

BPI 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

BARD PRISON INITIATIVE



COLLEGE *for a* BETTER WORLD

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In 2024, BPI will celebrate its 25th year.

In 2023, BPI did more work in more places, with more students than ever before. We challenged the boundaries of what BPI can be, finding new ways for BPI alumni and faculty to reimagine higher education — where it can be and where it might lead.

Forever, BPI operated with extreme uncertainty about its future. With the restoration of Pell and TAP, at last, we have some financial stability. So now, we are taking more risk and more responsibility than ever.

Here's what I mean:

BPI is national. We're determined to impel colleges to make the most of the restoration of Pell in prison. Cultivating programs across the country, we're working to ensure that college-in-prison of the future is as dynamic and ambitious as the students it serves. This year, in four states, our partners held their first in-prison graduations ever. On campus, we hosted more than 20 emerging practitioners at BPI's Summer Residency.

BPI is global. For a generation, the United States has worked hard to export the very worst of its criminal justice practices internationally. Let's own that. With the restoration of Pell complete, college-in-prison in the United States has a promising future. Now, we are pressing so the U.S. can export some of its *best* practices in criminal justice. This year, BPI invested in college-in-prison programs in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. In Buenos Aires, BPI catalyzed the first ever global conference on college-in-prison.

BPI is local. In NYC's juvenile justice system, BPI now offers holistic tutoring and career services to incarcerated youth led by BPI alumni through an extensive, multiyear contract with New York City. In Brooklyn, Harlem, and Holyoke, BPI's tuition-free Microcolleges are creating radically ambitious college opportunity. And, on Bard's main campus in Annandale, BPI is enrolling alumni of all these programs and adult students from across the Hudson Valley tuition-free via the BardBac.



And, BPI is where it's always been. This year, over 400 students are enrolled across seven prisons in New York. In a striking example of the crisis enveloping higher education at large — and of the need for a strong BPI: that number includes 85 incarcerated transfer students who were enrolled in other colleges that collapsed and closed entirely this year. We are proud to give those incarcerated students a path to a degree and welcome them to Bard.

All of this work is an example of what college could resemble in a more just world.

It is a pleasure to share this Report, the breadth of the past year's work, and a sense of where we are headed in the next 25.

You'll hear from us throughout the year as we celebrate BPI's quarter century. In the meantime, please enjoy, share, and don't forget that, however unlikely, the reason we are still here is because of you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Max Kenner".

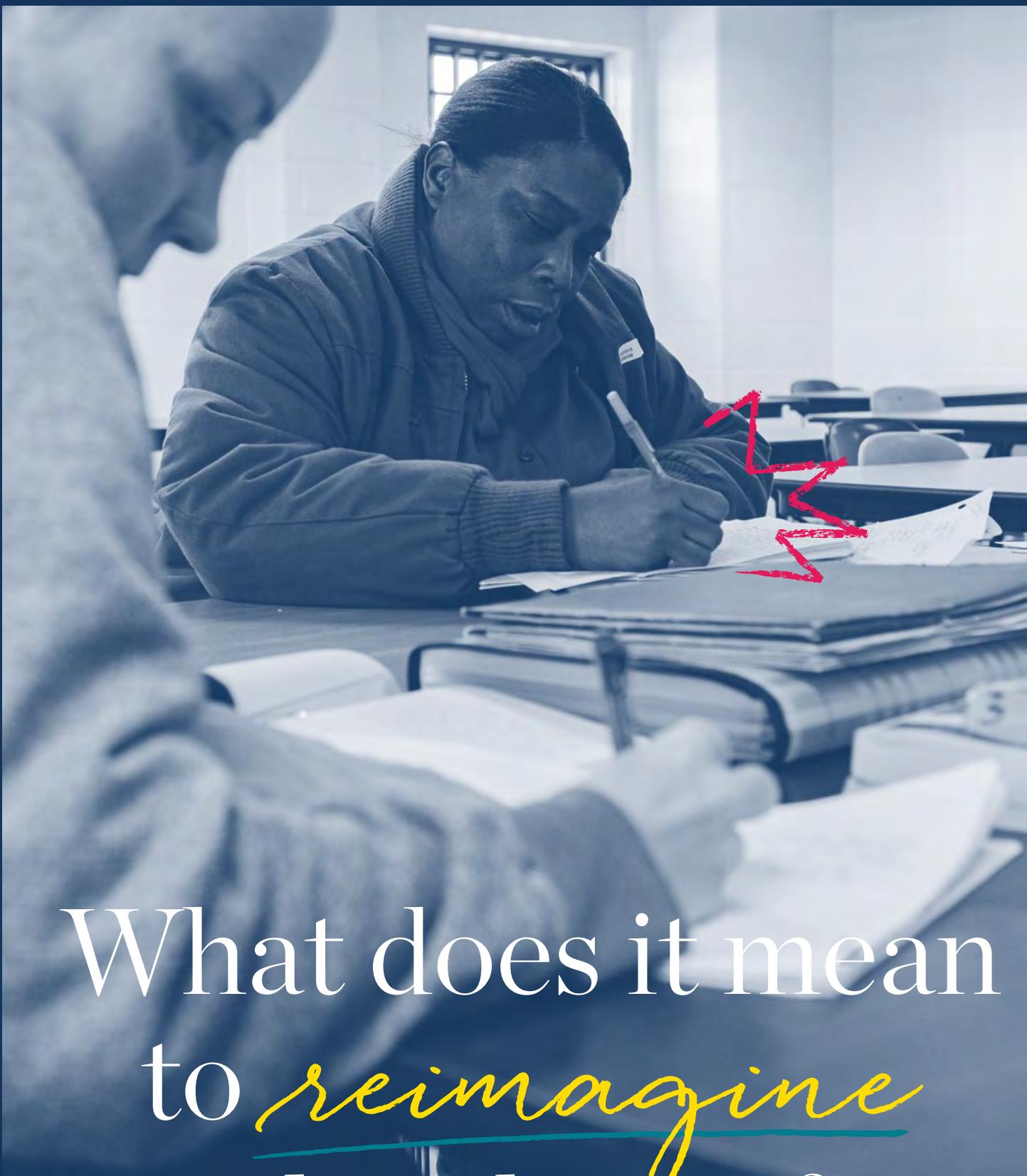
Max Kenner '01
Executive Director
Tow Chair for Democracy and Education

YEAR IN REVIEW



2022-2023





What does it mean
to reimagine
the place of
higher education?

THE 2022–23 ACADEMIC YEAR began with more than 450 students enrolled across seven college-in-prison sites, three Microcolleges, and the BardBaccalaureate.



ALBION CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, BPI's newest site, enrolled 30 students in AA and BA degree programs.



SINCE 2017, BPI AND THE FORD FOUNDATION have collaborated on the Ford Business Associates Program, an engaging professional development opportunity for BPI and Bard Microcollege alumni to work with the foundation across a range of fields, including HR, facility management, communications, finance, and IT. This year, five alumni — including Denise Roman, 2022 Bard at BPL graduate — were placed in the program, which recently extended from one- to two-year positions, providing an added depth of experience for participants.

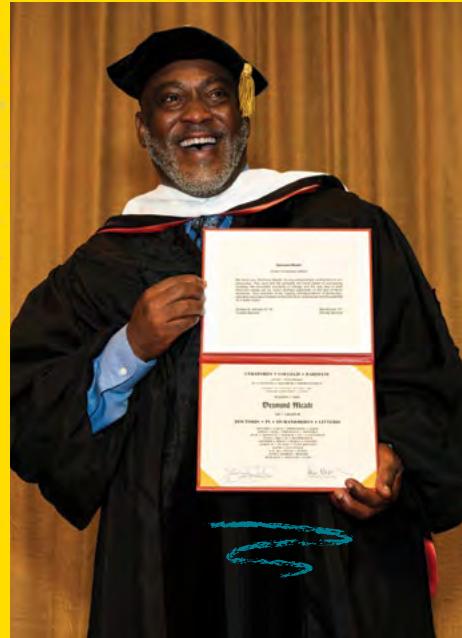


31 STUDENTS GRADUATED WITH A BA THIS YEAR. Students were celebrated at commencement ceremonies at Eastern and Fishkill Correctional Facilities, and five additional students who have returned home walked the commencement stage at Bard College's main graduation ceremony in Annandale, along with Bard Microcollege, BardBac, and Bard College graduates.

EXPANDING IN-PERSON COLLEGE-IN-PRISON ACTIVITIES, BPI introduced a Biology Lecture Series, which featured a different weekly speaker, part of BPI's new bachelor's degree concentration in Biology.



BPI ALUMNI GATHERED for events several times throughout the year, including the annual holiday party and networking events in New York City, the Capital Region, and beyond.



SENIOR PROJECT TITLES this year included:
Mathematics and Music: Where These Two Dynamical Worlds Collide and the Epigenetic Fallout to the Human Species, Allegory of the Maze: Deconstructing Adolescence in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction, and Thriving Modern-Day Imperialism: How Techno-Fixes in Agriculture Create Social and Ecological Crises in the Global South.

BPI HELD ITS 21ST COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY at Eastern NY Correctional Facility. Activist and MacArthur Fellow Desmond Meade delivered the commencement address and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

DURING COMMENCEMENT SEASON and over the summer, four members of BPI's Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison — including the Women's College Partnership — held their first-ever graduation ceremonies.

REFLECTING ON A VISIT TO EASTERN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, Zack Carpenter, Head of Partnerships at Just Impact, noted, “this wasn’t your average ‘please read a passage’ school experience. This was serious *Dead Poets Society*, standing-on-the-desk-reading-Whitman-type energy.” The visit was led by BPI alum, Alelur “Alex” Duran ’18, Program Director, Criminal Justice Reform at Galaxy Gives, and organized by One for Justice, a coalition of which Duran sits on the advisory board.



BRINGING THE BPI COMMUNITY TOGETHER, a team of seven participants ran 13.1 miles across two boroughs of NYC in the 2023 United Airlines NYC Half, for BPI’s inaugural year as an Official Charity Partner.



