white prison guard lording over a group of predominantly African American men laboring in a field, and McCormick's *Daddy'O* (2004) presents viewers with a moving portrait of the oldest living incarcerated person in Louisiana. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, an 18,000-acre prison farm built on the site of a former plantation that was named Angola for the area of Africa which supposedly “bred the most desirable slaves,”

76% of those incarcerated are Black and 93% will die there. These statistics demonstrate the extent to which prisons have decimated the Black community and Calhoun's and McCormick's images put a human face on a displaced generation. Conversely, Shaun Leonardo's *Eulogy* offers a “Second Line on the High Line” for the thousands of unnamed victims who have been lynched by white supremacists or murdered at the hands of police officers over the last 400 years. State police forces in the U.S., as historian Edward L. Ayers notes, were developed to capture run-away slaves, a legacy that psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt argues continues to inform implicit bias in policing today. According to a recent study by the National Academy of Sciences, police violence is a leading cause of death for young men in the U.S. with Black men two-and-half-times more likely to be killed by police than white men. Matt Watson's stark black-and-white photographs of protestors responding to the recent murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department bring the dependence of our nation on racial oppression and white supremacy into sharp focus.

Institutions of discipline and punishment are built on separation, and the architecture of prisons divides and isolates those inside its walls, while also masking their presence from those living outside them. American prisons tend to be built in rural areas—out-of-view and away from our daily lives—and this physical marginalization allows many of us to ignore mass incarceration even as it has a significant, if unseen, impact on our lives. Hank Willis Thomas's and Baz Dreisinger's *The Writing on the Wall*, an installation of essays and poems written by incarcerated people from around the world and pasted to the walls of the gallery to simulate the inside of a prison cell, exposes the unseen spaces of incarceration and gives voice to those who live inside them. Maria Gaspar's video documentation of a collective art project created at the Cook County Jail and projected on its exterior walls shares the stories of those incarcerated in Chicago's largest facility and illustrates the power of art to break down barriers. Prisons spatially and geographically marginalize people—separating them from one another, from their families, friends, and communities, but these artists' work brings their lives to light, illuminates the dark spaces of the prison-industrial complex, and breaks down our conceptions of what constitutes inside and outside.

Other artists included in the exhibition have contributed work informed by their personal experience of incarceration. The People's Paper Co-op, a women-led, women-focused, women-powered art and advocacy project comprised of women in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections's reentry system, creates prints on handmade paper made from shredded criminal records. The resulting works are sold to raise money for the Philadelphia Community Bail Fund. Purvis Young, Al Black, and Jason Fronczek all spent time in Florida prisons, a state with the country's third largest prison system and nearly 100,000 people behind bars. Young's paintings of angels provide an ethereal view of the afterlife, whereas Black's Florida landscapes remind us of life—and the chance of redemption—here on earth. As Fronczek says, "Having lost my liberty, social standing, and freedom, I am thankful for what remains—my unique perception of this journey." His monochrome portraits of Marquis McKenzie, Ruben Saldaña, and Gale Buswell, each of whom were formerly incarcerated and now advocate for others through their work with No Place for a Child, Community Outreach Enterprise, Ru Camp Champs, and the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, offer a look at life after prison. Providing us a view of life in prison, Jhafis Quintero, who became an artist while incarcerated in Panama, creates films and sculptures that convey the monotony and loneliness of imprisonment and solitary confinement. Research shows that solitary confinement causes changes in the brain that lead to depression and mood disorders, yet it is still used as punishment in prisons around the world. On any given day in Florida, some 10,000 people, twice the number in other states, are held in solitary confinement.

Incarceration amplifies psychological, social, and cultural divides—increasing the distance between white and Black, rich and poor, abled and disabled. 40% of people in prison are Black, 57% lived below the poverty line before incarceration, and 32% have a physical or cognitive disability. Incarceration has detrimental physical and psychological effects on those imprisoned, and one in five people in prison has a serious mental illness. Over 50% of people in prison experienced trauma either as children or adults, and the effects of trauma and institutionalization contribute to cycles of violence and victimization. Prisons offer little in the way of meaningful social, health, or educational services, and in Florida only a few facilities offer college classes or arts programming, even though research conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts

found that the arts contribute to a positive mental outlook, reduce violence, and decrease the likelihood of recidivism.

Daniel McCarthy Clifford draws upon his "experience as an inmate in the federal prison system" and blends archival research, sculpture, photography, and installation to "suggest new ways of understanding social control and disciplinary structures." Similarly, Omari Booker, who honed his art skills while incarcerated in Tennessee, paints because it allows him to "both deal with the world and escape it simultaneously." Booker's painting *Rebel* appropriates a portrait of Pompey Factor (who was born enslaved in Arkansas in 1849), rings it in red razor wire, and centers it on a Confederate flag to draw attention to the ways in which slavery, Jim Crow, and redlining institutionalized economic, educational, and social disadvantages and dispossessed African Americans of wealth and property. Christopher Etienne's work responds to structural racism and issues a call to action. As a second-generation Haitian immigrant, Etienne experienced extreme poverty before being convicted of possession and distribution of drugs. Today he works to help other formerly incarcerated people earn a degree and break the cycle of poverty and incarceration.

Finally but most importantly, the exhibition includes work made by currently incarcerated students enrolled in a foundation of visual art class taught by contributing artists Fronczek, Dreisinger, Booker, McCormick, and Calhoun. Many of these students had never taken a drawing class but were excited to spend a few hours each week thinking about art instead of incarceration. As one student remarked, "At the start we were all a little hesitant seeing as how we've never actually spoken to one another in a normal setting, but we were soon laughing, trading jokes, and having a great time. I never thought I would have enjoyed the company of my classmates and I'm grateful to the [class] for uniting us." The classroom had a mural by Florida Highwayman painter and contributing artist Al Black on its wall, and as one student said, "While attending [class], I found inspiration and hope. I found them in such quantities as to be nearly unbelievable."

The work gathered together for this exhibition calls upon the power of art to draw attention to the structural inequality that undergirds the U.S. criminal justice system, illuminate the darkness, and demonstrate the ways in which we are all complicit in building and maintaining America's carceral landscape.

Skin On The Rope

Valada Flewellyn

We all have skin on the rope
Whether a neck on the rope
Or a hand on the rope
We ALL have skin on the rope
The pain of that connection
Grips us, entangles us

Compels us to examine
Our history, then construct
Tomorrow to manifest the
Wounds that need
More than a band-aid

Wounds that warrant more
Than a cursory examination
We must dissect the
Fibers of our history
Inspect our suspect
Moral Consciousness

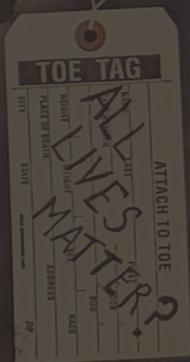
Which allows sin to fester
As we turn our heads
Away from the atrocities
That grab our children
Drowning them in the muck
Of our making

Leaving them unprepared
Unprotected but infected
Generation after generation
From our refusal to acknowledge

How we have failed
Our children. . . All
We ALL have skin on the rope.

"The truth is that the police reflect America in all of its will and fear, and whatever we might make of this country's criminal justice policy, it cannot be said that it was imposed by a repressive minority. The abuses that have followed from these policies—the sprawling carceral state, the random detention of black people, the torture of suspects—are the product of democratic will."

