

# FROM THE INSIDE OUT: The Power of Language to Incarcerate Proposal Guidelines Summer 2019

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*\*Supported by Humanities New York*

## APPLICATION GUIDELINES

### FROM THE INSIDE OUT: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE TO INCARCERATE

The Center for Justice in partnership with The Confined Arts presents *From the Inside Out: The Power of Language to Incarcerate*, a one-day justice conference in New York City that will meet and resist linguistic methods of dehumanization, which foster implicit and explicit biases about people in the criminal justice system. The mission of the conference is to unveil popular labels, which are coupled with negative imagery about people in the system and provide re-humanizing counter narratives using the power of storytelling to highlight true-lived experiences. More specifically, the audience will engage with stigmatized labels couple with (mis)representative imagery and be given a historical context of how labels foster misconceptions about incarceration and the people that are incarcerated.



This conference demonstrates a sense of the urgency to facilitate discourse around dehumanizing labels and stereotypical representation of people in the criminal justice system and to understand how the general public forms perceptions of different groups of people based on the common labels used to reference them. Labels carry stigmas and stereotypes. They allow us to acknowledge social, cultural, or physical differences amongst one another. Labels also inadvertently influence our perceptions of one

another depending on the social significance of the label that is attributed to a person In one-study students who were labeled as “bloomers” were perceived by teachers to be more cognitively adept than their peers, even if their capabilities were the same. This effect was so strong that some teachers gave increased levels of support to students labeled as capable, which resulted in concrete differences in educational performance. In a 2010 poll conducted to gather the approval rates of gay men and lesbians in the US Military, approval rates for including gay people in the military were higher when the words “Gay Men & Lesbians” were used instead of “Homosexuals” Finally, people who are directly impacted by the criminal justice system reported, using stigmatizing language to reference them is the first step in “dehumanizing them”.

This conference will socially as well as physically engage with popular labels and language content.

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**The conference goals are to:**

1. Provide a historical review of how language and media has been used to shape public perceptions of people in the criminal justice system.
2. Provide a historical review of how law, policy and popular discourse has shaped punitive attitudes.
3. Understand how the popular (current) philosophy of justice and incarceration and current media representation of people in prison in the US intersects with and is reflected in the law and policy of today.
4. Determine the influences on public opinion of people in prison – is it the legal framework, popular media or personal opinion and experience?
5. Provide re-humanizing counter narratives inspired by true-lived experiences.

**Event Objectives**

- Present research information through performances and presentations
- Engage directly with dehumanizing language and imagery
- Facilitate public discourse to gain a better understanding of the influence of public opinion towards people in prison
- Present a call to action for all conference attendees

Activities will include a Keynote address by Pastor Isaac Scott followed by: 1) Arts Engagement 2) Panel Discussion 3) Breakout Sessions

# **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

This submission portal is on a research based named Qualtrics. Because of the limitations set therein:

1. All applicants should download and read this instruction guide and email our Operations Manager aedan.macdonald@columbia.edu if you have any questions before you begin your application.
  2. Once you begin your application you will not be able to go back or save your application as draft.
  3. We advise applicants to draft their applications outside of the submission portal then copy and paste into the correct fields.
  4. If you are not able to proceed to the next page, it is because there is a required field that must be completed.
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## **BREAK-OUT SESSION FACILITATOR APPLICATION**

Break-Out Sessions are designed to grant facilitators and teaching artists creative control over the conference's final takeaway in relation to its theme of linguistic engagement. Applicants should expect to facilitate a 30-minute session with 3 separate groups of approximately 20-40 people per group (group numbers will depend of conference attendance).

### **About Break-Out Session Categories:**

Select the Break-Out Session category are you applying for.

- Category 1: Creative/Art making
- Category 2: Think tank/discussion: Continuing the Advancement of Language Rights
- Category 3: Reflective writing

### **In 750 words or less you must answer the following application questions:**

- 1) Describe your current advocacy/activism work and how it relates to the From the Inside Out Project.
- 2) Why did you choose to apply to this particular Break-Out Session category?
- 3) What is your proposed break-out session plan?

### **Your proposal should demonstrate the following:**

- Knowledge and experience with media portrayals of incarcerated individuals

- Knowledge of linguistics and the impact language has on public perception
- Interest in reforming or abolishing the American prison system
- An ability to facilitate meaningful discussions and encourage incorporation of all viewpoints

Word Count: 750 Max

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## **ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION BLITZ APPLICATION**

The Information blitz session will allow organizations and project leaders 15 minutes to present the social justice work they are doing and how language (negatively or positively) impacts their work. Organizations and individuals doing work in every area of human rights will be considered.

**In 750 words or less, please outline your organizational work:**

Your organizational work should demonstrate the following:

- The mission and goals of the organization/project that you will be presenting
- The target audience of the organization/project that you will be presenting
- The impact that current language has on your work and how language sensitivity would advance the impact of the organization/project that you will be presenting

Word Count: 750 Max

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## **HEADLINE PERFORMANCE CALL FOR PERFORMING ARTISTS**

### **Spoken Pen Performing Artist Application**

SPOKEN PEN "The Performance."

This performance is a creative writing project produced by four (4) condemned prisoners from the State of Arkansas as a collection of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction works of literature. It was created entirely by: Kenneth Williams, Kenneth Reams, LaTavious Johnson, and Justin Anderson. What's significant about this project is that these condemned writers are forgotten individuals in a forgotten place trying to show the rest of the world that they exist. The performance is fresh, unique, and unusual. It is not a strike against the judicial system, a system that all four men have spent a vast majority of their lives grappling with. Instead, this performance is a richly detailed and personal glimpse inside the minds of four (4) talented writers who happen to be death row inmates.

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

- Kenneth Williams, author of *The Unrelenting Burdens of Gang Bangers* and an ordained minister. He was executed on April 27th, 2017.
- Justin Anderson, creator of (Art by Anderson) and author of *Soul of a Panther*. His work has appeared in national publications such as *Compassion and Human Rights*.
- Kenneth Reams, social justice activist, poet, public speaker, artist, and founder of the non-profit organization Who Decides, Inc.
- LaTavious Johnson, co-author of the upcoming book *Spoken Pen*. He is a "mighty talent" who is bridging the gap between poetry and rap.

Applying artists should have experience performing monologues that take the form of personal narratives and storytelling of firsthand experience. Applicants should be able to commit to two 75 – 90 minute performances:

1. *From the Inside Out: The Power of Language to Incarcerate* conference September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019
2. *Full Participation is a Human Right* conference October 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 2019  
(Performance date TBD)

**In 750 words or less, applications should include the following:**

- Your artist statement (who you are, your medium, and your experience)
- Your particular interests in performing at this conference
- Why you would be perfect for this role

Word Count: (750 Max)