THE 5TH ANNUAL BPI SUMMER RESIDENCY welcomed emerging leaders in the field of college-in-prison from 12 states and four nations representing public and private institutions, HBCUs, small liberal arts schools, and large research universities.

IN THE PAST YEAR, 62 alumni returned home, many enrolling in the BPI ConnectEd Workshop, an intensive, six-week reentry workshop. Since launching in November 2020, the workshop has engaged more than 120 alumni.

IN A LONG-AWAITED REMATCH, the BPI Debate Union at Eastern Correctional Facility faced off against Harvard for the second time, debating the topic “The corporatization of higher education does more harm than good.” Harvard was determined the winner, bringing BPI’s record against them to 1-1. During the year, BPI also debated and won against Brown University. The BPI Debate Union’s overall record is 12-3.



MORE THAN 25 UNIVERSITIES from 16 countries across North and Latin America, Africa, and Europe, along with BPI staff, joined the first-of-its-kind international meeting of educators in the prison context, hosted by the National University of San Martín in Argentina and funded by BPI with a grant from the Open Society University Network.



AT THE BARDBAC AND THE BARD MICROCOLLEGES, BPI continues to welcome an ambitious group of students. More than 100 students enrolled across three Microcolleges and more than 50 enrolled in the BardBac. BPI alumni now hold leadership roles across all three Microcolleges.



Universidad Nacional de La Plata



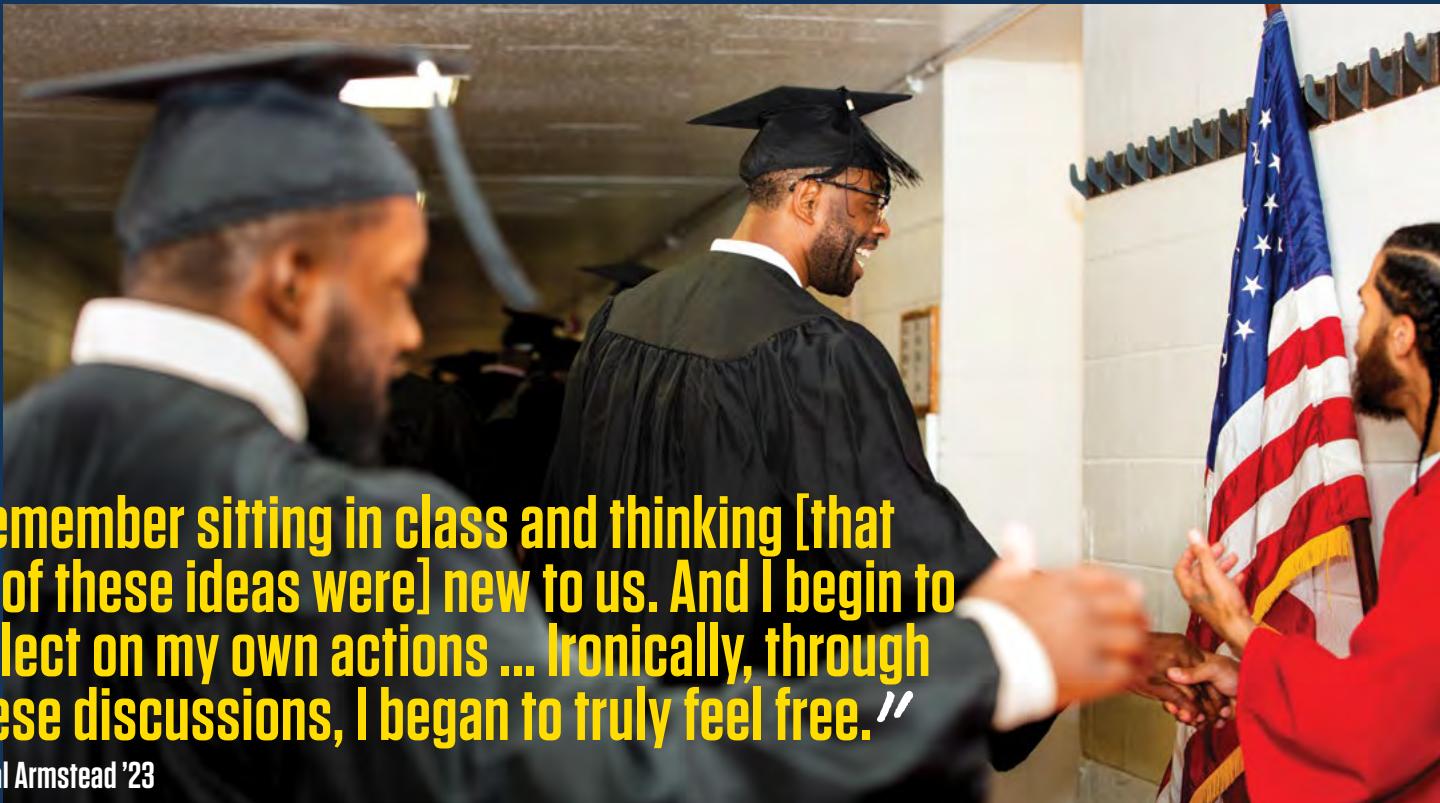
University of Milan

STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS AROUND THE WORLD, BPI supported 20 emerging and existing college-in-prison programs through capacity-building grants funded by the Open Society University Network. The grants supported critical investments in technology, books and materials, programmatic infrastructure, research, and personnel.

Section 1 COLLEGE-IN-PRISON

More BPI

for More People



“I remember sitting in class and thinking [that all of these ideas were] new to us. And I begin to reflect on my own actions ... Ironically, through these discussions, I began to truly feel free.”

— Jamal Armstead '23

Last year, BPI set out to expand pathways to degree completion across all seven college-in-prison sites. 31 BA students were celebrated at commencement ceremonies at Eastern and Fishkill Correctional Facilities, along with 32 AA students. Five additional BA students and three additional AA students who returned home walked the commencement stage at Bard's main campus in Annandale.

Over the academic year, BPI welcomed **327 STUDENTS** across seven correctional facilities: Albion, Coxsackie, Eastern, Fishkill, Green Haven, Taconic, and Woodbourne. Students enrolled in **MORE THAN 140 COURSES** during the academic

year, including “Anthropology of Women’s Health,” “Partial Differential Equations,” “Biostatistics,” and “Literary Classics of Asia;” hosted two debates; tended to gardens; and engaged fully in the depth and breadth of the college.

A Growing College Community

EXPANDING PATHWAYS TO A BARD BA

Until recently, BPI's bachelor's degree program was centralized at Eastern New York Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison in Napanoch, NY. In the 2022–23 academic year, BPI worked to expand access to bachelor's degree seminars at Albion, Eastern, Fishkill, Green Haven, Taconic, and Woodbourne Correctional Facilities.

This work has also built pathways for BA degree completion for incarcerated women enrolled in BPI at Albion and Taconic Correctional Facilities.

A THRIVING STUDENT BODY AT ALBION CORRECTIONAL FACILITY



The 2022–23 academic year marked the first full year of BPI coursework at Albion Correctional Facility,¹ which enrolled its inaugural cohort of 10 BPI students for the summer 2022 semester. This was a milestone for BPI, doubling its programming and introducing the bachelor's degree for incarcerated women. Additional admissions cycles conducted at Albion more than doubled the student body, with 16 new students enrolled in classes for the spring 2023 semester. To continue growing the student body and providing the women the opportunity to form connections with BPI as soon as possible, admissions will be conducted more frequently.²

STEPPING IN AFTER COLLEGE CLOSURES

This summer and fall, in response to two coinciding college-in-prison program closures, BPI undertook an unprecedented transfer and enrollment cycle to support incarcerated college students in the process of complete a degree.

Following financial struggles, two New York private universities, Medaille University and Alliance University, announced closing this year. Both Medaille and Alliance had long-standing college-in-prison operations, enrolling incarcerated students in degree programs at Albion Correctional Facility for women and at Fishkill Correctional Facility for men, respectively.

BPI had been operating degree programs alongside these universities at Albion and Fishkill for several years. In addition to running its general admissions process this summer, BPI offered students the opportunity to transfer with immediate enrollment in Bard College degree programs, minimizing the risk of losing credits or time to finish their degrees. Doing so added 80 transfer students to the class of over 120 newly-admitted BPI students. The entire BPI academic team worked quickly to add 10 more courses, more faculty, more computers, and more course materials so that the impacted students could begin the fall 2023 semester without delay. This growth in the student body marks the largest single expansion of BPI to date.



2 Illustrating the engagement of the community in the program's first year, Jesse Miller, BPI's Site Director at Albion, shared:

"As I observed students new and not so new sharing their incisive work to an audience of peers, I was struck that a supportive, engaged intellectual community now existed where, less than a year ago, it did not."

Strengthening STEM Curriculum



Over the year, BPI has worked to identify and address areas of curricular development, leading to a redesign of the math curriculum, and the introduction of a concentration in biology, which was also encouraged by student interest and engagement. Concentrations enable BA students to receive formal recognition for significant academic work in a field. Along with Biology, BPI also offers concentrations in Public Health and Education. The first student who pursued the biology concentration graduated in spring 2022 and is now enrolled in a Master's Degree program at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, along with several others who have recently returned home.

Continually working to expand college events and activities, and to support the biology concentration, BPI introduced a biology lecture series in the fall of 2022. The series brought in 11 guest speakers to discuss with students the questions which biologists in different subfields ask as well as the paths they take to get there. Lectures included:

- Using Modern and Ancient Genomes to Understand Human History
- Energy, Climate, Climate Change and Climate Justice
- CRISPR/Cas Genome Editing: Harnessing Basic Biology for Technology
- An Introduction to Evolutionary Bioinformatics and Phylogenetics
- Apples, Oranges, and Stasis
- The Biology of Retrotransposons and Transposable Elements in our Genomes
- Human and Natural Activities Altering the Planet, Present and Past

Guest lecturers were faculty from Stony Brook University and Bard College. Over the semester, students were asked to write two papers on two of the primary literature papers provided by the researchers as supplementary reading. The papers focused on delivering the substance of primary research to the general public.

