



**The New York City Council,  
Committee on Juvenile Justice  
Committee on Cultural Affairs  
January 29, 2016**

***"Oversight- Examining Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System"***

**Testimony by  
New York City Administration for Children's Services  
Felipe Franco, Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Youth and Family Justice**

Good morning Chair Cabrera, Chair Van Bramer and members of the Committees on Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations. I am Felipe Franco, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth and Family Justice. With me today is Stephanie Prussack, Associate Commissioner for Detention Services and Jennifer Romelien, Executive Director of Detention Program Services. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the cultural programs and services that ACS and our partners provide for youth in our juvenile detention facilities. Also, on behalf of Commissioner Carrión and my colleagues, I would like to thank Chair Cabrera and the Juvenile Justice Committee for recognizing 27 deserving and committed Crossroads Juvenile Center staff during yesterday's proclamation ceremony.

### **Overview of DYFJ**

The Administration for Children's Services' Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) oversees a continuum of services and programs for youth at every stage of the juvenile justice process. Our mission is to improve outcomes for young people who come into our care, which we strive to accomplish by contracting with agencies that support youth in community-based alternative programs, secure and non-secure detention facilities, non-secure placement residences, and limited-secure placement residences.

DYFJ provides secure and non-secure detention services to young people who are awaiting the conclusion of their family or criminal court case. New York distinguishes between a "juvenile delinquent," which is a young person between the ages of 7-15 who commits a crime is considered a "juvenile delinquent" and a juvenile offender, which is a 13, 14 or 15 year old child who commits a more serious or violent act – such as murder, manslaughter, assault, sexual assault, attempted murder, burglary, arson, or kidnapping and who may be treated under the law as an adult. ACS' 13 non-secure detention residences serve juvenile delinquents, while our two secure detention centers

(Horizon Juvenile Center in the Bronx and Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn) serve both juvenile delinquents and juvenile offenders.

The number of youth admitted to detention has been decreasing for some time. That number has continued to decrease from 2,928 in 2014 to a total of 2,722 in 2015. This has occurred due to a reduction in the number of juvenile arrests, as well as the increased number of community-based alternative programs designed to divert young people from the justice system.

### **Cultural Programs for Young People in Juvenile Detention Facilities**

While young people are in our care, ACS seeks to expose young people in detention to positive programming and services to encourage them to get on a better path. DYFJ and our partners maintain a range of programs and services that provide structured, fun, and developmentally appropriate activities, and culturally enriching experiences for justice-involved young people. Our partner agencies and community-based organizations offer high quality services for our youth and help ACS enhance and expand a network of activities. This testimony will highlight some of the cultural activities that take place within our detention facilities.

We are fortunate to have a number of collaborative partnerships with our sister City agencies and with cultural and educational institutions that provide positive services to the youth in our care. Many of the programs that we speak about today are funded through awards by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development's SONYC (School's Out New York City) program, and some are funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs, through its Cultural Development Fund.

## **The Performing Arts**

One of our partnerships is with Carnegie Hall, the respected New York City musical institution. Once a year, through Carnegie Hall's Musical Connections program, youth in both of our secure detention facilities work with professional musicians to develop and record original compositions. Residents perform these musical works in concerts at the facilities which are attended by their family members, DYFJ staff, and fellow residents. The performances are the culmination of two weeks of collaboration between our residents and Carnegie Hall artists that include lyric development, songwriting, track recording, track mixing, and song rehearsal. We have seen great benefit from the Musical Connections program – staff have reported a positive change in “tone and temperature” around the times these programs take place. Detention residents get to showcase their talents, or discover new ones, and gain exposure to positive activities which they can continue when they return home.

Detention runs a number of other performance art workshops, each of which emphasize different skills and all of which provide an outlet for creative expression:

Drama Club gives our youth an opportunity to learn, write and perform their own skits and plays. Drama Club also features unscripted performances and role playing, which allow youth to learn positive problem solving and conflict resolution skills.

With the help of artists from the Shadow Box Theatre, a puppet making and performance workshop, our youth make their own puppets and perform puppet shows with scripts they create themselves.

Flex Dance Gives young people opportunities for self-expression and self-esteem building through urban dance. Collaborative dance scenes and projects require youth to work together and cooperate, which in turn reinforces team building.

Building Beats allows youth to create their own electronic music. Detention staff has played the music created by youth in this program at family visiting days and other facility events, which allows parents, staff and others to experience and enjoy the musical creativity of our young people.

Youth in our non-secure detention (NSD) group homes have had the opportunity to explore and experience some of our most venerable cultural institutions throughout the City. Through Arts Connection— an arts-in-education organization in the City and its “High Five Tickets to the Arts Programs,” – NSD youth have watched performances by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the New York City Center, the Joyce Dance Company, and the Blue Man Group. They have seen on- and off-Broadway plays and shows at the Apollo Theatre, and have visited several museums throughout the City, including the Museum of Modern Art.

### **Creative Writing**

DYFJ also partners with several community based organizations that use creative writing to encourage positive self-expression. Through the Bronx Writers Corps, youth engage in creative writing with established authors. At the completion of the program, the youth’s work is compiled and published in a book. In a similar program, youth work with Voices UnBroken, which provides youth the opportunity for creative self-expression through the craft of poetry. Another program, Power Writers, allows youth to participate in judgment-free writing activities, poetry and spoken word.

### **Artwork**

Our youth also have the opportunity to express themselves through their own artwork. Art Start is an award-winning creative arts organization that provides creative arts workshops in NYC shelters and alternative schools such as the Passages Academy in both of our secure detention

facilities. Doing Art Together (DAT) is a non-profit arts education organization that provides hands-on programs to under-served audiences. DAT's programs build skills that enhance the ability to learn and are easily transferred from the classroom to life. DAT aims to offer high quality arts education programs that level the educational playing field for children and youth (ages 2 through 22) who come from under-resourced communities.

Our youth have participated in several mural programs with artists from the Groundswell Project and artists from Creative Art Works. These murals depict messages of hope and transformation from our youth and are displayed throughout both secure detention facilities. Two murals created by youth at Horizon are on display in the community health clinic at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx.

The Animation Project (TAP) is a digital technology non-profit that provides animation through art therapy. TAP uses digital art technology as a tool to change the lives of youth.

### **Closing**

Thank you for the opportunity to share the important work we are doing to address the cultural needs of young people in our juvenile justice facilities. We appreciate the Council's ongoing support as we continue to strive toward improving services for the City's most vulnerable youth. We, as well as the other city agencies represented today, are happy to take your questions.





# CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2016

January 29, 2016

## Oversight: Examining Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System

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Chairman Van Bramer, Chairman Cabrera, Members of the Council Committees on Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and Intergroup Relations. My name is David Freudenthal and I am grateful to the City Council for considering this important issue, and for the chance to speak today about Carnegie Hall's work in New York City's juvenile justice system.

I must start by commending Commissioner Carrion and her fantastic team at the Administration for Children's Services for including arts in their portfolio of solutions in their justice reinvestment initiative. Together—along with the other organizations in the room today—we have shown the power of arts and culture to engage these young people and help them to get on track.

I shall focus on two aspects of Carnegie Hall's role—our direct service to young people in secure and non-secure settings, and our efforts to build pathways so they do not come back into the system:

1. Over the past seven years, Carnegie Hall has made a deep investment in direct service to young people in the City's juvenile justice system. Our programs link participants to a variety of musical experiences designed to have a powerful impact on their daily lives. Within ACS settings, we are providing songwriting workshops reaching court-involved young people in secure detention facilities—Horizons Juvenile Center in the Bronx and Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn. In addition to ACS, Carnegie Hall partners with the Department of Education's Passages Academy and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring these workshops to young people in non-secure placement facilities—Belmont Academy in Brooklyn and the Bronx Hope Academy. In FY16 we will reach nearly 300 young people.

Led by artists with experience in the justice system, each workshop provides students with 28 hours of focused music learning, including: songwriting sessions; rehearsals; a launch concert; a recording session; and final performances at facilities and Carnegie Hall for peers, family, and friends.

Participants develop and express their musical skills, but they do so much more than that. They work closely with peers and build connections to their schools and neighborhoods, giving them an increased sense of agency and personal motivation, while reinforcing positive decision-making. Young people learn about their strengths and interests, and build positive self-esteem at a time of uncertainty. Participants self-select music as an afterschool option and explore their strengths, skills, and interests in creative ways. They experience tangible accomplishments and build pathways to continue their interests in music beyond the workshop.

This past Wednesday, I witnessed a concert at Carnegie Hall of Belmont Academy students performing songs inspired by West Side Story. The songs created by participants were powerful. In addition to this performance, those 20 young people will get a letter of recommendation for their case file, and earn half of a general elected credit from the Department of Education. More importantly, they have an introduction to opportunities that lie ahead; at the end of the program, we told the young participants to look to the kids in the back working on the production and how they were in a similar place last year. We emphasized that they can be in their place doing production work next year!



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2. Carnegie Hall believes that it is important to support kids through programs in secure/non-secure placement, but it is more important to make sure they do not cycle back into the system. We are invested in doing both on behalf of the City's young people. Carnegie Hall is working with community partners to set up three pathways for young people as they make the transition out of the justice system:

**School:** Many kids return to schools with no arts program. Carnegie Hall is in conversation with District 79's Transition Specialist to formalize pathways for talented young people to continue arts engagement after leaving placement. We are also in conversation with Celia Cruz H.S. about transitioning talented kids to this performing arts high school as a way to keep them engaged in school.

**Community partnerships:** Through our partnerships with *Close to Home* (CCA, Sheltering Arms, DYCD, Good Shepherd Services, SCO and others) and *The Door: A Center for Alternatives*, young people can find pathways to job training and placement, health and mental health services, legal assistance, GED and ESOL classes, homework help, college prep, job training and placement, supportive housing, sports and recreational activities, arts, and nutritious meals.

Through presentations at the Arts in Education Roundtable and other outreach efforts, Carnegie Hall is also engaging our colleagues in arts organizations all over NYC in getting involved and providing services for these kids. Through our partnership with the Department of Probation, Carnegie Hall is also leveraging opportunities citywide through NeON Arts: over 35 organizations have created arts-based programs to serve seven DOP NeON (Neighborhood Opportunity Network) communities.

**Year-long Out-of-School-Time Youth Programs at Carnegie Hall's Resnick Education Wing:** Kids who discover Carnegie Hall's workshops in detention and placement can transition into weekly afterschool workshops in our Resnick Education Wing. These workshops provide three tracks: Digital Music Production, Songwriting, and Concert Production and Design – which offers young people professional opportunities to work/train as ushers and production staff at Carnegie Hall events. These Youth Programs also support young people who come to us from DHS, Probation, ACS Foster Care, and from public high schools in all five boroughs. Given the 40-50% recidivism rate for juvenile offenders, every week a young person is engaged in programs is a week they are not under court-mandated supervision.

We thank the Council for interest in this area, and we encourage the Council to support programs that:

- **Build on strengths:** Much of what is assessed in Juvenile Justice is risk-based. We must work together to identify young people's strengths, interests, and talents in order to find the right opportunities that engage them toward success. The arts help to do this in spades.
- **Build on technology and transparency:** Many adults are working together in this effort. We need to continue to look for ways that technology and transparent communication help networks of adults coordinate on behalf of young people.
- **Invest in youth development:** Give young people a voice and continue to invest in youth development strategies in these settings.
- **Invest in evaluation:** Through our own work, we have had NEA-funded evaluation about the positive effect of the work in secure detention. We could use more research and evaluation pointing to the effectiveness of youth development strategies in justice settings.

