

Publishing

- Publish pieces by artists in all mediums
- Every artist will have their own profile page >> "portfolio"

CAP info

- What the CAP is, it's mission, what it offers, where, and how to participate

Advocacy

- Integration/partnership with Fortuna's David Rothenberg Advocacy Center

Art Portal

Support

- Direct monetary support to artists (donations)
- Online store: zines, prints, other merch of the program

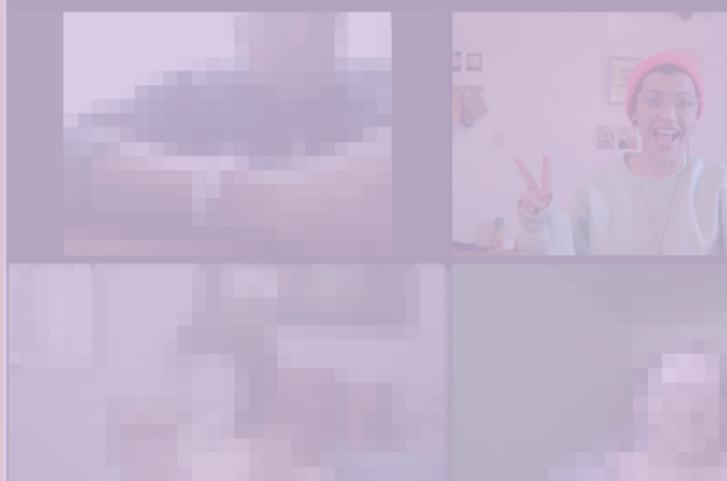
Nav & Tech help

- How-to guides
- Video tutorials

Documentation

- How Art Portal was built
- Tools, guides, etc.

PROCESSES LEARNINGS THE PROBLEM WHO THEIR STINT DESIGN/DESIGN/COM THE VISION SUCCESS NEXT STEPS



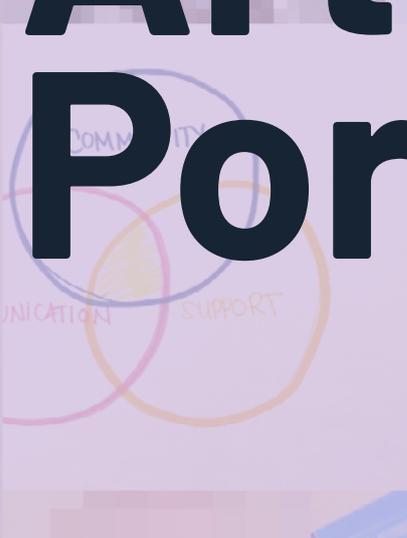
Art Portal



APP COMMUNITY BOARD

Hi all, I'm moving next weekend. Anyone free to help? If not, I'll message you for caption details. I'm struggling today.

Whats up! Wazn'take? it'll be on! Marynthere. Let's go for icecream!



How much do you feel that you belong to the Creative Arts community?

WhatsApp Broadcast group > Direct communication Jamie to all

5. Your Vision

Main users:

People with justice involvement (in & out; Fortune involved & others) Fortune itself	Public figures public sponsors Government officials People working in the reentry & justice fields	General Public Cast a broad net
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Art Portal

PROJECT BY
Laura Cerón Melo

ADVISED BY
Sahar Ghaheri



MFA Design for Social Innovation
School of Visual Arts
Spring of 2021

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**Art Portal
2021**

Hello!
I'm Laura
Cerón Melo
(she/her)



I am a queer designer from Colombia. My professional practice sits at the intersection of design, art, and activism.

I feel passionate about social justice, honest and vulnerable relationships, collaboration, and spiritual growth. I believe art is a life-giving act and expression. I'm interested in the power of design to communicate social imperatives, challenge the status quo, and foster individual and collective healing.

In my life and professional practices I strive to use my ever-growing skills, knowledge, and awareness of my power and privilege to create understanding; build capacity and resilience in communities; act and design responsibly and sustainably.

I am committed to the common good, I aim to minimize harm, alleviate suffering, and make life easier and happier.

I moved from my hometown of Bogotá to San Francisco, CA in 2012, and later relocated to Brooklyn, NY in 2018.

In short, I'm Colombian, I'm queer, I'm an immigrant in this country (USA).

Above all, I believe in love and justice.

I practice social and communications design.