– *Ta-Nehisi Coates*



Keith Calhoun

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT

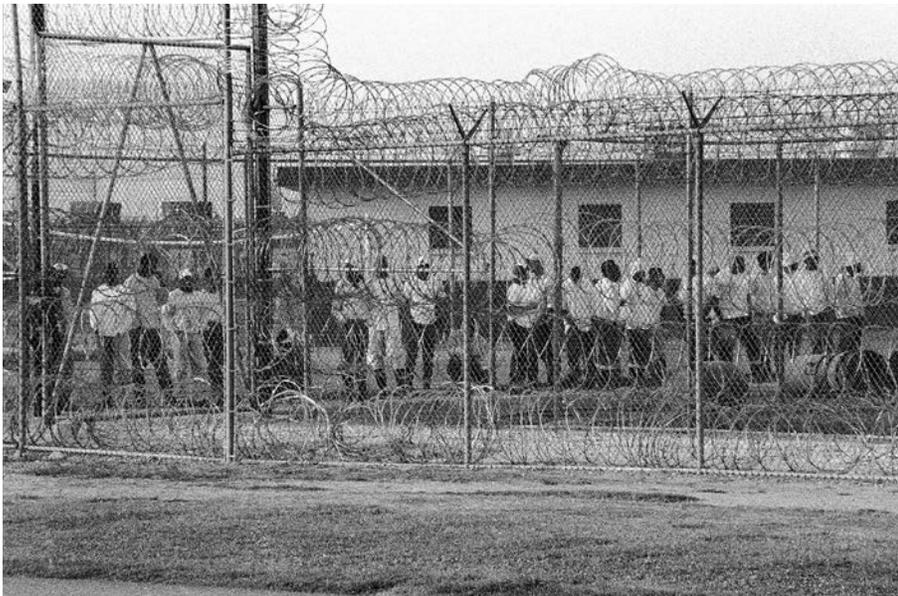
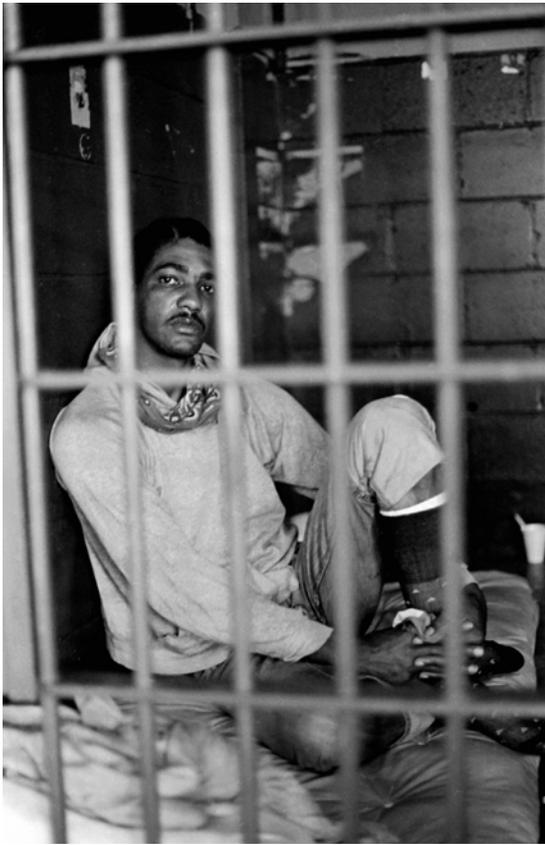
Glen Demourelle, Angola, Louisiana State Penitentiary, 1982. Photograph, 25.25 x 19.25 inches

Men going to work on the Hoot Nanny, Louisiana State Penitentiary, 1980. Photograph, 19.25 x 25.25 inches

The Hoot Nanny, Angola, Louisiana State Penitentiary, 1980. Photograph, 19.25 x 25.25 inches

Courtesy of the artist





Keith Calhoun

LEFT: *Men and Mules*, 1980. Photograph, 19.25 x 25.25 inches

RIGHT: *Who's that man on that horse, I don't know his name but they call him boss*, 1980. Photograph, 27.125 x 40 inches

Courtesy of the artist





Chandra McCormick

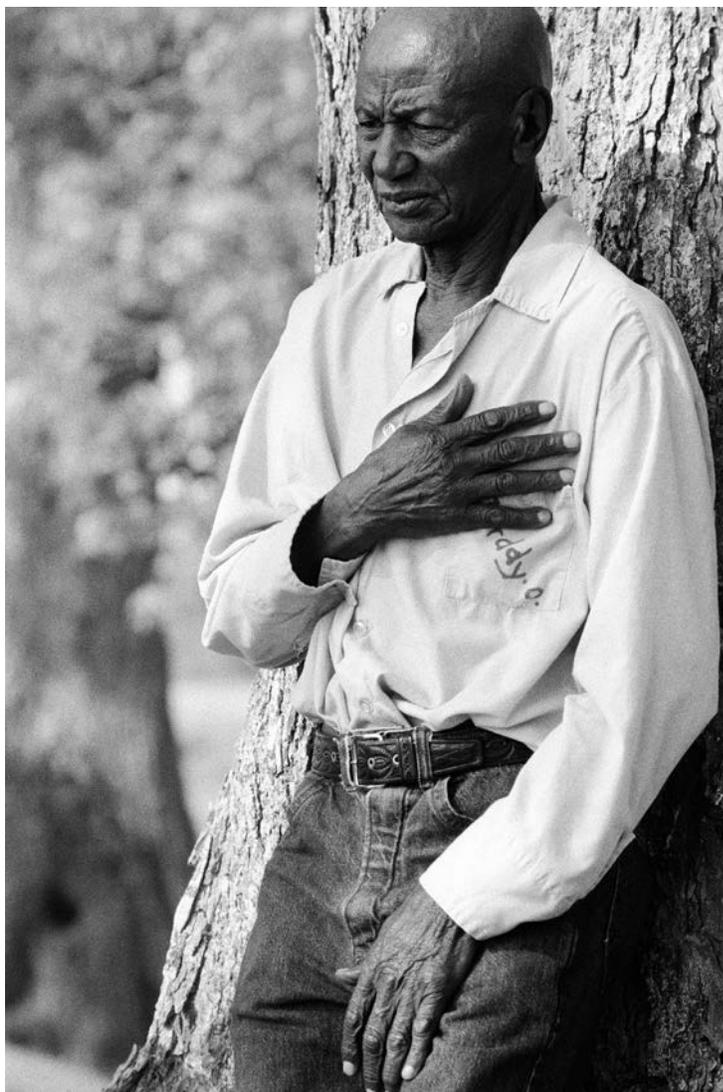
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT

Father Forgive Them, 2013. Photograph, 25.25 x 19.25 inches

Freddy King, 2013. Photograph, 25.25 x 19.25 inches

Daddy'O, 2004. Photograph, 19.25 x 25.25 inches

Courtesy of the artist





Shaun Leonardo

The Eulogy, 2017. Video still, 28:18 minutes. Courtesy of the artist

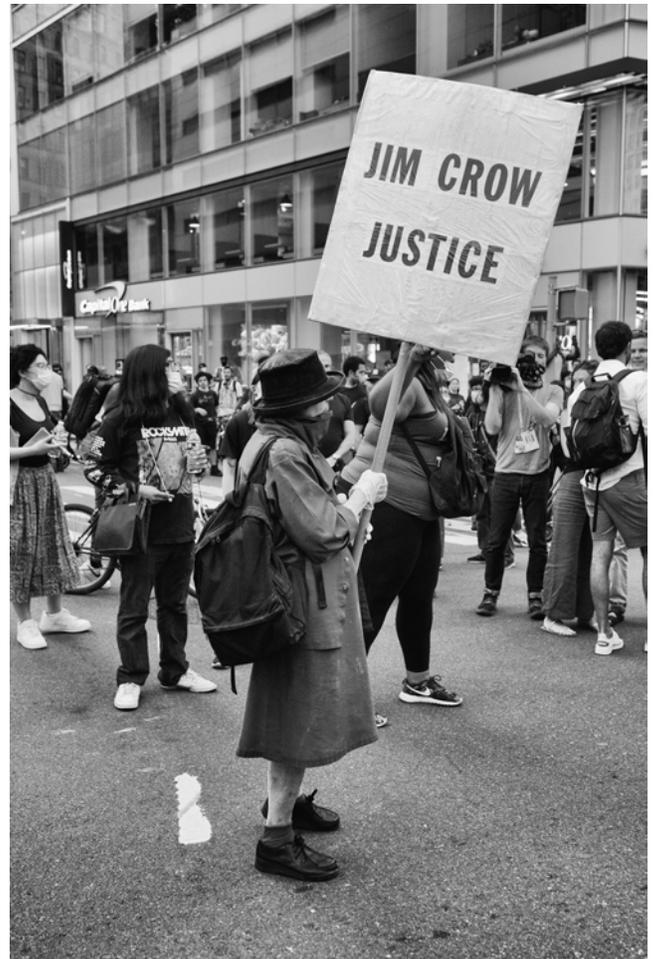


Matt Watson

LEFT: *Revolution*, 2020. Photograph, 18 x 12 inches

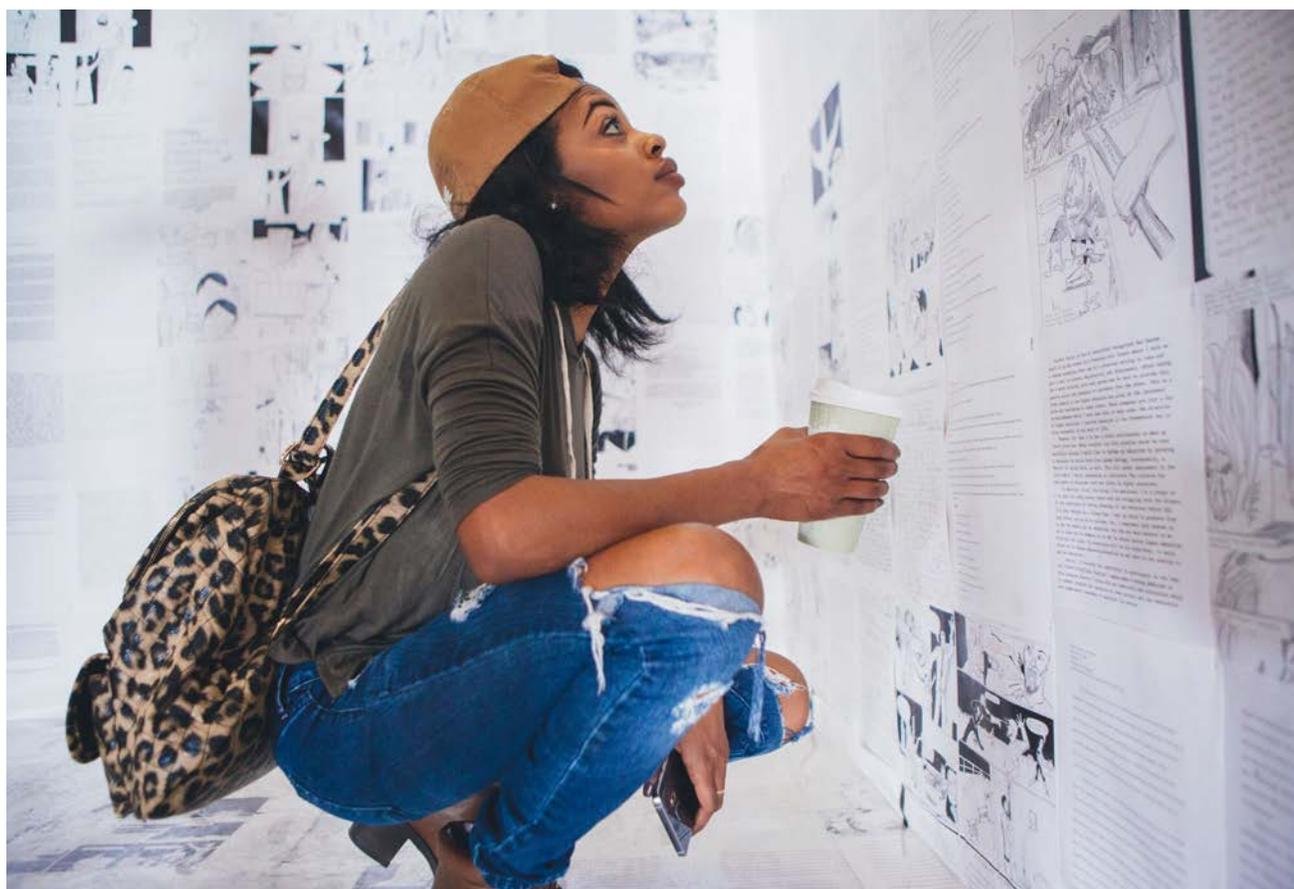
RIGHT: *Jim Crow Justice*, 2020. Photograph, 18 x 12 inches

Courtesy of the artist



Hank Willis Thomas and Baz Dreisinger

The Writing on the Wall, 2014. Installation. Courtesy of the artists





Maria Gaspar

Radioactive: Stories from Beyond the Wall, 2016-18. Video still, 9:41 minutes. Courtesy of the artist

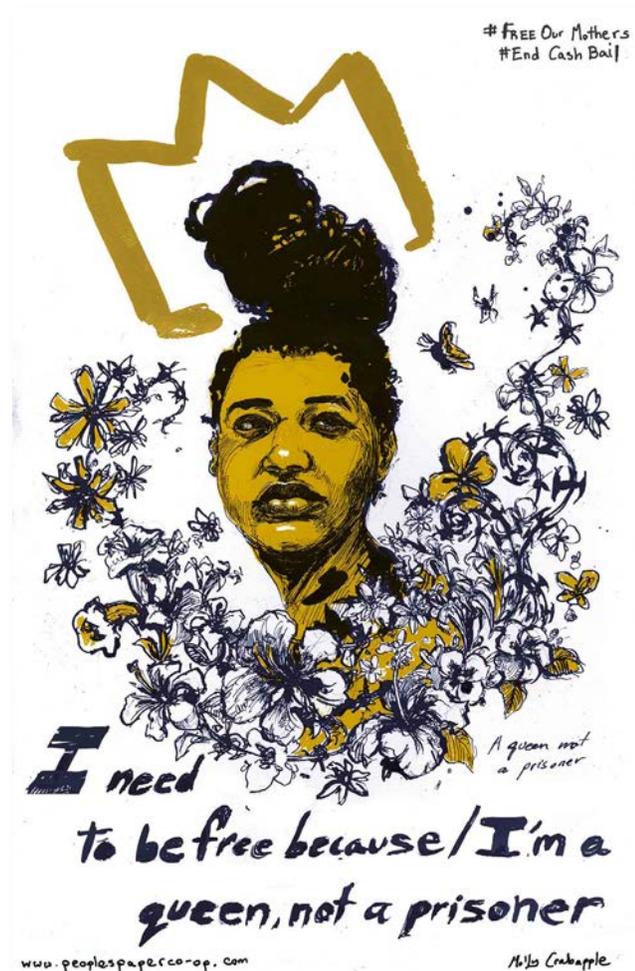
Mark Standquist and Courtney Bowles

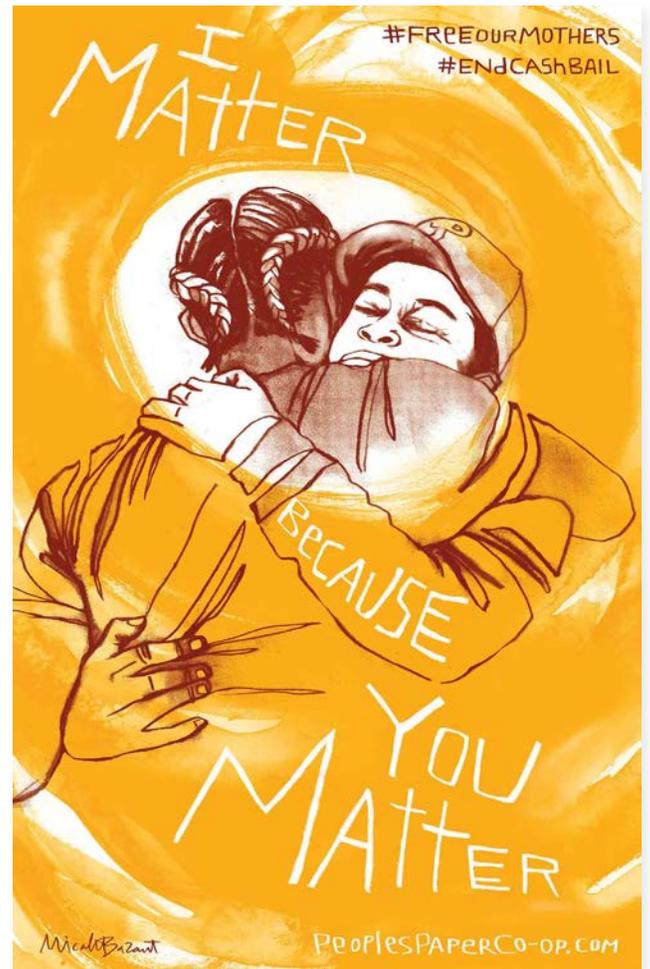
LEFT TO RIGHT:

Free Our Mothers, Sisters, Queens!: I'm a Queen, Not a Prisoner, 2019. Print, 17 x 11 inches.
Courtesy of People's Paper Co-op in collaboration with Molly Crabapple

Free Our Mothers, Sisters, Queens!: I Stand Up for Incarcerated Women, 2019. Print, 17 x 11 inches.
Courtesy of People's Paper Co-op in collaboration with Mary Tremonte

Free Our Mothers, Sisters, Queens!: I Matter Because You Matter, 2019. Print, 17 x 11 inches.
Courtesy of People's Paper Co-op in collaboration with Micah Bazant







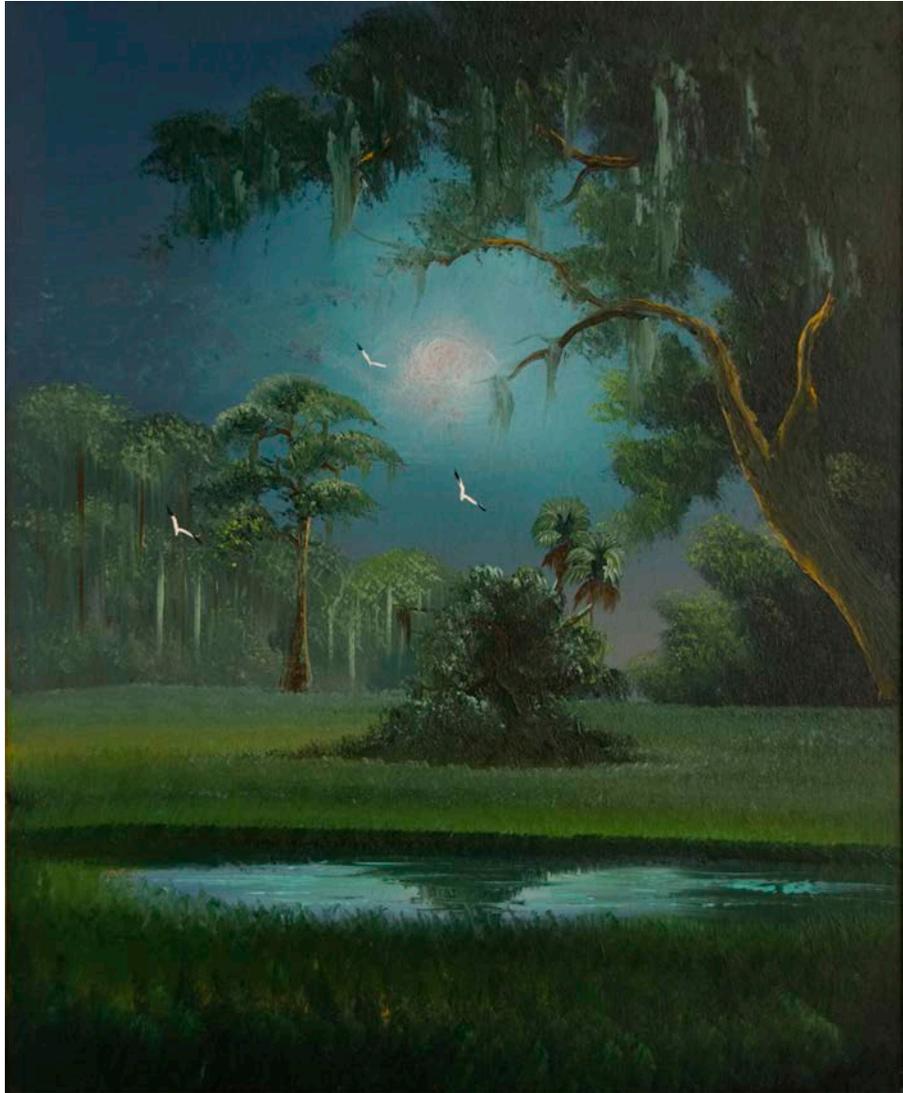
Purvis Young

ABOVE: *Angel with Three Mystery Figures*, 1980-90. Paint on Masonite, 24 x 84 inches

RIGHT: *Renaissance Angel*, Mid-1980s. Paint on skid, 41 x 29.75 inches

Courtesy of the Orlando Museum of Art





Al Black

LEFT: *Untitled (Moonlit Night Scene)*, 1979. Oil on Upson board, 24 x 29.25 inches

BELOW: *Untitled (Landscape Sunset with a Pine Island)*, 1979. Oil on Upson board, 35 1/2 x 23 inches

Courtesy of the Orlando Museum of Art



Jason Fronczek

Marquis McKenzie: Entrepreneur, 2020. Photograph, 36 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist



“You wouldn’t take a baby out of daycare and put him in high school. But in this country, we routinely take children who’ve committed crimes out of the juvenile justice system and try them as adults.” These words introduce Marquis McKenzie Sr. in an open letter explaining his reasoning for becoming involved with the coalition No Place for A Child. Marquis shares his testimony with families and lawmakers across Florida, hoping to change state legislation that sends juveniles to adult prison. “Even though I was 15 years old, under the law, I could have been sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor in my case wanted me locked up for 10 years. Luckily, because of my good behavior I got into a transitional program that allowed me to get my high school diploma. The judge chose to sentence me to two years in prison and four years of probation. I’ve paid for my actions and [have] tried to do everything I can to be a good son, father, citizen since I got out of prison. But I should never have been in the adult system, and I’m doing everything I can to keep other children out of it.”

Marquis is Founder and President of Community Outreach Enterprise, a not-for-profit organization geared towards teaching entrepreneurship to youth who have been negatively impacted by the legal system. He was exposed to entrepreneurship firsthand through a six-week course while waiting to be sentenced as an adult. That six-week course elevated his reading level and taught him basic budgeting skills. He also learned how to tie a tie and was shown how to register a business. However, the most impactful life skill he gained was learning how to change his way of thinking. Experience and hands-on training are what Marquis brings to the youth he mentors: both the youth on the streets of high-crime areas and those who are currently serving sentences.

Marquis is currently the regional organizer for the Central Florida chapter of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC), an organization that recently ended a 150-year lifetime ban suppressing the voting rights of the formerly incarcerated. In this capacity, he rallies his fellow returning citizens and guides them

through the process of registering to vote while simultaneously teaching them how to research what to look for in the candidates who will stand up for their interests and rights. He also organizes meetings with local and state politicians so they are aware of the growing needs of his community, advocates for work and housing equality, and licensure reform to allow returning citizens the opportunity to follow their dreams and open their own businesses.

In 2015, Marquis founded The Dirt Master LLC, a residential, commercial, and construction cleaning company which today stands as his success story for those he mentors. He often uses his position to give work opportunities to help young men and women prove to themselves their own potential and value, which ultimately provides them with an elevated sense of self-worth and purpose. Today, Marquis enjoys spending time with his children, helping the community, and speaking at community and civic engagement events.

