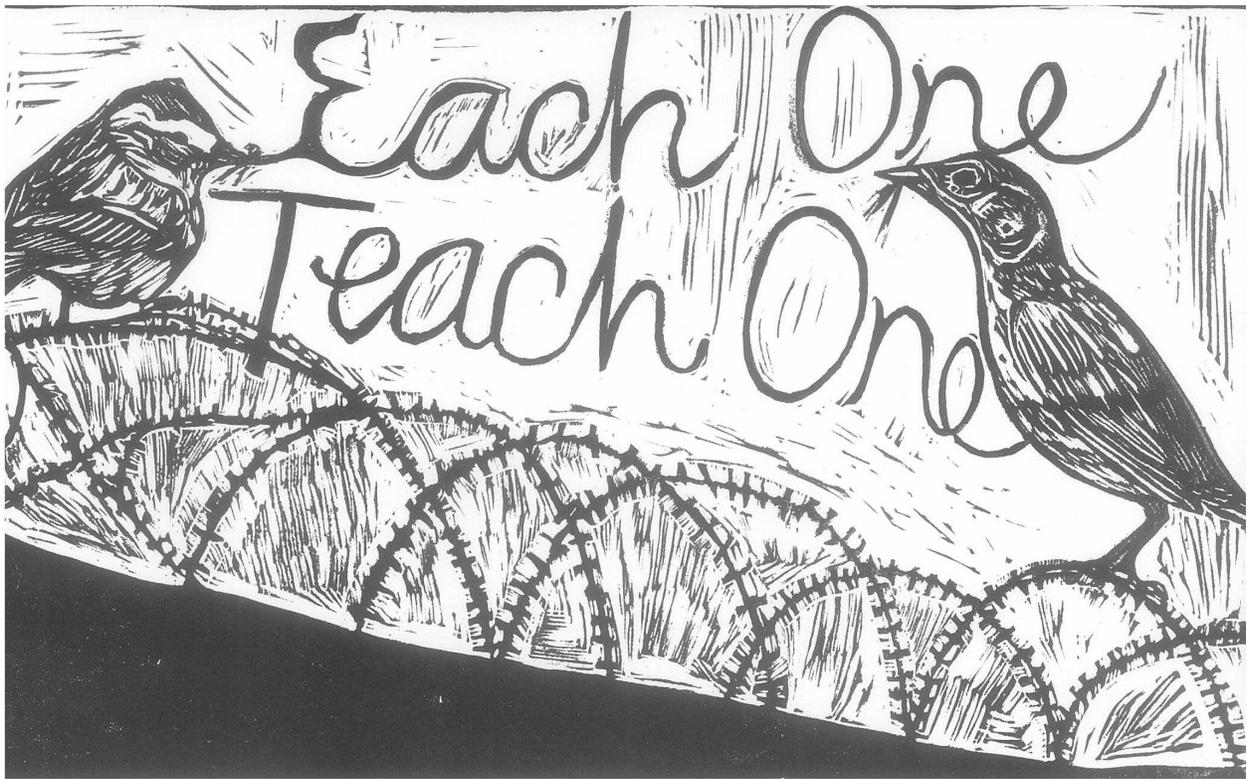


PLEJ (Power, Love, Education, Justice) for Liberation

Curriculum Resource Guide for Community Educators



January 2016, Human Rights Pen Pals

**INTRODUCTION AND GUIDING INTENTIONS/PRINCIPLES/POINTS OF
UNITY/Framework**

We are thrilled that you have joined the PLEJ for Liberation! We are excited to grow this visionary project with you.

Enclosed are materials to support and guide the collaborative curriculum visioning process between you and your matched incarcerated educator.

We wish to respect and honor the experience and wisdom of PLEJ's incarcerated educators and community educators; we are here to support as much (or as little) as you would like.

We offer these guiding intentions and framework to help you begin your curriculum collaboration:

Please hold these intentions central as you begin communication with your PLEJ educator and begin to design curriculum:

- No one understands the prison system as well as imprisoned people themselves. No one but the incarcerated can tell us the full human cost of the current legal order. [Wording taken from *Incarcerated Witnesses: American Prison Writing*]
- Center the experiences of both our incarcerated comrades in solitary confinement, as well as those most impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, overwhelmingly youth of color and particularly low-income youth of color. The ACLU stated recently that the “over-representation of children of color in youth jails and prisons remains a persistent and troubling dynamic in almost all 50 states.” [<https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/youth-incarceration>]
- As youth of color are targeted by the school to prison pipeline, PLEJ for Liberation intends to transcend prison walls and connect youth with incarcerated educators to build resistance against the Prison Industrial Complex. [See *Natania Kramer's sample curriculum for some ideas of how to bring in and center the voices and experiences of youth of color.*]
- Support the Prisoner Human Rights Movement and the 5 Core Demands of the California Prisoner Hunger Strikers. We ask Community Educators to familiarize themselves with the history of the California Prisoner Hunger Strike and to support the 5 Core Demands and read the Agreement to End Hostilities. (See page 5).
- Practice ‘Each One Teach One’ as a political principle and educational practice utilized by the Black Panther Party
- Create an environment of sharing, of non- judgment, and of mutual education. Respect present life experiences and don't make judgments of peoples' pasts.

- Build student leadership. A request from incarcerated educators is that teachers allow students to pick topics and lead class discussions on that topic, in order to build student confidence.
- Foster a collective atmosphere in all group activities. Encourage students to learn to work in unity, not just individually.
- Understand that all systems and structures of domination and oppression are interconnected and interdependent. All liberation is bound up together. If we see forms of oppression as separate, or as one mattering more than another, we reproduce the systems of domination we seek to dismantle- for example, if racism is addressed, but not transphobia, or transphobia is addressed, but not racism, further erasure and marginalization of transwomen of color is enacted. Seek to always understand the ways that systems of oppression uphold each other. [*See resource guide for recommended articles*]

Guiding Intentions from Incarcerated Educators in Solitary Confinement:

Some reflections from the Incarcerated Educators on why they are participating in PLEJ:

“To give back to those struggling, suffering humyn beings that have or may...witness/experience some of those things that I did...and just give some positive food-for-thought...”

“I would like to see prisoners given the opportunities to show the kind of caring people we are.”

“During my educational transformation – culturally, politically and socially – I have always had the desire to work with youth in hopes of saving them from finding themselves in prisons...”

“Authentic discourse. Education invoices dialogue. Dialogue only exists when teacher and student can talk to one another without fear of being wrong, when they relate reciprocally...”

“I see this as an opportunity to participate in the lives of young people and somehow give back to society based on my learned experience. I view education as a two-way street. I want to be educated by young adults...Education either functions as an instrument to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the present system, or it becomes the practice of freedom...”

“I think ... we can help the youth by developing their minds to creatively apply themselves to ways and means other than what's being taught to them by standardized tests...”

“To broaden our perspectives on the work/issues of both progressive and liberatory social movements.”

“Teach children, young adults to be critical thinkers by assessing...evaluating their concrete conditions. I want to inform young people how to avoid drugs, guns, alcohol, gangs and

violence...to educate young people to what prisons/solitary confinement and poverty do to a human society..."

"It affords me the opportunity to give back. This is what coalition-building must look like if it is to really be effective."

"...To utilize my life experience to teach, inspire and help forge within people the capacity to think and discuss issues relating to their lives, e.g. Poverty, homelessness, senseless wars, economic and social inequalities."

Life Experiences that Imprisoned Educators wish to share through PLEJ:

"Despite my body being warehoused in the dungeons, my spirit is connected to the rest of humanity"

"How solitary confinement – the prison industrial complex – destroys the lives of people (prisoners and non-prisoners alike), communities, society."

"I would want to focus on how systems orientate and indoctrinate people to act and think a certain way based on their race and class, and how humans are consciously, unconsciously, and subconsciously forced to live under these indoctrinations, or suffer a consequence."

"Focus on how abilities are put to use, to achieve our aims/goals. Examine what works best amongst whom and what isn't working – so we may better utilize our time and skills."

"I would want to share my prison experience as a life lesson, and the pressures of growing up in prison and finding ways to mature into a decent human being, even while being subjected by the onslaught of prison. Having courage and fortitude as one weathers the tide of adversity on a perpetual basis."

"Teachers have to deal with the stultifying necessity of teaching in over-populated, underfunded classrooms full of students who do not see any intrinsic value in a rote process that gives the illusion of educating them. By contrast, PLEJ can address the major failure of the education system by trying to understand what actually happens in a student's learning process as opposed to forcing our ideology upon that process, as a bankrupt educational system does."

"I have always been a firm believer that through the 'power of unity' we prisoners are the solution to ending senseless violence, rebuilding our communities, and helping to rebuild our schools by uniting with teachers and connecting with the students who are the present and the future."

"I never place limits or restriction on what areas of learning that we can go into, I believe in being very open as for my sharing all aspects of my struggles and times throughout my life."