I believe in and strive to practice intersectional feminism and abolition, as well as radical lovingkindness for myself and others. I believe self-expression and relationships are the most important agents for individual and collective healing. I believe in the saying attributed to many, that *Hurt people hurt people*. And that *Healed people heal people*.¹

1. "*Hurt people hurt people. Healed people heal people.*" is not my creation. However, I haven't been able to track down whose words these are, they are attributed to many different people.

**HURT PEOPLE
HURT PEOPLE.
HEALED PEOPLE
HEAL PEOPLE.**

I believe

**LOVE. JUSTICE. JOY.
HONESTY. SUPPORT. COMMUNITY.**

The thesis journey

My journey with this thesis started in the spring of 2020 and by then the project looked very different, just like the world did. Back then I was set up to work with two extraordinary organizations whose partnership brings art education into correctional centers in New York City, Art and Resistance Through Education (ARTE), and Justice in Education Initiative (JIE) at Columbia University. At that point in time, the plan was to go with them into Rikers Island to work with incarcerated young men (18-21).

And then, the pandemic hit, forever changing life as we knew it. Among the incalculable impacts of this event, for me it meant that I had to change my project. However, I kept working with ARTE and JIE all through the summer. My work with them was the beginning of this transformative thesis journey. Learning from and working with Mia Ruyter and Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario was my first dive into understanding and navigating the criminal justice system in a practical way, beyond the theoretical and the merely rational. It was also during these months that I had an opportunity to witness the power of art in this setting, the inspiration, critical thinking, reflection and even healing it can bring about.

This first thesis attempt planted the seeds that allowed me to design a whole different project (with a different community and organization) in the months that followed. Art Portal came to be as a collaborative endeavor developed with The Fortune Society, where I landed thanks to Marissa. (relationships are *everything!*)

This work is dedicated, in part, to the brilliant, creative, and fierce women that most helped me build this project:

Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario
Sahar Ghaheri
Jamie Maleszka
Alyson Fraser-Diaz
Luisa Velez Henao
Kathy Cherry

Thank you for your wisdom, care, and mentorship. You have not only shaped this project, but changed me. Forever.

I also dedicate this work to the intelligent, talented, loving and brave humans that make up the Creative Writing class at the Fortune Society. This is, in a big measure, *our work!*

It has been an honor and a privilege to learn from and with you all. It is a joy to be part of this community. Thank you!

Land acknowledgement

“The land of the five boroughs that make up New York City are the traditional homelands of the Lenape, Merrick, Canarsie, Rockaway, and Matinecock Nations. These lands are also the inter-tribal trade lands, and are under the stewardship, or many more Indigenous nations.

New York City is home to the largest populations of inter-tribal Native America. First Nations, and Indigenous individuals out of any urban city across Turtle Island (the United States)

Some of them born here with family roots in New York City and the NYC areas surrounding Nations that go back for generations.

Others of us coming to NYC to find what we could find anywhere else. Each one contributing to the rich and diverse culture that is the NYC urban Indian community.

This is our story, and our experience. We are a living culture that thrives here.

We acknowledge the Peoples of these Nations- their cultures, their communities, their elders. Both past and present, as well as future generations.

We acknowledge the over 115,000 inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, and Indigenous peoples who call New York City home right now. One of the largest in the country. We acknowledge and offer deep gratitude to Manhatta - the land and waters on which we stand upon.”

- American Indian Community House

01 CON- TEXT

- Glossary
- Mass Incarceration
- Reentry
- Frameworks

Glossary

Carceral State "often calls to mind institutions of confinement like jails, detention centers, prisons, but... it also comprises a wide range of policies, practices, and institutions that scrutinize individuals and communities both before and after their contact with the criminal justice system."²

Correctional Facilities refers to federal, state and local prisons and jails, immigration detention centers, juvenile detention centers, among others.

Correctional System refers to government agencies, and involving the punishment, treatment, and supervision of persons who have been convicted of crimes. These functions commonly include imprisonment, parole, and probation."³

Criminal Record "is the summary of an individual's contacts with law enforcement agencies. It provides details of all arrests, convictions, sentences, parole violations as well as dismissals and not guilty verdicts committed by an individual."⁴

Criminal Legal/Justice System is a network of government agencies and institutions. The main institutions that compose it are law enforcement, prosecution and defense lawyers, the courts, and corrections (prisons).

