

“And What Happens to You Concerns Us Here”: Imaginings for a (New) Prison Arts Movement

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In 1968, despite his claims of innocence, Nathan Wright was convicted of armed robbery and murder and sentenced to serve 170 years in prison. While in prison, Wright started to paint. A 1975 exhibition of his work at the South Side Community Art Center benefited his defense fund, “Friends of Nathan Wright,” headed by Dr. Margaret Burroughs, the Chicago artist and activist. The warden permitted Wright to leave Pontiac Prison, where he had been locked up, to attend the final day of the exhibit, which was attended by more than seven hundred people.¹

In 2014 this seems astonishing. The possibility that a warden might release an artist to attend an exhibit at all, let alone to support a defense fund, has become unimaginable. While they are public institutions—supported by taxpayer dollars, staffed by mostly unionized state employees—prisons are also widely understood as opaque, impermeable places that couldn’t be further from the realm of art.²

There is scant research on art production inside prisons, even though in 1970 available data suggests that across the US there were at least 6,900 incarcerated artists; per prison, an average of sixty artists participated in prison art programs, raising at least \$30,000 per year through art sales.³ In 1970,



Gathering at the Nathan Wright exhibition, South Side Community Art Center, 1975. Published in the *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 2, 1975. Photo: Bobby Sengstacke.

prisoners at Stateville, a maximum security prison in Illinois, sold more than \$40,000 worth of artwork, making the prison the “correctional facility with the largest number of registered artists and the highest art sales in the US.”⁴

The erasure of this history is the legacy of an art market in which expertise and value is made available only to those with formal education or private resources to produce art and access cultural knowledge. But it is also particular to the site of the prison and the body of the prisoner. Beyond the heterogendered, racialized commodification of art (and other forms of expertise or mastery), prisons are understood as outside of normal life—antithetical to civilization. And as theorist Frank Wilderson writes, “whoever says ‘prison’ says Black” or “absolute dereliction.”⁵ A prison artist is thus oxymoronic. Yet behind the walls of American prisons, art production thrives. Despite limited tools, people inside prisons make works that range from portraits on paper to sculptural and functional objects to narrative forms that create cultural knowledge about the history and context of confinement.

Both of us have spent a good portion of the last decade working outside and inside prisons in Illinois to support and/or build access to art and edu-

cation programs. Mercurial and punishing regulations enacted by the state prison systems make any attempt to work inside at best a time-consuming rabbit hole and at worst a collision with a death star. Meager resources exist for public arts or education programs outside of prisons; even less is available for people who are locked up. Available private or philanthropic funds are inadequate and inconsistent and require quantifiable outcomes, such as reduced recidivism or contributions to the economy. In the current climate, cultural and educational institutions—operating under imagined or real financial strains—are loath to support programs inside prisons.

A look at the 1960s and 1970s illustrates a different constellation of possibilities in which Chicago artists, academics, and affiliated organizations and institutions crossed boundaries between free and un-free worlds to make connections, build political analysis and solidarity, and sometimes make money. Ceramic programs, art exhibitions, poetry readings, and live jazz performances happened in state prisons. Lee Bernstein identifies a Prison Arts Movement, enmeshed with the Blacks Arts Movement, characterized by “an impressive array of artists and writers [who] ran workshops, published chapbooks at their expense, taught music classes.” Not only did those working within the Black Arts Movement actively support the artistic goals of people inside, but some served time themselves. Bernstein notes that the identity and the image of the prisoner were central to the liberatory goals of the Black Arts Movement.⁶

Dr. Margaret Burroughs and other black artists working or living in the prison system forged relationships between educational and cultural institutions and the emerging prison nation. Focusing on Stateville and Pontiac prisons, two state institutions for adult males, where Dr. Burroughs and the DuSable Museum of African American History developed art and black history programs, this chapter outlines a small part of what we provisionally identify as Chicago’s Prison Arts Movement. We do not seek a mythic past of better program-rich prisons or real revolutionary practices. Nor is our goal simply to build strong educational and arts programs inside prisons when, in our own political moment, universities and museums are increasingly inaccessible. Rather, along with many others, we envision and work toward a society that does not warehouse poor people in prisons, and finds ways to address harm other than by caging and policing people. We long for a future in which all people have access to high-quality art and educational experiences in freedom, not behind walls. To that end, we learn by tracing the histories of work done by Dr. Burroughs and other individuals, cultural institutions, and political movements, to illustrate what networks inside and outside were once possible. This allows us to imagine prisons not as timeless and inevitable but as a process that can be changed, reimagined, and dismantled.

