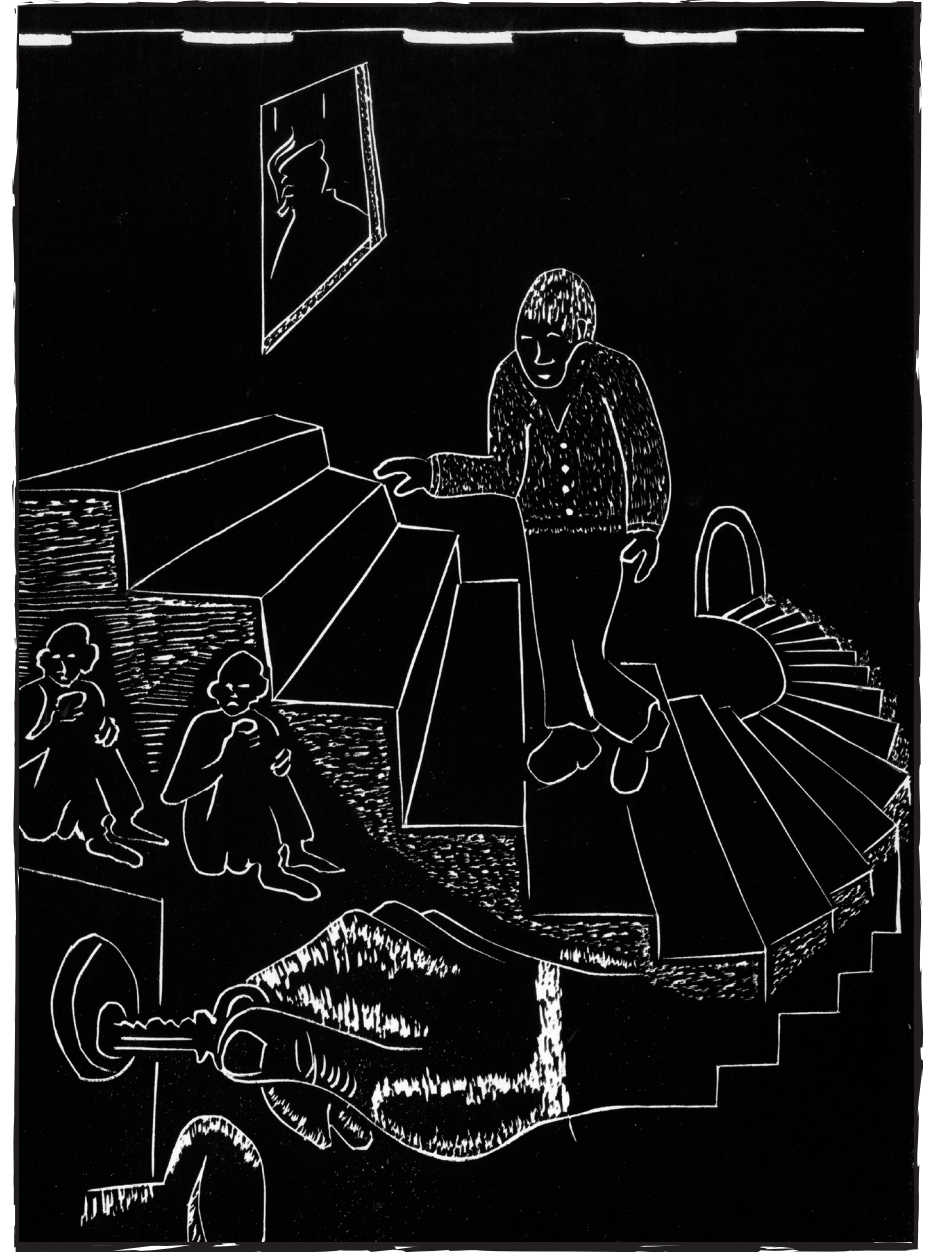


The Artistic Ensemble presents:

Thank you:

Warden Kevin Chappell, Steve Emerrick, the Deputized
Staff of San Quentin, IPP Staff and Board Members, Ellen Barry, Sonya Shah,
Jennifer Thompson, SQ News, SQ TV, William James Foundation,
Maria Healey, Kaela Terreson, University of San Francisco
Performing Arts and Social Justice Department.