Understanding the world through a mathematical lens

On changing the narrative surrounding mathematics:

Tammar Cancer: I didn't really start studying math until I was 30 years old. When I enrolled in intro to algebra and advanced algebra, I realized very quickly I was totally a fish out of water. And I think what made me persevere was the fact that I found it difficult. Eventually, something started to click.

Francis Su: Yeah, I love the way you put that. You love the challenge of working hard on a problem. And then, you have that thrill of solving the problem. And you're like, "Whoa!"

TC: Every semester, by midterm, I would say I'm done with math. I'm not taking any more math classes. Then next semester, I'm taking more math classes. So it's definitely that relationship there.

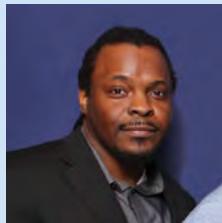
On the transfer of math-related skills

TC: While [studying math] can deliver a decent job, I think what's more important is you just get this mental toughness that you can translate to any facet of life. Just the ability to stay with a problem, even when you're frustrated, even when you're confused or angry, you're exercising those muscles while you're pushing through. I think that skill — that ability in itself — is priceless. I remember working on a problem one time from 6pm to midnight. The same problem. And when I finally solved it, I felt like I won a championship.

FS: And that toughness is what's gonna carry us through other hard problems in our lives. I know that I often lean on the fact that I've worked on hard problems in math, and I know what it means to sit with the problem and not solve it for a long time. And that that's okay. It's okay if I don't solve it right away. But, if I think carefully about this, and put my mind to it, maybe eventually I will see a way out. And that's, I think, a toughness of spirit that is hard to come by in other ways.

TC: Yeah. I'm not afraid to take on something. As Director of Special Projects at Center for Community Alternatives, I get projects all the time that I've never come across, but I just know that all I have to do is ask myself the right questions. I have courage because I'm not afraid to dive right in. And I think that definitely comes from going from not having the courage to get up to a whiteboard, and, you know, do an algebra problem to translating it now to problems in life.

FS: I think one thing that math has built in me is an expectation of an enchantment. And what do I mean by that? I guess what I mean is that feeling of when you're working on a hard problem and then you suddenly get that "Aha!" moment. That it's neat how that worked out. Every once in a while, something happens, and you see something in a different way. And suddenly a hard problem is easy. There's a certain feeling of enchantment when you see that. It's like the end of a mystery movie where everything gets explained. You suddenly understand why something is true. That's one of the best feelings in the world.



Tammar Cancer graduated with a Bard bachelor's degree in Social Studies in 2017. Tammar has worked as a Bard Writing Fellow since 2021 and is now employed as Assistant to the Executive Director & Director of Special Projects at the Center for Community Alternatives. He is also an active part of the upstate reentry community.



Francis Su is Benediktsson-Karwa Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College and former president of the Mathematical Association of America. His book, *Mathematics for Human Flourishing*, published by Yale University Press, won the 2021 Euler Book Prize. It offers an inclusive vision of what math is, who it's for, and why anyone should learn it.

Beyond the Classroom

DEBATE



3 In addition to founding and coaching the BPI Debate Union, Register is also the Director of Debate on Bard's main campus and will also take the lead in organizing the OSUN Global Debate Network's faculty.

The BPI Debate Union has made national and international news since its first debate. Over 150 students have been members of the Debate Union, building a record of 12–3 against intercollegiate debaters from colleges and universities across the globe.

This year's debates were rematches for BPI, against Brown University — a win for the BPI Debate Union — and Harvard — a loss for BPI, bringing the Debate Union's record against Harvard to 1–1.



4 Reginald Dwayne Betts (right) in the Woodbourne library with Executive Director Max Kenner '01. Betts is the founder and director of the Freedom Reads. A poet and lawyer, he is the author of four books. His latest collection of poetry, *Felon*, was awarded the American Book Award and an NAACP Image Award.

“Beginning as a humble experiment in a classroom in the summer of 2013, the Debate Union has blossomed, with teams in two facilities, numerous active debaters, and a growing group of alums. The Debate Union is set to begin a new decade of providing opportunities for BPI students to excel.”

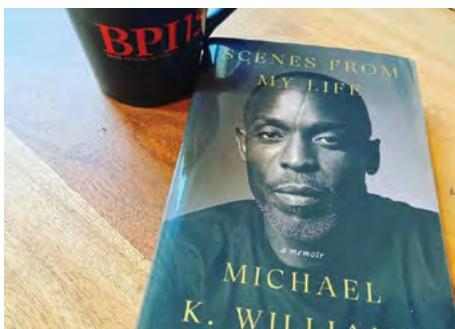
— David Register, BPI Faculty Fellow & Director of Debate³

FREEDOM READS



BPI students at Woodbourne Correctional Facility celebrated the opening of a Freedom Reads library inside the facility. Freedom Reads was founded by poet, lawyer, and long-time BPI friend, Reginald Dwayne Betts, Esq.⁴ During the event, Betts read selections from his most recent collection of poetry, *Felon*.

BPI READS



BPI held its third annual community reading event, reading Michael K. Williams' *Scenes from My Life*. Williams' nephew, Dominic Dupont; the book's editor, Madhulika Sikka; and co-writer, Jon Sternfeld joined BPI students in conversation, visiting five facilities over two days.

GARDENS



In connection with BPI's curricular specialization in Public Health and focus on sustainability, students utilize the garden spaces to examine and cultivate relationships with food sciences.

ACTING ENSEMBLE



The BPI Acting Ensemble staged the first-ever production at Eastern Correctional Facility. The play, *A Passing Life*, was the culmination of more than a year's worth of work by students, who wrote, produced, and performed the play for fellow students and BPI guests.⁵

5 La-Meik Taylor '23 shared,

“Joining the acting ensemble helped me break down barriers of judgment — it allowed me to remove the fear of failure and not worry about what other people thought of me. The activities Professor Tynes led us through allowed me to fully explore my imagination.”

Commencement 2022-23

Honoring a Voting Rights Icon

THIS SPRING, at Eastern and Fishkill Correctional Facilities, BPI conferred 32 AA and 31 BA degrees over two commencement ceremonies, including the first graduate at Fishkill to earn a BA in mathematics.

At the ceremony at Eastern NY Correctional Facility, activist and MacArthur fellow Desmond Meade delivered the commencement address and received an honorary doctorate.

Through his work as Executive Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Desmond Meade led a grassroots campaign to overturn a regime of voting exclusion in Florida, restoring voting rights for more than 1.4 million formerly incarcerated Floridians, the largest expansion of American enfranchisement since the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Meade himself earned a degree in adverse conditions, and his address reflected a deep connection with the graduates. A veteran of the US Army, who was born in St. Croix and raised in Miami, Meade struggled with drug addiction and was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, serving three before his conviction was reversed on appeal. He enrolled in college while living in a homeless shelter and graduated with distinction in 2010, when he assumed leadership of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRCC). The bipartisan FRRCC led the aforementioned grassroots campaign to overturn a regime of voting exclusion in Florida.

Meade and his work are widely celebrated. He was among *Time Magazine's* "100 Most Influential People in the World" in 2019, and in 2021 he received a MacArthur Fellowship, the "genius grant." But in Florida, new "implementation legislation" requires people to pay prohibitive fees and fines, severely blunting the impact of Amendment 4. FRRCC has raised over \$27 million to help Floridians pay these court-related charges.



“Our work...will help transform our communities and transform the thinking of people’s hearts and minds that we no longer can be classified as what’s wrong but rather what’s right and what’s possible.”

— Desmond Meade



Meade was joined by his wife, Sheena Meade, CEO of The Clean Slate Initiative.



“I believe liberal arts education is the best education for incarcerated people.”

— 2023 graduate





“Enrolling in Bard College,
I knew my life would
forever change. And it did.”

— 2023 graduate



Distinguished Faculty

THE MELLON CHAIR IN THE HUMANITIES: AUSTIN SARAT



The first-ever endowed chair for teaching college-in-prison, the Mellon Chair in the Humanities, will be held by Austin Sarat. An American political scientist and William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, Sarat will be teaching “Secrets and Lies” at Green Haven Correctional Facility.

Professor Sarat’s work has centered on the death penalty, punishment, law, and most recently, lethal injection. He has written 11 books, co-edited 67, and produced 5 anthologies and dozens upon dozens of journal articles and book chapters. He is also a passionate writer of op-eds, and frequently contributes to *Slate*, *The Guardian*, *Politico*, *US News & World Report*, *The Hill*, and *The Conversation*, among others. He is the current editor of the journals *Law, Culture and Humanities* and *Law, Politics and Society*. A profile of Sarat in *US News and World Report* noted that he is “one of the best loved professors at Amherst College” and praised his teaching for combining “innovation and inspiration.”

DISTINGUISHED FELLOW: BOBBY L. RUSH



From the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Black Panther Party, and from there to the Chicago City Council under Mayor Harold Washington and then the halls of the United States Congress, former Congressman Bobby Rush has been a tribune of U.S. Black political thought and action for decades.

Rush was first elected to Congress in 1992, and, after retiring in 2022, joined BPI as a Distinguished Fellow. This fall, Rush is co-teaching a course at Eastern Correctional Facility with BPI’s Associate Dean, Delia Melis ’86, entitled “Rural Roots and City Branches: Themes in Twentieth-Century Black Political Thought.”

STEM FACULTY: MEREDITH FINKELSTEIN



At Fishkill Correctional Facility, professor Meredith Finkelstein will lead students through a course called “Cyberspace: Issues and Ethics,” which delves into the complex issues of personal and social ethics that arise from the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Throughout the course, students will develop critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning to navigate the ethical challenges posed by modern technology. Finkelstein is a technology innovator who has been working in the field for two decades. Along with being a programmer, poet, and professor, she also worked on the first Mars Rover.