Chicago: Prison/Arts Movement

In the last decade, studies on incarceration and confinement have critically historicized and analyzed how one of the world's largest democracies produced the highest rate of imprisonment and the largest number of people confined in prisons, jails, and detention centers. In 2014 approximately 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States—one in every 99.1 adults. Disproportionately, people of color and poor people are locked up.⁷ Since the 1980s the war on drugs, “three strikes” laws, mandatory minimum sentencing, and a plethora of regulations and legal maneuvering have confined more people for longer sentences than any other period in American history. The construction of our current prison nation is neither a narrative of progress nor separable from wider economic and political shifts.

In Illinois, early prisons were built in proximity to major cities and held mostly white men who would return to their home communities. Pontiac Prison was built in 1871 as a boys' reformatory school; it was later converted to a prison. Similarly, Oakdale Reformatory for Women opened in 1930 and later became the Dwight Correctional Center, a maximum-security prison for women. Stateville Prison was built in 1925 as the fifth prison in the state.⁸ It has one of the last round houses in the nation, buildings designed on the panopticon model of British philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham.⁹ Duties such as growing food and tending livestock were common practices when prisons were built. By 1955 Stateville had a 2,200-acre farm with cattle, hogs, and vegetables, and raised pheasants for the Illinois Conservation Department.

In the 1960s prisons across the country possessed a range of educational and artistic programs of varying quality and depth that were possible in part because of Pell Grants, National Endowment for the Arts funding, and resources provided by large private foundations. In 1966 the *Summary of Educational Opportunities: Available to Inmates at Stateville Joliet*, edited by the educational staff and printed at Stateville Prison, started with the statement: “The schools represent a major part of the overall program of rehabilitation for the inmates of the institution, emphasizing the fact that free education is part of our democratic ideal.”¹⁰ This report highlights programs available at Stateville in 1966, including GED classes, college programs (taught by faculty from Northern Illinois University), distance education programs delivered on TV, electronics classes, a barber school, a horticultural program, an art program, and a number of trades, including sheet metal, canning, and book binding. Art was one of the more popular classes at Stateville: “undoubtedly responsible for this popularity is the gifted civilian teacher of the art class... The inmates know their instructor as an accomplished artist as well as teacher.”¹¹ In addition to the classes,

more than 600 men had “art permits” to work on art projects, and their work had been “exhibited on television, as well as in the following cities: Joliet, Galesburg, Elgin, and Chicago, Illinois; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and New York City.”¹² By 1968 the fourth annual exhibition of artwork by incarcerated artists was held outside the gates of the prison, with 17,500 people attending and purchasing more than nine hundred paintings. Ten percent of the sales went to prison education programs; the rest went to the artists.¹³

In Chicago, black artists, religious leaders, and institutions in Chicago organized arts and educational programs in prisons. Rainbow PUSH, an organization started by Jesse Jackson in 1971, offered Prison Ministries, the venue through which Dr. Burroughs later met incarcerated artists and started teaching art classes.¹⁴ The DuSable Museum, co-founded by Burroughs, developed a Prison Fund that, among other things, supported a publication created by black poets at Pontiac Prison.¹⁵ Art by incarcerated artists was shown at Operation Breadbasket headquarters in the Capitol Theater at 79th and Halsted and in other locations around Chicago with the support of the economic development organization's staff.¹⁶ Looking Toward Freedom, a group created by formerly incarcerated artist Ben Bey, organized artists to exhibit their work as a means of “provid[ing] money and a feeling of acceptance” by their communities.¹⁷ The Illinois Arts Council supported a program of theater and art at Stateville called “Con-Artistes,” which produced plays such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*¹⁸ and supported a Prison Art Center.¹⁹ In addition to art and academic classes in the prison system from the 1960s through the 1980s, Leisure Time Services staff facilitated intramural sports between prisons and with outside teams.²⁰ In some minimum-security prisons, incarcerated people worked in the community.²¹