Thank you, and thanks to ACS, our partner agencies, and fellow arts organizations for believing in these transformational changes.



***"Drama Club makes you release stress cause you express your feelings – you can tell your life and nobody can tell it's your life." S. 16, Drama Club participant, Crossroads Juvenile Center, Brownsville, Brooklyn***

Good morning Chair Cabrera and the members of the Committee on Juvenile Justice and Chair Van Bramer and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. I am Josie Whittlesey, the founder and Executive Director of Drama Club, a non-profit that provides theater programming to incarcerated youth in NYC. Thank you for the opportunity to share the powerful work we are doing with a population that is commonly referred to as "the most vulnerable youth in NYC".

Drama Club provides theater programming as a means of developing empathy, promoting academic growth and empowering the individual through self-expression. Current year-round weekly theater classes take place at both secure detention centers in New York City: Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brownsville, Brooklyn and Horizon Juvenile Center in the South Bronx. We also offer our program to the young people detained at RNDC, the jail for adolescent boys on Rikers Island, which is currently being offered as part of the NYC Department of Education (DOE) program, Saturday Academy. We are working towards expanding our partnership the DOE and have discussed the possibility of the youth receiving school credit for their participation in Drama Club, as well as extending our programming to the adolescent girls residing at the Rose M. Singer complex.

We directly serve approximately one hundred youth per year at each secure detention center and approximately fifty youth at Rikers.

#### **Drama: A Proven Method for At-Risk Youth**

According to "The Power of Art: Arts in Juvenile Justice: Intervention and Aftercare", a comprehensive report prepared for the California Endowment, art programs for incarcerated youth have been shown to reduce violence and recidivism. They report, "youth in the juvenile justice system who have participated in art programs display important pro-social and mental health characteristics, including greater self-efficacy, the ability to express themselves, improved attitudes toward school, and appropriate behavior and communication with adults and peers." Evidence increasingly shows that arts-based programs improve executive functions in children. These include the ability to control emotions, focus thoughts, develop empathy toward others and control reward-motivated impulses, all skills linked to lowering recidivism. *The Arts as an Effective Intervention Strategy For At-Risk Youth* report, "the arts provide adolescents with the risk-taking they need developmentally, provides them with meaning and significant mentor relationships,

and supplies social connectivity and accountability. Arts programs have been found to contribute to brain development and provide a cultural opening to knowledge of the world and self."

### **Drama Club**

In order to address young people's limited ability to focus, impulse control issues and varied literacy rates, Drama Club relies heavily on improvisational theatre as our core curriculum. Improvisation is play. It involves healthy risk taking and decision making in a safe environment, allowing youth to establish and explore the rules of the world they have created, an empowering and self-reflective exercise. Improvisation is an especially powerful tool for youth as it is loosely structured so that participants can establish the rules of the world they are creating. The program cultivates focus, self-expression, impulse awareness, teamwork, self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment in participants.

Core program benefits include:

**Conflict Resolution:** The core of any good improvised scene is conflict, challenging students to examine what a conflict is, what causes conflict, and most importantly, alternative ways to resolving conflict. Because physical violence in scene work is prohibited in Drama Club, youth are encouraged to find nonviolent and creative solutions to conflict, providing a safe way of practicing conflict resolution. For example, instead of reaching for an imaginary pistol, students need to find a way to resolve their conflicts with words. One of the primary rules of improv is "never say no". Drama Club's rules of improv include "no killing" (thus ending the scene) and "no arguing or fighting" (this is boring in improv). The restriction on the use violence is the only censorship we place of the improvisations; it is very important for the youth to express themselves in their own language, set scenes in environments they know, and explore subjects important to them.

*"I like acting cause you get to be different people, like you get to have a lot of personalities. When you step in their shoes like some are crazy and some you can understand. Next time you come into a situation you can solve it" --R. 16, Horizon Juvenile Center, South Bronx*

**Harnessing Emotion:** The process of creating a character takes a student outside of him/herself into a different persona. Despite how they are feeling, acting allows a student to take control of their feelings and harness their emotions into powerful, positive change. They can practice how they react to different situations, and gain power over their circumstances as a result. Drama Club provides a safe space to explore a possibility of one's self, different from the circumstances one has found oneself in; a scared youth can become brave, a youth afraid to express their emotions can find their voice. Drama Club takes students out of their past, present and future circumstance and gives them a vision of a new way of life. Students have the opportunity to process and express their inner feelings and find ways to channel their emotions into positive outlets, while building trust with others and gaining confidence in abilities they may have not previously known they possessed.

*"I think Drama Club is kinda cool. It allows you to express your feelings and take out anger in a positive way." -- L. 14, Drama Club participant, Horizon Juvenile Center, South Bronx*

**Connecting with Others:** Even the most disadvantaged young person can develop positively when connected to the right mix of opportunities, supports, positive roles, and relationships. Drama Club provides a vehicle for students to engage with one another in a safe, supportive learning environment. Youth have the opportunity to connect with others facing very similar, as well as their own unique, challenges, enabling them to see that they are not alone. These important connections allow troubled young people to learn that while they may have made mistakes, they are capable of learning new skills, improve peer and adult interactions, and focus on positive and constructive ways of dealing with problems and communication. Students also gain a respect and understanding for their peers, gaining attention for acting, not acting out. When not onstage, fellow students in the audience are developing essential listening and attending skills.

***"I found out my fellow peers is talented. I thought a lot of them couldn't do anything but get locked up, but they're talented!" -- C. 16, Drama Club participant, Crossroads Juvenile Center, Brownsville, Brooklyn***

**Improved Communication:** Theater is storytelling. And storytelling is powerful. It allows an individual or group to organize information and events from their lives into a narrative, which can then be communicated to someone else. It also allows for people to see and process the patterns in their lives and make sense of them. Participants actively practice negotiation, listening and responding, articulation, projection, eye contact, and grounding. Not resorting to violence forces these skills, which will help them in life and in court.

***"I like the Drama program for the simple fact that I release my expressions. I learn certain things like trying not to be nervous and not to be shy. It's good to learn these things cause to me it's learning a way of life." -- L. 14, Drama Club participant, Crossroads Juvenile Center, Brownsville, Brooklyn***

**Drama as Education:** Drama Club utilizes differentiated instruction which provides different students with different avenues of learning, often the most successful teaching technique and especially useful when working with incarcerated youth who often struggle with reading and literacy. Drama Club engages learners on multiple levels by allowing them to be physically part of a story in improvisation, then move to dissecting, understanding and disseminating a text from a play before translating the author's viewpoints into performance. We incorporate plays, using texts that are high quality yet accessible for students of different ages and learning levels. Drama Club gets students out from behind a desk and on their feet, creating multiple entry points for students to access and engage with the various texts presented. For example, by analyzing characters in "Oedipus El Rey," a modern adaption of the Oedipus tale set in an Los Angeles barrio, students examine why we make the choices we do, and how those choices directly affect both ourselves and others. Our introductory games (*e.g.* picking a sentence out of a bag to be used as the first line of an improv scene) allow us to assess reading levels, and programming is adapted based on the group's general literacy rate. We have witnessed youth enter the program struggling to read and by the end of the program, reading with ease.

While learning and engaging in ensemble-based team building and theatre making technique, participants cultivate a basic understanding of team-based writing, improvisational theatre, acting, and theatre-based vocabulary including: projection,

enunciation, stage directions, cheating out, character, stakes/commitment, where/who/what, "yes, and...", objectives and tactics. The students also learn about the fundamentals of a narrative: how characters express different points of view, what makes a character, what creates conflict, and what engages us as an audience.

Drama Club supports students academically by creating an on-your-feet curriculum to help students access and engage creatively with reading, speaking and listening skills essential to life as a productive, thriving member of their communities and society at large. Every effort is made to align Drama Club's curriculum and activities with Common Core State Learning Standards, carried out by our Director of Education, a New York City Department of Education certified teacher who has extensive knowledge of the Common Core. Drama Club is engaged in conversations with the New York City Department of Education to allow for participants to receive school credit for their work in our program. This will aid in their educational achievement and move them closer to graduating; for criminal justice-involved youth who are notoriously behind on their academic progress, gaining school credit is vital.

***"You are tricking these kids to have academic success!" -- Administrator at Horizon***

### **Program Activities**

An emphasis is placed on a final performance, with the program culminating in a showing for families, peers, and staff. Placing an emphasis on the final act encourages the youth to persevere with the program, even on the more difficult days. Most importantly, it allows the participants to feel successful, receive positive validation for their accomplishments, and build self-esteem and a positive self-image; something to which these youth typically do not have access. These performances are mutually beneficial for children and their families as it is also immensely meaningful to family members to witness their loved one succeed in front of a supportive audience. Likewise, parents have remarked how proud they were to see their children show their talents, sometimes for the very first time. A proud mother recently stated:

***"My child was given a chance to show her talents."***

Her daughter stated:

***"I had a lot of strange people coming up to me talking about 'good job.' My mom was crying. She was really proud of me. Really, really proud of me."***

In post-evaluation surveys completed by youth involved with Drama Club, 100% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- ***Drama Club has helped me feel more comfortable speaking in front of an audience.***
- ***Drama Club has improved my ability to be a team player.***
- ***Drama Club has helped me enjoy learning.***
- ***Drama Club has helped me have more courage.***

**Brooklyn Public Library testimony to the  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup  
Relations Jointly with the Committee on Juvenile Justice**

**January 29, 2016, 10:00 AM  
250 Broadway - Committee Rm, 14th Fl.**

***Oversight - Examining Cultural Non-Profits in the New York  
City Juvenile Justice System.***

Good morning.

I am Nick Higgins, director of Brooklyn Public Library's Outreach Services Department.

I'd like to thank Chairs Cabrera and Van Bramer, and all the committee members for the opportunity to testify today.

BPL's Outreach team serves veterans, seniors, immigrants, and other Brooklynites with unique and often overlooked needs, including those in the city's correctional systems.

In addition to our work in Brooklyn's 60 branches, my team provides library services in senior centers, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities.

The Library has longstanding relationships with several juvenile educational and correctional institutions, including ACS secure and non-secure detention sites and DOC facilities housing adolescents.

We have hosted book giveaways and career day events at Passages Academy, and have regularly deployed the Bookmobile to Crossroads Juvenile Center to deliver library materials to residents and conducted library card drives at the center.

In the past year, we also worked with ACS and staff in non-secure sites to offer photography classes in partnership with the Josephine Herrick Project. This year, with support from the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Humanities, we plan to launch a Great Stories Club at Crossroads.

Books chosen for the club will resonate with reluctant readers who struggle with complex and deeply personal challenges. The club will help young people in detention develop critical reading skills and articulate their responses to literature in a positive, nurturing environment.

In late December, we launched a similar Great Stories Club for adolescents at Rikers Island that will serve as a model for the program we intend to establish at Crossroads.

In fact, we are pleased that we've been able to provide services for adults and adolescents detained in Department of Corrections facilities for several years.

The Robert N. Davoren Center on Riker's Island is home to 21 small reading rooms established last year by Brooklyn Public Library to serve incarcerated adolescents.