ELÍAS BELTRÁN '17



This fall, BPI alum Elías Beltrán '17 will be teaching a BA seminar course in literature and the humanities at Albion Correctional Facility entitled, "Stories Not to Pass On: Magical Presences, Trauma & History in World Literature." Through the course, students will consider what is at stake in these stories, and what it means to be a story not to pass on. Elías is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at Cornell University. His area of research is Hispanophone Caribbean literature, art, culture, and history.

During his time at BPI, Elías earned his BA degree in literature and the humanities, was part of the BPI Debate Union when it beat Harvard in 2015, and was a student speaker at his commencement ceremony. At Cornell, he received the prestigious distinction of Dean's Scholar. Elías was also a 2022–23 BPI Education Fellow, completing a participatory action research project focusing on writing for underrepresented students.

"Stories Not to Pass On" will apply the lenses of magical realism, postcolonial theory, feminist critique, and temporality to look at historical events, but with fantastical elements considered normal in the worlds of the texts and film. Students will open critical apertures through which to explore the dialogue between postcolonialism, magical realism, and faith in novels, short stories, and film as they blur the line between fantasy and reality, how they do so and, most importantly, ask "Why?"

Lampblack

When we decided on "Labour" as the theme of our third issue of Lampblack, a magazine that publishes Black writers from around the world, I reached out to my friend Max Kenner and asked if there was a BPI student or alum who might want to contribute. Max, in all his infinite wisdom, introduced me to Elías Beltrán. The short story Elías contributed to the issue is a tale of lost love. Set in a bucolic, pastoral environment bearing no resemblance to the prison where he spent 29 and a half years of his life, Elías explores the strange realities of romance masterfully. His command of time in this story recalls the work of Alice Walker or James Salter; his characters are as confused about their love as Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. I hope you enjoy your first encounter with "Three and a Half Hours" as much as I did.

— Zack Graham, editor of *Lampblack*



Three and a half hours and there he was, his head and shoulders rising from the lazy grade of the hill past the swaying pond of golden grass. As he drew closer, she felt alive-yet-panicked, and tossed the cigarette out the car window. The stick of gum had barely folded against her tongue, but she already wanted to light another one.

His torso was tightly wrapped in a black t-shirt that floated upwards but was held in place by the boombox he carried. How else would the CDs get played? He would be freshly showered, though that was barely enough to clear the smell of the stalls and horses he'd cleaned, whose bodies he'd been rubbing down before she arrived.

It wasn't a stink though. It was the smell of work, of labor and security, of patriarchal maleness, of westward expansion, and of having been up since four, working when others were still hours away from waking.

And then he was there, yards away, and she was out of the car, running, sailing, lurching, cutting through the golden grass. He'd barely gotten enough time to put the boombox down before she slammed into him, her arms locking around his neck, her face pressed under his jaw, squeezing with all of her faith, looking to draw something just as great out of him as the woman who'd stolen through the crowd and reached for the hem of Jesus' garment, desperate for her healing.

Hey, he said, surprised by the ferocity of her embrace; the plaintive yearning with which she held him in her thrall. Hey.

She didn't answer right away. Instead, she held on, squeezing tighter still. He enabled it: holding her firmly in place, his arms offering their own reassurance of how secure her place within him was. He knew about the cigarettes she smoked while she waited, knew about her needing that half hour, about the jangling hum of her nerves, as if the anticipation of seeing him scorched her wires, bubbling their insulation and threatening her mainframe. Knew because his own nerves threatened to undo him just as violently. Knew she needed that half hour of solitude for the same reason he did: it was a hard re-group because, otherwise, each one's first sighting of the other would leave them doubled-over and unbreathing. Why cross the sea only to die at the opposite shore?

Learn more about *Lampblack* and the *Labour* issue:



Section 2

REENTRY & COMING HOME

More Support

for More People

When They

Return Home

A recent survey of 374 prison-education programs by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison found that less than 20 percent offered direct pathways to a campus program, and even fewer — 14 percent — provided reentry services.

But BPI does. BPI's distinctive approach — pairing ambitious college-in-prison, with holistic reentry and long-term support for people leaving prison — radically expands access and opportunity, creating a pipeline directly from traditionally excluded communities into corridors of decision-making and leadership.

Reentry at BPI begins upon a student's enrollment and continues not just throughout their academic journey, but after they return home through a combination of one-on-one and cohort-based support, including the ConnectEd Workshop — a six-week intensive program designed to meet acute needs and long-term planning in the first few critical months home.



“It was a blessing to have BPI as a part of my support system upon, and following, my release. I knew I had not only the college and organization but, more importantly, the people tasked with its care to rely on as a means to guide me through my re-acclimation.” — Brian Shaw '17

FOR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI leaving prison, BPI provides catalytic reentry support across New York State. Investment in housing, wellness, and career support lays the critical foundation needed for students and alumni to continue to fully leverage their education back in their communities.

Along with on-the-ground support in New York City and the Capital Region and remote support for alumni across the state, in the coming year, BPI will enhance reentry support for incarcerated students and alumni, which includes increased work inside prison and expanded services for returning citizens. Over the past year, BPI has expanded the operations of its reentry to the Capital Region as a means to better serve alumni returning to upstate communities.

In the past year, 62 alumni returned home, joining 800+ others in the BPI alumni network. BPI has developed unique, comprehensive support for alumni returning home that emboldens personal ownership, allows them to make the most informed decisions for their futures, and mediates the inconsistencies that exist among disintegrated reentry services.

The Alumni and Reentry team at BPI works individually and in cohort-based groups to help alumni think about and create post-release strategies. Coming home with a unique set of skills, experience, and education, BPI alumni are met with a reentry environment that acknowledges their individual experiences, which creates a space for them to grow and thrive. Reentry at BPI begins as soon as a student is enrolled, preparing them to leverage their education in their community and establish stability when they return home.

Reentry on the Inside

The Reentry Workshop is a key part of BPI's reentry support, which also includes one-on-one reentry advising during the entire period of enrollment and ongoing support post-release. The workshop is the last formal reentry support prior to the student's release and helps BPI students prepare for the immediate challenges and opportunities of going home. It highlights the issues and obstacles many BPI alumni have faced during the transition period, and it ensures that all students are familiar

with the resources available to them from BPI, as well as from partner organizations. Students participate in seminars such as: "Hurdles, Obstacles and Opportunities: The Myths and Misconceptions About Returning Home;" "Getting Things Done & Managing Your Time;" "My Transition Plan;" "Resumes, Cover Letters and the Job Hunt;" "Mental Preparation and High Risk Factors During the First Year Home;" and "Maneuvering in the Digital Economy."

BPI's Reentry team works with students inside the prisons to gather information about their plans for going home and then coordinates with the Alumni team so those students can be connected to the services that will meet their needs outside of prison.

Coming Home

LIFELONG SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

The BPI alumni community is active in both New York City and the Capital Region of New York, sharing on-the-ground experiences and providing an open space for dialogue.

Beyond the comprehensive reentry programming and transitional assistance provided by BPI's Reentry and Alumni Engagement team, the community of BPI alumni themselves offers a tremendous amount of support to one another and the broader community of formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted New Yorkers. The majority of BPI alumni remain connected to BPI on some level — from continuing their education post-release at a Bard Microcollege or Bard College to teaching at the Bard Microcollege, to holding leadership positions with BPI, to being a pillar of support for fellow alumni. BPI alumni leverage their unique experience in working with justice-impacted youth and giving back to their communities. The alumni network across New York has provided countless opportunities for employment, continuing education, and connection as individuals return home and prepare for their futures.



BARDIAN & PROUD

“My relationships crafted with the tools of mutual care and desire for successes remain the most significant and amazing part of being a BPI alumni.”

— Darryl Byers-Robinson '15



A: A group of alumni in Albany, NY; **B:** Demetrius James '17; **C:** James Kim '21; **D:** Nancy Jordan '09 and Erica Mateo '11; **E:** Alex Mitchell '19, Dyjuan Tatro '18, Giovannie Hernandez '13, and Alex Hall '17 with Amelia Adams, co-founder of Adams Buckner Advisors; **F:** Cleveland Lovett '22 with BPI staff, Monique Leggs-Gaynor (left) and Delia Melis '86 (right); **G:** Adam Bloom '23 and Nikko Vaughn '15



ConnectEd Workshop

→ *by the numbers*

The ConnectEd Workshop provides intensive support for alumni who have recently returned home as well as a stipend that allows alumni to fully engage in the workshop while receiving critical income. Over the course of six weeks, participants are taken through 25 hours of weekly programming that explores four key areas: Housing, Wellness, Tech, and Career. Alumni learn about financial literacy, communication, and personal branding, gaining tangible skills that will underpin their reentry journey. The workshop is designed to reflect the environment and pedagogical approach that alumni experience in a BPI classroom, providing a space to learn and have critical, open conversations.

HOUSING

Safe and stable housing is a vital human right and supports all other aspects of reentry.

Housing support helps alumni to secure a safe place to land and work toward permanent housing. Alumni also receive support in making plans to purchase their own homes.

WELLNESS

Demystifying the transition from correction- to community-based health and wellness care is an essential part of a reentry strategy.

The Reentry and Alumni Affairs team has worked to increase mental health and wellness support, both during the ConnectEd Workshop and in standalone sessions entitled *Love and Relationships*. BPI alumni who have gained credentials in the field of mental health are valuable resources to the community.



A new effort supporting New York City youth

In September 2022, nearly two dozen alumni visited Crossroads and Horizons Juvenile Detention Centers in New York City to engage youth regarding their education, goals, and aspirations. The visit underscored the need for many to become more engaged with the youth. Committed to supporting the BPI alumni community and the growth and development of incarcerated youth, BPI has been awarded a grant from the New York City Administration for Children's Services through the Office of Training and Workforce Development.

Through this contract, BPI will provide tutoring and coaching services to youth detained at Crossroads and, through partners, provide career training.

