

PCAP NEWS

November 2017

The PCAP newsletter aims to keep incarcerated artists, writers, and performers informed of what the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is doing and how to be involved. If you know someone who would like to receive this newsletter, please have them write to us.

A Note from the Director

by Ashley Lucas

This autumn has brought us a lot of good news at PCAP, and I am delighted to be able to share it with you.

Artists Bryan Picken, Scribbles, and Serge Tkachenko all had artwork published in the September 2017 issue of *Michigan Bar Journal*. The art was reproduced in full color, and it looks wonderful. All of us in the PCAP office are so proud of the work they created and that art from our community complimented all of the articles in this issue of an important journal.

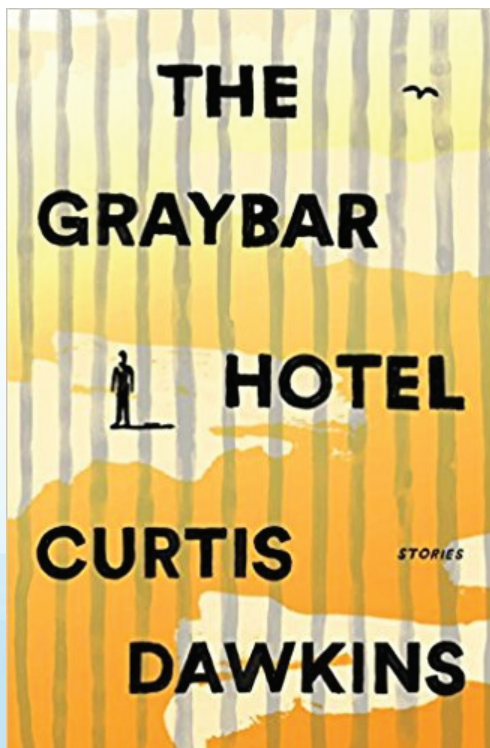
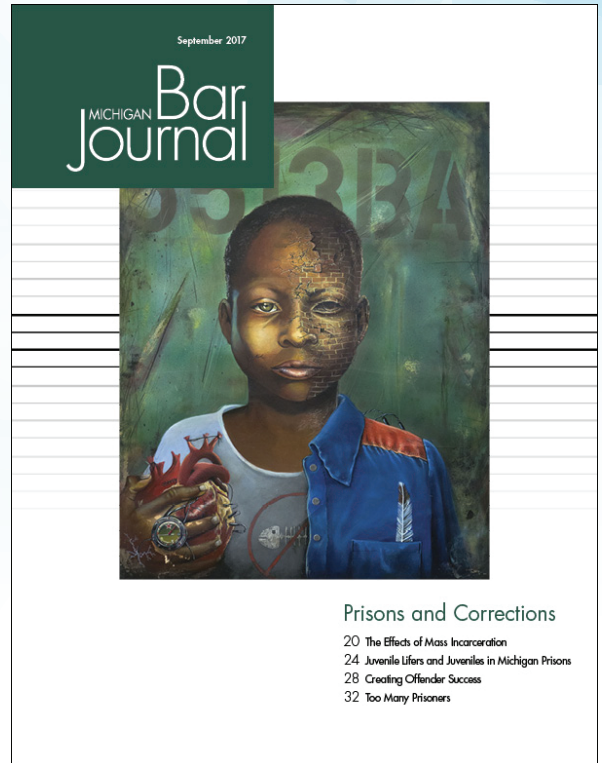
Curtis Dawkins, whom we have known at PCAP as a visual artist in our annual exhibition, published a collection of short stories with Simon & Schuster and made the front page of *The New York Times* in the process. His excellent book *The Graybar Hotel* depicts a series of fictional characters and events, mostly set in Michigan prisons. I have read a great many books about life behind bars and been disappointed by the worn-out tropes and stereotypes writers often use to make prison seem exciting, sexy, or terrifying. Dawkins' complex and thoughtful descriptions of prisons and the people who live inside them made me grateful for his words.

