

RTA – Funding for Rehabilitation Programs

by

Daniela Fonseca

Submitted to the Board of Arts Management

School of the Arts

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College

State University of New York

December 2020

Sponsor: Dawn Gibson-Brehon

Second Reader: Jack Tamburri

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Introduction

My senior project will help me to better understand arts organization funding for social justice programs. For that purpose, I decided to research the work done by Rehabilitation Through The Arts (RTA) and their program with the Hudson Valley Incarceration System. My goal is to verify how RTA strategizes for funding resources when dealing with marginalized subjects, and whether RTA can reinforce the positive outcome of its programs to society, politicians, and local leaders. Considering criticism on some arts and social practice, my sub-questions are: how does the project impact participants (inmates) in the long run? How do these impacts influence the communities where the participants belong to or live at?

To find the answers to my question I have researched literature reviews such as journals, articles, institutions websites, and annual reports. I have researched academic findings related to the studies of art as a tool of inclusion, empathy, to exercise citizenship, and humanize marginalized populations. To support my findings, I have taken an internship with RTA in the fall 2020 semester. The ethnographic approach used on my research consisted of interviews and analysis of material (art works) produced by the participants during my internship period. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19 I did not have a chance to observe the participants of the programs in person. I conducted interviews with Ricki Gold, RTA Deputy Director, and Charles Moore, RTA Director of Operation. During my interview with Ricki Gold, I was able to gather important information on funding for the project and about their marketing strategies for the near future.

I worked as a Production Manager for the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra (OSB) for nine years. Our main challenge regarding our inclusion and inequity programs was to find sponsors and funding for those projects. Besides the Youth Concerts and Youth Orchestra, which were

produced under OSB Education and Engagement department's umbrella, most projects that reached out to disenfranchised communities on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, faced enormous hardship to find financial sponsors. The few projects that were carried out were in partnership with non-profit organizations funded mainly by groups in these communities or closely connected to them. Because RTA has had a successful response to its program it is a good case study to analyze strategies to find resources and partnerships to maintain such programs. To achieve its goals, RTA needs to be acknowledged by society that, public support is of utmost importance for the programs to continue and to be successful. Such projects are long term investments for our communities, our cities, and our country.

History of Art Therapy

Art is a social tool for change, education, interaction, self-knowledge, the list of its mechanism of transformation is endless. We learn social skill tools through arts on our everyday lives. It has been used as therapeutics methods of physically and emotional healing in many studies, the creative process of art making is healing and builds up non-verbal communication of ideas and feelings. Cathy Malchiodi is the founder, director and lead faculty member of the Trauma-Informed Practices and Expressive Arts Therapy Institute. She is an educator, and an expert in the fields of art therapy. She holds a doctorate in Psychology with a specialization in research and health psychology (About). Dr. Malchiodi writes, "Like other forms of psychotherapy and counseling, it is used to encourage personal growth, increase self-understanding, and assist in emotional reparation and has been employed in a wide variety of settings with children, adults, families, and groups." (Malchiodi 1). Malchiodi further explains, Art Therapy is a mix of arts and psychology, it is a pairing of arts and healing that has been observed throughout human history, it has become a profession in the 20th century (Malchiodi

5,6). Psychiatry and psychology have been the main fields to explore Arts Therapy, but it has also been accessed for patients with AIDS, cancer, chemical dependency, traumas, asthma, and other rehabilitation needs, as shown by Malchiodi in a Handbook of Art Therapy (Malchiodi 2) .

Art Therapy explores the connection of body and mind. In the last few decades neuroscience has made some significant discoveries alongside this correlation that can support even further psychotherapy and art therapy approaches to enhance physical, mental, and behavioral rehabilitation. Neuroaesthetics, for instance, is an innovative area of neuroscience that studies the intersection of art (aesthetics), neuroscience, biology, and evolution to understand how our brains react to art, how we perceive, and produce art. Neuroaesthetics studies how art can affect our cognitive responses to the world around us, cognitive functions are the information our brain access (perceive) and the actions we take (judgement) as we process the information (Magsamen).