"I'd like my community educator to know the importance of our (prison) conditions and that we may experience set-backs with our correspondence, due to sharing this form of knowledge, because of the oppressor's censorship..."

“In the spirit of “Each One Reach One and Teach One”, it's essential to meet one another at whatever present life station that we currently find ourselves. Welcome each other without judging our past but learning-respecting what our present life journey experiences – learning lessons have to offer...both behind and beyond these neo-colonial lines and New Jim Crow Mass Incarceration Prison Industrial Complex.”

“Must-Reads” before beginning communication with your incarcerated collaborator:

We strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with some historical and political context to the formation of the Prison Industrial Complex and its current state today. Additionally please take the time to familiarize yourself with the California Prisoner Hunger Strike organizing and resistance history.

1. ***The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*** by Michelle Alexander. We also recommend the book’s accompanying free study guide *Teaching Tolerance*: <http://www.tolerance.org/publication/teaching-new-jim-crow>

2. It is **crucial** that you familiarize yourself with the **California Prisoner Hunger Strikes** in which your incarcerated collaborators have brilliantly organized and participated in:

Background and Context: <https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/education/>

The Five Core Demands:

<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/the-prisoners-demands-2/>

The Agreement to End Hostilities

<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/agreement-to-end-hostilities/>

Latest news and updates:

<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/>

3. ***Pedagogy of the Oppressed*** by Paulo Freire- Please familiarize yourself with this book so that you have a sense of what kind of teaching pedagogies to bring into PLEJ.

4. ***A People’s History of the United States*** by Howard Zinn. Please familiarize yourself with this book as a *beginning* of familiarity with the untold, silenced, and erased histories of resistance in the United States and its role in constructing authoritative educational systems.

5. ***A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement*** by Alicia Garza

<http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>

RESOURCE GUIDE

Core books:

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Prison Abolition*.
- Friere, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag*.
- Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the US*.

CA Prisoner Hunger Strike Background and News:

- Background and Context of the California Prisoner Hunger Strikes:
<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/education/>
- CA Prisoner Hunger Strikers Five Core Demands:
<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/the-prisoners-demands-2/>
- The Agreement to End Hostilities
<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/agreement-to-end-hostilities/>
- Latest news and updates on CA Prisoner Hunger Strike:
<https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/>

Articles on Solitary Confinement and the Prison Industrial Complex:

- Law, Victoria. *The Untold, Real-Life story of the prison in Orange is the New Black*.
<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/untold-real-life-story-behind-prison-orange-new-black/>
- Mother Jones. *Maps: Solitary Confinement, State by State* -
<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/10/map-solitary-confinement-states>
- Raemisch, Rick. *My Night in Solitary* - http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/opinion/my-night-in-solitary.html?_r=0

Newspapers - We suggest subscribing to keep updated:

- Abolitionist (*Critical Resistance Newspaper*) (online)
- California Prison Focus (*quarterly newspaper*) (online)
- SF Bay View Newspaper (*online and print*)

Books recommended by PLEJ incarcerated educators:

- Berger, Dan. *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era*.
- Blackmon, Douglas. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II*.
- Copleston, Frederick. *The History of Philosophy*.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Prison Abolition*.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag*.
- Harding, Vincent. *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*.
- Huntington, Samuel. *The Crisis of Democracy*.
- King, Jr., Martin Luther. *Strength and Love*.
- Kurshan, Nancy. *Out of Control*.

- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.
- Martinot, Steve. *Prison Abolition: An Ethical Indictment*.
- Shaka, Oba T'. *The Art of Leadership, Vol 1 + 2*.
- Winant, Howard. *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II*.
- Woodson, Carter G. *Miseducation of the Negro*.
- Wright, Bruce. *Black Robes and White Justice*.
- Yee, Min S. *The Melancholy History of Soledad Prisons*.
- Zinn, Howard. *A Power Government Cannot Suppress*.

Books on Liberatory Teaching Pedagogy:

- Alexander, M. Jaqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred*.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.