Shaka Senghor, likely PCAP's most famous alumnus, served as a consulting producer on a new eight-part reality television series called *Released* on OWN, Oprah Winfrey's network. *Released* follows five men and one woman as they return home after incarceration. The show reveals the complex and emotional challenges that returning citizens and their families face after prolonged incarceration. The show has only aired three episodes so far at the time of this writing, and I am deeply moved by everything I have seen.

The final piece of joyful news that I have to share today is that PCAP can now offer consistent music workshops!

We have offered one every now and then in the past when we had just the right facilitators to make that happen, but now we have a professor of voice and opera—the fabulous Kathleen Kelly—working with us. Kathy is a world-class musician who has worked with some of the best opera companies on earth, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Houston Opera, and the Vienna State Opera. She teaches voice and conducting, and we are so blessed to have her on the PCAP faculty.

This semester Kathy and I are co-teaching the Atonement Project class that Shaka and I founded in 2014. We have twenty-two amazing students who are offering workshops at Cotton, Cooper St., Gus Harrison, Milan (federal), and Lincoln/Calumet (a juvenile facility for boys). Some of our students are also offering workshops for high school students in Ypsilanti and for folks coming home from prison. (Please write to the PCAP office when you have an out date or call us when you are home so that we can give you all the information about our reentry programming!) For this class, students can choose which art form they would like to use in their workshops. We have a mix of theatre, creative writing, visual art, and music workshops, and all are going well. Other PCAP volunteers who are not in our class are also offering workshops at Women's Huron Valley.



A Note from the Director cont.

Thank you to those of you in the workshops this semester and to those who are meeting with our curators and volunteers on art selection trips. I so appreciate the warmth, grace, and openness with which you welcome our students, faculty, staff, and volunteers. You cannot possibly know how much your contributions, intellect, and creativity enrich our lives. We are ever grateful for the chance to do this work with you.



Literary Review

The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is accepting submissions of creative writing—fiction, poetry, essays, or memoir) of up to 4,500 words (ten typed pages) for *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*. The next pieces selected will appear in Volume 11, appearing in 2019. Writers are notified 8-10 weeks after submissions are received. Submissions will be received at this address throughout the year.

PCAP at LSA Residential College
ATTN: Phil Christman
1801 East Quadrangle
701 E. University Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

Please submit the following information with your written work:

- Your legal name (so we can communicate with you by mail);
- Your name or pen name as you'd like it to appear in the journal, if that's different than your legal name;
- Your MDOC ID number;
- Your current address;
- A short paragraph about yourself/your writing that will be published alongside any accepted piece.

Thank you for your outstanding pieces of writing that you have submitted thus far. We strongly encourage you to continue in this creative process and send us any and all of your work.

Discovering Self-Worth through the Gift of Self-Expression

by **Robert Hinds, PCAP Participant**

Unsurprisingly, most inmates have been given a wealth of time to think at the expense of their own freedom. As a result, numerous hours during the day are consumed with regret, guilt, unanswered questions, or in my case, intense strategic planning as I tirelessly pursue my exoneration. Some prisoners have learned the tools needed to enable them to have more productive thought-processes, but in many cases, inmates have never been taught how to think constructively. As a result, they are unable to share in the rich benefits of appropriately utilizing their mind as a weapon to accomplish positive goals and to cultivate the strength of their imaginations. Consequently, many inmates can't cope with their own thoughts because they lack the ability to use their words to paint the depths of their emotions, fears, and dreams or even more importantly, to build healthy relationships with their loved-ones. Due to their inability to engage in self-expression, they often feel a depreciated sense of self-worth.

On November 13, 2016, I was given the opportunity to participate in a creative writing workshop with the University of Michigan PCAP Students. At the time, I had no idea how meaningful this workshop would become to me. The workshop was facilitated by two U of M students named Kaitlin and Hanna and was overseen by the coordinator, Ashley. The positive energy and thoughtful intellectual themes that were presented to those of us who participated in this class served as a much-needed form of therapy. The truth is, that just something as simple as having an outlet to express the things that are on our minds can change our entire day.

The most meaningful part of this workshop for me was being viewed and treated like an intelligent and valuable human being for an hour and a half. The workshop facilitators made me feel like my thoughts mattered, my ideas mattered...I mattered. In addition to feeling valuable, I found it intellectually stimulating to be given different thought-provoking prompts to write about. Some of the creative thoughts that were shared amongst the students in this workshop were very enlightening and profound. The encouragement to befriend words so that we can discover the beauty of self-expression is something that those disconnected from the harsh realities of prison life can't place proper value on.