WATERLINE

A full-length production of original theater

November 5, 2014 | San Quentin Prison

Cover artwork by Gary Harrell

The **Insight Prison Project** (IPP) is committed to transforming the lives of those impacted by incarceration through programs that inspire reflection, compassion, and accountability. IPP holds space for incarcerated individuals to heal and to understand self and society. Restorative justice processes like Victim-Offender Education Group support emotional growth and responsibility.

The **Artistic Ensemble** is a rigorous, creative practice at San Quentin Prison where participants develop artistic tools with which to explore personal journeys and their intersection with systemic forces of poverty, violence, power, and incarceration. The **Artistic Ensemble** strives to create a safe and disciplined space to intentionally unbind psychological, social and political constraints and barriers. This approach is deeply aligned with the restorative justice philosophy that is the core of the Insight Prison Project.

Current Ensemble Members

Adnan Khan
Anouthinh Pangthong
Antwon William
Carlos Flores
Chris Marshall, Sr.
Eric Lowery AKA Mike Lowery
Garey Martin
Gary Harrell
Gino Sevacos
Ira Perry
Julian Glenn Padgett
Losdini
Nate Collins
Neiland Franks
Richie Morris
Rodney Capell
Upumoni Ama
Amie Dowling, Freddy Gutierrez,
Tatiana Chaterji, Sebastian Alvarez

Former Ensemble Members

Belize Villafranco
Ellen Berry
Gary Snodgrass
Joey Mason
Joseph Demerson
Kroung Songkra
Kurt Vonstaden
Larry Mosley
Madniz Smith
Paul Comauex
Phil Mandendez
Richard Honea
Shadeed Wallace-Stepter
Tristan Jones
Watani Stiner

Soundboard Operator: Stephen Pascascio

San Quentin Lullaby

shut up shut up inmate
step behind the yellow line
this is a direct order
report to the podium

don't move don't move
up against the wall
down on the yard
get off of my yard

strip out, step out
cuff up, squat, and cough

shut up shut up inmate
step behind the yellow line
this is a direct order
report to the podium

don't move don't move
up against the wall
down on the yard
get off of my yard

strip out, step out
cuff up, squat, and cough

I was born

I was born
I moved
I cried
I became conscious
I learned to crawl, to stand , to walk
I ran
I defied the force of gravity
I spoke
I learned words
I expressed myself
I was able to want something
I learned rules
I learned to pretend
I came of age
I was able to tell my history
I became responsible
I expressed myself in action and in inaction
I lived one moment to the next
I broke my word
I did not think of the future
I was too much alone
I was not enough alone
I became guilty
I was not what I should have been
I am not what I was
I am aware
I am

This is the Year

- Adnan This is the year I wipe my tears
- RC This is the year I forgive; love me exactly as God says
- Adnan This is the year I make eyes clear
- RC This is the year I forgive; love others exactly as God says
- Adnan The year they see my vision
 This is the year I manifest my presence
- Upu This is the year that the broken boys we sent
 away, return as healed men
- The year that the mother's of murdered children
 have a heart of forgiveness and reconciliation
- Gary This is the year that men open their minds
 and stop wondering what other people are thinking and ask them!
- Richie For as long as the blind man
 chooses to wallow
 his vision will remain limited
- Don This is the year that the United States
 regains its sight
- Prince The year a better understanding between races begins
- Don This is the year that people unite
- Carlos The year reason, logic, and love seem to be real
 and everyone establishes their utopia
- Choy This is the year that youth of every nation
 feel the value of those who preceded them
- Chris The year that all Africans share in the mineral wealth of their countries,
 the year of peace in the Middle East
- Choy The year that the underdog raises his fist in victory

Chris This is the year social inequality is abolished

Banks This is the year, that change is not a slogan
thoughts are planted like seeds, and we water what's growing

Los This is the year soldiers are born to free people changing the present
The year the police understand where they are and the rich pay the check

Luke This is the year struggle becomes Shalom, where "I can't stand you" becomes "I'll
stand with you"; where "I hate you" becomes "I love you"

 This is the year!