BPI alumni are playing critical roles in this endeavor as leaders. Using a student-centered approach, BPI aims to help the young people reconnect with education and to acquire and build the skills – reading, writing, math, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking – they need to pursue college and/or a career and to engage productively in their communities.

120 PARTICIPANTS
SINCE NOVEMBER 2020

17 COHORTS
SINCE NOVEMBER 2020

25 HOURS/WEEK FOR **6** WEEKS



CAREER

Due to systemic barriers, an estimated 60% of the general population leaving prison are unemployed a year later.

Alumni go on to work in a range of fields and are encouraged to identify and pursue careers that they're interested in. The Reentry and Alumni teams provide support to alumni for advancing their careers and/or making transitions to different sectors. BPI's Public Health and Education fellowships help students to develop career paths in those respective sectors.

TECHNOLOGY

The communities most impacted by mass incarceration are notably underrepresented in the tech field.

Returning home requires intense lifestyle adjustments, one of them being living in an increasingly digital world. The Reentry and Alumni Affairs team works to provide the tools and information alumni need to stay agile and adapt as technology changes.



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Today, nearly 65% of jobs require at least some college.

149 alumni have chosen to pursue degrees, from bachelor's degrees to PhDs, and receive support in navigating bureaucratic processes as well as preemptive stigmas.



Frederick Joseph and Alex Mitchell '19

On community:



Frederick Joseph: So, Alex, I got a question for you: how would you define community?

Alex Mitchell '19: For me, the mutual understanding of need for one another, and love for one another is what builds a community.

FJ: I think community is also where the love is, or at least where the potential for love is, right. Anywhere that you can build yourself, build with those around you, that's a community.

FJ: You've had such an interesting existence, having to build community in some of the most beautiful and dark places of your life. I want to know more about the community that you built with BPI — how has that community been, both inside prison and outside of prison?

AM: As BPI students, I think what it was for us was knowing that we could identify ourselves as something different than what society has defined us as. All we focused on was, how can we get ourselves better at whatever it is that we're trying to learn for this class? How can we get ourselves better for the next paper that we hand in? How can we achieve the goal of being college graduates?

Now, coming home, that community has evolved. Coming home, thriving is an obscure hope for people like us, but we use the community that we built within BPI as a form of support, making sure that when a brother comes home, or when a sister comes home, we put the ladder there for you to just climb, and we're gonna support you everywhere we go, whether it's setting you up with an interview, whether it's pushing you out to meet other people, to network, but even more so, if there's moments of your life where you feel sad and down, we're your friends. We're your people. We're here. It's something that we built that is more family-like. We're always gonna be there to support, to pick each other up and help each other progress forward the same way we did when we were inside trying to get our degree.

That's what the BPI community has meant to me. **We've always been there every step of the way to push one another to our fullest potential.**

On the impact of critical thinking and community-building:

FJ: [So much] rests upon whether we can come together, whether we can — not just put our differences aside, because I don't think it's ever a matter of that; it's a matter of understanding our differences — whether we can try to understand one another.

AM: It's important to learn what your community is, learn who's in your community, and what defines your community.

FJ: We have been taught to not take our time to actually pause and think about the world around us, to think about our place in the world, to think about the people around us and their place in the world, the history that got us here, and the things we're doing that send us forward. I think learning is the most important thing. To being able to dissect what's in front of you, especially in the age of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda. When we were young, we weren't really taught to critical think. Not in the classrooms, not on the block, unless we were lucky. So I couldn't understand critically why I was in my neighborhood. Why certain things were happening in my neighborhood. But being able to see the world for what it really is changes everything.

AM: Being in BPI, that was the moment that I was able to understand what critical thinking can actually do to save a person's life. My thoughts before that, and the way I proceeded, everything was reactionary. It was reactionary to things that I didn't understand. And BPI, that I'm gonna always hold near and dear to my heart, opened my mind up to something different. How to process what it is that you're feeling, how to process what it is that you're perceiving, or what you're seeing and how to address it in a manner that's not reactionary, but more thoughtful.



Alex Mitchell earned a Bard bachelor's degree in Literature and the Humanities in 2019. Since coming home, he has worked as a GED Teacher at The Fortune Society and is currently an Associate at Adams Bucker Advisors, LLC. Frederick Joseph is a philanthropist and bestselling, award-winning author known for works such as Patriarchy Blues and Black Panther: Wakanda Forever — The Courage To Dream. Together, Alex and Fred have worked to raise money several times a year to provide mutual aid and necessities to families and communities in need throughout New York City.

Najet Miah '18 on building a personally meaningful future

"If you're looking for success stories about formerly incarcerated members of society, a quick Google search can provide you with countless examples. But focusing on 'impressive' achievements alone can often result in overlooking the significant internal struggles that the formerly incarcerated face while they're navigating their reentry process. Before speaking on our stories of resilience, I think it's important to acknowledge the reality that reentry is a complex, years-long experience, and our academic and professional successes are often accompanied by unique challenges for years.

Like many formerly incarcerated individuals, I struggled with mental health issues after being released. It's not easy to talk about this publicly because announcing your mental health problems may compromise your ability to show your professional value when you already have a serious violent felony on your record that raises questions about your character. That's not something I wanted to do after investing in myself and my education for several years with BPI, both inside and outside of prison. Aware that a stellar academic record could offset the impact of a blemished criminal record, I dedicated myself to getting the most from all of my college courses. I was pursuing medical school during and after incarceration before I realized how many barriers there were for people who had a violent record like mine. Also, my experiences with and sensitivity to Islamophobia, racism, and justice system issues started guiding me away from medical school and toward law school.

As a second-year law student, I can confidently say that law school is definitely a better fit for me. After dedicating over a year to my applications, I was accepted to a few law schools. I ultimately enrolled at Albany Law School (ALS) with a full-tuition, merit-based scholarship, which I am so blessed to have. I'm grateful that I had the guidance of a BPI staff member in making this decision because I was the first person in my family to attend an American law school.

That's one of the things that I love about BPI. Several years after leaving their college program, I am still able to reach out to colleagues, former classmates, and faculty for professional and personal support.

As for law school, the first year was challenging, but I eventually got the hang of it. During my first year, I created a proposal and curriculum for the first all-women's prison-to-law school pipeline program based out of ALS, which won the first-place Kate Stoneman Award at Albany Law School. It was inspired in part by my experience with BPI and seeing how effective BPI's college-in-prison program is for so many current and former inmates. In general, I care about infusing the application and practice of law with compassion.

The summer after my first year of law school, I worked at the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior (CLBB) at Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital. At the Center, we focused on incorporating neuroscience and psychology into legal arguments that challenged excessively lengthy sentences for youth. The role was fulfilling because the work felt very relevant. At CLBB, we believe, and the science supports, that these individuals are redeemable. I think my life story offers some proof of that. After experiencing Islamophobia-related violence in my neighborhood at a young age, I sought refuge in a gang and quickly became a very active and violent member. To no one's surprise, I ended up going to prison. Despite what I did, I had a lot of support from people who believed that, because I was young, I could change. Their belief and support made law school a real possibility for me, and I believe that is also true for other young people who make bad decisions; no one has the capacity to predict with certainty that a person is irredeemable.

Recently, I received an opportunity to be a law clerk at an immigration firm for spring 2024 as well as a summer law clerk position with the National Police Accountability Project. I am excited for and committed to these opportunities, but I still embrace this period as the beginning of my legal career. In the recent past, I believed that I needed to be calculated and certain about all the next steps of my life. As a result, I was too rigid to be open to experiences that would have helped me develop myself to be of more value to others. I am now trying to be more present with my journey, and I'm learning that it's okay to do that."



"Before speaking on our stories of resilience, I think it's important to acknowledge the reality that reentry is a complex, years-long experience, and our academic and professional successes are often accompanied by unique challenges for years."

BPI alumna Najet Miah '18 is now working toward obtaining a Juris Doctorate at Albany Law. Najet also earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Queens College in 2020.

Section 3

COLLEGE FOR THE FUTURE



More BPI

Through

More Partnerships

in More Places

The Microcolleges and the BardBac both grow out of the same fundamental assumption: that there are excellent potential students everywhere. People for whom a deep encounter with the liberal arts could be decisive in their personal, intellectual, and career growth but who have been excluded from higher education by finances, loan debt, citizenship status, or the need to work or care for others. Or they have been disillusioned by their previous educational experiences. The mission of both the Microcolleges and the BardBac is to find and enroll those students in ambitious liberal arts degree programs in our community at no cost to them.



“BPI has fundamentally been about changing the meaning of higher education to be a radically democratic space where all different kinds of students may strive and flourish within our rigorous academic program.”

— Madeleine George, BPI Director of Admission



“What does it mean to exist *on the margins of academia*, a traditionally eurocentric space? Not simply to be physically present as a woman; a person of color; a queer, trans or non-conforming person, but to have a voice in the ongoing conversation of what it means to be human? To have your *histories and experiences included* in that conversation? And for your voice to be recognized and valued?”

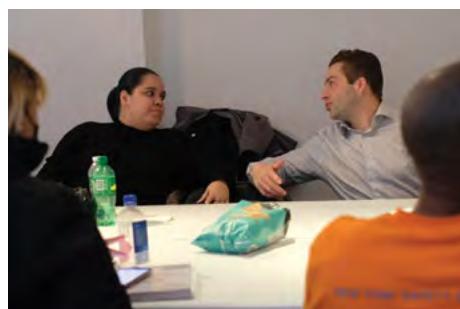
— Bard at BPL students



THE BARD MICROCOLLEGES have been enrolling an extraordinarily diverse group of undergraduates since 2016.¹ Through the Microcolleges, BPI has brought the core college experience and a rigorous liberal arts education to other unexpected spaces.