Art therapy is also used as a form to rehumanize individuals that were dehumanized through the rigid prison system. It helps to release stress, develop social skills, increase capacity for problem solving, and it is very useful to build frustration tolerance. “There is ample evidence to suggest that the artistic process can provide a safe and acceptable way to express, release and deal with potentially destructive feelings such as anger and aggression.” (Brewster 4). In the prison system, trust is not found very often, and artwork activities can offer inmates an alternative to convey feelings, situations, or some health conditions such as depression and stress. Art can be used to create discussion generating awareness to a specific topic without exposing any inmates as weak or show them as too sensitive. Building trust was also an important subject to Dr. Lucy O’Grandy’s research which took place in a maximum-security women’s prison in Australia. O’Grandy is a music therapist and musician. She lectured at the

Universities of Bergen and Melbourne in Australia and has extensive experience in community music therapy. The art forms performed by her group research were music and theatre. Women needed to trust the music director, and the theatre company implementing the program as well as each other. “Trust was a vital ingredient of the creative process as well as an outcome of the journey.” (O’Grandy 135). Participants of the program reported prison staff members’ trust in them increased due to their progress along their creative journey. Dr. O’Grandy’s research took place in a maximum-security prison in Australia and it was published in 2015. It involved seven incarcerated women and seven artists from a theatre company. The Theatre company had been working with women from that prison form more than 25 years. The group collectively created and performed a musical. The process took ten weeks and included a two-hour weekly music workshop. In the last two weeks of the research, the workshops became daily. First, the workshops approached writing individual and collective songs. Then, the group would discuss which song would be in the musical. At the end of the project, they performed for other inmates, and prison staff. O’Grandy research was intended to understand “if from creating and performing music helped women to move from inside/internal realms to more outside/external ways of being.” (O’Grandy 128). The research findings showed that, to increase engagement in the creative process, the women needed to access a series of resources. She abbreviated these resources C.R.E.S.T. (courage, readiness, exchange, support, and trust). (O’Grandy). This study helps us understand the importance of being able to assess and to use the resources mentioned on C.R.E.S.T. in relationships with other people, and with social structures. The research shows how these resources are tools to create and develop mutual respect and collaborative systems where the prisoners contribute and gain from relationships. Thus, they form a sense of empowerment.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is often applied to help inmates deal with anger management. CBT is a result of the combination of behavior therapy and cognitive therapy. It is a psychological treatment used for depression, anxiety disorder, alcohol problems, drug use problems, marital problems, eating disorders, and several mental illnesses (American Psychological Association). CBT is often incorporated in Arts Therapy to help inmates deal with problematic behavior often caused by problematic thinking. Studies have shown the positive results of these treatments and how they have improved patient's quality of life. As we can find on the America Psychological Association, CBT can be determined on the principles that psychological problems are based, in part, on faulty or unhelpful behavior or on learned patterns of unhelpful behavior. Also, people suffering from psychological problems can learn better ways of coping, thereby relieving their symptoms and becoming more effective in their lives. (American Psychological Association).

The two main characteristics of cognitive behavior are 1) problematic thinking leads to problematic emotions and 2) problematic thinking is either learned or lack of learning. Some of the form of treatment is “to learn to recognize one’s distortions in thinking that are creating problems and then to reevaluate them in light of reality. Gaining a better understanding of the behavior and motivation of other. Using problem-solving skills to cope with difficult situations. Learning to develop a greater sense of confidence is one’s own abilities.” (American Psychological Association). One type of problematic thinking common among prisoners is blaming of their crimes on external factors, such as someone or something made them commit the crime. Looking into their behavior and understanding their responsibilities towards their crimes and actions is one of the first steps to modify their patterns. Inmates often blame their violent behavior on anger and their inability to deal with it. Another example of learned

problematic thinking is repeating violent behavior patterns, which one might have been exposed to for a long period, such as childhood. (Mandracchia, Morgan and Garos).

CBT's purpose is not to act on the cause of the problem, but to deal with the symptom and develop ways to cope with life and move forward. By identifying problematic behaviors and emotions, Cognitive Behavior Therapy helps inmates to deal with them. It can also be useful in art therapy to develop self-esteem and to build confidence as a result, increase participants interest in further their education. As Brewster indicates in his studies, there was an increase in inmates' interest in re-engaging in school and, in some cases, in college education. (Brewster 4). RTA has reached the same results. Furthermore, their participants who graduated high school prior to entering the program tend to spend more time in the prison's college program and complete their degree.