Mass Incarceration refers to "the current American experiment in incarceration, which is defined by comparatively and historically extreme rates of imprisonment".⁵ It disproportionately impacts (mostly male) Black, Indigenous and people of color living in conditions of poverty.

Parole or Parole Supervision is "the conditional release of a person convicted of a crime prior to the expiration of that person's term of imprisonment, subject to both the supervision

2: Krinitsky, Nora. "What Is the Carceral State?" (2020) Retrieved from: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7ab5f5c3fbca46c38f0b2496bcaa5ab0>

3: "Corrections". Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrections>

4: "What is a Criminal Record". Retrieved from: <https://www.backgroundchecks.com/learning-center/crimes-and-criminal-records>

5: Wildeman, C. "Mass Incarceration" (2012). Retrived from: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396607/obo-9780195396607-0033.xml>

of the correctional authorities during the remainder of the term and a resumption of the imprisonment upon violation of the conditions imposed."⁶

Probation is a "sentence whereby a [person] is released from confinement but is still under court supervision; a testing or a trial period. Probation can be given in lieu of a prison term or can suspend a prison sentence if the convict has consistently demonstrated good behavior."⁷

Reentry is the process of transitioning from prisons or jails back into the community. It is also a vast and complex system of institutions dedicated to facilitate the reentry process.

Reentry Programs and Organizations are designed to support individuals in a successful transition into the community after their release from incarceration.

Prison Industrial Complex " (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems."⁸

Language Matters

STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE

Offender, Inmate, Felon,
Criminal, Convict, Prisoner,
Delinquent, Ex-offender,
Ex-con, Ex-Offender,
Ex-Prisoner, Parolee,
Probationer, Detainee

HUMANIZING LANGUAGE

People, person or individuals

- with justice system involvement
- impacted by the justice system
- previously incarcerated
- with incarceration histories
- on probation
- on parole supervision

6: "Parole". Retrieved from: [https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Parole+\(law\)](https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Parole+(law))

7: "Probation". Retrieved from: <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Probation>

8: Critical Resistance. "What Is The Pic? What Is Abolition?" Retrieved from: <http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/>

9: Based on the flyer " WORDS MATTER " by The Fortune Society.

Mass Incarceration

The larger context within which this project is situated is the Mass Incarceration phenomenon, which is one of the many elements that make up what is now referred to as the Carceral State. The base of Mass Incarceration is the Correctional System, an extensive network of government organs and institutions. Its three main components are Correctional Facilities, Parole, and Probation. In general terms, this is a system characterized by the criminalization, punishment, and management of more than seven million people nationwide, most of whom are Black, Indigenous, and people of color who live in conditions of poverty in places of concentrated disadvantage. It keeps 2.3 million people in jails and prisons all across the US, making it the most incarcerated nation in the world. Mass Incarceration, also, "Costs \$182 Billion Every Year, Without Adding Much to Public Safety"¹¹