A jail cell was taken offline in each of the 21 housing areas; the toilets, sinks, and beds were replaced with bookshelves provided by DOC and stocked by Outreach Services staff.

Our team makes weekly visits to refresh the collections and talk to the young men about their reading and programmatic needs.

Another program of which we are particularly proud is Telestory, which facilitates virtual story times, sing-alongs, and other bonding activities for fathers detained in any of our city's jails and their children.

The program, unique among US libraries, invites children to come to our welcoming libraries and visit with their incarcerated parents through live video.



Since its launch in the spring of 2014, we have expanded Telestory to invite parents to visit with their incarcerated teen children. We know that frequent, positive family interactions can help incarcerated young people reintegrate more successfully into the community upon their release.

While we have experienced a great deal of success with Telestory, uniting more than 130 families since the program's launch, I would like to share a story that is illustrative of the challenges faced by families impacted by the justice system.

Last spring, a mother asked if we could facilitate a video conference with her son, a detainee in the RND Center at Rikers.

Outside of his tan uniform, the young man on the video screen at Central Library looked like any 18-year-old: tall and skinny, polite but fidgety, a bit unsure of himself.

The visit was a success. In the following weeks, the young man's mother returned three more times. She and her son had space and privacy to discuss his education, family news, and their plans for his return home.

In a perfect world, the story would conclude here, on a happy, or at least a hopeful, note.

Sadly, the family ultimately discontinued the video conferences when the young man told his mother he was experiencing harassment by the others in his housing unit for being pulled out to visit with his mother.

Clearly, we face enormous challenges in the juvenile justice system, and Brooklyn Public Library is eager to help the city address them.

We will join our city and non-profit partners in efforts to make family unification an accepted norm at all stages of a child's justice involvement: through in-person programming and visits and the use of innovative technology like videoconferencing.

We are preparing to expand the Telestory program to four additional locations in February: New Lots, New Utrecht, Macon, and Sunset Park libraries.

Each branch was selected based on the demographics of their neighborhoods: At New Utrecht and Sunset Park, the technology will serve homebound seniors who cannot physically visit the library. Immigrants will utilize it to consult with our expert immigration counselors.

At New Lots and Macon, libraries located in neighborhoods with high rates of incarceration, we will provide access for families who wish to visit with their incarcerated loved ones.

# # #

With branches located in every Brooklyn neighborhood, the Library's reach into the community is unmatched by any other civic institution.

We are a resource in all of our neighborhoods, and a refuge in many of them.

With early literacy programs, homework help, free cultural events, college preparation courses, and many more resources for young people, our aim is to set every child we serve on a path to literacy, stability, and success.

We are proud to partner with the city to serve Brooklynites from every walk of life, including juveniles in the criminal justice system.

Thank you for giving us the chance to do what we do best for the people who need us most.

I am happy to answer any questions the committees might have. Thank you.



**Statement by Kim McNeil Capers, Coordinator for Outreach, Queens Library  
New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International  
Intergroup Relations, Jointly with the Committee on Juvenile Justice**

**Examining Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System**

January 29, 2016

Good morning. My name is Kim McNeil Capers, Outreach Coordinator at Queens Library. Thank you Chair Van Bramer and Chair Cabrera for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify today on the important work Queens Library has done, and is doing, to serve youth in the juvenile justice system. In addition to serving this population, Queens Library provides educational programs and services for at-risk youth, as well as those recently released from incarceration.

Queens Library prides itself on the dynamic range of programs and services offered to our customers. It might be surprising to some present to learn that Queens Library is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> year of doing correctional outreach. At the Queensboro Correctional Facility, we provide youth with multiple program choices such as book clubs, resume writing workshops, and transitioning to technology courses. Seventy (70) youth participated in these various programs in the past year.

While it is unquestionably important to provide beneficial and practical services to incarcerated youth, Queens Library believes it is equally important to provide services to those who have been recently released from jail.

As part of the City's Young Men Initiative, the Library received funding from the Department of Probation over a three-year period to help implement a program called Community Education Pathways to Success. Program components included instructional math and literacy classes, case management and referral services, and service learning and job shadowing. The goal of the program is to raise literacy levels for youth on probation, to help them obtain a High School Equivalency diploma (HSE) and perhaps pursue higher education.

According to the Department of Probation, of the approximately 8,800 sixteen to twenty-four (16-24) year-olds on probation, more than 70% do not have either a high school or an HSE diploma. In the three years we received funding for this literacy program, we have served about 85 youth.

Queens Library worked with the Queens District Attorney's office and was an active participant in their Second Chance Program for fifteen years. We funded and conducted teen empowerment programs, self-esteem building programs, resume workshops, employment and school alternatives programs, and artistic and financial planning programs. In fifteen years, these programs served approximately 800 youth.

In partnership with Queens Law Associates (QLA), Queens Library has implemented a Youth Justice Court program at the Queens Library for Teens located in Far Rockaway. This was made possible by funding from Council Member Donovan Richards, so a special thank you to him for this and his steadfast support of the work we do.

Youth Justice Courts are an essential tool facilitating both accountability and opportunities for exposure to peer intervention and the positive impact it provides. The Youth Justice Court is a court run by young adults in the community who choose to become members of the program. This program empowers them to become peer leaders both in school and in the community. By developing a sense of civic responsibility, these youth are cultivated into effective advocates for themselves and others. By learning the foundations of the justice system, participants are empowered to shape and decide what justice means in the Far Rockaway community. The goal is to provide an alternative response to youth crime, and to educate young people about the justice system.

The Youth Justice Court also provides an opportunity for youth participants who are cited for misbehavior to answer to a court of their peers. Youth participants in the program are held accountable for their actions, but afforded an opportunity for positive change. Each case is presented using the following steps:

- First, referral sources identify, screen, and approve cases before sending them to the Youth Justice Court.
- Next, the victim, the victim's parent/guardian, the referred youth participant, and the referred youth participant's parent/guardian all must sign releases to have the case accepted into Youth Justice Court.
- Then, the members will prepare the case for a hearing.
- Finally, under close attorney supervision provided by Queens Law Associates, a hearing takes place to determine appropriate consequences. Consequences reflect restorative justice ideals focused on reintegrating youth participants and encouraging them to play a more positive role in their communities.

The Youth Justice Court began in July 2015 with a six-week intensive training program for members. Members were trained to function as their adult counterparts from the criminal court system (judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, etc.). Trainings incorporated a variety of teaching methods such as: lectures, simulations, discussions, and experiential learning. We work with and engage members of the NYPD, Queens Criminal Court, Defense Bar, Department of Probation and Queens District Attorney's Office to serve as guest trainers and further community involvement. Thirty (30) youth per month participate in this program.

The Queens Library is proud of the work it does to serve at-risk youth and those that are in the juvenile justice system. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in government and in the community, in an effort to expand and provide more of these types of services for a population sorely in need of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Theatre Education in the Juvenile Justice System: Transforming Young Lives**

**Submitted by Judy Tate**

*Founding Artistic Director of Stargate Theatre Company & MTC Board Member  
January 29, 2016*

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Judy Tate, and I'm speaking on behalf of Manhattan Theatre Club, a not-for-profit theatre company that annually produces a season of eight plays — mostly new work — on and off Broadway. I am a member of MTC's Board of Directors, a senior teaching artist with its Education Program, and the Founding Artistic Director of its Stargate Theatre Company, one of our programs for court-involved young people.

Manhattan Theatre Club has been a leader in theatre education for more than 25 years. As a side note, our Education Program reaches one or more schools in eight of the districts represented by Council Members on the Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs committees. Reaching court-involved youth is a special focus; I'm proud to say we have been working in the juvenile justice system for over 20 years now. We focus on these kids both because they are so dramatically underserved by the arts, and because of the great value the arts hold for them.

Through our Stargate Theatre Company and Write on the Edge (or WrOTE) playwriting programs, court-involved young people build reading and language skills through creative writing and play analysis activities. (As research shows a strong correlation between low literacy, dropping out of school, and involvement in the criminal justice system, these benefits are particularly important for the populations we serve.) Stargate and WrOTE also give young people opportunities to safely and effectively express their ideas and emotions, improve communication skills, develop empathy as they identify with characters, and practice cooperation with their peers.

In addition to helping to build vital academic, social, and learning skills, Stargate and WrOTE also give young people opportunities to process past experiences and the consequences of their actions in a supportive environment, and a chance to envision new, productive ways of engaging with their communities and society at large. For young people who are struggling to graduate or are involved in the justice system, giving theatrical voice to a more healthful and hopeful version of their current realities can be a critical first step to charting paths toward a brighter future. Recent brain research and neurobiological studies are amassing powerful evidence that creating such fictional alternative images of one's life can have strong positive impact on behaviors and social interactions in the real world. Through Stargate and WrOTE, we help young people take this critical first step.

MTC's work in the juvenile justice system began in the early 1990s with the WrOTE program. In WrOTE residencies, students write original plays inspired by MTC productions that they have studied and, where possible, attended. A team of teaching artists who are also professional actors, directors and writers collaborate with classroom teachers to supervise the writing and revision process; each residency culminates in a performance of the students' work by the professional actors.

MTC offers two main versions of WrOTE. WrOTE I is an 11-session classroom residency that primarily serves at-risk youth. Participating students study and attend one of MTC's productions, and then students write and revise their own plays based on themes in the MTC work. MTC also offers a specially modified version of WrOTE, WrOTE II, for young people at juvenile detention facilities, who typically cannot attend an MTC play due to their incarceration. To launch the writing process in WrOTE II residencies, guest actors perform scenes in the classroom from past MTC productions and other classical and contemporary plays. These excerpts generate discussion and ultimately a theme that serves as the residency's writing prompt. WrOTE II residencies then precede much like WrOTE I residencies. As in WrOTE I, students' plays are performed by professional actors at each residency's conclusion, usually in an assembly with some or all of the rest of the student body as audience. Both WrOTE I and II residencies are generally completed within 5-8 weeks.

All WrOTE programs help foster college and workforce readiness through an emphasis on timely submissions of scripts and a deadline-oriented approach to learning that encourages discipline and responsibility. Students build oral communication and interpersonal skills as well as accountability as they learn to offer and receive critical input from their peers. In addition, WrOTE's central focus on revision imparts a set of processes and habits of mind that are indispensable for students after graduation.

In 2014-15, we offered WrOTE II programs for about 60 young people each year at five juvenile detention facilities around the city, including the East River Academy at Rikers Island, and four Passages Academy sites in the Bronx and Brooklyn. This year we will be piloting a playwriting residency with a newly opened Low Security Placement in the Bronx. WrOTE I serves about 500 young people annually at 20 other sites, nearly all of which are alternative schools around the five boroughs. These include Pathways to Graduation sites, which help young people ages 18-21 earn a high school equivalency diploma, and Young Adult Borough Centers, which offer evening academic programs for high school students who are behind in credit, considering dropping out, or have adult responsibilities in the daytime.

Evaluation of past WrOTE programs provides strong evidence that these residencies positively impact student literacy. For example, last year, MTC examined how WrOTE programs support student attainment of Common Core Writing standards. We used a comparison of early and final drafts of student-written plays to evaluate the extent to which they evidenced improvement related to demonstrated competency in written Characterization, Conflict, Setting, Plot, and Language. On average, student scores in each of these areas increased by at least 51% from their early drafts to final drafts, and scores for Conflict, Setting and Plot each increased over 80%.