History of Corrections in The State of New York

As reported by Correctional Officer website, "the United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world." (U.S. Correctional System). New York State plays a very important part in the history of the prison system as we know it today. The US prison system was created in the early 19th centuries. Prior to that, during the colonial period, executions and public punishment were applied as sentences. As we entered the 19th centuries, the confinement concept was introduced in the country. The first states to adopt it were New York and Pennsylvania. (The Evolution of New York Prison System). Reformer and Quaker Thomas Eddy was born in Philadelphia. In his early adulthood, he moved to New York, and became a banker and a businessman. He was also a philanthropist, and a strong supporter of a new criminal punishment system called "confinement". He believed criminals could be rehabilitated through work, education, and religious practices. He was also involved in the changes of New York State's

criminal law's in 1796 which led to the reforms in the beginning of the following century.

(Ekirich)

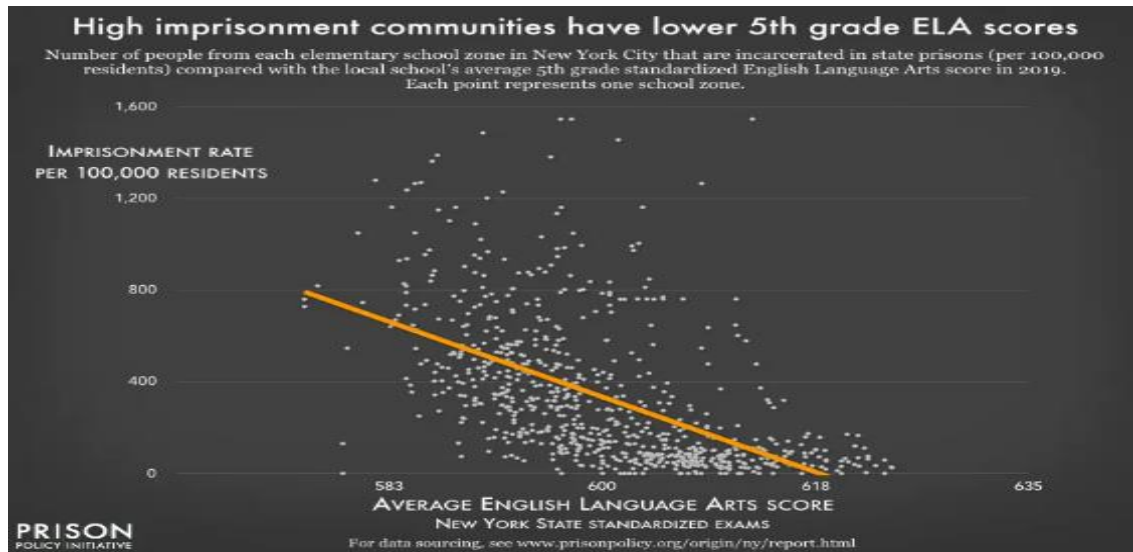
New York State chose a prison system in which the goal was reformation. After many years of advocating for a new type of prison, Thomas Eddy finally succeeded in 1819. That year, Auburn Prison, America's first maximum-security prison, was opened in New York. (The Evolution of New York Prison System). As we find in the Correction History website, not just New Yorkers felt total isolation led to extreme distress. They also understood how expensive it would be to maintain such a system. If inmates could "learn from hard work and thrift--if such a system also offered the potential for inmates to grow and harvest their own vegetables, raise and butcher their own meat, make their own clothes and manufacture other items for use or sale by the estate, such a boon to the states' budget could not reasonably be ignored." (The Evolution of New York Prison System). Prisoners were not allowed to communicate with each other, nor with their families in the outside.

According to the Committee on Correction's 2019 Annual Report, New York State's correctional system is the third largest in the nation. The Correction Committee is a standing committee of the New York State Assembly. The committee's chairman is appointed by the state's Speaker of the House. The Committee is responsible for "bills and resolution referred to them by the Speaker...implementation and administration of programs, of departments, agencies, divisions, authorities, boards, commissions, public benefits corporations and entities within its jurisdiction". (Correction Committee, New York Assembly). It also states that New York houses 47,000 inmates in state facilities and 24,271 inmates in local facilities. Since 1994, all New York State prisoners under 21 are mandate to be enrolled in an academic education program until they obtain a General Education Diploma (GED). According to the Department of Correction and