Choy If the seeds of love are planted in the hearts of men
to overthrow the cowardice of hate,
then this is the year.

 If it takes a village, the roar of the community
to invoke unity,
then this is the year.

All This is the year!
This is the year!
This is the year!

Thank you all for such an extraordinary experience this morning. The work was amazing on so many levels and I will be thinking about it for a long time to come. My only regret is that it will only be performed once. It should be seen by many.

Thank you so much for inviting me to see the Artistic Ensemble perform at San Quentin. I was so tremendously moved by the performance--as was everyone there, I think--and I felt that I saw your way of making very simple things (bodies, sheets of paper, a blanket on the ground) into very powerful ideas. The image of the men curled sideways on the backs of other men who were crawling across the floor was especially striking for me. I thought of Judith Butler's ideas about interdependency--that we can only conceive of ourselves by acknowledging how much we are constituted by others, how much we bear others and are borne by them.

Thanks so much for inviting me to the SQ Artistic Ensemble performance. The men in the ensemble were amazing and really put themselves out. I was truly affected by hearing their collective stories. They are a strong and talented bunch with so much to offer! And I was so moved by the men's answers in the Q&A at the end, most of which were incredibly powerful - so heartfelt and articulate.

The whole experience has really stayed with me. Not only the performance, but meeting the group members afterwards, and just being inside the facility. I had/have so many thoughts and impressions all at once. I am still sorting them out and seeing the insanity of our country's incarceration policies and the impact it has on so many people's lives. I have always been aware of the injustice, but experiencing the prison first hand and hearing seeing the AE stories makes it more real and visceral.

I am impressed by the ways that the groups artistic vision and skills allows individuals to find their voices, connect with each other and connect with each performer and audience members humanity.

WATERLINE

On November 5, the Artistic Ensemble at San Quentin State Prison performed WATERLINE, a full-length production of original theater. The artistic ensemble is part of the [Insight Prison Project](#); its members are all prisoners at San Quentin. They created and performed WATERLINE in collaboration with four outside facilitators including Freddy Gutierrez. I'm grateful to Freddy for the invitation to experience theater produced from within such radically constricted conditions, the kind of conditions that have shaped other moments in which theater played a vital part, from Russian agitprop to Dario Fo and Franca Rame's collective, Associazione Nuova Scena, or the Black Reperatory Theatre/ School started by Amiri Baraka. Within the prison industrial complex, the constriction of everyday life under capital's rule is intensified, its stratification, its genocidal drive, its logic absolutely clear. What does it mean to perform, to make art in such conditions? For those who make it, those who experience it? I've been confused about a lot of things in the wake of this performance. I experienced things I didn't expect. The performance raised questions about my everyday life. About gender. About institutionality. About restorative justice. I wanted to write something about it. I wanted to write something for the artistic ensemble.

This goes out to Adnan Khan, Anouthinh Pangthong, Antwon William, Carlos Flores, Chris Marshall, Sr., Eric Lowery AKA Mike Lowery, Garey Martin, Gary Harrell, Gino Sevacos, Ira Perry, Julian Glenn Padgett, Losdini, Nate Collins, Neiland Franks, Richie Morris, Rodney Capell, Upumoni Ama, Ami Dowling, Freddy Gutierrez, Tatiana Chaterji, and Sebastian Alvarez.

Up early to eat borscht and leave by 8, discouraged by everything, the early hour the diversity and inclusion working group the administration the bargaining table the budget the money raised at the gala on the backs of where it doesn't go the affordable senior housing crisis aging generally holidays death rape we need to get a wooden salad bowl.