Having PCAP staff and students provide us with the opportunity to share our written work gave myself and other inmates something positive to look forward to every week. Sometimes, with all of the hustle and bustle of life, we fail to see the value in the small things like this writing workshop. This program was a bright spot in my life for its duration as it helped me learn more about myself through self-expression. It's my sincere desire in the future to have the opportunity to give back to PCAP so that I can help someone feel how I left the workshop feeling....valuable! I am truly grateful for being afforded the opportunity to share my experience with the PCAP program.

Sincerely,
Robert

Greetings from Katy Kelly, PCAP's Newest Faculty Member

Greetings to all the participants and supporters of PCAP! I'm enjoying my first challenging, life-giving, and life-changing term as a PCAP team teacher. I'm with you because Ashley Lucas is an incredible speaker and human being, and after hearing her tell a recent University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance faculty meeting about her work, all I could do was contact her and ask how I could help. Crime has touched my family's life, but music has transformed our lives, and I know that possibility is always there. And so I'm in class with Ashley's incredible students, learning from them every day. The whole PCAP team has been so welcoming and helpful to me. So hello to you all, and thank you for the chance to be part of this extraordinary community.

Kathy Kelly,
Associate Professor, Coach/Conductor of Opera

Art Auction

Art selection for the *23rd Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners* has started! Meaning... it's time for auction again! Prison Creative Arts Project is holding an art auction on December 8, 2017 on the University of Michigan Campus (Michigan League, Hussey Room, 911 N. University Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109).

All proceeds will support the upcoming exhibition. This event is free and will feature artwork donated by incarcerated artists, PCAP curators, University of Michigan faculty, and Michigan artists. Please invite your family and friends to join us for an evening with wine, dessert, art, and connection with the PCAP community.



Call for Art Donations from State Appellate Defender Office (SADO)

The State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) is seeking donations of art from currently and formerly incarcerated individuals for our downtown Detroit office, and we sincerely hope you will consider donating a piece or two of your work! Because SADO is a public defender office, we don't have an arts budget. However, we plan to feature selected donated art on our website, www.sado.org, complete with images and artist profiles. We hope this increased exposure will be beneficial to you artists.

If you are interested in donating some of your art, or if you have any questions, please write to us! (And be sure to include "Prisoner Art Project" in the subject line of your letter.) Thank you!

SADO
c/o Dawn Van Hoek & Jaime Nelson
645 Griswold
Suite 3300
Detroit, MI 48226

Calendar

November—December, 2017

Art selection trips for *23rd Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*

Weekly creative arts workshops

Rolling submissions for *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, vol. 11

PCAP office closed, November 23-24

PCAP Art Auction, December 8, 6:30-9:00pm, Michigan League

PCAP office closed, December 25-31

January—February, 2018

PCAP office closed, January 1

Final selection for *23rd Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*

Weekly creative arts workshops

Rolling submissions for *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, vol. 11

March — April, 2018

23rd Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners, March 21 - April 4, Duderstadt Center Gallery

Weekly creative arts workshops

Book release and readings from *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, vol. 10

Rolling submissions for *The Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*, vol. 11

Linkage Project workshop day (April, date TBD, Detroit)

About PCAP

Mission Statement

The Prison Creative Arts Project brings those impacted by the justice system and the University of Michigan community into artistic collaboration for mutual learning and growth.

Contact Us

PCAP at University of Michigan
1801 East Quadrangle
701 E. University Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245
pcapinfo@umich.edu
www.prisonarts.org

PCAP Faculty

Ashley Lucas, Director
Phil Christman, Kathy Kelly, Sarah Messer,
Isaac Wingfield

PCAP Staff

El Chen, Graham Hamilton, Mary Heinen,
Vanessa Mayesky

Annual Exhibition Curators

Janie Paul, Lead Curator
Reuben Kenyatta, Charlie Michaels, Ariana
Wescott, Isaac Wingfield, Jason Wright