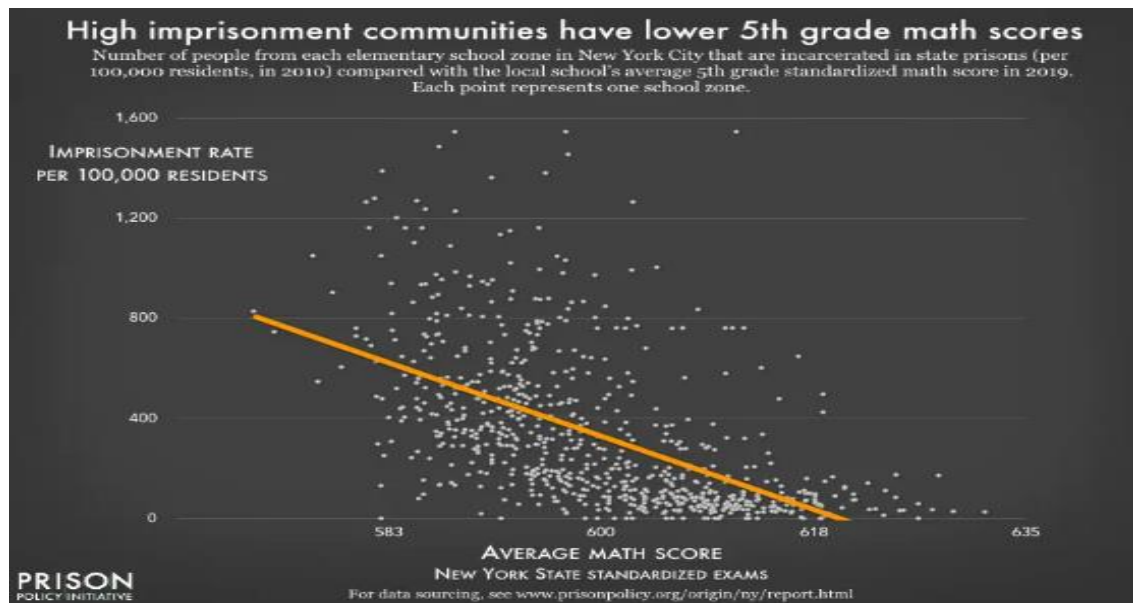
Community Supervision's Under Custody Report for 2018 provided by, 32% of inmates in the state of New York are under the age of 21. (Under Custody Report: Profile of Under Custody Population 4).

Prison Policy Initiative is a non-profit organization that produces research on mass criminalization and advocates for criminal justice reform. Their data of the country's incarcerated population is "widely-used in the field". (About). Their 2020 report revealed a significant relation between learning underachievement and high number of incarcerations neighborhoods in New York City, specific to 5th grade scores (figures 1 and 2). As the scores get higher, incarceration decreases. "People in prison have markedly lower education attainment, literacy, and numeracy than the general public, and are more likely to have learning disabilities." (Prison Policy Initiative and VOCAL-NY).

VOCAL-NY is a statewide grassroots organization that advocates for the end of the AIDS epidemic, war on drugs, homelessness, and mass incarceration. They are supported by the Brooklyn Community Foundation, Ford Foundation, New York State department of Health, New York City Council, and other relevant institutions. (About Us). Although this study was conducted in areas of New York City, it is relevant for this project as people in New York state prisons, such as Hudson Valley incarceration system, come from different parts of the state. The study shows that the youth in communities with higher imprisonment rates deal with constant hardship regarding their education.



(Fig. 1 Source: Prison Policy Initiative and VOCAL-NY)



(Fig. 2 Source: Prison Policy Initiative and VOCAL-NY)

The Department of Corrections and Community Service (DOCCS) is the agency responsible for the supervision of all persons under custody or released from the state correctional facilities, as well as the ones on parole. The DOCCS hires RTA services, therefore, all RTA programs need to be in accordance with their rules and regulations. The relationship between the organization and DOCCS is of most importance for the development of the

programs. The DOCCS understands the importance of such projects. As stated on 2018 Correctional Report, “Many ex-offenders have high educational and vocational needs, a history of substance abuse and problems maintaining stable housing and employment, The Correction Committee recognizes the importance of supportive reentry services and continues to advocate for increased funding and diversity of programming to help people coming out of prison successfully reintegrate into the community.” (New York State Assembly 6). RTA programs’ goal is not just decrease recidivism, but to help inmates develop tools and skills to enter the work force once they are released. As Rick Gold, RTA Deputy Director stated, “...frankly, I think having a low recidivism it’s a low bar. That is the least that we would want. We want to show that people have solid employment, interesting jobs, jobs that use the skills that they learnt at RTA.” (Gold).