Resources on Teaching about the Prison Industrial Complex:

- *Introduction to the Prison Industrial Complex Workshop* - Created by: The Chicago Prison Industrial Complex Teaching Collective 2011 - https://chicagopiccollective.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/introduction_to_the_prison_industrial_complex-curriculum-final.pdf
- *Lesson Plan – Is Solitary Confinement “Cruel and Unusual”?* - *Herman’s House* – PBS - http://www.pbs.org/pov/hermanshouse/lesson_plan.php
- *The Knotted Line Curriculum – freedom and unfreedom* – Compiled by Evan Bissell and Ora Wise – <http://scalar.usc.edu/anvc/the-knotted-line/index>

Resources on Black Lives Matter:

- #BlackLivesMatter – SpeakOut - <http://www.speakoutnow.org/content/blacklivesmatter>
- Garza, Alicia. *A Love Note to Our Folks: Alicia Garza on the Organizing of #BlackLivesMatter* - <https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/a-love-note-to-our-folks/>
- *Teaching #Blacklivesmatter* - <http://sfusd.libguides.com/blacklivesmatter>

Resources on Racism and Anti-Racism:

- People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. *Undoing Racism: Selected Anti-Racism Resources 2012* - www.pisab.org
- Watson, Renee. *Happening Yesterday, Happened Tomorrow. Teaching the ongoing murders of Black men* - *Rethinking Schools*. Winter 2014-2015. pp. 32-41

Online Advocacy Toolboxes:

- Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. *Fighting for Our Rights: A Toolbox for Family Advocate of California Prisoners* - <http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/resource-library/family-matters/>
- Transgender Gender Variant Intersex Justice Project. *We Rise: A Resource Packet for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People in Prison* - www.tgijp.org

Youth and Family Organizations:

- California Coalition of Women Prisoners - www.womenprisoners.org
- California Families Against Solitary Confinement - <https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/tag/california-families-against-solitary-confinement/>
- The Jericho Movement, - <http://www.thejerichomovement.com/> (*devoted to political prisoners*)
- Youth Justice Coalition - <http://www.youth4justice.org>

Additional Recommended Resources (Articles):

- Duguma, Mutope. *Pattern of Practice: Centuries of racist oppression culminating in mass incarceration* – SF Bay View - <http://sfbayview.com/2015/01/pattern-of-practice-centuries-of-racist-oppression-culminating-in-mass-incarceration/>
- Hingi, Julianne. *Race, Disability and the School-to-Prison Pipeline* - http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/05/race_disability_and_the_school_to_prison_pipeline.html
- Murphy, Carla. *Criminals, Victims and the Black Men Left Behind* – Color Lines - http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/08/criminals_victims_and_the_black_men_left_behind.html
- Wright, Kai. *Why Young, Black Men Can't Work* - Color Lines - <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/why-young-black-men-cant-work>

Additional Recommended Resources (Books):

- Abu-Jamal, Mumia. *Jailhouse Lawyers. Prisoners Defending Prisoners V. The USA.*
- Abu-Jamal, Mumia. *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party.*
- Bukhari, Safiya. *The War Before: the True Life Story of Safiya Bukhari.*
- Critical Resistance. *Abolition Now! Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex.*
- Davis, Angela. *Are Prisons Obsolete?.*
- Gordon, Rebecca. *Mainstreaming Torture: Ethical Approaches in the post 9/11 U.S.*
- Jackson, George. *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson.*
- James, Joy., ed., *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention and Prisons.*
- Law, Victoria. *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggle of Incarcerated Women.*
- Meyer, Matt, ed. *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the movements to free U.S. Political Prisoners.*
- Rios, Victor M. *Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys.*
- Schenwar, Maya. *Locked Down, Locked Out: Why Prison Doesn't Work and How we can do better.*
- Shakur, Assata. *Assata: An Autobiography.*

Resources for various ages:

- Attica Prison Uprising- <http://zinnedproject.org/materials/attica-prison-uprising/>
- Lakshmi, Aparna. *Teaching the Prison Industrial Complex* by Aparna Lakshmi – Rethinking Schools - http://www.rethinkingschools.org/cmshandler.asp?archive/26_02/26_02_lakshmi2.shtml
- *Raising Race Conscious Children* - <http://www.raceconscious.org/>

- Sesame Street workshop on Incarceration: <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/incarceration/>
- Williamson, P., Mercurio, M., and Walker, C.,. *Songs of the Caged Birds: Literacy and Learning with Incarcerated Youth* - <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/news-and-calendars/files/archives/EJ1024Songs.pdf>

Comic books/Graphic novels:

- Mauer, M., and Jones, S. *Race to Incarcerate* - <http://zinnedproject.org/materials/race-to-incarcerate-a-graphic-retelling/>
- Miller-Mack, E., Gilmore, C., Ahrens, L., Willmarth, S., and Pyle, K. *The Real Cost of Prison Comix* - <http://zinnedproject.org/materials/the-real-cost-of-prisons-comix/>