Even though such opportunities existed, these programs did not interrupt the prison's focus on punishment. Lee Bernstein suggests that those involved with the Prison Arts Movement understood the aims of their work inside prisons as revolutionary, while largely white correctional staff, on the other hand, understood their aims as “the reformation of the convict.” These programs were unevenly available; many people of color within prisons were locked out of college and other educational access programs because prison staff did not see them as candidates for rehabilitation or they failed to pass the tests used as gateways to educational programs.²²

In Illinois, artists working in all media got involved in prison work. Preston Jackson, an artist and musician, recalled a time in 1968 when his jazz band was paid to perform in Pontiac Prison.²³ Musician Phil Cohran also played at the prison, dancer Darlene Blackburn performed, and poet Gwendolyn Brooks read her work at state prisons as the Illinois Poet Laureate.²⁴ These connections were not unidirectional: people in prison

were not simply audiences for trained artists to educate. Instead, relationships were reciprocal and the production and sharing of creative work was fluid. Preston Jackson, a black sculptor and musician, says that his band often played music at state prisons to visit incarcerated musicians. Brooks mentored the writing of Etheridge Knight's *Poems from Prison* while he was incarcerated in Indiana.

Dr. Margaret Burroughs was one of the germinal figures supporting artists in Illinois prisons.²⁵ She was a friend and classmate of Gwendolyn Brooks, and early on they worked together in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) youth council.²⁶ As an educator, artist, and activist, Dr. Burroughs and her then-husband Bernard Goss were among the many community members who helped establish the South Side Community Art Center in 1940. The Center, started with community and Works Progress Administration funds, provided visual, literary, and performing arts programs and a place where black artists could exhibit their work.²⁷ Twenty years later, Dr. Burroughs co-founded the DuSable Museum of African American History in her home.

In its early years, the DuSable Museum offered books, magazines, counseling, and correspondence courses in black history to people in Illinois prisons.²⁸ A co-founder of the museum, Eugene Feldman, a white, Jewish civil rights activist, credits Burroughs with developing and offering the first correspondence course in African American history, designed primarily for people in prison. Feldman describes Burroughs's early work in Illinois prisons:

In the middle 1960s she and her husband Charles Burroughs went to the Illinois State Penitentiary at Joliet, Illinois to lecture to the prisoners concerning black history and culture. The lecture was arranged by an Episcopal priest. It was a very fruitful time and afterward some of the prisoners kept in close touch by mail with Dr. Burroughs and the museum. Later when I went to Pontiac, Illinois State Prison she went with me on several occasions and in our classrooms where I taught weekly, she talked very casually to the students in prison, telling about her African trips, what was developing in the way of African liberation of nations, African culture and languages, music, and about the DuSable Museum.²⁹

As Executive Director of the DuSable, Dr. Burroughs reached out to a larger community to raise awareness and funds for the work with people, mainly men, in prisons. In an editorial in the *Chicago Defender*, published twenty-two days after the Attica Prison uprising, she wrote, "In recent days we have become painfully aware of problems in our prisons.... We are

presently conducting classes at Pontiac, Illinois State prison and we have plans to publish an anthology of poems by black prisoners in the state."³⁰ She asked readers for financial donations for "books, art supplies and special programs" at the prison. She also used her own artwork to garner financial support. In a small self-made publication titled *Black, Black*, a rhythmic poem rooted in Black Power sentiments, Dr. Burroughs used the last page of the piece to let readers know where to send contributions to a Culture Fund for Prison Inmate Artists.³¹

Margaret Burroughs's work inside prisons continued throughout her life, emphasizing black history, positive black identity, and art. In the 1980s, she went on Sundays with Queen Mother Reverend Helen Sinclair and others in PUSH to prisons across Illinois; in February they focused on black history. Dr. Burroughs and Sinclair went to Pontiac prison, meeting with men on death row, including William Jones, who wrote an obituary for Burroughs in 2011 for *Stateville Speaks*, a newspaper written by and for incarcerated people:

I along with almost every other member of death row found so much hope and life every third Sunday of the month when Dr. Burroughs and Queen Mother Helen Sinclair made their visit. Pontiac's death row was a cold and barren place not fit for people such as Dr. Burroughs and Queen Mother, but there they were in their colorful African attire. And such big smiles on their faces. Dr. Burroughs spent her time out on a Sunday to walk the gallery throughout all the elements, from heat to cold. She did it to bring a little comfort to a few lost souls like me. She made me believe in myself. In my despair, she raised her voice and told me: My son, do you know you are a descendant of great Kings; you are someone and I love you. Now get to your work-station and write me a poem. I will be back the third Sunday of next month and you have to have something for me.³²

Eventually, Burroughs taught regular Tuesday classes at Joliet and later at Stateville. She taught drawing, painting, and even printmaking (before Stateville staff confiscated her cutting tools). Burroughs, Feldman, and Sinclair created a culture where other black artists and intellectuals, including Useni Eugene Perkins, a distinguished poet and playwright of the Black Arts Movement, felt connected and able to work inside prisons. Between 1970 and 1973, Perkins taught at Pontiac, where he described the relationship between prisoners and prison administration as "quid pro quo." In other words, incarcerated people had access to some tacit power in their environment because confining people without some cultural outlets

could lead to an organized response by people inside, with the potential of support from outside organizations. Perkins describes a political climate at Pontiac that enabled events such as a conference he co-organized there with Chicago community activist Russ Meeks:

We organized with the community a first Community Conference there at Pontiac. It had never been done before. Community people were involved in going out; they took a bus and talked with the men. We had workshops.... I had such good connections with the men I would walk around the whole place; I'd have lunch with the men, go into solitary on occasions. That's because the men had trusted me, and they had influence [with the administration]. It's a quid pro quo—you had Black Muslims, the gang members, each one had their own cellblocks, a number of organizations [and] they were not in conflict. Pontiac at that time, it wasn't peaceful but...it was being managed.³³

Perkins's work and other classes organized by Eugene Feldman (then director of development at the DuSable) were halted as a direct response to the uprisings in Pontiac in 1973.³⁴

Preston Jackson also taught in state prisons in the late 1960s. He started teaching in prison to support himself as a student at Southern Illinois University: "I guess I wasn't dedicated to it but to be honest with you it was for the money. But the attitudes in the country were such that we felt that we were part of the revolution.... I belonged to a mixed group called Youth Against War and Fascism, and that attitude went in with me.... We related to being prisoners ourselves, I think it was simply because of the color of my skin and economic background." Later Jackson and his jazz band performed at Pontiac and Joliet prisons. "That was semi-regular, because again, that attitude of bringing something to the prisoners from the outside [was important] because that was the beginning of a lot of African Americans being hustled—being taken off the streets—for a purpose."³⁵

Between the 1960s and 1970s, as culture makers were teaching, sharing resources, and organizing exhibitions in state prisons, some formerly incarcerated men organized themselves. Looking Toward Freedom, founded in 1970, aimed to use art, culture, and training programs to support people coming out of prison. Members of the group were exclusively former prisoners and had exhibited their work at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Merchandise Mart, among other venues.³⁶ An article about the opening of the group's first exhibition quotes founder Ben Bey: "There is no line between prison and post prison life, only an instant and then series of difficult, frustrating and seemingly endless experiences for which we were never

prepared and which often end in re-incarceration." Bey saw the importance of formerly incarcerated artists working together to create different rehabilitative programs: "Our solidarity and our tool is the prison experience. The present programs of 'rehabilitation' are run by professionals.... [W]e do not reject these programs...but more is needed and we see ourselves as a complement to existing organizations."³⁷ With funds from the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation in 1972, the Shop for Prison ART (art, rehabilitation, and training) opened on 209 North Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago as the first permanent gallery devoted exclusively to showing the work of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated artists.³⁸

Cracked Walls, Broken Windows

Prison and community exchanges represented mobility and possibilities seemingly unthinkable today, but even as these arts exchanges deepened, prisons were (and still are) spaces of intense state violence. As key sites for liberation struggles during the 1960s and 1970s, prisoners' resistance and collectivization were met with violent repression. In 1973 uprisings broke out at many prisons across the nation, including Stateville and Pontiac.³⁹ A *Chicago Defender* report on the 1973 Stateville uprising, "Revolt Was Expected," highlights the reason for the uprising: "inaction of public officials was cited as cause for the rebellion by several persons who have advocated reforms for IL and other penal institutions throughout the nation." Demands from prisoners at Stateville included a black warden, closing isolation units, release of those in programs for "hard to handle prisoners," and an end to the honor block⁴⁰ "to create equality for all prisoners."⁴¹ A year later, the John Howard Association, an Illinois prison watchdog group, released a report stating that the Department of Corrections was "sabotaging" education programs at Stateville by, among other things, transferring all teaching programs to the building that holds the segregation housing units.⁴²