Jason Fronczek

Ruben Saldana: Messenger, 2020. Photograph, 36 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist



You would never know that the only male coach who helped the Youth MMA Team USA become the current #1 youth team in the world trains kids for free, right in his backyard—literally. Coach Ruben Saldaña started Ru Camp Champs with the mission to keep kids out of prison—a place in which he was incarcerated from adolescence into adulthood. He has created the only youth crime-prevention program in the southern United States which trains kids for free in youth Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), outside, in high-crime areas, successfully competing at the highest levels internationally—and winning.

Ruben is not your typical coach: formerly the “Godfather” of Miami’s biggest street gang in the late ’80s and early ’90s, he was incarcerated for his gang association during that period of his life. When he shares his story, he tells people Ru Camp Champs began in 2005 while he was serving time in Avon Park, nine years before his 2014 release date.

He recalls, “I was missing a bunch of family and friends’ kids growing up while in prison. So, I felt the only thing I could offer them upon release was youth crime-prevention based on my experiences.”

From the rec yard then to his backyard today, fifteen years has proved one thing to Ruben, and that is, “the only way to keep these youth from following in my footsteps is to get out there and teach them how to succeed.”

Today, Ru Camp Champs training takes place in Coach Ruben’s backyard, which is open to any and all who need a safe space to hang out. The only requirement: give 100%.

He is also a member of Credible Messengers, a local chapter of the national organization by the same name, whose primary goal is to find individuals who can connect and develop trust over time. And connect he does—through fitness, MMA, games, travel, animal care, and motivational speeches. He teaches character development centered around “Respect, Responsibility, and Resilience.”

“Training has tons of benefits,” Ruben cites. “Competing in a sports setting can prepare you for real life self-defense and give you real confidence. Training allows you to endure the fears that come with competitions. Competing also teaches restraint because restraint is embedded in the student to use force only when needed. It is frowned upon in any good gym to use your skill and competing techniques otherwise. That’s why it’s important to have mentorship with the training, otherwise you are creating abusers, bullies, and physical specimens.”

Coach Ruben says, “These kids have the opportunity to become what I always wanted to become... It’s ok to start as a poor child... As a leader... I can lead them out of poor circumstances by showing them how to avoid poor decisions.”

Jason Fronczek

Gale Buswell: Advocate, 2020. Photograph, 36 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist



I am Gale Olivia Buswell, the third child of seven. We were raised alone without our father by my mother, Bessie (Little Sister). At the age of 10, I was sent to Albany, New York to stay with my aunt Earnestine, my uncle James, and my cousin, Maria. Maria and I went to a Catholic School at St. Anthony Cathedral. I made good grades in school and was in all the talent shows, May Day events, and Christmas programs.

At the age of 14, I was sentenced to one year in the Alyce D. McPherson School for Girls for shoplifting. In November of 1978, at the age of 21, I was sentenced to three years in prison for aggravated assault. On January 2, 1979, I was transported to the Lowell Correctional Institute for Women. My birthday is April 28, and on April 25, I was called to the Chaplain's office. I knew at that moment that one of my loved ones had passed, so I began praying to God that it wasn't my mother and that it wasn't death.

My mother had died. I said that day that I would never have a happy birthday again. Orange County came and transported me from the prison in Marion County to Orlando Jail for my mother's funeral. I was in jail, and it was different because all the guards showed compassion and concern. I had visits with my family, and they brought me clothes for the wake and the funeral. An officer took me to my mother's wake.

After about an hour or so, we left and he took me back to the jail. He did not handcuff me at the funeral home but, on the way he stopped and told me, "I am sorry for the loss of your mother. The reason we stopped is because I have to handcuff you to bring you back into the jail."

The next day, two officers took me to the funeral. They stayed in the back and allowed me to sit with my family on the front row. Afterwards, they drove me to my mother's house for the repast and let me spend about an hour with my family. A few days later, I was returned to Lowell.

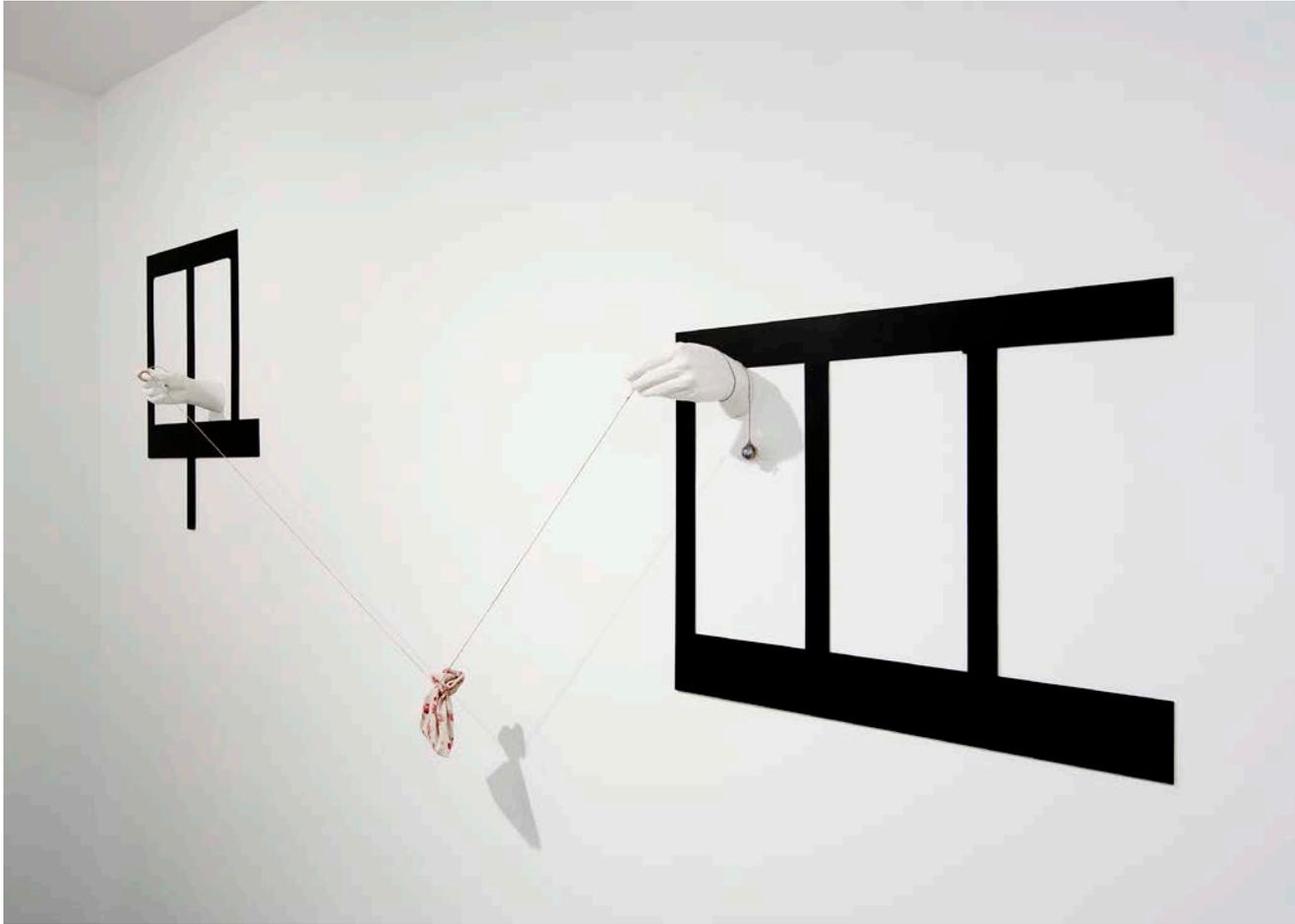
Several months later, I went to work release in Tampa, FL. I was released after six months; I had been sentenced to 13 months.

And that year I had a happy birthday because I came home on my birthday.