Comments from teacher surveys reinforce these results, and provide some insight into the broader impact of WrOTE programs on participating students. One teacher recently wrote, "the MTC

workshop has been successful in promoting considerable improvement in the writing ability of the majority of the participants. Comments from students indicate growth in positive self-esteem, increased self-confidence as well as understanding the value of having an education.” Another wrote, “Students displayed an enthusiasm for the work done. They also displayed the ability to work cooperatively, critiquing each other’s work and offering suggestions for improvement.”

Recognizing a need for more in-depth programs for court-involved young people, MTC launched the Stargate Theatre Company in 2013. The program was conceived by Education Director David Shookhoff, myself (Judy Tate), and psychologist and juvenile justice expert Evan Elkin, who at the time was a Deputy Director at the Vera Institute of Justice. (Evan now participates in an advisory capacity as a consultant.)

Each summer, Stargate Theatre Company provides 10-15 court-involved young men aged 16-21 with transitional employment, work-readiness training, and literacy education in a creative theatrical environment intended to improve members’ employment prospects while boosting their skills and self-esteem. In total, 39 young men have completed one or more Stargate sessions in the past three summers.

Stargate company members meet for three hours almost every afternoon for seven weeks in July and August. Together with my Co-artistic Director, Stephen DiMenna, I lead company members through a range of structured writing, acting and team-building activities. The first three weeks focus on writing on themes such as “my neighborhood” and “who I really am.” The company reads and discusses poetry by writers such as Langston Hughes and Nikki Giovanni, as well as relevant newspaper articles (e.g., an op-ed piece about Trayvon Martin); many texts serve as writing prompts as well. These reading and writing experiences foster literacy and critical thinking skills. Through this process, we help the group shape a working script for a collage theatre piece.

In later weeks, company members rehearse the piece and revise the script as they memorize lines and master choreography taught by a professional choreographer. The program culminates with a performance of the collaboratively written play at New York City Center for an audience of family, friends, the local community, probation officers, and other key members of the young men’s support networks. (For video from past Stargate Theatre Company performances, visit <http://www.manhattantheatreclub.com/education/stargate/>).

The primary aim of Stargate is not so much to turn company members into theatre artists (though we would welcome that outcome), but rather to instill in them crucial workplace and life skills—e.g., discipline, resilience, teamwork, creative problem solving—that will help them become happy and productive workers and community members. To build job readiness skills, MTC employs Stargate company members, paying them minimum wage, and teaching them the importance of punctuality and attendance, workplace behavior, and team problem-solving. Company members have their pay docked for lateness or absence; receive coaching in proper workplace attitudes and “soft skills” such as commitment to participation and collaboration; and participate in résumé writing and job-interview workshops presented by MTC Human Resources staff and guest speakers. Members are terminated for repeated violations of company policies.

We have already seen great success among Stargate company members from our first few years. Of the 16 young men who completed the 2013 and/or 2014 summer programs, three have been



accepted to colleges, one enrolled in Write Now!, MTC's intensive, after-school playwriting program, one got an internship with a video production company, and one secured a job--with MTC's assistance--as an usher at a midtown theatre.

In addition to demonstrating gains in their literacy and job readiness skills, Company members have also found their Stargate experience helpful both emotionally and practically. Comments from participants include:

—*“I now understand myself better because of Stargate Company... Thank you again for changing my life.”*

—*“Thank you for giving me an outlet to express myself... the chance to meet people and go places I wouldn't have known were open for me.”*

—*“Stargate changed the way I handle situations, like school and issues with my family.”*

In evaluations completed at the end of the program, nearly all Stargate participants have reported that they “Agree” or “Agree Strongly” with the statement, “I now think and feel differently about myself than I did when I first joined the Stargate Company,” and all participants have rated their experience as a member of the Stargate Company to have been either “Highly Satisfactory” or “Deeply Rewarding and Fulfilling.”

Beginning in February, you'll be able to get a look at this amazing project through a new hour-long documentary, *Stargate Theatre: A Defining Act*, produced by public television station WLIW. The broadcast schedule is as follows:

- Saturday, Feb. 6, 2016, 4-5pm on WLIW
- Sunday, Feb. 14, 2016, 9-10pm on WLIW
- Sunday, Feb. 22, 2016, 3:30-4:30pm on WLIW
- Friday, Feb. 19, 2016, 10-11pm on WNET

We would also like to extend an invitation to you and members of your staff to attend a special premiere screening of the film and reception on Monday, February 8 at 6:30pm at MTC's Stage I at New York City Center. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Katy Higgins at [khiggins@mtc-nyc.org](mailto:khiggins@mtc-nyc.org) or 212-399-3000 x4345.

In closing, I'd like to talk about money. Altogether, MTC commits over \$1 million annually to its Education Program. Donations and grants cover about 30% of this, and school fees another 8%. The remaining \$600,000 has to be covered by operating funds, and is roughly equal to our current annual operating deficit. It is unclear how long we can sustain this without additional dedicated funds. Demand for our services is great, and we would love to expand both the Stargate and Wrote programs, however, we need more funding to make that happen.

While these programs are labor intensive and therefore relatively costly, they are a veritable bargain compared to the costs of incarceration. I urge the Council to support MTC and its peers in partnering with the Juvenile Justice system. The arts aren't just an economic engine, a driver of tourism or a source of entertainment—we also have a role to play in transforming lives in our communities.

I'm Rosalind Barbour, Administrative Chief of Staff at The Public Theater. Thank you to Councilmember Van Bramer for all of his support of the arts and the CIGs and to Councilmember Cabrera for holding today's hearing regarding the intersection of cultural non-profits and the NYC juvenile justice system. Before I begin I want to acknowledge The Public's Strategy and Planning Manager, Dr. Ciara Murphy, whose research on our programs supports my testimony today.

Conceived nearly 60 years ago as one of the nation's first nonprofit theaters, The Public has served as a model, both in terms of mission and programming, for nonprofit theaters that have blossomed throughout the country since that time. The Public engages one of the largest and most diverse audiences in New York City in a variety of venues—including the Delacorte Theater; its landmark downtown home, which houses five theaters and Joe's Pub; and the Mobile Shakespeare Unit, which tours Shakespearean productions for underserved audiences throughout New York City's five boroughs. Through all of its programs The Public serves approximately 300,000 a year.

The originating impulse for The Public Theater – “to bring Shakespeare to the people” – was first realized by The Public Theater's original Mobile Unit in 1957. The Public Theater's current Mobile Unit, led by Director of Special Artistic Projects, Stephanie Ybarra, was revived in 2010 and provides a powerful remedy to the demonstrable lack of professionally produced

theater (and other arts forms) available to culturally under-resourced neighborhoods of New York City. For the last five years, the Mobile Unit – serving a diverse portfolio of venues including **Juvenile Detention Centers**, homeless shelters, State and Federal prisons, community centers, and New York City Parks – has endeavored to bring free high-quality, professionally produced adaptations of Shakespeare’s work to communities most underserved by arts and theater in all five boroughs.

Via partnerships with community organizations, the Mobile Unit strategically identifies and reaches communities with the highest need. The Mobile Unit has partnered extensively with the New York City Department of Correction & Administration for Children’s Services thereby creating many strong relationships with Correctional Facilities here in NYC including visits in 2013 and 2014 to the **Crossroads Juvenile Detention Center in Brooklyn** - a secure center for juveniles awaiting resolution on their court cases **as well as visits to Horizon Juvenile Center**. Furthermore, we have partnered with groups such as DreamYard and the Fortune Society since the inception of the Mobile Unit and have grown those partnerships to include them as founding partner organizations of another Public Theater community engagement program, Public Works.

Among other key partners in this work has been the Parks Department with whom we have partnered to strategically targeted stops at locations within the Community Parks Initiative zones.

Since its start in 2010 our Mobile Unit has served over 17,000 New Yorkers. Through surveying our audiences, we've found the Mobile Unit program to have very promising results:

The Mobile Unit serves diverse audiences both in terms of age, and of race and ethnicity in marked contrast to national theater audiences. Our Mobile audiences trended significantly younger than the national average for theater goers, with the under-18 year old, and 25-34 year old age ranges representing the most likely age of attendees. Most surprising of all, perhaps, was the racial and ethnic makeup of touring audiences. The racial/ethnic group in highest attend attendance for Mobile Unit touring performances of Macbeth was African-American (38%), followed by closely Hispanic/Latino audiences, suggesting that offering free arts programming in close geographic proximity to communities of color is key to enabling diverse communities to participate in live theater.

Mobile Unit performances are becoming a regular and deeply enjoyable cultural experience for audiences in the outer boroughs. Due to the seasonal nature of Mobile Unit programming, and the relative “youth” of the touring

program, expectations of repeat audience attendance were low at the outset, however, 27% of respondents reported having seen one or more previous performances by the Mobile Unit. This “core” audience demonstrates both the longitudinal impact of Mobile Unit’s artistic programming, and suggests the possibility of audience cultivation in the future.

In March we will begin our 5th touring production, ROMEO AND JULIET, to 18 sites across the 5 boroughs and bring in many more community groups to attend performances at The Public. Everyone is invited to attend the productions in their borough or at The Public’s home on Astor Place.

The Public is honored to have the opportunity to partner with the City in engaging with all New York communities especially those most at risk and least able to access the arts. To learn more about The Mobile Unit and The Public’s other programs please visit [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org).

Thank you for your time.

**Testimony of Victoria Sammartino**  
**Founder & Executive Director Emeritus, Voices UnBroken**  
**New York City Council Oversight Hearing: Examining Cultural Non-Profits**  
**in the New York City Juvenile Justice System**  
**January 29, 2016**

Thank you Chairpersons Fernando Cabrera, Jimmy Van Bramer, and members of the Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Committee for convening this hearing and for this opportunity to testify.

I am joining you today as the Founder & Executive Director Emeritus of Voices UnBroken, a Bronx-based non-profit organization that makes high-quality creative writing workshops accessible to vulnerable youth, with a specific focus on working with youth, ages 12-24, in the juvenile and adult justice system. Approximately 70% of the nearly 700 young people who participated in Voices UnBroken workshops in 2015 were in the juvenile justice system. 48% of these young people were in residential juvenile justice facilities (in secure detention or in non-secure detention or placement) and 23% of youth served were in alternative-to-detention programs.

I founded Voices UnBroken in 2000 with a single workshop at the high school for adolescent girls on Rikers Island after working there as an educator and resigning my position. In 2001, I had the first opportunity to work in the juvenile justice system, facilitating a poetry workshop as a teaching artist for the Brooklyn Public Library. Approximately four years later, Voices UnBroken would form a partnership with the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice and begin offering poetry workshops at Horizon Juvenile Center. In 2007, Voices UnBroken was awarded a contract with the NYC Department of Juvenile Justice to make poetry workshops accessible to all of the girls in secure and non-secure detention. In the intervening years, Voices UnBroken has continuously prioritized working with youth in the juvenile justice system throughout New York City<sup>1</sup>.

### **2015 & 2016 Programming**

In 2015, Voices UnBroken staff facilitated 33 workshop cycles for youth in the juvenile justice system.