Art Program Research in Correction Facilities

The incarceration environment system by its nature, and purpose, promotes exactly the opposite of social interaction. Therefore, the challenges of such programs are very different from others that use arts to deliver a message. Because the intention of incarceration is to isolate individuals, and at the same time, rehabilitate them to be apt to reintegrate society, the process is much more complex. Although the idea of segregating one as punishment and to have them reintegrated is antagonistic, US Corrections system intent is to “re-institute” inmates. As Dr. Larry Brewster writes in Justice Policy Journal, “Incarceration carries with the responsibility of offenders rehabilitation. It is morally and physically the right thing to do—especially with historically high rates of incarceration, longer sentences, and the revolving door or recidivism.” (Brewster 2).

Larry Brewster is a researcher and author of books on California and US public agenda. He has been involved with arts programs in Correctional Facilities since the early 80's. He has conducted much research on the subject and his most recent book focuses on how art education can change the lives of the incarcerated population. His research finds are used by many organizations, including California Layers for Arts (CLA). Because of the evidence of one of his studies, in 2014, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation provided the California Arts Council \$2.5 million dollars for a 2-years arts program. (Arts in Correction, County Jails Project). Brewster researched three northern California state prisons and one southern California state prison. The study took into consideration other published works. The literature in this area suggests that social and cognitive abilities are developed through arts instruction and practice. Cognitive impairment is also related to the impossibilities of playing real-life roles such as family's roles (father, daughter, grandfather, and so on), which can be suppressed during the incarceration period and can be worked on at some of the arts programs and workshops.

Brewster indicates that beyond social skill and self-value development among the prisoners, the programs activities also increased inmate's interest in getting their GEDs, as well as college education. Researchers have found a strong correlation between arts education and practice and the pursuit of knowledge through other education programs. "Arts and the creative process help to develop the right brain, and to builds confidence and self-esteem, all of which prepares and encourages individuals to expand their learning in other disciplines." (Brewster 19).

The RTA program has reached the same result. Furthermore, participants who graduated high school prior to entering the program tend to spend more time in the prison's program and complete their degrees (Rehabilitation Through The Arts).

Two published research projects have measured the effects of RTA on its participants. The first was conducted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice and NYS DOCCS in 2006. It found that participants behavior changed. Consequently, the amount and severity of infraction within prison was significantly improved, compared to a group of non-participants. “It measured the impact of theatre education on participants in the areas of institutional and social behavior.” (Moller 10). The research was produced from sixty-five male participants, thirty-six of which were RTA members. That year they were involved with “Slam”, a play they produced. From the group, nineteen participants have taken part in a past production. For the remaining members, that was their first play. They were divided in three groups: (1) Beginner, (2) Intermediate, and (3) Experienced. NYS DOCCS provided a match group of seventy-two prisoners non-participants to the RTA program. This control group matched RTA’s participants in age, ethnicity, religion, and nature of offense. Research showed that RTA group disciplinary infractions during the time of pre-production and play performance among all their three participants groups was average. Moreover, it was 50% lower than the control group. The study suggested educational theatre can have positive effects on re-socialization and behavioral management.

The second research study was administered by Purchase College and NYS DOCCS, in 2012. It demonstrated that RTA is a facilitator for learning, and coping responses. The study involved one hundred and eighteen RTA participants, and one hundred and eighteen inmates for a comparison group put together by NYS DOCCS. The comparison group matched the RTA group on race, age, education, crime, and length of sentence. RTA members were divided into two groups: (1) members who acted in two or more plays [central], and (2) those in the program for two or more years [peripheral]. They then compared the RTA group and non-RTA group

enrollment in various educational program over time. The research shows more men in RTA groups complete degrees beyond a GED while incarcerated than the matching group.

Furthermore, RTA's central group, in comparison among the three groups, had a higher percentage of pursuing and finishing these degrees. It also indicated RTA member engagement with college program increased after they joined RTA. (Research Studies).

Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA)

Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA) is an organization that uses arts as a tool of transformation for inmates to reach and develop their ability to succeed in their communities and society. RTA operates its arts program in New York States prisons in the Hudson Valley, serving 220 inmates in 6 facilities. RTA has developed and taught over 100 workshops and productions in theatre, dance, music, and visual arts.

RTA was founded in 1966 at Sing Sing Correctional Facility by Katherine Vockins. Vockins worked in International Marketing and Management. Her husband was a volunteer in the only master's program in the country's penitentiary system, Ossining Correction Facility in Ossining, New York. RTA's first project started after she attended her husband's student's graduation in Ossining. She found out that no theatre activity happened in the facility. She was asked to come back and talk to them about it. After that, they started the first RTA program. (Vockins 1). When Sing Sing closed its medium security section, prisoners solicited RTA programs and moved along to facilities they were destined for. The Department of Correction agreed, and RTA launched new programs in Fishkill, Green Haven, and Woodbourne Correctional facility. Since then, RTA has expanded its program and, as of 2020, it serves six Hudson Valley facilities (Sing Sing, Fishkill, Woodbourne, Green Haven, Bedford Hills, and Taconic). Vockins gathered a group of people from different professional fields interested in the

project who have helped her along the way. She is currently RTA's Executive Director. In 2007, Ricki Gold joined her as the RTA Deputy Director. Until then, Vockins was heading the project by herself (Gold 3).

RTA's mission is to use the transformative power of the arts to help people in prison develop skills to unlock their potential and succeed in the larger community. RTA also seeks to raise public awareness of the humanity behind prison walls (Rehabilitation Through The Arts).

RTA has a Board of Directors and an Advisory Council. The Board is comprised of fifteen people that contribute to RTA in many ways. For instance, one of the board members handles press coverage and social media. Another member was responsible for the first research study of RTA programs done by John Hay College of Criminal Justice in 2012. The Board is very supportive and shares in Vockins' commitment to RTA.

RTA's Advisory Council is composed of people connected with DOCCS, a legal and arts organization. Unlike the Board, they are not closely involved with RTA. Rather, their purpose is more to provide RTA with credibility for being an organization associated with them. RTA's partners include the New York Council on Arts, Arts for Justice, The Tow Foundation, Tikkun Olam Foundation, Sills Family Foundation, The Andrew Mellon Foundation, Arts Westchester, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and The Hyde and Watson Foundation.

RTA organizational structure is as follows: Katharine Vockins is the Founder and Executive Director. Ricki Gold is the Deputy Director. Charles Moore is the Director of Operation. Jackie Kunhardt is the Development, Joe Giardina is the Program Director. Brandon Barrow is the Development Manager. In addition, there are thirty-four arts teachers involved. Some are hired, others are volunteer.

Rehabilitation Through the Arts is a program of Prion Communities International Inc, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization (Rehabilitation Through The Arts). RTA funding derives from different sources. Their state revenue comes from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Department of Corrections. DCCOS represented 16.25% of their total revenue in FY19, RTA only earned income, as they provide DCCOS with their services. They rely on grants from foundations and private donors (Annual Report 2019). The Report shows that grants represent 9.75% of the 2019 revenue, and donations represent 64%. Board members contribute \$2,500.00 annually. RTA's gifts, grants and contributions have increased every year since 2014. In 2017, their net assets/fund balance at the end of that fiscal year was \$293,037. In the end of FY18, it was \$206,352. And in 2019, they had a total of net assets/fund balance of \$ 397,066. (GUIDESTAR).

RTA's programs help participants build skills to cope and succeed outside prison, as well as while they are incarcerated. RTA has come up with a Skill Wheel to demonstrate how specific arts activities can enhance their members' behavior towards their relationships with their family, employment, and communities. They use the Wheel to make a correlation between their programs and workshops to each skill intended to be developed by each program. For instance, in dance programs, the individual will challenge gender stereotypes, focus on ensemble, release stress, and so on. They show the strong and successful relation between the arts and its power of transformation and capacity to build emotional structure, thus enabling RTA members to grow and transform. These are tools of a very tangible and humane rehabilitation.