In 1986, I received a letter from the Clemency Board, and when I opened it and read it, I found out my civil rights had been reinstated. On March 19, 1988 I gave birth to my one and only son, Courtney Raymon Phillips. At the age of eight months and 28 days, he died. Four months later, I started back doing drugs. I was a functioning addict, working and paying bills. About six months later, I became dysfunctional and stopped working. I started forging checks and was able to pay all my bills easily, and after 10 years, I was arrested and sentenced to 30 days in jail and 2 years probation. Probation was good for me because that's when I realized that I did not want to live that old life anymore. Two years later, I was released from probation and I started working as a chef at Disney. I had to work through agencies because my background always kept me from being hired by the companies themselves. I did well for myself, and I thank God for all He has done for me and brought me through. I accepted Christ as my personal Savior and my Redeemer, and He cleaned me up and opened so many doors for me.

I was finally hired with Crothall, and I worked at the Florida Hospital in Winter Park. After two and a half years, I left. I started working with FEMA. After leaving FEMA in 2017, I came to work at the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition part time as a canvasser. After the petition for Amendment 4, they brought me back on, and the next year I was hired as an Orlando organizer. This is the best time of my life and the happiest moment of my life thus far.

I have so much passion and love as I am working for returning citizens all over Florida. I work to end the disenfranchisement of and discrimination against returning citizens and to create safer communities for people all over Florida. I am actively working toward criminal justice reform for 1.4 million people. I am also a volunteer with ReNEW program for incarcerated women at the John E. Polk Correctional Facility in Seminole County. It is very important to me to be on the right side of history.





Jhafis Quintero

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT

Knockout, 2012. Video still, 1:11 minutes

Mirror, 2017. Video still, 1:27 minutes

Spiders, 2014. Video still, 1:33 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Prótesis' (Prosthesis), 2015. Installation

On loan from Sabrina Amrani Gallery



Daniel McCarthy Clifford

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Brandon (AZ), 2010. Graphite on lunch bag, 14 x 11 inches

Mono (CA), 2010. Graphite on kraft paper, 12 x 10.5 inches

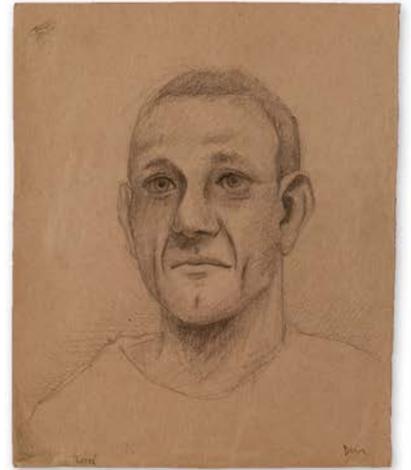
Tesko (NV), 2010. Graphite on chipboard, 11 x 8.5 inches

Leroy Sharpe (TX), 2010. Graphite on lunch bag, 12 x 10 inches

Paisa, 2010. Graphite on lunch bag, 15 x 13.5 inches

Thao Tran (CA), 2010. Graphite on kraft paper, 12 x 8 inches

Courtesy of the artist



Omari Booker

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Rebel, 2018. Oil and razor wire on panel, 36 x 24 inches

Reasonable Doubt, 2015. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

All Lives Matter?, 2017. Oil and toe tag on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

Pick Every Lock, 2016. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the artist





Christopher Etienne

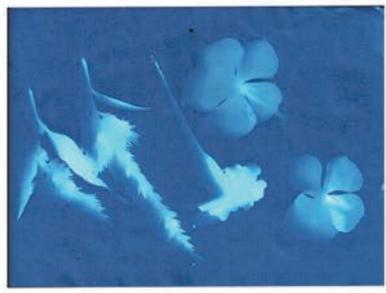
LEFT: *A Poignant Reminder*, 2020. Photograph, 12 x 18 inches

RIGHT: *Power & Solidarity*, 2020. Photograph, 12 x 18 inches

Courtesy of the artist



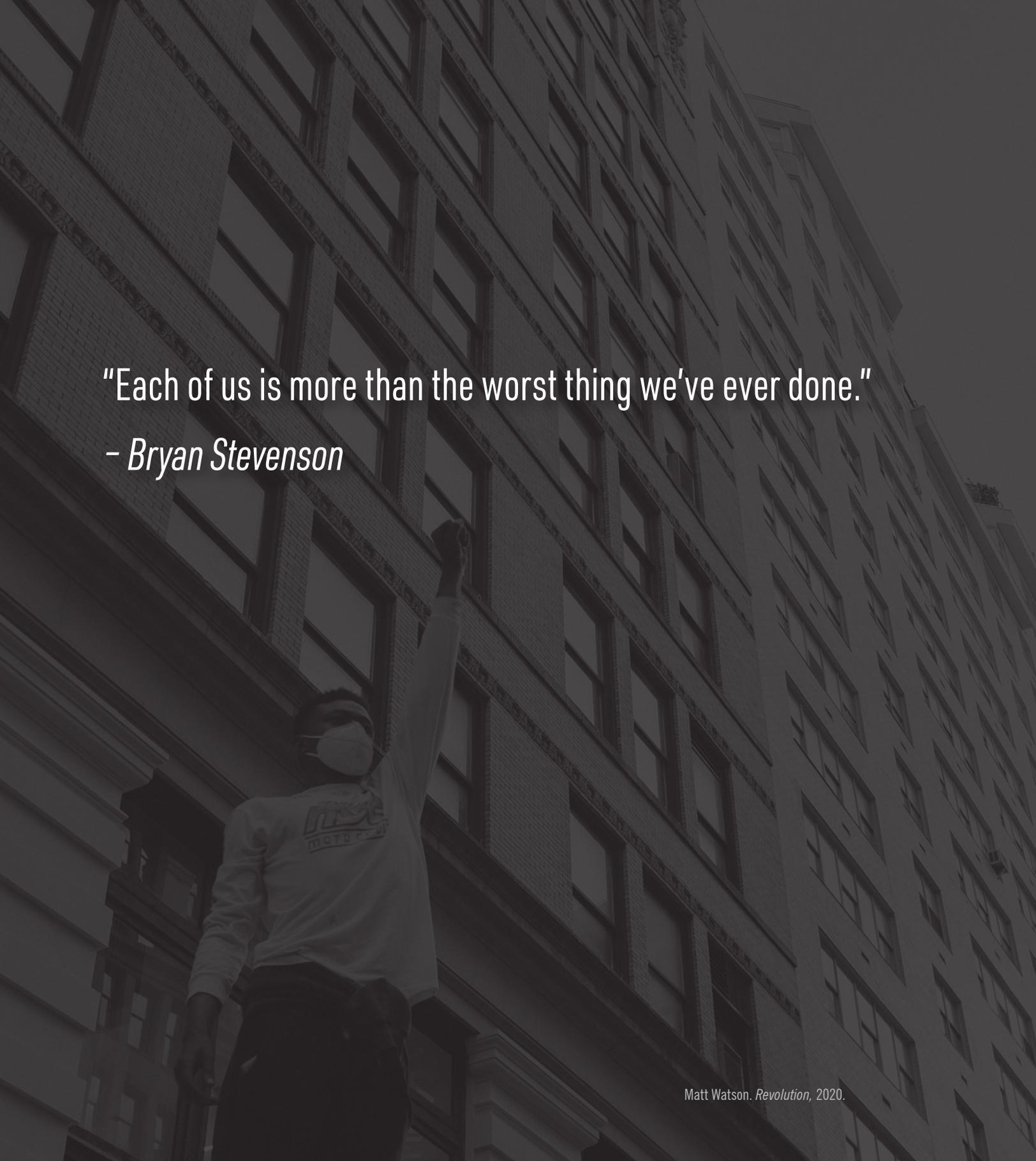




Florida Prison Education Project Students

Untitled, 2019-20. Mixed media installation, dimensions variable.

Courtesy of the artists



"Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done."