Repression in prison did not go unnoticed. In 1975 the *Black Panther* newspaper featured an "Open Letter to the People" written by men incarcerated at Stateville urging people to see how the treatment inside is linked to the lives of black people in the "free" world:

For the past two and one half years, the State Ministry of Repression, better known as the Illinois Department of Corrections, has been working with other state institutions, government bodies, so-called private and/or civic organizations and the federal government, to change the state judicial/prison system. The public, as well

as prisoners, are being led to believe that these changes are for the benefit of all concerned. But we should not continue to accept these changes without questioning them and we should not continue to look only on the surface of these changes. Nothing happens in the state of Illinois that is not in some way connected to all other things happening all over the US... While they build new walls and install cameras in Stateville, they are also building walls, fences and installing cameras inside and around the housing projects and neighborhoods that you live in and all for the same reasons. What happens in Stateville concerns YOU. And what happens to you concerns us here.

These words remind us that *any* program in prison, even those with good intentions, can serve to create a “surface” of rehabilitation or correction, while obfuscating the functions and daily administration of control. Furthermore, the writers identified a dialectic between free and unfree spaces for poor people, people of color, and revolutionaries alike. Written in 1975, when less than 300,000 people were incarcerated across the nation, this statement is still resonant, as current organizers and scholars also try to knit together a “you and us” to demonstrate how prisons and punishment shape lives outside of prison walls.⁴³

Despite research documenting how education dramatically reduces recidivism rates and enhances prison “stability,” in 1994, Pell Grants to incarcerated people were eliminated and some seven hundred college programs in prisons folded.⁴⁴ Along with other states, Illinois passed new regulations and laws that further compounded the rates and lengths of incarceration. Elongated sentences then seemingly justified a prison’s decision to not allocate resources for people who will be “locked away for life.” In 1955 the warden of Stateville said, “Ninety-five percent of all the men committed here are released some day.”⁴⁵ Today many people in maximum-security prisons such as Stateville and Pontiac will die serving extraordinarily long prison terms, often for crimes for which they would have already been released had they been sentenced in a different country or years earlier.

Remaking, Rebuilding, Again

Dr. Margaret Burroughs spent the last thirty-five years of her life visiting and working in prisons, including teaching at Stateville, but outside of prison this work has been marginalized or forgotten, omitted from her *Chicago Sun-Times* and *New York Times* obituaries.⁴⁶ A display case at the entrance of Stateville honors Dr. Burroughs publicly through a memorial

to her contribution as an art teacher (along with awards for prison guards and counselors in a section titled “Positive Corner”).⁴⁷ While the greatest acknowledgement to Burroughs could be to build high-quality cultural programs, to create and support relationships between black art institutions and people in prison, or to let all people—particularly black people—out of cages, instead the Burroughs legacy within the Illinois Department of Corrections is stripped of a wider political and cultural legacy. In the display, she is represented as a quaint, sweet, grandmotherly art teacher.

Researching the history of art and educational programs in Illinois’s prisons is illuminating and depressing, particularly as we are currently working and negotiating within these institutions. We are careful not to imagine that knowledge of these histories could somehow ensure that our current efforts inside Stateville prison are special, different, or even revolutionary. If anything, this research reminds us that the current carceral state is undergoing a period of change and reconfiguration, and that our efforts can also be easily appropriated or erased. While contemporary budgetary crises have galvanized such divergent figures as former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and US Attorney General Eric Holder to publicly question the US criminal legal system, real change is maddeningly slow. Rules, laws, and regulations woven into school policies, public housing ordinances, and health care facilities continue to sweep up populations of mostly poor black people; the tough-on-crime legacy has expanded to include immigrants as a new carcerable population.