Artwork programs are perfect tools for the prison population for many reasons. Anyone can participate because the arts do not depend on education or any other qualification. The arts are non-judgmental. They are experimental events. Therefore, even though you can explore

subjects deeply, there are no right or wrong answers. Moreover, through arts, one can explore different takes on the world and/or situations and explore different perspectives, often enough to discover different talents and opportunities.

RTA's curriculum includes study of classical, modern, original, and musical theatre, modern dance, hip-hop and theatre choreography, Slam Poetry, science fiction, keyboard and vocal training, song writing, improvisation, monologues, and Shakespeare. Visual arts workshops include art history, arts appreciation, and hands-on studio art that introduces participants to new techniques and prison-friendly material (Rehabilitation Through The Arts).

Some of the drama workshops RTA offers are based on Theatre of the Oppressed techniques and Paulo Freire's education philosophy to explore real life scenarios related to interpersonal relationships and community engagement (Giardina). Theatre of the Oppressed was founded in 1970 in São Paulo, Brazil, by Augusto Boal. It was used as a form of bring communities together to work through their underserved social situation. Nowadays, this technique is performed around the world for political activism, community organizers, social workers and so on. Inspired by Paulo Freire's vision on education, his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" theory and line of work. Paulo Freire's studies and practices suggest education is a process that goes beyond the capacity and means of learning how to read, do math, or understand science. It should be an exchange of knowledge, "the teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking. The teacher cannot think for his students, nor can he impose his thought on them—Authentic thinking does not take place in ivory tower isolation but only in communication" (Freire 64, 65) . For Freire, empowerment of the oppressed happens through their understanding of their own situation. The learning process thus shall be one of knowledge exchange; it should be a dialogue conversation rather than a monologue. It is

necessary to include the students (inmates) experience in the learning process, this might be reached through music, art and any form of expression. The term “Critical Thinking” refers to one’s ability to analyze and assess a situation or a problem. For Critical Thinking to occur, questioning of one’s social situation is a fundamental tool to understand the process that led to their position as oppressed. Moreover, this is a process of examining structures of power and forms of inequity (Freire).

Augusto Boal worked with the Critical Thinking (CT) concept of analyzing rather than accepting one’s situation. Ari Barak further explains the main idea of CT is to take action, using acting to represent a situation involving oppressed and oppressor and giving the audience the opportunity to take their places. They act out as these characters to find ways of solving problems or injustices created in the scenes. Through a series of techniques, people express their feelings, ideas, oppression, and dreams. They explore internalized oppression, their cognitive behavior, fears, barriers, etc. (Barak).

RTA programming in the facilities is chosen by a steering committee formed by a small group of its participants. RTA refers to inmates in the programs as participants or members. The steering committee represent RTA members; they actively participants in helping to run the programs. “We encourage the development of Steering Committee in all of our programs, and it is a really interesting exercise of leadership, because to be the voice of your committee without being another layer of oppression inside the walls is a tricky thigh-rope walk.” (Vockins). RTA staff suggest a series of programs such as workshops of different art forms and structures as well as plays to be performed. RTA participants discuss it with the steering committee who then decide upon which activities will take place. The steering committee is the RTA inside the facilities. It has responsibilities that can be better executed by the participants rather than RTA

staff. Charles Moore, RTA Director of Operations, is an RTA alumnus and ex-member of the Sing Sing steering committee. He describes some of the committee's tasks, "one of their bigger part is that they're responsible for the discipline of their membership at each facility." (Moore). Moore points out the relevance of the program for the participants and how being part of the committee goes beyond empowerment, "we [Mr. Moore refers to himself as a committee member] are very, very protective of the program because it's such a unique program and we never want anyone to jeopardize us losing such a program." (Moore)' Being a member of the committee builds a sense of discipline, leadership, and responsibility that is shared among most of the participants.

ArtSpring is an example of another rehabilitation arts programs developed in the U.S. Based in Florida, they developed programs for the Florida Department of Corrections and the Juvenile Department of Justice for. It served six facilities for women and female juveniles. They provided inmates with a long list of workshops and activities involving drama, writing, music, and body work. They also developed a child of inmates program, reaching out to family connection and providing safe spaces for the families of inmates.