- Bryan Stevenson

Contributors

Al Black (b. 1945/47 near Jackson, Mississippi) is one of the Florida Highwaymen artists, a group of African American landscape painters who created over 200,000 paintings between 1955 and 1985, despite facing significant racial and cultural barriers. Black painted landscapes *en plein air* and made a living selling them door-to-door to businesses and from the trunk of his car along A1A and US 1. Black, who served time, painted dozens of murals on the walls of Florida's prisons. A beautiful Florida landscape reminiscent of the two included in this exhibition is painted on the concrete-block wall in the South Unit's Library where FPEP teaches its classes.

Omari Booker (b. 1980 Alexandria, Virginia) is a Nashville-based painter. Largely self-taught, he began painting while incarcerated in Tennessee. He received his BS in graphic design from Tennessee State University in 2014 and has exhibited his work in Nashville, Memphis, Atlanta, and Ft. Lauderdale. He has work in the permanent collections of Vanderbilt University, the Tennessee Higher Education Initiative, and the Florida Prison Education Project.

Courtney Bowles (1974, Richmond, VA) is an artist, educator, and community organizer. She co-founded the People's Library in 2013, which has brought hundreds of individuals together to transform discarded materials into blank books for anyone in the city to fill with their histories. She co-directs the People's Paper Co-op., an advocacy project at the Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia, which raises money to help free incarcerated women.

Keith Calhoun (b. 1955 New Orleans, Louisiana) has been photographically chronicling the African American experience in New Orleans and its surrounding parishes since the early 1980s. Working collaboratively with fellow photographer and wife Chandra McCormick, his work preserves the unique traditions and deep-rooted attributes of Louisiana culture and has been exhibited widely at venues including the 2015 Venice Biennale, Brooklyn Museum, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans Museum of Art, Peace Museum, Ogden Museum of Southern Art, Frist Museum, Baltimore Museum of Art, and MoMa PS1.

Daniel McCarthy Clifford (b. 1988, Albuquerque, New Mexico) earned his BFA in Sculpture and BA in Art History from the University of New Mexico (2014) and completed his MFA at University of Minnesota (2018). He is a recipient of the Hopper Prize (2019), Right of Return USA Fellowship (2019), Jerome Foundation Book Arts Mentorship at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (2019), and was artist-in-residence at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis. He currently serves as the co-convenor of Just Education, a research collaborative at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Minnesota.

Baz Dreisinger (b. 1976 New York, New York) is a professor of English at the City University of New York and the Founding Academic Director of John Jay's Prison-to-College Pipeline Program. She is the author of *Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World* (2016) and Executive Director of the Incarceration Nations Network. Dreisinger and her Prison-to-College Pipeline students came together with conceptual artist Hank Willis Thomas to create the *Writing on the Wall*, which is made from essays, poems, letters, stories, diagrams, and notes written by individuals in prison around the world and accrued by Dreisinger during her years teaching in U.S. and international prisons. The words of the incarcerated—handwritten and typed—are a moving testament to the often ignored humanity of those in prison.

Christopher Etienne (b. 1985 Neptune, New Jersey) is a multi-media strategist with a background in creative writing, journalism, and video production. A second-generation Haitian immigrant, Etienne earned his GED in prison and after his release continued his education at Rutgers University where he received undergraduate degrees in Africana Studies and Journalism (2015). He went on to earn his MA in Journalism from Columbia University (2017) and now owns his own video production company and tutors for the New Jersey STEP program, which assists formerly incarcerated individuals looking to pursue post-secondary education.

Valada Flewellyn (b. 1951 Bessemer, Alabama) is an author, poet, storyteller, and exhibit curator. Her books include *Poetically, Just Us, Yours Truly, Jack & Jill of America into the New Millennium, African Americans of Sanford*, and *For the Children: The History of Jack and Jill of America Incorporated*. She has also created the documentaries *Goldsboro: An American Story, Ensign Jesse Leroy Brown the First African American Naval Fighter Pilot*, and *We Are Still Here*.

Jason Fronczek (b. 1972 Orlando, Florida) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work investigates mass incarceration and mental illness. After spending 4.25 years in prison, Jason continued his education at Valencia College and the University of Central Florida, where he earned his BFA (2016) and MFA (2020). He has exhibited his work at Snap! Downtown and the SouthEast Center for Photography and has work in the permanent collection of the City of Orlando. He currently is a jury-selected artist at McRae Art Studios, and for the past year has taught at the Central Florida Reception Center as part of the Florida Prison Education Project.

Maria Gaspar (b. 1980 Chicago, Illinois) earned her BFA from Pratt Institute and MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Currently an assistant professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she works in installation, sculpture, sound, and performance to challenge social injustices and structural racism. Gaspar's projects have been supported by the Art for Justice Fund, the Robert Rauschenberg Artist as Activist Fellowship, the Creative Capital Award, the Joan Mitchell Emerging Artist Grant, and the Art Matters Foundation.

Shaun Leonardo (b. 1980 in New York, NY) is a Brooklyn-based artist from Queens who received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. He is a recipient of support from Creative Capital, Guggenheim Social Practice, Art for Justice, and *A Blade of Grass*, and has been featured at the Guggenheim, the High Line, and New Museum, and the Maryland Institute College of Art. From fall 2018 through spring 2020, Leonardo enacted socially-engaged projects at Pratt Institute as a School of Art Visiting Fellow.

Chandra McCormick (b. 1957 New Orleans, Louisiana) documents the soul of New Orleans and offers views of a vanishing Louisiana: the demise of manual laborers in the sugar cane and sweet potato fields, the loss of dockworkers and longshoreman on the New Orleans waterfront, and the displacement of African Americans after Katrina. Working with fellow photographer and husband Keith Calhoun, McCormick photographs the traditions of black church services and religious rituals and community rites and celebrations such as parades and jazz funerals. As part of her labor series with Calhoun, she documented the cruel conditions of the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, a former slave-breeding plantation named for the African nation from which "the most profitable" slaves were kidnapped.

Jhafis Quintero (b. 1973 La Chorrera, Panama) began his career as an artist during a ten-year prison sentence in Panama. Working in painting, video, and performance, he explores the physical and psychological struggles induced by isolation. In 2013, he represented Panama at the 55th Venice Biennale with the performance *Protesis* (2013), in which he gave original drawings to viewers as a means of communicating with them. The project was inspired by the surreptitious passing of notes in prison as a way to maintain privacy, social interaction, and a sense of self.