- 28 of these workshop cycles were for youth in residential juvenile justice facilities
  - 14 workshop cycles in secure detention
    - Horizon Juvenile Center
    - Crossroads Juvenile Center (one of these workshops was offered in partnership with the Center for Community Alternatives as part of DYCD's SONYC program)
  - 7 workshop cycles in Non-Secure Detention (NSD)
    - Good Shepherd Services' Peter J. Sharp House
    - Sheltering Arms' New Bridge
    - Sheltering Arms' New View
    - Sheltering Arms' New Way
  - 1 workshop at Belmont High School, the high school for youth in NSDs and NSPs (this workshop was offered in partnership with the Center for Community Alternatives as part of DYCD's SONYC program)
  - 5 workshop cycles in Non-Secure Placement (NSP)
    - Good Shepherd Services' Shirley Chisholm House
    - Sheltering Arms' Marolla NSP
    - Sheltering Arms' 162<sup>nd</sup> Street NSP

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<sup>1</sup> Voices UnBroken workshops take place in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan. 36% of people who participated in Voices UnBroken's 2015 workshops told us that they came from the Bronx; 33% told us that they came from Brooklyn; 16% from Manhattan; 13% from Queens and 3% from Staten Island.

- 5 workshop cycles for young people in Alternative-to-Detention (ATD) programs
  - Center for Community Alternatives
  - CASES in Harlem and the Bronx

Voices UnBroken is currently facilitating workshops in at Crossroads Juvenile Center and Belmont High School in partnership with the Center for Community Alternatives as part of DYCD's SONYC program. Additionally, workshops are currently being held in Non-Secure Placement at Sheltering Arms' 162nd Street NSP, Sheltering Arms' Astoria NSP, and Sheltering Arms' White Plains Road NSP, and at CASES' Alternative-to-Detention program in Harlem.

### **Workshop Structure & Impact**

Voices UnBroken Workshops generally meet for 90-minutes, once or twice a week for 10 sessions and are facilitated by professional Teaching Artists/Workshop Facilitators who are hired as part-time staff and receive continuous training and support from the organization's full-time staff. We approach our work from a positive youth development and believe firmly that all young people need and deserve the opportunity to creatively express themselves. As a general rule, we do not ask that young people to self-select to participate in workshops. Instead, we believe that it is the Teaching Artist/Workshop Facilitator's responsibility to guide young people in a fun and engaging process that introduces them to the craft of poetry and helps them to fall deeply in love with their own voice. Workshops also offer a space for young people to hear each other's voices and connect with each other's experiences in ways they might not otherwise. In fact, 82% of young people tell us that they received help from one of their peers during the workshop and another 74% tell us that they helped one of their peers during the workshop.

Among young people who participated in workshops in 2015, 79% of young people who participate in Voices UnBroken workshops tell us that the workshop helped them to understand what they're reading better and 80% tell us that their writing has improved. 90% of young people reported feeling successful in the workshop and 87% told us that the workshop helped them to think about their goals for the future. When asked what they liked most about the workshop, young people responded:

- *None of my answers are wrong, it's simply my own feelings.* - A.M., Age 15, Sheltering Arms 162nd Street NSP
- *How we can talk with each other instead of arguing ... and poetry too* - K.P., Age 17, Horizon Juvenile Center
- *The poetry and the lines we used to express our insides.* - B.M., Age 15, Sheltering Arms' New Way (NSD)

And when asked how they will use what they learned in the future, they told us,

- *Well, I'm gonna make more poems.* - D.C., Age 15, Sheltering Arms' New Way (NSD)
- *I can use poems to control my answer and just write stuff down.* R.R, Age 15, Sheltering Arms - New Bridge (NSD)
- *It will help me express myself more and become less shy.* - D.W., Age 14, Good Shepherd Services' Peter J. Sharp House (NSD)

### **Funding**

Voices UnBroken's work is funded by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and a host of private foundations, including the NoVo Foundation and the Pinkerton Foundation. We are also honored to have developed a fee-for-service partnerships with the youth-serving agencies that operate Non-Secure Detention facilities, Non-Secure Placement facilities and Alternative-to-Detention programs where Voices UnBroken workshops take place.

Most recently, since the fall of 2015, Voices UnBroken is being sub-contracted by the Center for Community for Alternatives to offer poetry workshops at Crossroads Juvenile Center through the NYC Department of Youth &



Development's SONYC program. It is worth noting that Voices UnBroken has worked at Crossroads Juvenile Center for many years and is excited to be part of this new approach to offering programming for youth in NYC's juvenile justice system.

I would like to end with a short poem by a participant in a Voices UnBroken workshop at Horizon Juvenile Center:

I am wonderful

But never perfect

I am a girl

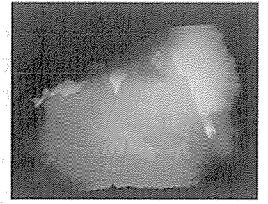
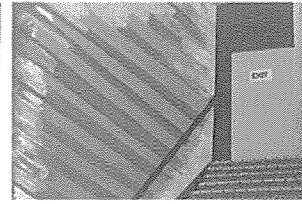
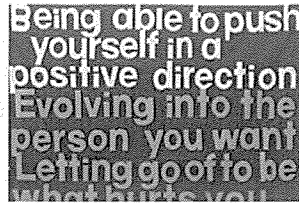
That never speaks

And tries to dream

- M.M., age 16, Horizon Juvenile Center

Thank you again for convening this hearing and for offering me this opportunity to testify before you.

# artistic noise: boston ny | empowering incarcerated and court-involved youth through art, work and community



## City Council Testimony January 29, 2016

Hi! My name is Laura Schneider and I am the Director of Artistic Noise's Art, Entrepreneurship and Curatorial Program. I want to thank the City Council for allowing us the opportunity to present our work today.

I would like to begin with a quote from a participant who has worked with us for the past 5 years.

*"I got involved with Artistic Noise through a reentry program. I'm not going to lie, at first I was intrigued by the money, but later as I got more involved in the program I fell in love with the concept of making art. The program has changed my life in many ways. Artistic Noise introduced me to things in life I had no idea about. It taught me how to express myself in a non-violent way. Artistic Noise gave me an outlet in which I was able to express myself freely. Artistic Noise is my home away from home, we are a family unit. This 'family unit' has watched me grow from a wild teenager into a respectable young woman. My 'family' has given me tools that have made me stronger and wiser. In a nutshell Artistic Noise showed me an inner strength I was not aware of, then it gave me a space in which I could test it out and build it."*

-Ebony, Office & Exhibit Manager and former Participant and Curator

Although I would have loved to have had a young person here with me today to speak about his or her experiences with art and Artistic Noise, because of the public nature of a City Council hearing and the sensitive issues related to confidentiality with our youth, that was not possible. Ebony began as a participant referred to us through The Children's Aid Society's LINC Program and is now our Office Assistant in our new Harlem storefront space.

Founded in Boston in 2001 and established in New York in 2008, Artistic Noise is an arts and entrepreneurship program for juvenile and criminal justice involved youth. We were founded by Francine Sherman, a Juvenile Defender; Lauren Adelman, an artist; and Minotte Romulus who was at the time an incarcerated young woman. Artistic Noise gives voice to the experiences of youth in the justice system.

Artistic Noise has been building community through art for 15 years. Our workshops create a community for our youth participants. Beyond that, our public art projects, installations and exhibitions connect our young artists to the general public allowing them to advocate for themselves and their communities. Through Art Studio Programs in detention and residential facilities; Art Therapy Programs with the NYC Department of Probation; and our innovative Art, Entrepreneurship and Curatorial Program, Artistic Noise uses the visual arts in the service of social justice and change. Our goal is to break the destructive cycle of recidivism which teens in the justice system are at very high risk through working directly with youth while they are on probation, in detention and home in their communities.

Once a young person is involved in the justice system, he or she often lacks the resources and network to successfully transition back to community living. Siblings, families, groups of friends and communities are affected by a youth's involvement in the justice system. Though young people affected by the justice system have a great deal to say, they have few places to be heard. They have few healthy opportunities to assume responsibility and demonstrate leadership, to experience accomplishment and affirmation, and to develop their creative voice. In Artistic Noise teens, through their artwork and participation, develop a sense of personal pride and become a part of

their community. We use a whole-person approach, providing youth with a job and a place where he or she is valued as a human being and given the chance and support to grow beyond whatever challenges they face.

Since Artistic Noise launched in New York in 2008, over 900 court involved, low-income, minority NY youth between the ages of 13 and 21 have participated in our programs. Since our inception we have been committed to working with small numbers of youth for long periods of time. With the population we serve we have found that focusing on small group work has had the most positive and lasting impact. Many of the programs we partner with continue to refer youth to us because they know that we will work with youth for extended periods of time, often over the course of many years. We are committed to doing so because we know once a teen becomes involved in the juvenile justice system they most often need extended periods of support in order to succeed.

Through Artistic Noise's headquarters, a storefront space in the heart of Harlem, we provide access to art to the broad Harlem community. Our Art and Entrepreneurship teens lead free workshops for children (5-10) living in Harlem. This Fall we led a public art project with the residents of the St. Nicholas Housing Development across the street from our space through the Mayor's MAP Initiative. This project, and others like it, promote greater civic engagement through community art projects. The Artistic Noise space has become a working gallery open to the surrounding community. Our teen curators work tirelessly every Spring to launch an annual exhibit of all the work created by all Artistic Noise programs that year. This exhibit is attended by hundreds of people and showcases the talents and maturity of the young artists involved.

This is a time when juvenile justice reform is in the national conversation like never before. It is a time where our leaders, people like you on the City Council, have the opportunity to really look at the system and assess what changes need to be made. Here in New York there are so many progressive policies happening that are affecting our teens in positive ways. Research has proven that small, community based arts programs can support these necessary changes. For 15 years, Artistic Noise has been doing this and only this, working with court-involved youth, helping them to express their voice and forge a positive future for themselves.

Minotte Romulus co-founded Artistic Noise as an incarcerated teen in Boston 15 years ago. She is now the Assistant Director of Artistic Noise and teaching at the facility she was once a resident. When Artistic Noise was founded we aimed to build a program that the participants could eventually take over. We still believe in this mission and have begun to train the participants who have graduated from our programs to be our future leaders. To close I would like to read what Minotte wrote for you. Since she is based in Boston she was unable to attend today's session.

*This is a topic that is very important to me.*

*I was once a youth in need of guidance. Locked-up and lost with little hope of coming home to find a job. Being locked- up was like being on vacation from my negative experiences. As Lauren walked into the unit I thought to myself another group. Art wasn't mandatory though and all the other programs were. I thought the art group would help my time go by faster but as I sat down and took a look at my blank paper I started to think about what I wanted my message to be.*

*And their message was clear, they offered me a voice and a way to express myself. With art my emotions were under control. I still remember the first legal penny I ever made. It was in Artistic Noise. I was locked up and getting ready to age out with no money and I was just amazed at the fact that people would want to buy my artwork.*

*When I got out Artistic Noise paid me to come and learn skills like graphic design and marketing. With Artistic Noise I got my G.E.D and I got to take college classes. They treated me like I was their equal; for once I mattered. The art and the exhibitions were all something for me to call my own. And no one could take that away.*

*I am now in a position where I can call myself a leader, and help other youth with their problems. It helps them to see someone that came from the same situation as them. When I go back as a mentor to teach, it makes me feel good for the girls to know I was there and I turned my life around and they can do the same.*

Thank you.