The programs grew to the point that its administrative body was overwhelmed, and its financial support did not keep up with the demands. They realized the next step for the organization would have to be offering support for transition houses to inmates' re-entry into society. But according to Leslie Neal, Founder, Artistic Director, and Board President of ArtSpring, they did not have the resources to start such a program. She believed "many of the women need to stay engaged in the creative work...it became apparent that transitional housing would be the next step, but we didn't have the resources and there is nothing like that in South

Florida”. (Rupersburg). ArtSpring’s administrative structure was very dependent on Neal, and when she decided to leave, they lost their funding and had to stop their programs.

Re-strategizing its social media and funding approaches is RTA’s future goals. Their social media main target consists of people engaged and interested in social justice project; many times, they are involved with legal practice. RTA struggled to optimize its social media potential, “we had a social media audit...somebody reviewing all of our social media...reporting on results, who was on our website, how long they stayed on the website...like a pilot, a platform.” (Gold). This is one of many services that RTA Board members bring on board through their connections and professional expertise. As Gold put it, they are a “Hands-on Board” (Gold). Taking into consideration they need to better structure the organization; the Board has also requested support from Board Leaders; they will advise RTA Governance Committee to recruit and prepare new members for the Board. “Katherine has founded the organization. She has been around for twenty-five years. They are starting to talk about succession planning, about what happens when she leaves and planning around that” (Gold). RTA is looking into the future and how to maintain the organization dynamic and its administration self-sufficient. Arts for Justice Fund, founded by Agnes Gund, was RTA’s first significant grantor. They support artists and advocates working to reduce incarceration population through the arts projects (About). According to Ricki Gold, this five-year long invitation-only fund has helped enormously. Although they have changed their guidelines and now, they are more focused on activism and advocacy for arts, RTA has been able to get a smaller grant for 2020 and hopes to be funded next year as well (Gold). In conversation with Brandon Barrow, RTA Development Manager, she has mentioned that in 2021 RTA is also

looking to reach out to donors of color and organizations deeply involved with social justice causes and racial inequities.

Conclusion

Research shows Arts Therapy has been efficient in treating many different forms of rehabilitation, from physical to emotional issues. It has shown how behavior can be modified through acknowledgment and learning mechanisms to overcome them, such as anger and violent conducts. Scientific advancement is proving, almost on a daily basis, the wide-reaching, almost infinite capacity of our brains to transform and overcome cognitive barriers and how arts play a unique part in this process. Science has helped to clarify how arts is directly linked to empathy and how we connect to each other through it, either by participating in the same activity, as a group, or depending and counting on others to create a collective work. The learning process developed by RTA programs through humanizing, recognizing the **person**, and not the inmate, has given them a real opportunity to grow and make positive choices for their outcome; it has given them tools to reflect on their actions and understand their responsibilities as well.

The penitentiary system has gone through considerable changes since it was founded and even though much more needs to be done and improved on, there are some correctional facilities looking into the positive results reached by arts programs around the country. There is an increasing interest by correctional facilities in investing such programs based on the results of important research done on the field. Therefore, research on results of RTA programs showing how RTA alumni progressed after a period following their reentry is of the utmost importance, many of the alumni have completed their BA degrees and some even their Master by the time they are released from prison, which enables them to be fit for the working market, give back to their community professionally as well as to be mentors for young adults.

RTA understands the importance of its organization among population that has rarely had any opportunity to move forward once trapped into the incarceration system. Arts Organizations for correctional art programs need to have longevity to be effective. With that in mind, and the understanding that participants' sentences vary and can last for decades, RTA is making sure its structures is solid enough to serve for many years to come.

RTA is very much aware of the public conversation happening right now about social justice and the need for Arts Organization to address the issues of an oppressed system that promotes inequalities in many forms. This discussion speaks directly to their public and communities. This is the moment for the public to acknowledge RTA programs' value, both for the inside incarcerated population as well for the outside population. The general population need to be aware of RTA programs to be supportive of it. Through visibility and recognition, RTA can ensure its programs will endure for many years. Arts organizations projects can have a notable impact on disenfranchised communities; they are doors for self-discoveries that create growth and opportunities.

“We get the opportunity to perform in front a civilian audience, an opportunity to perform in front our family, the opportunity to perform in front of a Department of Correctional administrative staff. It is just a beautiful life change thing, because most of the time when people are incarcerated, their self-esteem is really, really shot because they feel they let themselves down, they let their family down, they let their community down.” (Charles Moore, about RTA)

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