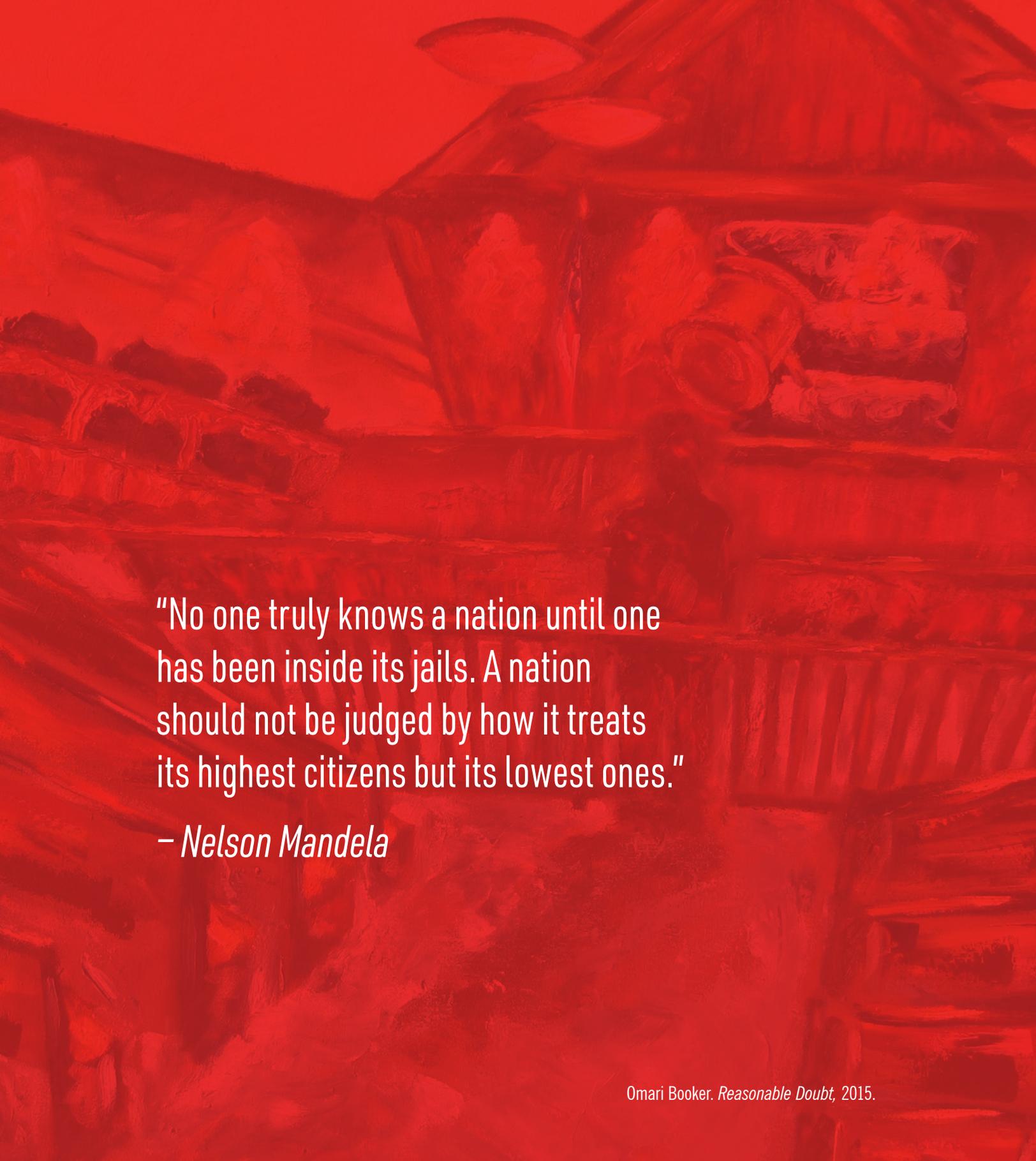
Paul Rucker (b. 1962 Anderson, South Carolina) is a visual artist, composer, and musician who integrates live performance, sound, original compositions, and visual culture into his multimedia installations. The product of a rich interactive process through which he investigates community impacts, human rights issues, historical research, and basic human emotions surrounding a particular subject matter such as the prison-industrial complex, his work has been supported by the Arts for Justice Fund, Creative Capital, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Rauschenberg Foundation, the Smithsonian, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He was the first artist in residence at the new National Museum of African American Culture.

Mark Strandquist (1985, Washington, DC) is a cultural organizer who uses art as a vehicle for connecting diverse communities, and building empathy and support for social justice movements. At the core of his practice lies the belief that those most impacted by the criminal justice system are “the experts that society needs to listen to.” His Performing Statistics project in Richmond, Virginia asked incarcerated youth to create their own police training manuals and a virtual reality police encounter, which are now used to train every police officer in Richmond. With Courtney Bowles, he co-directs the People’s Paper Co-op., an advocacy project that raises money to help free women incarcerated in Pennsylvania.

Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976 Plainfield, New Jersey) is a conceptual photographer whose work addresses issues of identity, politics, popular culture, and mass media as they pertain to American race relations. He earned a BFA in photography and Africana Studies at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts (1998) and an MFA in photography, along with an MA in visual criticism, from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco (2004). With Baz Dreisinger, he created the *Writing on the Wall* to raise awareness about mass incarceration and to galvanize grassroots efforts toward prison reimagining and justice reform.

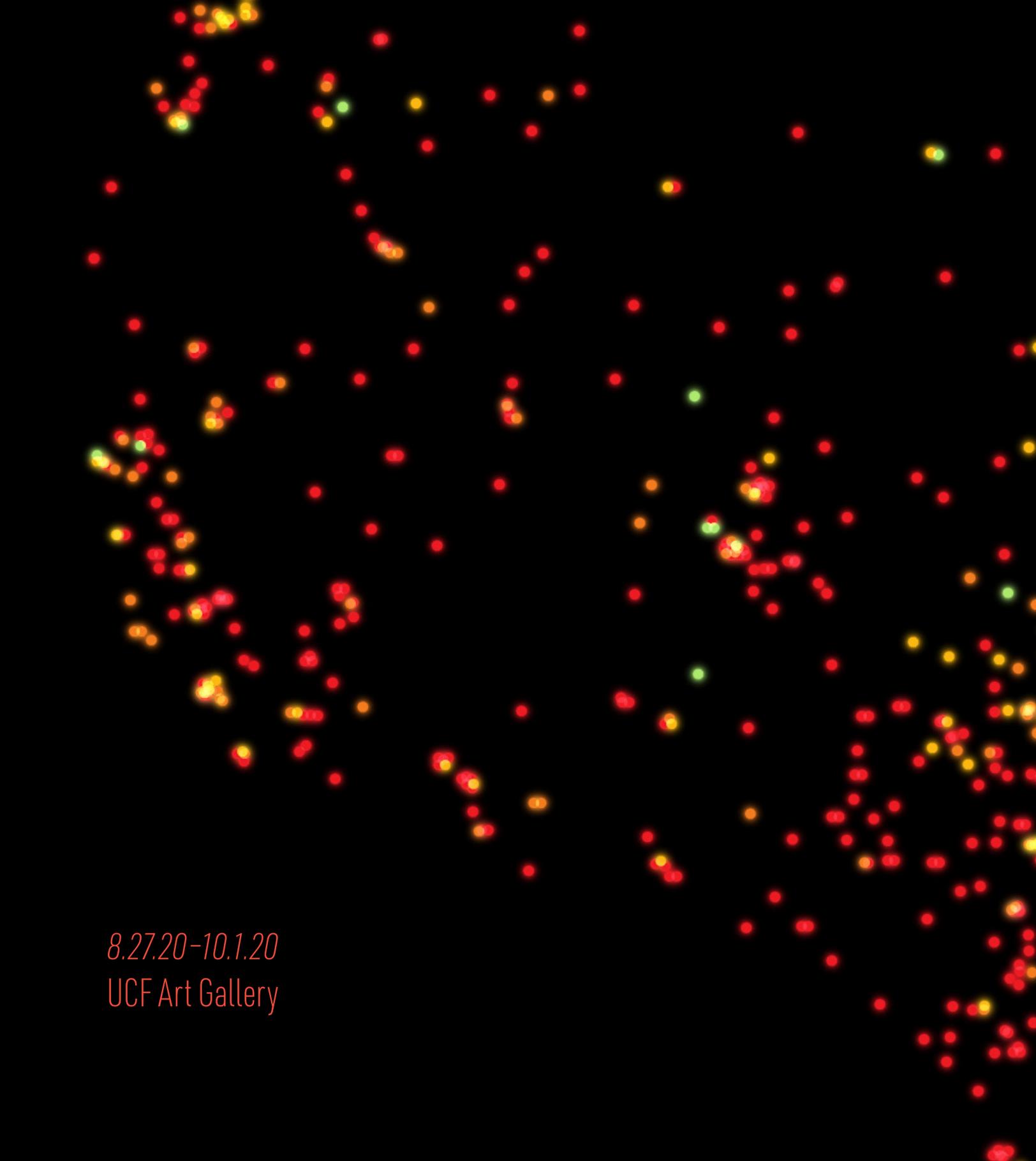
Matt Watson (b. 1987 Miami, Florida) is a New York City-based photographer. Largely self-taught, he lives in Harlem and works as a freelance street photographer and doorman.

Purvis Young (b. 1943 Miami, Florida; died 2010) was a self-taught African American artist known for his expressive collages and paintings made on found objects, including scrap metal, book pages, and discarded envelopes. He began making artwork while incarcerated at Raiford State Penitentiary. He came to the attention of the Miami Art Museum years after his release.



"No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones."

– *Nelson Mandela*



8.27.20-10.1.20
UCF Art Gallery