Lauren Adelman the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Artistic Noise was unfortunately unable to present today. Should you have further questions please contact her at [lauren.adelman@artisticnoise.org](mailto:lauren.adelman@artisticnoise.org) or 718.496.8873. More examples of our artwork and information about our programs can be found at our website: [www.artisticnoise.org](http://www.artisticnoise.org) or come visit us at 2185 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.

# Lincoln Center Education

Helping young minds perform in a dynamic world



Chairman Cabrera, Members of the Council Committee on Juvenile Justice. I am Julianne Alberty and I am pleased to speak with you today about Lincoln Center Education's work with young people at Passages Academy.

As the birthplace of aesthetic education and one of the first cultural institutions in America to bring professional artists into public schools, Lincoln Center Education has a 40-year track record of improving education and leveling the playing field for all kids through the arts. Our mission at LCE is to enrich the lives of *all* students through engagement with the arts, and we wouldn't be fulfilling that mission if we didn't serve kids involved in the court system.

At the urging of our beloved Lincoln Center Education Board Committee member and juvenile justice advocate Judge Judith Kaye and guided by our principle of "*Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere*," Lincoln Center Education launched a pilot program in 2014 for young adults who reside in non-secure placement facilities. With the deep belief that the arts can cultivate indispensable skills, LCE adapted a program called Poet-Linc, which builds a creative community of young creative writers and spoken word artists, for Passages Academy at Boys Town in Brooklyn. Over the course of 6 workshops, the students identified special talents, found their voices, enhanced their collaboration and communication skills, and began to imagine alternate futures for themselves. Poetry from select Passages Boys Town students was incorporated into a broader spoken word showcase at Lincoln Center's David Rubenstein Atrium for a public audience in April 2015 and was included in a published anthology released in October. In addition, the Passages poets performed their pieces at John Jay College for an audience of about 300 people at the Restorative Practices in Action: A Conference for School and Justice Practitioners (ACS). With engagement through social media channels, including NYC First Lady Chirlane McCray's blog, the students' performance has reached an additional 96,500 people. And, we believe, the experience has changed these young people in powerful ways.

Due to the success and popularity of the Poet-Linc program at Passages Boys Town, LCE is expanding the program and has begun Poet-Linc residencies at 3 sites serving court-involved youth – Passages Bronx Hope and Belmont and Crossroads Secure Detention Center. We know that these experiences will provide our budding poets with a sense of accomplishment and have a lasting impact as they re-enter their communities and schools, when we hope to continue to be there for them. LCE plans to continue to increase our presence in NYC's juvenile justice system and to collaborate with our esteemed colleagues in the arts education field, such as Carnegie Hall, to provide a network of support for youth as they transition out of the system.

Following the performance at John Jay College, I mentioned earlier the 4 Passages poets answered questions from the audience about how Poet-Linc has made a difference in their lives. They spoke about how the program changed their behavior and their mood, about how they found an outlet through poetry to express themselves in ways they hadn't been able to do before. They talked about how they were able to channel their anger into writing and how calm they felt when they were able to express themselves. They talked about how the program gave them confidence, not only to write and perform, but to hope for better things to come in the future. The statements from these young people were proof to me that our work is having deep impact on kids in the system and that LCE and the field at large need to look more closely at how and why the arts have these profound effects on kids in the system.

In her closing remarks at a meeting of the Juvenile Justice Initiative at Philanthropy New York in 2010, Judge Kaye said, "Remember *Field of Dreams*? 'Build it and they will come?' That is what we have to do. In New York. It is in our hands, all of us working together, to build the partnerships, the interventions, the off-ramps from disaster, so that the dreams of our children and the dreams of our nation can be fulfilled."

Arts and cultural organizations are already and need to continue to be strong partners to help imagine and build programs that will have a deep impact on young people involved in the court system. Let's continue Judge Kaye's vision to fulfill the dreams of our children and give them a brighter outlook for the future.

Thank you for listening today. On behalf of Lincoln Center Education I hope the council will continue to support cultural institutions working in the Juvenile Justice System.



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

**HEARING ON OVERSIGHT - EXAMINING CULTURAL NON-PROFITS IN THE NEW YORK  
CITY JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.**

**January 22, 2015**

Good afternoon. I am Sarah Ball, the Manager of Correctional Services at the New York Public Library (NYPL). Joining me today is Miles Hodges, our Youth Engagement Program Coordinator. I would like to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Committee Chair Fernando Cabrera, Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer, Members Inez Barron, Barry Grodenchik, Rory Lancman, and the entire City Council, for holding this hearing and allowing us to testify. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the contributions our system provides to patrons in the juvenile justice system.

NYPL's Correctional Services team has served incarcerated New Yorkers since the early 1980s. Although the majority of our program participants are adults in city, state and federal facilities, we have many dedicated and talented teen specialists who advocate for the teens in the system who can't currently make it into one of our branches.

We work with the amazing librarians at the Passages Academy schools to introduce their students to the many facets of the public library, forging an important continuum from their school to their neighborhood library, waiting for them when they return home. Staff members from across our system have delivered programming at the four Passages sites, including job readiness workshops, book talks, library orientations. We participate in their regular career



fairs, where we inform the young people how to use their library to look for work, but also tout the rewarding career opportunities within libraries. Finally, the Passages librarians work with NYPL staff to advise us on the challenges and opportunities of working with court-involved youth. District 79 has been very generous to allow them to visit us to share their expertise.

In the Correctional Services department, my team and I are responsible for training branch staff across the system to effectively serve court-involved teens that use the library. We've developed and employed specialized trainings for our young adult librarians to understand the barriers faced by the court-involved teens in their branches. The trainings cover general information about juvenile classifications, mental health issues, and the incidence of victimization among these young people.

Most of our work with justice-involved youth happens on Rikers Island. We understand that many of these teens have had contact with the courts prior to their incarceration on the island and that some have aged out of DYFJ and into the DOC. We rely on our positive relationship with the District 79 school system to bridge that gap. We provide East River Academy with a small circulating collection of books, available to the 16 & 17 year old boys, and operated by the caring reading intervention team at the school. In October of last year we began a monthly poetry and spoken word program for the young ladies' site of East River Academy, where the girls hear guest poets perform and they compose and share their own work. Last summer we had the wonderful opportunity to bring an author talk to the teen boys at Rikers and they were able to ask one of their favorite authors, Allison Van Diepen, questions about writing, reading and publishing a best selling young adult book.



Finally, we are excited to announce that our widely-used reentry guidebook *Connections*, updated and published annually by our Correctional services team, has a new chapter entitled Youth and Family Resources. We expanded and reorganized the information to make it easier for youth and their families to find the right program to serve their needs. We even added more information on fun and educational institutions like zoos and museums, for justice involved families to enjoy the unique wealth of culture our beautiful city offers.

The New York Public Library's services to teens in the juvenile justice system are run and sustained with the utmost passion and remarkable expertise of our wonderful staff. We are proud of the work we do and would like to thank the committee and Council Members once again for offering us this opportunity to testify today. We remain available to answer any questions you may have.



**New York City Council Oversight Hearing:  
Testimony of Lineage Project, Inc.  
Presented by  
Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco, M.A., Esq.  
Executive Director**

Re: Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System

**Submitted to the  
Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs Committees  
January 29, 2016**

Testimony of Lineage Project, Inc.

Re: Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System

January 29, 2016

*Before learning yoga if I got angry I would hurt someone. So not only is my life saved but their life is saved from me.*

- Kayla, former Lineage Project student

My name is Gabrielle Horowitz-Prisco. I am the Executive Director of Lineage Project, Inc (Lineage). Lineage was founded in 1999, and began its work teaching adolescents on Rikers Island. Lineage currently serves New York City youth, age 10-24, who are incarcerated, homeless, suspended from school, and at high risk of dropping out and/or justice-involvement. The majority of the youth Lineage serves come from neighborhoods with a high police presence and high levels of poverty, inadequate housing, and under-performing schools. An understanding of the traumas and challenges these youth face and our deep belief in their inherent wisdom, resilience, and multi-faceted strengths inform Lineage's culturally responsive programming. Lineage also serves the frontline staff who work with justice-involved young people, recognizing that they are often extremely taxed and under-resourced. Our mindfulness-based programs help youth consciously manage stress, increase self-awareness and self-regulation, and cultivate compassion and non-violence.

Each year, we deliver our unique program model to roughly 2,500 young people age 10-24, in approximately 35 classes a week, in juvenile detention centers, alternative-to-incarceration programs, schools for suspended youth, high-needs public schools, and a homeless shelter. We teach caregivers, staff, schoolteachers, and administrators alongside young people.

Thank you to the Chairs and members of the Juvenile Justice Committee and Cultural Affairs Committee for this opportunity to testify.

### **Lineage Project's Mindfulness-Based Programming and Benefits**

Lineage's 3-part teaching model includes 1) meditation; 2) mindful movement practices (including yoga, Tai Chi, and Qigong); and 3) group life skills discussions focused on a theme such as "anger," "fear," "choice," or "acceptance."

Our model is based on resiliency theory, relational and trauma theory, and the research of Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn who demonstrated the positive impact of mindfulness-based practices on incarcerated populations. Dr. Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment." Mindfulness practices have a unique capacity to make individuals conscious of the mental and emotional processes that occur beneath their ordinary reactions. By bringing consistent attention to this level of consciousness, youth can begin to break habitual patterns of action and reaction, and make positive choices in character and behavior.

Lineage has built the groundwork to evaluate the impact of mindfulness-based practices as a cutting-edge preventative and rehabilitative intervention for justice-involved and at-risk youth. We are one of only a few organizations developing and honing a direct service model in this modality, and capable of evaluating impact. The Lineage Project Program Evaluation Team, comprised of independent professional researchers, began evaluating our work in 2010. The Team instituted a formal research protocol at several sites, leading to its 2011 Initial Evaluation Report. The report –

which included both qualitative and quantitative data – showed that youth in our program gained an increased capacity for self-awareness and self-knowledge, and had more compassionate responses to events in both their internal and external environments.

The Lineage Project Program Evaluation Team also created a simplified Lineage Program Evaluation Survey and a protocol for measuring the Lineage model's effectiveness. In 2014, the statistical summary of the Lineage Program Evaluation Surveys showed that Lineage helped 86.8% of participants become more aware of their body, 90.8% more aware of their thoughts, 84% feel more calm and relaxed, and 73.7% to discover better ways to manage stress.

Lineage participants and staff also express these benefits in their own words :

While a Lineage student, Ebony, a 16-year-old said: "My home is really chaotic and I used to get stressed as soon as I stepped in the door. Thanks to the teachings, the minute I get home I can go into a small space I set up for myself and do the breathing. Then I can face the drama in my house in a calmer way."

Summer Deaver, a former Lineage teacher, shared this anecdote: Kimberly is about four feet tall, wiry and full of pent-up anger and energy. The first thing she said to me was not 'hello,' but 'I'm gonna throw you out the window.' She was a time bomb. Over the next few months, I saw tremendous change in all of the girls who attended my classes, especially Kimberly. Then, one morning, about ten minutes into class, the door flies open, a girl runs in, gets into Kimberly's face and screams terribly nasty things to her. The class goes into chaos and all the girls run out the door. I found Kimberly in another room and beckoned her back into the room with the yoga mats. 'Let's look at how you reacted. What did you do, Kimberly?' Kimberly said, 'I didn't do nothing, but I wanted to punch her in the face.' I asked her, "What would you have done a month or two ago?" Kimberly said, 'I'd have beat the s\*\*\* out of her.' I asked, 'What stopped you today?' Kimberly took a breath and said, 'Myself.'" -

### **Current Lineage Programming in the Juvenile Justice System**

Lineage has been working with youth in New York's justice system for approximately sixteen years. An overview of our justice programs and their benefits follow.