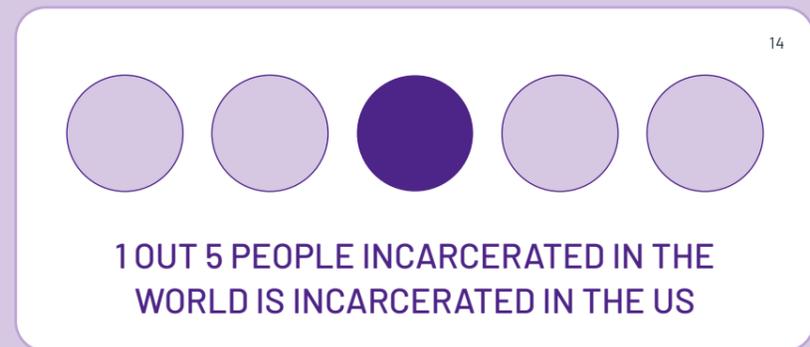
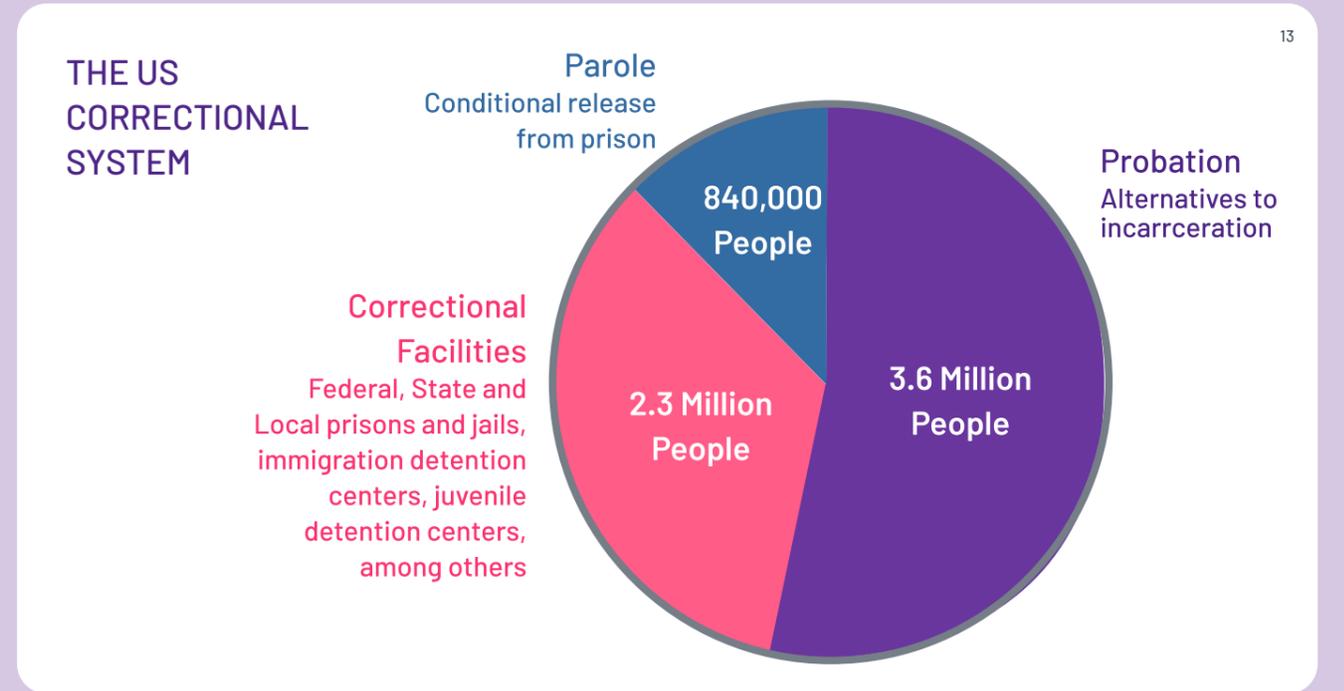
This is a social issue that breaks the general social tissue and devastates communities. In 2017, it was calculated that 113 million people had an immediate family member who had ever been to prison or jail.

Those who have been directly impacted by the Criminal Justice System are left with a criminal record, which among many things, hinders their ability to access opportunities for education, employment, housing, healthcare, some state and federal aids, and inhibits them from voting. In 2017 there were 77 million people with criminal records.

Additionally, the ACLU states that people who are released also "face nearly 50,000 federal, state, and local legal restrictions that make it difficult to reintegrate back into society."¹²

The amount and variety of challenges that many formerly incarcerated people face upon their release is infinite. Unable to secure housing, many end up homeless. Unsuccessful at finding a job and having an income, many turn to illegal activities. Having little or no community support, plus limited access to care for their physical and mental health, many recur to substance use to cope, and sadly for many this leads to death by overdose. Additionally, thousands are re-incarcerated due to minor violations like failing to meet their parole officer just because they can't afford the transportation fare or get lost in the subway system.

11: Equal Justice Initiative. "Mass Incarceration Costs \$182 Billion Every Year, Without Adding Much to Public Safety" (2017). Retrieved from: <https://eji.org/news/mass-incarceration-costs-182-billion-annually/>
 12: ACLU. Retrieved from: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration>