This year, **111 students enrolled** in 45 different courses across the three Microcollege campuses, learning about *The Fairytale as Protest*, *Introductory Statistics and Quantitative Reasoning*, *Ecoterritorial Politics in Latin America's Extractive Frontiers*, and *The Making of the Carceral State* — a new course to BPI that featured 14 guest lecturers from institutions across the country who have written about and/or conducted research on incarceration in the United States. BPI's Jessica Neptune, and Assistant Director of Admissions and Faculty Fellow for the Microcolleges, Natalia Guzmán Solano, collaborated to conceptualize the course, develop the curriculum, and teach the course, which focused on the rise of mass incarceration as a defining American event of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. By investigating the specific circumstances that contributed to the making of the carceral state, the course explored larger themes around how change happens and also how institutions, laws, policies, ideas, and norms are actively resisted, contested, debated, made, unmade, and remade over time by everyday people as well as people in positions of power.



1 Learning can happen at any age:
AGES **17-75.5** AVERAGE AGE **33**

*Data is self-reported and current as of spring 2022

2 2022-23 ACADEMIC YEAR

37 Students enrolled at Bard Microcollege for Just Community Leadership (Harlem, NY)

45 Students enrolled at Bard Microcollege at Brooklyn Public library (Brooklyn, NY)

29 Students enrolled at Bard Microcollege Holyoke (Holyoke, MA)

SINCE 2016

104 Graduates

300⁺ Students

Graduates pursue **further degrees** at: Smith College, Hampshire College, University of Georgia, Bard, and more, many with full scholarships.

Two Microcollege graduates have returned as **full-time tutors**.

Microcollege alumni have held writing residencies, worked as Microcollege writing fellows, and gone on to **careers in various fields**, including advocacy, entrepreneurship, the arts, and publishing.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Since launching as a pilot program in 2016, Bard Holyoke has become a prominent institution in the community. The 120 students and 62 graduates have remained highly connected with the Microcollege, the Care Center, and one another. They have come back to work at the Microcollege, like Julisa DeLeon '19, who is the Program Coordinator at Bard Holyoke. Others return as tutors and writing fellows. The growing alumni network offers connection and support to current Bard Holyoke students and to fellow alumnae who have pursued further degrees at four-year colleges in the area, including Mt. Holyoke and Smith.

The BardBaccalaureate (BardBac) — a full-time scholarship for adult learners to finish their bachelor's degree on Bard's main campus — continues to attract adult learners from around New York's Hudson Valley, diverse in their educational experiences and backgrounds.



THIS YEAR, 17 NEW AND 41 RETURNING STUDENTS enrolled in the BardBac. Students explored in and out of the classroom, researching the surrounding Hudson Valley area, taking part in archaeological digs, working as Bard STEM teaching fellows, and strengthening their sense of community by joining weekly cohort gatherings.

After leading the BardBac in its first three years as the inaugural Program Director, Kwame Holmes will be returning to a full-time faculty position at Bard. We congratulate and thank him for the work he did to lay the foundation of the BardBac through its first three cohorts. Stepping into the Program Director position will be Yesenia Ruiz Cortes, a PhD in anthropology and previous faculty fellow for BPI.

To alleviate hardships relating to travel and housing, BPI began offering a room and board supplemental scholarship to BardBac students in 2021. Since then, BPI has moved from utilizing dorm rooms on Bard's campus to a housing unit adjacent to campus, which will provide housing for three room and board scholarship students this academic year. The scholarship is identical to what students would have if they were living in

dorms, including a meal plan, and will support student success and engagement.

YESENIA RUIZ CORTES, BARDBAC PROGRAM DIRECTOR



After teaching for BPI for several years, Yesenia Ruiz Cortes has made the transition to Program Director of the BardBac. The Program Director is a vital contact for students, many of whom are years removed from, or overcoming, a negative college experience. Yesenia is an anthropology professor who has taught and advised for BPI in prison and at the Microcolleges. Her teaching and scholarship focus on immigration, Latinos in the U.S., and gender in Latin America.

“The opportunity to look at education through a shared vision of aspiring Bard graduates who were given a chance to be counted, be open, and be developed is a long time coming.”

— Cleveland Lovett '22



MICHAEL BROWN '23

Michael Brown '23 began his Bard journey with Bard at Brooklyn Public Library. He earned his associate degree in 2020 and continued his education by applying for the BardBac. Michael enrolled and earned a bachelor's degree in literature with a concentration in medieval studies this spring. Michael was widely recognized by faculty as an unusually talented student in medieval literature, with a focus on Ethiopian manuscripts. While deciding his next academic venture, Michael will join BPI as a full-time tutor at Bard Microcollege for Just Community Leadership.



SHANIQUA BOWDEN '23

Shaniqua Bowden '23 attended and graduated from the BardBac while holding the position of Director of Cultural Engagement and Sustainable Living at the Kingston Land Trust, a local organization that is committed to centering the voices and needs of people of color, and specifically Black people, in its work around land access, Ownership, livelihood through the land, and land conservation. Her position there opened up opportunities for other Bard students to connect with the Land Trust as well as local

events, such as the virtual series she leads, called Land and Resilience, on how the land can meet the community's needs. In her work, Shaniqua incorporates and acknowledges culture and heritage and its potential for moving land conservation work forward.

Shaniqua is also the co-founder of my Kingston kids, an organization originally created to help the parents of Kingston find children's events and activities in a central location.



Section 4

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

More College ↗

in the U.S.

↖ & Around the World

Over the past year, BPI has worked to enrich community-building efforts through the national Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison and created new platforms for an international voice that advocates for the core role of education — particularly higher education — in prisons globally.

The Open Society University Network's investment in the Consortium in 2022 led to the development of a global community of practice — an international network with goals of making higher education the norm within prisons — and enabled BPI to expand capacity within the national Consortium.

Emerging out of a year's worth of work that has laid the groundwork for the redistributing of critical resources, financial and otherwise, to meet an urgent need everywhere, BPI and the Consortium are planning future work that will strengthen what we've built, and extend the opportunity even further.



“As the field continues to grow, a strong community of practice is more essential than ever.”

— Jessica Neptune '02, Director of National Engagement

College-in-prison throughout the country

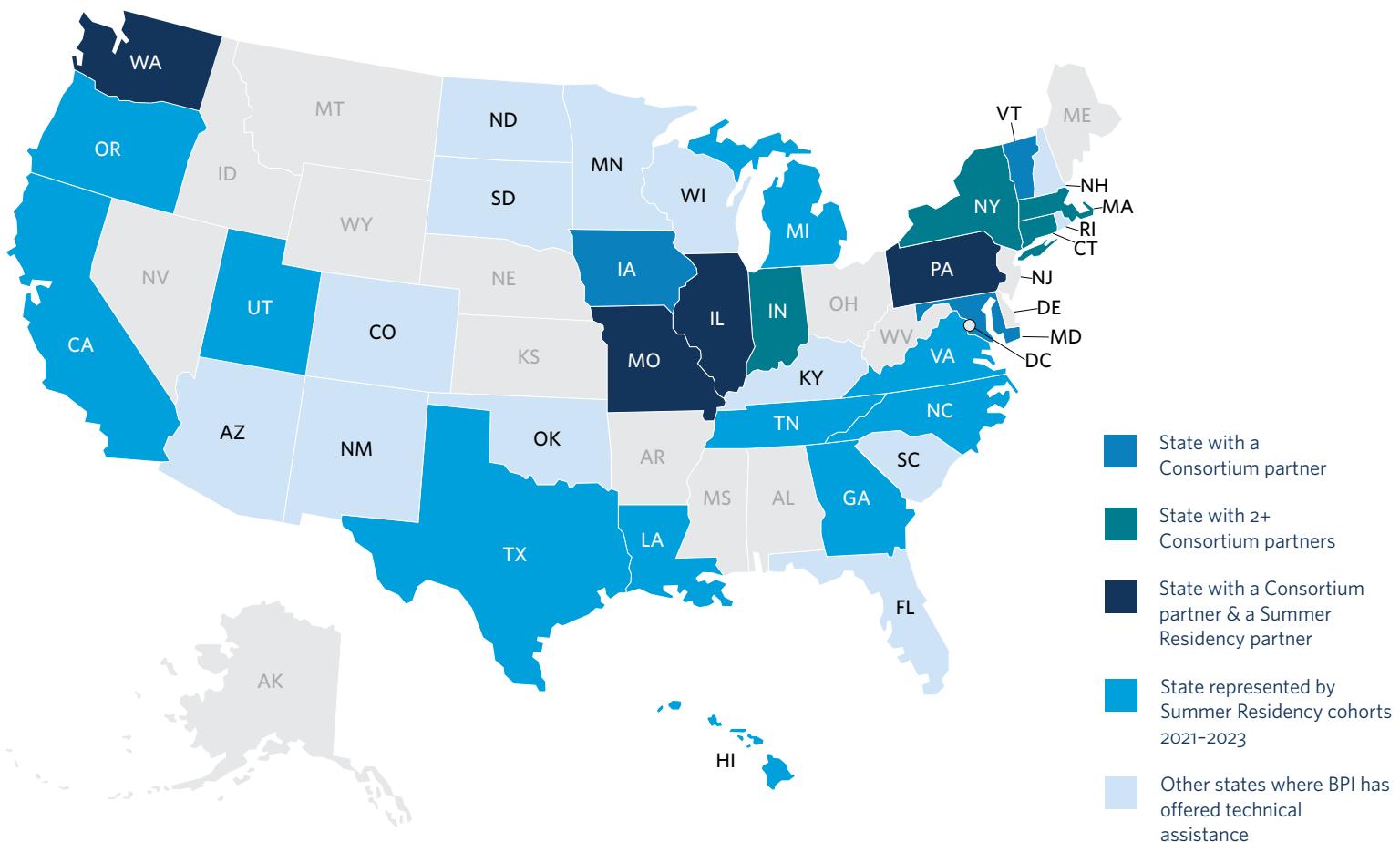
1 As noted by states with  in the map below

2 As noted by states with  in the map below

With federal Pell Grant funding officially becoming widely accessible in prison this year for the first time since 1994, the field is facing a precipice: can college-in-prison be a genuine expansion of the best of American higher education? Or, will it devolve, as skeptics have warned, into a low-expectations-extension of the prison? BPI has fostered a community at the forefront of shaping the answer to that question. In an era when higher education is facing its own existential crises, college-in-prison can be an example of what American higher education should be everywhere: accessible, inclusive and ambitious, forward-looking, cultivating the leadership and perspectives of systematically excluded students and engaging them in curricula that reflect the full richness of human thought and learning.