#### **Lineage at Horizon Juvenile Center**

Lineage has provided mindfulness programs to youth and staff inside Horizon for over a decade. Until September 2015, we offered these programs free of charge, which was challenging for our small organization, as it is for our colleagues at other community-based organizations. In July 2015, we were awarded a SONYC contract by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development to manage a comprehensive afterschool program in Horizon, discussed in a separate section below.

In addition to our bi-weekly classes at Horizon, in August 2015, we offered a five-day intensive for young women and staff at Horizon, filling a gap in services. During the summer, there is no summer school and few other special programs are offered to fill the hours of confinement. Youth often become restless and bored, and tensions in New York City's detention centers tend to rise.

Additionally, programming for young women is historically an undermet need within the detention system. This intensive model gave Lineage teachers the opportunity to connect in a personal and consistent way with the young women and staff, breaking through many of the participants' initial resistance. Facility staff reported a distinct and positive change in the atmosphere of the halls housing the participants.

Of participants in the intensive who completed the Lineage Project Class Evaluation Survey, 100% reported the classes helped them become more aware of their body, 80% reported the classes helped them become more aware of their thoughts, 60% reported the classes helped them become more aware of their emotions, and 100% reported the classes helped them discover better ways to manage stress. Youth reported using mindfulness practices at night, when they were alone in their cells, in order to calm themselves when they got worked up. One resident said, "I use it [mindfulness] to fall asleep." Another resident commented: "I learned how to be quiet."

### **SONYC Horizon**

In September 2015, Lineage Project launched the DYCD-funded SONYC afterschool program at Horizon. As the lead grantee for SONYC Horizon, Lineage both manages a comprehensive afterschool program and provide its own mindfulness-based classes for detained youth. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that community-based cultural programs have received compensation by the city for their work in Horizon.

Together, Lineage and our sub-contractors, working closely with Horizon and ACS staff, provide a wide-ranging set of creative and empowering programs designed to promote:

- 1) enrichment, including reading, writing, math, communication, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking;
- 2) leadership development, including service learning and civic engagement; and
- 3) physical activity and healthy living.

As part of SONYC Horizon, Lineage offers its own mindfulness classes and sub-contracts with and manages the following programs:

- **Building Beats** (DJ, music production, entrepreneur and life skills): Building Beats' Teaching Artists teach youth how to produce music that fuses the digital with the traditional, while giving them insight into careers in the music industry and challenging them to work collaboratively. Youth create their own original music, and are exposed to and taught to use exciting musical technology. Participants' music can be shared with other staff and youth in detention and with families and caregivers. For example, a compilation of original music from the Building Beats program provided the soundtrack to a recent Family Day.
- **Carnegie Hall** (building music connections): Carnegie Hall's Artist in Residence fosters music connections for youth, including those who do not believe they have musical talent. Their program includes music creation, production, and performance, and represents a multi-year collaboration between the city and this world-class music organization. Youth in Carnegie's program build pathways to continue their interests in music, with a focus on those youth continuing onto a justice placement, and staff are invited to actively engage alongside youth.

- **Drama Club** (theatre, empathy and skills building, and mentoring): Drama Club provides youth with theater programming as a means of developing empathy, promoting academic growth and empowering the individual through self-expression. Drama Club offers the opportunity for such creative, academic engagement and leadership, while developing mastery of the four Language Literacies, and the Common Core State Learning Standards (CCLS).
- **Flex Dance** (movement and freestyle performance, life skills): Flex uses skilled dancers from the local community to communicate life lessons and emotional equanimity. The program seeks to create an authentic routine that will elicit trust and cooperation between the residents and staff. The Flex community frequently holds dance events, freestyle sessions, and competitions where young people can get involved after their release. Transforming energy into a positive, non-verbal expression may help the program participants find personal solutions to conflict in fundamentally non-violent ways.
- **Power Writers** (literacy, creative writing, and poetry): Power Writers' sessions focus on literacy and writing. Power Writers' core curriculum includes writing and reciting poetry, a student-lead comment and response component, individual commentary by teaching artists/mentors on participants' own writing, discussions about major current events that may be relevant to participants, a section in which students read aloud and analyze a selected passage of text, and exploration of other forms of writing such as essays, letters, speeches, fiction or academic papers. The goals and objectives of the Power Writers curriculum are the effective and practical mastery of the four language literacies: Reading; Writing; Public Speaking; and Active Listening. Power Writers programs will also help youth gain mastery over the Common Core State Learning Standards (CCLS).
- **4As**: A leadership initiative for youth who, by virtue of their prior experience with the justice system and their desire to give back to their communities, are "Credible Messengers." The 4As Mentors (Credible Messengers) facilitate a mentoring group at Horizon, using the Change Companies Interactive Journaling curriculum. This group-mentoring model engages participants in a variety of leadership development activities, and supports emotional literacy, community awareness and family relationships. The 4As program is a project of the Bronx-based Community Connections for Youth.

### Benefits of SONYC Horizon

SONYC Horizon programs allow youth to explore their interests and find interests they never knew they had. Many of our programs have expressive and creative elements, offering youth opportunities to find their voices, express their truths, create something positive, and share their creative expressions with other residents and staff. One young girl, Felicia, was seen by many at Horizon as just a problem. When she got to the Power Writers SONYC program and was able to share her poetry, people were amazed at her talent. Lineage SONYC staff believes those who heard her poetry, especially facility staff, saw Felicia as more whole and three-dimensional, and were able to recognize her strengths.

Anecdotally, it appears that programming reduces the incidents of altercations and other disruptions in the facility. For example, Lineage ran SONYC programming on one school holiday and was informally told by staff that incidents were lower than they usually are on school holidays.

Traditionally, NYC detention has struggled to provide programming during school holidays. SONYC Horizon has a limited holiday schedule and works hard to provide programs during times when school is on break.

SONYC Horizon has also fostered a deep collaboration between ACS and Lineage. Lineage has a staff member, the SONYC Horizon Program Manager, on site four times a week. The Program Manager works extremely closely with frontline and administrative staff, ensuring that programs run smoothly within the detention setting. The fact that a community-based mindfulness program has a staff member housed in a city detention facility is remarkable and speaks to the hard work being done by ACS, DYCD, and community based organizations to positively shift the culture inside detention.

### **Helping youth respond to violence**

Unfortunately, there was recently an altercation involving residents at Horizon. One of the young men, who we will call Jay, was significantly hurt in the altercation and was being transferred out of the facility. Jay had a history of challenging behaviors and required intensive staff supervision in a previous facility. He also expressed an interest in yoga. After the incident, Lineage staff requested the opportunity to speak with Jay. Lineage's SONYC Program Director spoke to Jay about his wonderful participation in SONYC programs, and his leadership skills, creativity, and maturity. Lineage's mindfulness teacher asked if he might take anything from the mindfulness classes to his new facility. Jay said he remembered the "body breathing meditation" taught by Lineage. The Lineage's teacher offered Jay the opportunity to learn another meditation that he could take with him. Jay was interested, and Bart led a meditation with Jay sitting down, talking to Jay about how he might soften in the body where there might be pain or where attention is drawn, drawing his awareness to body breathing, and guiding Jay on framing whatever state/emotion he felt by studying it. Afterward, Jay said it was helpful even though he was a little distracted. Lineage staff also asked Jay if he had his journal with him from the Power Writers SONYC program since he had been writing prolifically. He did not have it with him and wanted it. Lineage let an ACS staff member know, and the staff member brought Jay his journal, Bible, and books. Here is a poem Jay wrote in Power Writers:

### **LOST AND FOUND**

I am lost  
but I'm trying to be found  
even though I was never lost  
I am lost to myself

A world of nothing  
a path I will take if I choose to do wrong

Lost & found  
I am a young man  
waiting to be found  
I feel as if I live in an empty space  
with no one around

Why

Because when I need support and help  
there is nobody to be found  
this world is full of hatred  
that EVERYTIME I listen  
There is never a calm and collective sound...

Jay said: “when I need support and help there is nobody to be found.” But we as adults can and must create networks of support and help so that youth like Jay do not feel so alone. And we can and must equip young people with tools that enable them to gain a sense of competency, build resiliency, and make more skillful choices in their daily lives. Cultural programming in the youth justice system is an integral part of such efforts, and can often reach youth in a way that purely educational or therapeutic programs cannot. Cultural programs reach youth where they are often most receptive—in their hearts, through their words and bodies, and through their connections to other people and their deepest selves.

#### **In their own words (with a video)**

Drama Club is another powerful cultural program that is part of SONYC Horizon (and SONYC Crossroads). Drama Club’s mission is to provide theater and positive mentor relationships to youth throughout each step of their journey through the criminal justice system: detention, placement and probation/aftercare. PIX 11 recently featured their work with youth in the SONYC Horizon program. A video of the young people in Drama Club can be viewed here:  
<http://pix11.com/2016/01/09/its-a-g-thing-drama-club-provides-theater-classes-for-teens-in-juvenile-detention-centers/>

#### **Family engagement**

SONYC providers regularly participate in Horizon’s Family Days, engaging caregivers and youth in our programs and exposing caregivers to their young people’s skills. For example, several SONYC Horizon programs participated in one recent Family Day. A group of youth participated in a dance performance facilitated by Flex Dance. As noted earlier, as caregivers and youth visited with one another, a soundtrack of powerful and original music created by youth in the Building Beats program played in the background. Drama Club facilitated games for residents and their families, including their younger siblings. Residents who participated in Drama Club programming helped lead and facilitate the games. Power Writers had students perform their original poetry, and one student sang. In just a short time, we have seen an increase in residents’ participation and confidence from one Family Day to another. For example, at our first SONYC Family Day, only four youth chose to participate in the Flex Dance performance. That number doubled by the next Family Day.

These are just a few examples of Lineage’s SONYC program in action and the myriad benefits youth experience. SONYC Horizon goes far beyond any program or service currently offered at Horizon. We believe this model of a comprehensive afterschool program for justice-involved youth has serious potential for national replication, and are interested in learning how we might help the program model expand beyond New York City.

### **Crossroads Juvenile Center**

Lineage began teaching mindfulness classes at Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn (secure detention) in 2008. As with Horizon and Bridges (where we taught for six years prior to its closing), prior to the SONYC organization, Lineage worked for many years without pay, which was stressful for our organization.

Beginning in September 2015, Lineage's work at Crossroads transitioned to the umbrella of SONYC programming, and we are now paid under a sub-contract with the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA). As part of SONYC Crossroads, Lineage offers one 90-minute class a week at Crossroads, available to both youth and staff. Lineage teachers at Crossroads offer mindfulness based programming using yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and meditation.

At Crossroads, Lineage offers programming alongside the Animation Project (art therapy through animation projects and technology); Art Start (performing arts, music writing and recording, and graphic arts); Body Sculpt (fitness); Drama Club; Sprout by Design (urban farming and healthy eating); and Voices UnBroken (poetry, writing, and performing).