In 2011, when we organized a multiracial group of artists, writers, and scholars to start teaching at Stateville (population hovering around 1,800), there was only one paid General Educational Development (GED) teacher and two or three volunteers teaching financial skills or facilitating reading groups, often without support from outside institutions. With the legacy of Dr. Burroughs still palpable at the prison, we organized regular classes, hosted a guest lecture series, and are starting an artist- and writer-in-residence project. We have several institutional partners and are in regular communication with other related projects around the country. As little is consistent or guaranteed within the context of punitive state power, we are not likely to be seduced into thinking that we have built something new or sustainable. Without a visible record of the connections between institutions, such as the museum or university and state prisons, there is little historical memory left to suggest how institutions’ affiliations and alliances could be arranged otherwise.⁴⁸ This is a wider problem within the carceral state where “tough on crime” is naturalized, and imagining forms of safety and security not predicated on policing or prisons is almost impossible. Similarly, within the field of art history, what counts as art persistently disqualifies those outside of formal institutions. While the presence of these

counter-histories does not guarantee other futures—in art, public education, or public safety—the erasure ensures a thin historic record from which to imagine and build transformative futures. This writing fattens the record.

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- 1** “Nathan Wright: Artist in Handcuffs,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 2, 1975.
- 2** The 2013 Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) Annual Report identifies several educational programs, prison gardens, culinary arts programs, and one ceramics program currently offered in some IDOC prisons. Our experience indicates that even if these programs are currently active, they are often very selective and reach few people inside. Additionally, there is little evidence that these programs have meaningful connections to any organizations outside prison.
- 3** “Stone-Brandel Center Show Prison Art,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 8, 1970.
- 4** Ibid.
- 5** Frank Wilderson III, “The Prison Slave as Hegemony’s (Silent) Scandal,” *Social Justice Journal* 30, no. 2 (2003): 18–27.
- 6** Lee Bernstein, “Prison Writers and the Black Arts Movement,” in *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, ed. Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 298.
- 7** The build-up of a prison nation shaped government functions that were historically perceived as either less punitive or not punitive—immigration, education, health care, welfare—creating a carceral state. See for, example, Katherine Beckett and Naomi Murakawa, “Mapping the Shadow Carceral State: Toward an Institutionally Capacious Approach to Punishment,” *Theoretical Criminology* 16, no. 2 (2012): 221–44; Kaaryn Gustafson, *Cheating Welfare: Public Assistance and the Criminalization of Poverty* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2002); Loic Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
- 8** By contrast, in one decade between 1990 and 2000, the state built fourteen prisons. Today there are twenty-five prisons in the state.
- 9** On the panopticon see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977), 200–5.
- 10** “Illinois State Penitentiary Joliet Statesville Branch: Summary of Educational Opportunities Available to Inmates at Stateville Joliet” (Joliet: Illinois State Document, 1966), 1.
- 11** John Hudak, a Joliet artist and Catholic High School teacher, was the volunteer art instructor at Stateville. “Stateville Prison Inmates Turn Talents to Study Art,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 22, 1958, S1. In 1970 a photo and caption shows Hudak with Zolla and Lieberman of the Zolla-Lieberman Gallery, who were the jury for a Nationwide Penal Art Show exhibited that year at the Illinois Institute of Technology; standalone photo, *Chicago Defender*, Feb 21, 1970, 5.
- 12** “Summary of Educational Opportunities,” 4.