Now stretching across 10 states and representing 15 colleges and universities, BPI founded the **Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison (the Consortium)**¹ in 2009, in anticipation of this moment and the return of public funding. In 2019, Consortium work expanded to include annual cohorts of **emerging practitioners**² invited to Bard's campus to attend the BPI Summer Residency. Through this unique network, BPI collaborates with other institutions of higher education as they launch fully autonomous college-in-prison programs of their own throughout the country. Together, these leading institutions set the bar for excellence and have become the example for the field of what building programs with integrity and serious commitment looks like, all the while supporting students who are redefining the boundaries of success for people in and returning home from prison.

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



This year, three Consortium partners held inaugural commencement ceremonies — a profound moment for students and institutions alike.

INDIANA

WOMEN'S COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

After more than a decade of BPI's work in Indiana and five years of BPI's partnership with Marian University, WCP celebrated its first graduation on August 7th, conferring six bachelor's degrees and 12 associate degrees. WCP graduates who had returned to their communities or started other programs in the facility were able to return and celebrate, as were the 15 new students who had been recently admitted.



CONNECTICUT

YALE PRISON EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Yale Prison Education Initiative (YPEI) made global news as it held its first-ever commencement ceremony — and first-ever college graduation MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution, the largest prison in New England — in June 2023. Seven graduates earned associate degrees from the University of New Haven (UNH). The ceremony also included a recitation from poet and UNH professor Dr. Randall Horton, the only tenured faculty member in the U.S. with seven felony convictions.

MASSACHUSETTS

EMERSON PRISON INITIATIVE

The Emerson Prison Initiative held their first graduation in September 2022 at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Concord, conferring six Bachelor of Arts degrees in Media, Literature, and Culture. One additional student completed the last semester of his degree on Emerson's Boston campus, becoming the first student to start the degree program in prison and finish on the outside campus.



VERMONT/NEW YORK

BENNINGTON PRISON EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The 2023 commencement ceremony of the Prison Education Initiative (PEI) at Bennington College, which launched in fall 2015 at Great Meadow Correctional Facility, was the first college commencement there since the ban of Pell Grant funding in 1994. Nine students earned Bennington College associate of arts degrees. PEI is currently in process to offer a bachelor's degree program at Great Meadow in fall 2024.

Through the investment from the Open Society University Network in 2022 to expand BPI's national and global work, BPI leveraged both expertise and financial resources to strengthen the American field of college-in-prison and university-prison partnerships outside of the United States. Over the past year, BPI and the Consortium have worked to create a global network of educators, supported programs in need – particularly in Argentina – and established foundations for programs in Brazil and Jamaica where there were previously none.

Argentina:

3 Logo for the conference; see BPI faculty advisor Andrés Pletch's reflections of the event on the opposite page.



CULTURAL EXCHANGE:

At the end of April, 10 BPI staff members joined with colleagues from across the globe for “ABRIR LA CÁRCEL,”³ a first-of-its-kind international meeting of educators in the prison context. The meeting was hosted and organized by San Martín University Center – the university-in-prison program of the National University of San Martín in

Argentina – and funded by BPI with a grant from the Open Society University Network.

With over 25 universities in attendance from 16 countries across North and Latin America, Africa, and Europe, this convening deepened BPI's work to foster a global community of practice that promotes education, not incarceration.



“I went to the conference anticipating some familiar sights, among them the university (UNSAM) and the prison (CUSAM). During the three days of the conference, however, our hosts introduced us to *a much more complex topography*, where the university and the prison shared prominence with the high school (Escuela Secundaria Técnica), and where ancillary initiatives such as the community library (Biblioteca Popular La Carcova) and the community center and daycare (Merendero Los Amigos) were prominent features of an educational landscape built upon one of Buenos Aires’s landfills. Furthermore, our hosts revealed that this topography was populated by more than teachers and students. Organized labor and the community itself were consequential stakeholders in *a holistic endeavor* aiming to channel the transformative power of education towards *the revitalization* of the community and the *rehabilitation* of the land.”

—Andrés Pletch, PhD

FACULTY ADVISOR TO THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM



Global Grantee Highlights:

4 “When I leave prison, I am going to follow my dreams, and nothing is going to hold me back. I've made a promise to myself that I am going to contact the people at Stellenbosch and show them that what they are doing with this class can change lives. This course brought out the old me that I thought I had lost long ago.”

— ULC STUDENT

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY (SOUTH AFRICA)



Stellenbosch University was able to bolster the community outreach component of the Ubuntu Learning Community (ULC), South Africa's first in-person prison-university partnership. The funding received from the BPI OSUN subgrant has contributed to the sustainability of the initiative and supported SU in expanding reintegration support and enhancing community-building efforts.⁴

THE UNIVERSITY OF MILAN (ITALY)



The University of Milan developed a network of incarcerated students, who attend the university on leave from the prison, to receive training to become tutors for high school students in a range of academic subjects. Formal training and mentorship has been paired with narrative change work that has lifted up the skills and knowledge of the tutors and has helped to challenge social prejudices. With the BPI OSUN subgrant-funded tutor training, the incarcerated tutors are now on a pathway toward becoming future teachers.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES MONA PRISON PROJECT (JAMAICA)



The University of the West Indies Mona Prison Project (UMPP) created opportunities to take in-person college-level classes in prison for the **first time** in Jamaica's history. The program promises to generate much needed narrative change around who is in prison, what they are capable of, and how Jamaican society as a whole might benefit from greater educational access for its incarcerated citizens.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF MARANHÃO (BRAZIL)



In 2019, the State University of Maranhão launched a pilot educational program for people incarcerated in the city of São Luís, Maranhão, but the COVID-19 pandemic halted any activity and support. With the BPI OSUN subgrant, the State University of Maranhão was able to formalize the pilot program, officially creating the **first higher education degree program in Brazil**, which operates in the Female Prison Unit for Resocialization of São Luís.

Ramiro Gual

Global Research Fellow



“Internationally, higher education in prison is a very intensive and productive field to explore.”

As BPI's first Global Research Fellow, Gual spent the past year conducting research comparing the origins and outcomes of several long-standing Argentine college-in-prison programs. Gual is a PhD candidate at the University of Buenos Aires and teaches for their college-in-prison program, UBA XXII. Through this Fellowship, Gual has shared research at more than six academic conferences over the year, published an article in *Revista Ícaro* (with additional article publications forthcoming), and has a book manuscript expected next year. Summaries of the research can also be found on BPI's blog. Gual transitioned this summer to a new role as Lead on Latin America for BPI's Global Initiatives.

In June, Gual made his first visit to prisons in the United States, giving guest lectures at three of the facilities where BPI operates;



sharing information about the notable history of college-in-prison in Argentina; and engaging in conversations with students about similarities, differences, and what the global south and global north can learn from each other.

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER



Ramiro Gual



Shawn Young '19

Shawn Young: This past year has really taught me a lot about what's needed, what's possible, and it's allowed me to explore my own intellect and the creative process. Now I have a question: why this work?

Ramiro Gual: I have been thinking about that, why different people like us engage in this type of work. I study criminal law, and there are just a few options where you can make the world better with your job when you're a lawyer. Then, I discovered these types of programs and people that were doing something that really improved the experience of their communities.

It's not an easy path to enroll in college. What was going on in your mind at that moment?

SY: Truthfully, I went in thinking that if I get out somehow, I need something that can help me take care of myself and get a job. What I gained, however, was so much more than just an education. When I got there, these people really cared about us, what we thought. They set expectations beyond what the dominant narrative is inside a prison. They gave us a rigorous curriculum that allowed us to really expose our own intellect and the confidence that comes from that.

RG: It's impossible to think it's not impacting in any way inside a prison; you can think about intended effects, but there are also unintended effects. It's impossible to think that that community is not going to be changed by the university.

SY: People gravitate toward the positivity of it. And then those in the program are doing work across the prison, similar to me coming home and wanting to work in a community, to address some of the issues that benefit everyone. There's something really deep about being able to create a place out of a very negative space. It's a powerful thing.

RG: When I went into the BPI classrooms, I thought, “How am I going to make them interested in this lecture about university-in-prison in Argentina? Why would they be interested in that?” So, I prepared a few questions, just in case, but they couldn't stop talking! They couldn't stop discussing my points. BPI students, they have an angle for everything! Is that a BPI ethos?

SY: [laughs] Sometimes other BPI alumni and I have to check ourselves because we just debate too much! For me, I feel like it's an exploration of my own intellect sometimes, because I now have an ability to see in all of these different ways, I want to be able to explore that as much as possible in conversation.

Shawn Young '19 is BPI's Project Lead for Upstate Reentry and Capital Region Initiatives. He works to identify opportunities for BPI students and alumni who are released from prison.

BPI held its fifth annual Summer Residency this July, hosting more than 20 practitioners for an intensive and immersive two-week sequence of 25 workshops on Bard's Annandale campus.

The 2023 cohort consisted of more than 20 emerging leaders in the field of college-in-prison representing public and private institutions, HBCUs, small liberal arts schools, and large research universities. The residents represented 12 states — Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Washington — as well as Australia, South Africa, and the UK.

Two weeks of intensive, hands-on workshops, led by experts across a wide array of subjects among BPI staff and alumni, are coupled with ample community-building downtime, leading to strong connections across programs that last well beyond the summer.

This annual community- and capacity-building endeavor expands the scope of BPI's Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison. The Residency broadens this community to practitioners in over 25 states with numerous fledgling and emerging college-in-prison projects supported by ongoing technical assistance from BPI's National Engagement team.