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that community-based cultural programs have received compensation by the city for their work in Crossroads. It is important to note, however, that this compensation often does not cover the true cost of programs. This issue will be addressed in more detail in the *Recommendations* section.

### **Passages Academy at the Belmont School**

As part of another SONYC grant managed by the Center for Community Alternatives, Lineage offers classes at the Belmont School (Belmont), part of Passages Academy (within the NYC Department of Education's District 79). Belmont serves NYC youth within both Non-Secure Detention (NSD) and Close to Home Non-Secure Placement (NSP). Belmont is predominantly a high school, although it also serves youth who are not yet in high school. Staff from NSDs and NSPs are embedded in the school, and work with youth and teachers.

At Belmont, Lineage offers programming alongside Art Start; Body Sculpt; Carnegie Hall; Drama Club; Sprout by Design; and Voices UnBroken.

### **Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Ella McQueen Reception Center**

Lineage also offers classes to youth and staff in the OCFS Ella McQueen Reception Center (Ella). We provide two classes each week at Ella. Youth are held at Ella for a 14-day period, during which they undergo evaluation as a pre-cursor to placement in a longer-term state facility. Because Lineage offers multiple classes a week, youth generally have the opportunity to take a series of classes during an extremely stressful and uncertain transition time. These classes also offer a unique opportunity for facility staff and youth to relate to each other in a positive way, and to engage in a shared experience, based on seeking mindfulness and inner tranquility. We receive a lot of positive feedback about the program from the director, staff, and youth, as well as from the facility's psychologist, who has participated in our classes.



### **CASES Choices Alternative to Detention Program**

The CASES Choices Alternative-to-Detention (ATD) program is for “young people facing juvenile detention while their cases are pending in Family Court. The program is designed to avoid the disruption that arises when young people are taken out of their school and placed in detention, away from their family and support networks. CASES court staff screen youth facing charges in Family Court and report to the courts on participant progress and compliance. The program also accepts referrals from the NYC Department of Probation.”<sup>1</sup> Lineage provides programs on site at the CASES Choices ATD.

### **Lineage Programs to Prevent Justice Involvement**

In addition to working with justice-involved youth, Lineage provides mindfulness-based programs to youth at high risk of justice involvement. Mindfulness-based interventions can offer youth alternatives to violence, increase compassion and community connections, and help young people make positive life choices. It can also help young people as they navigate difficult and potentially dangerous situations in their communities.

Lineage offers the following preventive interventions:

- ***Youth in school suspension:*** Lineage works in Alternative Learning Centers (ALC) for middle/high school students in long-term suspension from their home schools. In the 2015 – 2016 school year, we are providing programs at ALCs in Staten Island, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.
- ***Youth at high dropout risk:*** We provide 12 classes/week at Humanities Prep high school for students with academic/behavioral difficulties. All Humanities Prep students take Lineage classes five days a week for at least one semester. At the American Sign Language and English Secondary School (ASL), we provide three classes/week for youth as well as a class every other week for staff. ASL is a public school serving hearing impaired youth and students without hearing disability, 95% of whom are from low-income families and qualify for free lunch.
- ***Homeless youth:*** Lineage serves homeless youth in a “Homes for the Homeless” family shelter in the Bronx. Our classes are offered in a series of ten-week residencies throughout the year.
- ***Youth in residential care:*** Lineage provides community-based afterschool yoga/mindfulness through the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services for youth transitioning back to their communities from residential care.

### **Recommendations**

New York City, particularly the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Administration for Children’s Services, deserve recognition and validation for their recent and concentrated work to increase cultural programming for youth in the justice system. Now we must continue and build upon these groundbreaking efforts. Lineage urges the City Council to play an active leadership role in expanding funding for cultural programming, and respectfully offers the following four recommendations:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cases.org/programs/youth/atd.php>

1. **The New York City Council should provide additional funding for cultural programs for youth in the justice system.** As noted above, the DYCD-funded SONYC programs represent the first time, to our knowledge, that community based cultural programs are being compensated for their work. Although this is a significant improvement and should be applauded, many programs operating in the justice system are not part of SONYC and are still operating without any payment by the city. As an organization that served the justice system for approximately 15+ years without city payment, Lineage can speak first hand to the serious challenges this creates. Even with SONYC funding, for many, if not all of our SONYC Horizon programs, there is a significant gap between what a program costs and what it is reimbursed. And for Lineage, the true costs of operating and managing such a comprehensive program appear to be far outstripping the SONYC contract. Operating without funding or receiving less than complete reimbursement for true program costs places significant financial stress on providers and can stymie organizational growth, directly impacting the number of youth an organization can provide overall.
2. **The City Council should lead efforts to leverage state and federal dollars to support cultural programs.** The City Council has the chance to exercise leadership in this area and should prioritize identifying and pursuing opportunities to leverage state and federal dollars for cultural programming. The City Council should dedicate staff to actively search for such funding opportunities and collaborate with community-based cultural programs to apply for these opportunities once identified.
3. **The City Council should fund and support Technical Assistant and Capacity Building funds for smaller community based organizations so that they can more effectively compete for and more easily administer larger scale government grants.** The complex administrative requirements of government contracts can be challenging and time-consuming for small organizations. For larger organizations, these kinds of requirements are more easily absorbed among a bigger workforce. In addition, larger organizations tend to have a deeper infrastructure, which can make contract administration easier. The extensive administrative requirements on city contracts can keep smaller community-based organizations from ever stepping up to the plate, and make it difficult for those that do. The Council, Mayor de Blasio, and the city's social service agencies are committed to strengthening and supporting community-based programs. One of the most impactful ways to do this is to offer Technical Assistance and Capacity Building funds to help smaller community-based programs capacitate and scale up their infrastructure and staffing in order to compete for and more easily administer these kinds of important and groundbreaking contracts.
4. **The City Council should increase funding for cultural programming in the community.** The bulk of the kids in the justice system come from approximately seven to ten neighborhoods. These are the same neighborhoods that lack theatre and music programs, accessible yoga studios, and many of the other programs that can now be found behind bars. It is devastating and wrong that the first time many young people ever have the chance to perform a song or poem they wrote is after they are locked up. Kids in a NYC detention center have the opportunity to grow vegetables and learn about healthy eating with Sprout by Design, while their home communities lack access to affordable fresh and healthy produce. And kids in a Lineage class on the inside are taught practices that can help them stay centered, calm, and in control of

Testimony of Lineage Project, Inc.  
Re: Cultural Non-Profits in the New York City Juvenile Justice System  
January 29, 2016

their actions even in difficult situations, while they and their families cannot afford the \$20 to \$28+ price tag of many city yoga studios. The City Council should increase its investment in cultural programming for our city's youth, with a particular concentration of funds on those neighborhoods with the largest representation in the justice system. In addition to exposing children and families to the kinds of interests and experiences that can enrich their entire lives, this investment will pay priceless dividends by keeping youth out of the justice system to begin with.

Hans Menos  
Center For Community Alternatives  
New York City Council Testimony: Cultural Programming for Youth  
January 29, 2016

Good morning. My name is Hans Menos and I am the Director of Youth Services at the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the importance of Cultural Programming for all young people and particularly those who are marginalized traumatized and have or have had involvement with the justice system.

The Center for Community Alternatives has more than 30 years of experience working in the field of community-based alternatives to incarceration. Our mission is to promote re-integrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration through advocacy, services and public policy development in pursuit of civil and human rights.

Our Youth Services programs primarily serve young people who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth participate in CCA programs either as an alternative to detention as an alternative to incarceration or while they are detained or placed in the custody of ACS. Regardless of the setting, most of the young people with whom we work are facing the typical challenges of adolescence, i.e., the development of an adult identity. However, in many cases this process is made difficult by the challenges of poverty and racism. CCA endeavors to address the issues these youth present by emphasizing personal empowerment, self-respect and concern for one's community.

As mentioned, CCA has experience working with court-involved youth in the community and in various facilities. We have observed a marked improvement regarding the services now available to young people and are delighted to partner with the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Youth and Community Development and The NYC Department of Education to operate S.O.N.Y.C (Schools out New York City) afterschool programming at both the Belmont School and Crossroads Detention Center.

In designing these programs, we considered Howard Gardner's (1993) Multiple Intelligences Theory. Briefly, this theory posits that people are intelligent in many ways. These intelligences include visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmical, interpersonal capacities, intrapersonal capacities, logical-mathematical verbal- linguistic and naturalistic. This theory asserts that the question that should motivate all persons working with youth is not if they are intelligent but, how they are intelligent. It was important to CCA that we attempt to make some level of programming available for all of the possible intelligences that might exist.

Across all programs our programming intentionally focuses on building skills and awareness among youth. This endeavor is based on the idea that many youth have untapped intelligence and therefore untapped potential. We seek to expose the youth to as many different aspects of programming to both discover and hone their strengths. We are happy to report that for many youth our programming is successful in that they come away having uncovered a new interest or

talent. In other words, they have realized that have a penchant for a particular level of intelligence.

In order to provide a wide variety of expertise and program services, CCA partners with a variety of organizations. These partners include **Art-Start**, who provide performing arts, music writing and recording and graphic arts, **Drama Club** who build empathy and other skill building through Theatre programming **Voices Unbroken** who increase self expression through poetry and writing, **The Animation Project** who provide art therapy through animation projects, **Carnegie Hall** who provides connections to music by exposing youth to the music creation, production and performance process **Sprout by Design** who focus on urban farming, healthy living and technology, **Body Sculpt** who focuses on health and fitness via athletics and **The Lineage Project** who focuses on mindfulness through Yoga, Qigong and Tai- Chi.

In closing, the young people we all care about so deeply are indeed in need of the support which focuses on mental health, drug treatment and other more mainstream efforts to address and improve behavior and outlook. However, as helpful as these approaches often are, they are not the best approach for all young people. I believe that the young people who are in the juvenile justice system are there because they have not had their strengths recognized and or supported. It is often activities, which are more strength based and empowering which provide a young person with the strength needed to overcome and persevere. It is incumbent upon us all who seek to serve these young people to continue to consider creative and holistic interventions.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you all today and for your attention on our youth.

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Executive Director, Lineage Project

Address: Part of DYC D Sonyc Program

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Address: 1380 Virginia Avenue Bronx NY

I represent: Voices Unbroken

Address: 1419 Mel Le BX NY

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Address: 171 Rogers Ave Apt 1B, Brooklyn NY

I represent: Artistic Noise

Address: 2185 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd  
NY, NY 11007

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Name: Kim Mcneil-Capers

Address: Queens Library

I represent: Queens Library

Address: 89-11 Merrick Blvd, Jamaica NY

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Name: Josie Whittlesey

Address: 35-27 80<sup>th</sup> St, #1 Jackson Heights NY

I represent: Drama Club

Address: same as above

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Name: Felipe Franco

Address: 150 Williams Street

I represent: Administration for Children Services DFT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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I represent: ACS  
Address: 150 William St

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I represent: ACS  
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I represent: The Center for Community Advocacy  
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Name: Judy Tate

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Manhattan Theatre Club

Address: 311 W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street NYC 10036

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Address: 8 Spring St, 10012

I represent: Shadow Box Theatre

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Address: 11 Grand St. Norwalk, CT

I represent: Lincoln Center Education

Address: 70 Lincoln Center Plaza, NY, NY

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