- 13** “Prison Artists Sell 965 Paintings,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1968.
- 14** Rev. Helen Sinclair, interview by Sarah Ross, August 22, 2013.
- 15** Useni Eugene Perkins, interview by Sarah Ross, September 18, 2013.
- 16** In 1966, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference opened Operation Breadbasket, dedicated to improving conditions in black communities in the U.S. and organized boycotts to pressure white business owners to employ and buy goods or services from African Americans.
- 17** “Ex-Prisoner Artists Set Exhibition,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 13, 1970.
- 18** Dori Meinert, “A True Prison Drama: Stateville’s Grim Reality Brings ‘Cuckoo’ to Life,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 17, 1984.
- 19** Paul Weingarten, “CON ARTISTS: In the Belly of B-East, There Is Art,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 1982.
- 20** Marshall Hill, interview by Sarah Ross, August 26, 2013.
- 21** Rob Wildeboer, “Inside Vienna: The State of Illinois Prisons,” *WBEZ Chicago*, December 17, 2012, <http://www.wbez.org/news/inside-vienna-state-illinois-prisons-104408>.
- 22** Bernstein, “Prison Writers and the Black Arts Movement,” 298–99.
- 23** Preston Jackson, interview by Sarah Ross, October 31, 2013.
- 24** “Gwendolyn Brooks,” Poetry Foundation, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gwendolyn-brooks>.
- 25** Jessie ‘Ma’ Houston, mother of Helen Sinclair, was also a key figure in organizing art shows of work by incarcerated artists, with the help of Operation Breadbasket.
- 26** “Margaret Burroughs Collection,” Oakton Community College Museum, <http://www.oakton.edu/museum/burr.html>.
- 27** See Anna M. Tyler, “Planting and Maintaining a ‘Perennial Garden’: Chicago’s South Side Community Art Center,” *International Review of African American Art* 11 (1994) 31–37.
- 28** Carline Evone Strong Williams, *Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs: Educator, Artist, Author, Founder, and Civic Leader* (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1994), 248, 250.
- 29** Eugene Feldman, *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum* (Chicago: DuSable Museum Press), 73.
- 30** Margaret Burroughs, “For Prisoners,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 27, 1971.
- 31** Margaret Burroughs, *Black, Black* (n.d.). Collection of Faheem Majeed.
- 32** Williams Jones, “In Remembrance of My Dear Mother Dr. M.T. Burroughs,” *Stateville Speaks* (Chicago, IL), May 2011.
- 33** Useni Eugene Perkins, interview by Sarah Ross, September 18, 2013.
- 34** Ibid.
- 35** Preston Jackson, interview by Sarah Ross, October 31, 2013.
- 36** “Ex-Prisoner Artists Set Exhibition,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 13, 1970.
- 37** “Looking Toward Freedom Opens at Artists Guild,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 30, 1970.
- 38** “Stone’s 2d Prison Paper Out,” *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 11, 1972.
- 39** James Jacobs’s *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) documents “riots” in the early 1930s protesting conditions and overcrowding. While uprisings are identified as key markers of resistance, a focus on uprisings

can obscure other forms of resistance inside, in particular those enacted by people in women's prisons, as Victoria Law captures in *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2009).

40 Honor block was a housing unit for prisoners with no disciplinary records or otherwise selected men.

41 Ted Watson, "Stateville Revolt Was Expected: Grab 11; Make Demands," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 8, 1973.

42 Robert McClory, "Claim 'Sabotage' of Inmate Education," *Chicago Daily Defender*, November 30, 1974. Segregation housing units are a form of isolation used for many reasons including punishment or what the state identifies as protective custody.

43 "Stateville Open Letter Exposes Illinois Prison Repression," *Black Panther* (San Francisco), November 15, 1975.

44 In 1994, Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (VCCLEA), a large omnibus bill that, among other things, created sixty new offenses eligible for the death penalty, funded 100,000 new police officers, created the Violence Against Women Act, dedicated \$9.7 billion for prison building and \$6.1 billion for prevention programs, and eliminated access to the Pell Grant for people in prison. See, for example, Joshua Page, "Eliminating the Enemy: The Import of Denying Prisoners Access to Higher Education in Clinton's America," *Punishment and Society* 6, no. 4 (2009): 357–78.

45 George Manly and Chesly Wright, "Education Prepares Convicts for Future Freedom: Stateville and Joliet," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 9, 1955.

46 Mary Houlihan, "DuSable Museum Founder Margaret Burroughs Dies," *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 21, 2010; William Grimes, "Margaret T. Burroughs, Archivist of Black History, Dies at 95," *New York Times*, November 27, 2010.

47 To our knowledge, there is no memorial to the people who have been killed in state custody. However, a cemetery outside the prison serves as burial ground for indigent men who die while incarcerated.

48 For example, Conrad Worrill and Arlene Crawford identify a key role the Center for Inner City Studies (now the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies) of Northeastern Illinois University played throughout the late 1970s and 1980s to facilitate relationships between people on the inside and outside through supporting jailhouse lawyers, creating educational and other opportunities for people after release from Stateville, and encouraging outside black student organizations to focus on issues linked to prisons and incarceration (Arlene Crawford, interview by Erica R. Meiners, October 1, 2013; Conrad Worrill, interview by Erica R. Meiners, October 3, 2013).