We sit for a long time in the chapel waiting for everyone to move through the gates and walk in a single line on the path above the water show their ID pay attention to where your body is raise your arms while someone runs a wand around the arms and legs stamps your wrist through here hold your ID up will the gentleman in the suit pull the gate closed after us. While we wait in the chapel we make a to do list except we don't have paper or phone nothing in your pockets just ID and keys if necessary.

On the brief walk across the yard between the final gate and chapel, an empty fountain of mid-century design reminds me of fairyland, the sky so blue above it and afraid my body is going to do something weird wave my arms around

cause a problem in the airport security line sometimes I worry I won't be able to stop myself from making an inappropriate joke about weapons or lipgloss or toothpaste as weapons.

Guards cross the yard with huge rings of keys swinging from their belts like the Andy Griffith show. I feel high vertiginous I'm inside the state. The gate locks people inside. This is one of the better prisons like everything in the Bay Area there are so many artists and therapists and volunteers and programs a friend said people joke it's a community college or maybe the YMCA. Afterwards I ask if there will be another performance it's a stupid question. What it takes to get 60 visitors in at once.

But this isn't about me or not too much just that I got to see the single performance of this play with an audience of 60 visitors from the outside and I'm not sure how many men on the inside but a lot, they filled the chapel. Four facilitators from outside worked with seventeen men on the inside, they met three hours, once a week for a year and a half. They didn't know if there would be a performance at the end or not. They set the question aside and talked together instead did some writing together some moving. I think these meetings and other meetings and programs like this are the only places where the men socialize across racial divisions I think it may be the only multi-racial space in the prison.

Before it begins Steve waits for us to listen like the artistic director at a small theater and this is the curtain speech he has some housekeeping to go over but he says *housecleaning* instead. I have a warm feeling for Steve. We can't use the regular bathroom because there is drug testing going on and they have to maintain something about visual clarity they have to watch the men in line. We should use a bathroom in "the captain's porch" instead and if you are unfamiliar or do not have a brown badge go with someone who does. Do not exchange personal information with a prisoner. That is the policy. Wait for someone with a brown badge to take you out. Sign out of every book you signed on the way in so they do not have to look for you or call your house later tonight. Laughter. After Steve talks the men enter and fill in the rest of the rows behind us, visitors from the outside get the front rows. Some of the men recognize a television actor I don't Clive says he's on TV.

More quiet talking after a while some men lay down on the floor backs to the audience curled on their sides head cradled on their arms. The sound of water, rain, water falling and running down pipes and walls water drops. Freddy welcomes us and talks about the project and I have a warm feeling for Freddy.

I have a warm feeling sitting next to Clive in his suit because we had a hard time figuring out what to wear no colors nothing that might bring about misrecognition nothing a prisoner or guard would wear so no denim nothing green ok purple purple is ok. A beautiful woman in a bright purple scarf I saw her at the gate maybe she is bringing some courage some encouragement to someone she knows inside. Waving purple brightly. I don't know. I have a warm feeling sitting next to someone I've done yoga with the Friday night donation class but don't know her name.

Then it is starting and when it is over we will turn to each other and say we weren't ready for it to end. It begins with the drought. With water inside the body. All the water metaphorical water water as itself, rivers and oceans and tears and pee all the water outside the prison makes it a view for money for a resort like a postcard the mist or fog around rocks around the edge as we walked up the hill so blue. Where it meets the sky.

After the play we drive away from the prison in our truck and don't know how to talk about it. I keep calling it a play but that's not quite right. A dance. Poems stories sometimes just sounds part of a word. My face keeps breaking out crying all the way through the performance I hold back or try how maudlin so easy to be a person crying feeling things but this is stupid too look around everyone is crying. Richie one of the performers starts crying during the Q&A and men are shouting yes to him and it's ok and the men's hands on the back of the other man who is crying or laughing and some of you knew how I grew up and how did you step into that role how or tell a story that isn't yours? His friend gave him that story asked him to tell it. All the questions are smart questions. Richie spent most of his life in a level 4. Why these stories.