2023 Residency Cohort

Jac Arnade-Colwill, DUKE UNIVERSITY,
Program Coordinator, *Kenan Institute for Ethics*

Patrick Conway, BOSTON COLLEGE,
Director, *Boston College Prison Education Program*

Mollie Hosmer-Dillard, UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY,
Higher Education for Incarcerated Youth Program

Vanessa Estime, YALE UNIVERSITY,
Assistant Director, *Yale Prison Education Initiative*

John Fantuzzo, EASTERN UNIVERSITY,
Director, *Prison Education Program*

Marisol Garcia, YALE UNIVERSITY,
College to Career Fellow, *Yale Prison Education Initiative*

Michael Hebbeler, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME,
Managing Director, *Notre Dame Programs for Education in Prison*

Caitlin Jardim, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY,
General Administrator, *Ubuntu Learning Community*

Kipton Jensen, MOREHOUSE COLLEGE,
Professor of Philosophy and Coordinator of *Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership Higher Education in Prisons Initiative*

Keyra Johnson, M.Ed., SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY,
J.D. Candidate, President, *Louisiana College Prison Project*

Mary Johnson, EASTERN UNIVERSITY,
Administrative Coordinator, *Prison Education Program*

Victoria Justice, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,
Program Coordinator, *Center for Prison Education*

William Kerwin, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI,
Associate Professor of English and Founder and Director of the *Missouri Prison Outreach Program*

Ruth McFarlane, HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY,
Co-Director of *Doing What Really Matters*

Jazzmyn Moultrie, SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY,
J.D. Candidate, Vice President, *Louisiana College Prison Project*

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Postdoctoral Associate and BPI faculty

Adelle Sefton-Rowston, DARWIN UNIVERSITY,
Head of Humanities

Gina Shipley, ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY,
Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction

Savannah Sowell, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS,
Program Coordinator, *Wash-U Prison Education Project*

Eirik Steinhoff, EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE,
Project Lead for the *Evergreen Prison Education Project*

Leanne Trapedo Sims, KNOX COLLEGE,
Daniel J. Logan Assistant Professor of Peace and Justice

Sharon Varallo, AUGUSTANA COLLEGE,
Executive Director, *Augustana Prison Education Program*

Tess Wheelwright, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,
Director, *Wesleyan University's Center for Prison Education*



BPI SUMMER RESIDENCY 2023 *by the Numbers*

30+ ATTENDEES

including emerging and experienced college-in-prison leaders, formerly incarcerated practitioners, and new BPI and Consortium program staff

→ **5th ANNUAL COHORT**

25 IMMERSIVE WORKSHOPS ←

→ **12 STATES AND 4 NATIONS
REPRESENTED**



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"The BPI Summer Residency is vital to expanding the reach and impact as well as the quality of higher education in prisons across the nation. The staff and alumni encouraged me, personally, and my colleagues who teach in the prison education program at Morehouse, to think more strategically and ambitiously. BPI sets a standard worth emulating and adapting, creatively, to prison education initiatives at colleges and universities elsewhere." —KIPTON



"This was one of the most meaningful and insightful fellowships I've ever attended. I love the no-holds-barred honesty and transparency in what it takes to do this work. Not only do I feel like I learned a lot, I feel like I got a real plan with action steps on how to get my program started." —KEYRA



"Attending the BPI Summer Residency 2023 was an absolutely life-changing experience for me, both personally and professionally. Within a week of being home, I am already putting new ideas into action, and I know that the connections I have made will lead to many fruitful projects and collaborations over the coming weeks and months and years. I am brimming with ideas and excitement." —RUTH



"Folks at many stages of program development are able to learn together in a way that is simply not possible in short-term time periods or virtual environments. Two weeks is a commitment, but it is also a gift for the committed practitioner." —SHARON

"BPI's Summer Residency is the most insightful and useful professional development experience I've ever participated in. Not only did I learn best practices from the nation's premiere college-in-prison program, but I was also able to process these lessons with BPI alums and a community of practitioners."

—JOHN



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—JOHN



2017

Morehouse debates BPI at Eastern.



2020

Inspired by *College Behind Bars* and local organization, Common Good Atlanta, the Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership (AYCGL) launches the Higher Education in Prisons Initiative.

Using Bard's Clemente model, and in collaboration with Common Good Atlanta, several faculty members begin teaching in prisons and reentry centers in the Atlanta metro region.

2021

The AYCGl sponsored a remote screening and discussions of *College Behind Bars*, featuring BPI alum Giovannie Hernandez '13, who was also interviewed in the *More Conversations* podcast.

2022

Hosted in-person screening and panel discussion with alumni Rodney Spivey-Jones '17, Jule Hall '11, and Dyjuan Tatro '18.

Hosts Spivey-Jones '17 as a Scholar-in-residence. Rodney gives Gafney Lecture, Crown Forum, and sits down for the *More Conversations* Podcast.

2023

Hosts a panel discussion, Listen Out Loud, featuring Morehouse students, Spivey-Jones '17, and Professor Kipton Jensen.

Professor Kipton Jensen attends the BPI Summer Residency.



2019

Professor Sharon Varallo attends first NCHEP conference and watches pre-screening of *College Behind Bars*. Sharon had been leading a small group of faculty teaching non-credit bearing humanities-based courses at East Moline Correctional Center since 2018.

2020

Sharon reaches out to BPI to explore the possibility of Augustana College creating a program modeled after BPI and receives approval from Augustana College for the Augustana Prison Education Program (APEP) concept.

Frequent one-on-one technical assistance consultations with BPI National Engagement across all aspects of program building.

2021

Sharon joins cohort '21 of BPI's Summer Residency (virtual year) including participating in mock admissions interviews.

APEP holds admissions for first cohort, days after BPI Summer Residency, and begins in-person classes with 10 students.

Augustana College joins BPI's Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison.

2022

Augustana College hosts virtual double-screening of *College Behind Bars* for Black History Month with BPI staff and alumni joining.

APEP gets a capacity-building grant from BPI to build a computer lab, develop FileMaker database, develop a website, and enhance the library.

APEP connects BPI to educators at nearby Knox College for consultations on launching a Knox College program at Hill Correctional Center in Illinois.

2023

Sharon joins BPI Summer Residency for the in-person experience alongside other IL colleagues from Knox College.





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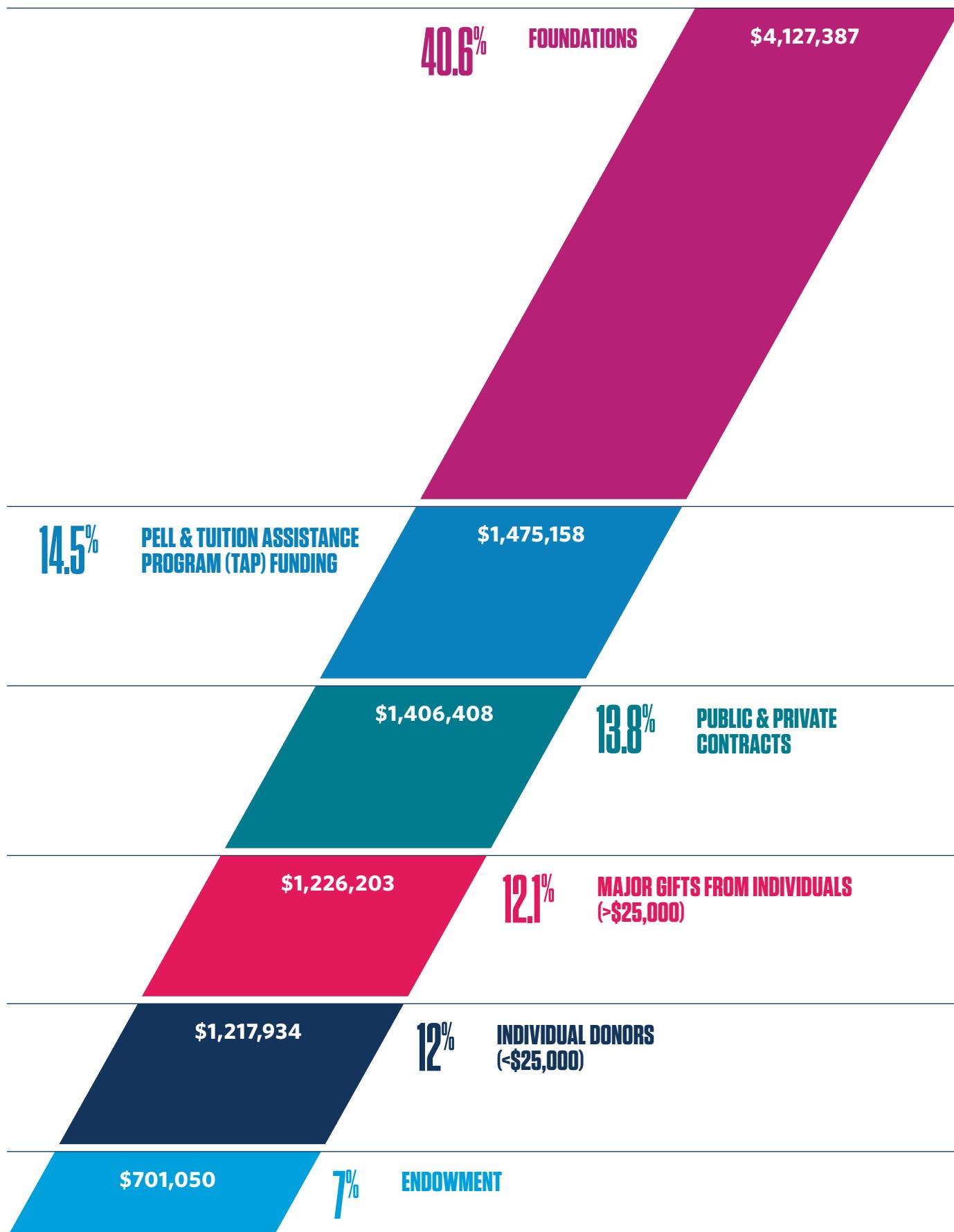


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