The ensemble wants critical feedback from the 60 visitors mostly artists community art types sitting in the two front rows but none of us has anything. The actor from TV says "In terms of technique I don't have anything on you" someone laughs "yes you do you're free" one of the men in blue there are a lot of jokes about calling on "the man in the blue shirt" during the Q&A most of the questions from people in blue shirts who the play is for where it came from and returned to.

This goes on all week I stand in the grass at work and say something about how disorienting it is when art matters when you weren't expecting it and realizing how often you do not. I confess I was afraid before we saw the play that it might be somehow bad, I mean emotional but not very good. Or expressed through genres that aren't my genres. Or afraid of myself as a portrait of liberal

guilt, observing myself observe the performers through a webbing of painful self-awareness of individual privilege. I sit on a bench at the bar I don't know how to talk about it. How when art matters, why is this, what do I mean, or when emotional work, under what conditions, the basic problem of the prison of the chapel in the prison where art mattered, when there is a group of men and the form of their being together is tenderness and all the places where this is not so, everywhere art that does not matter does not move the way something moved through the basic problem of the prison the chapel in the prison the inside and the outside.

It begins and ends in water with water it's blue. Some blue shirts say PRISONER. Some performers wear the same kind of boots. Some don't. One has on a grey shirt I don't know why or how someone wears a ring or belt or grey shirt and someone else doesn't.

There is a lot of holding. Some men form a kind of couch carrying another man leaning on his side propped up telling the relaxed story of leaving his father's house at 17 and bringing with him the TV his father bought him and other things his father bought him and the kush plant his father wouldn't let him keep which is why he left for a house with roommates and it was perfect with an empty swimming pool they could skate in a story I think sort of about the black middle class and slipping and getting caught in something and trying to get out and not being able to get out of something that ends very badly but begins with being carried on a couch with a high GPA athletic excellence and a lot of education you can hear in the language of this story

Some men form a mother on her knees carrying a child across her back across a river in Cambodia to a camp in Thailand collapsing there sleeping then getting up and folding a grey blanket like a red cross blanket a donated blanket folded like a flag into triangles the pain of citizenship of carrying that boy on your back all the way here

Some men form the walls of a cell pressing in on another man EIGHT BY TWELVE he says EIGHT BY TWELVE again EIGHT BY TWELVE

One man reads single lines really simple lines it's like *My Struggle* but more vast. Each line a piece of paper drops to the floor and piles up there while two other men crawl along behind moving the paper pushing it forward placing a sheet under each foot as the man reads a line and steps forward another man crawls there and places the paper he drops under his foot so each page allows him to tell more each man on the floor crawling behind him pushing him forward

holding him up

there is a story
that won't be told
one man staggers under the weight of a folding table

there is a list of names spoken through a dance so intricate and the performer
so handsome people would want to watch this man dance on a screen I think if
he released a track or danced on a screen people would want to keep listening
people would not get enough of watching this man ever

it's hard to enjoy the dance these names crying side by side over and over the
names of friends maybe or brothers maybe killed by police I think the men are
gone the names hurt and the dance snaps through his arms and feels so new
here together 60 of us from outside and I'm not sure how many inside but a lot
they filled the chapel listening to these names crying side by side I don't think
this will ever be on a screen or on the track

later the man who dances like that says when he's doing this when he gets to
dance or write or sing it feels like the life he should have had the one where he
dances writes sings

one man an older man begins singing twinkle twinkle little star

one man holds a guitar and another slowly pulls the strap over his head, takes it
out of his arms

"I just kept losing things"

the men seem a lot smarter than a lot of the men I know

maybe because of the men touching each other or forming mothers or how
each holds the dance in his face and arms differently each seems fine with the
way he does it the way he holds it

the men touching the other man's back when he is crying afterwards

the men calling out go on it's ok

the men making sure someone else gets to talk

I notice the men don't talk about sex in the play

I wonder what they are allowed to represent and not allowed to represent

the stories are all bigger than the men

the men hold little paper boats white boats and follow them with their eyes

it ends this way

sailing out of the room on little paper boats