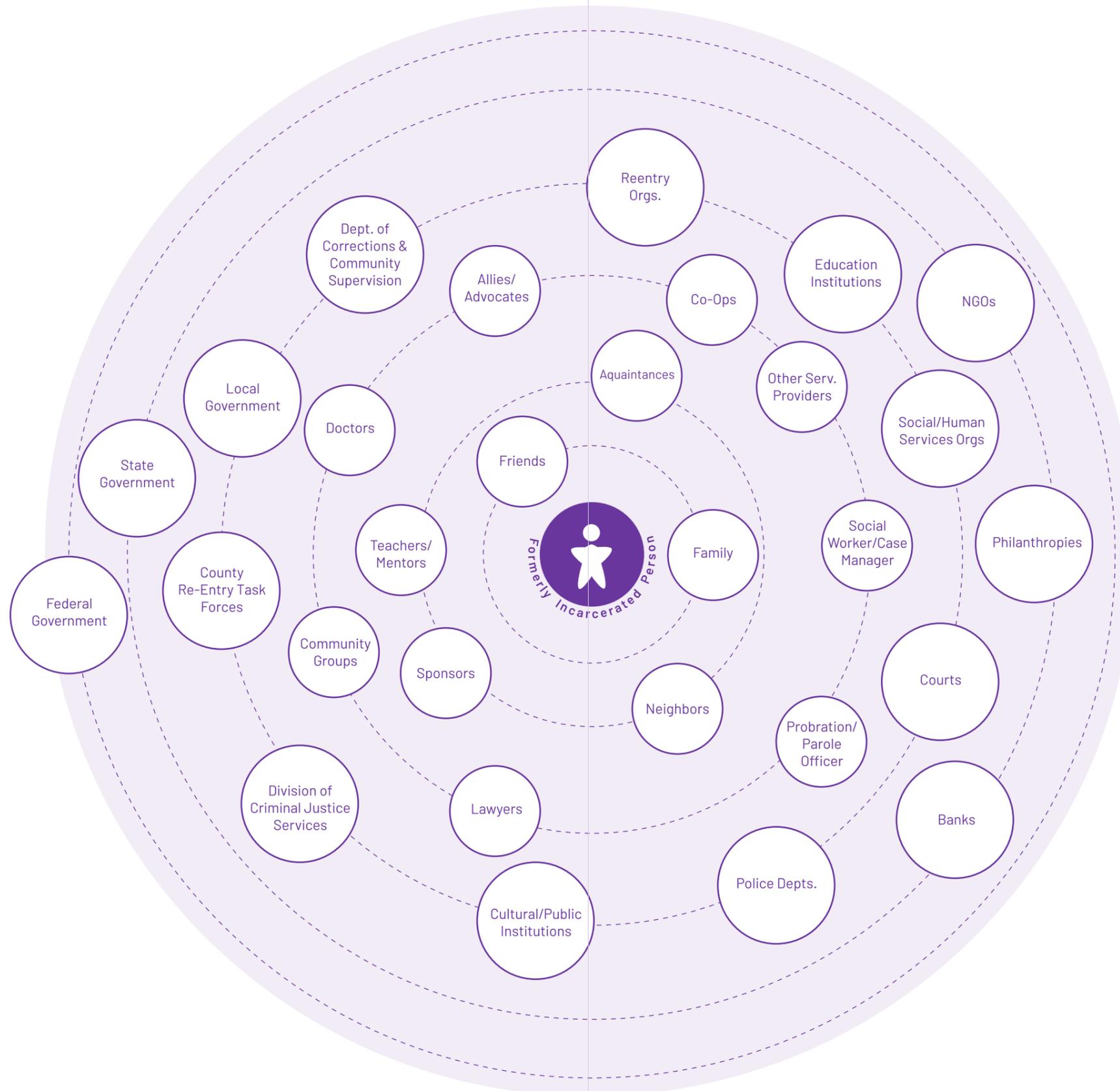
13, 14, 15, 16: Sawyer, W., and Wagner, P. "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020" (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.prisonspolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>

Reentry

Reentry is the process of transitioning from prisons or jails back into the community, and it is also a vast and complex system of institutions dedicated to facilitate the reentry process.

You can get a glimpse of the immensity of the reentry system, the multitude of actors involved in it with the graph at the right.

Factors like the kind of crime someone is accused of or convicted for (federal, state, local), where the arrest and the incarceration takes place, the duration of the incarceration, the person's community configuration among many factors make each person's interaction with and journey through the system unique. There will hardly ever exist two people with the same path and experience.



REENTRY ECOSYSTEM MAP

In regards to the process of reentry, The ACLU states that "Each year, 650,000 men and women nationwide return from prison to their communities."¹⁷

The general assumption is that returning to the community is a dream come true. However, the reality for many individuals coming out of incarceration is that the reentry process is very challenging, even traumatic.

"Coming out of those institutions is as traumatic as going in"
Wesley Caines,
The Bronx Defenders

17: ACLU. Retrieved from: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration>

Reentry programs & organizations

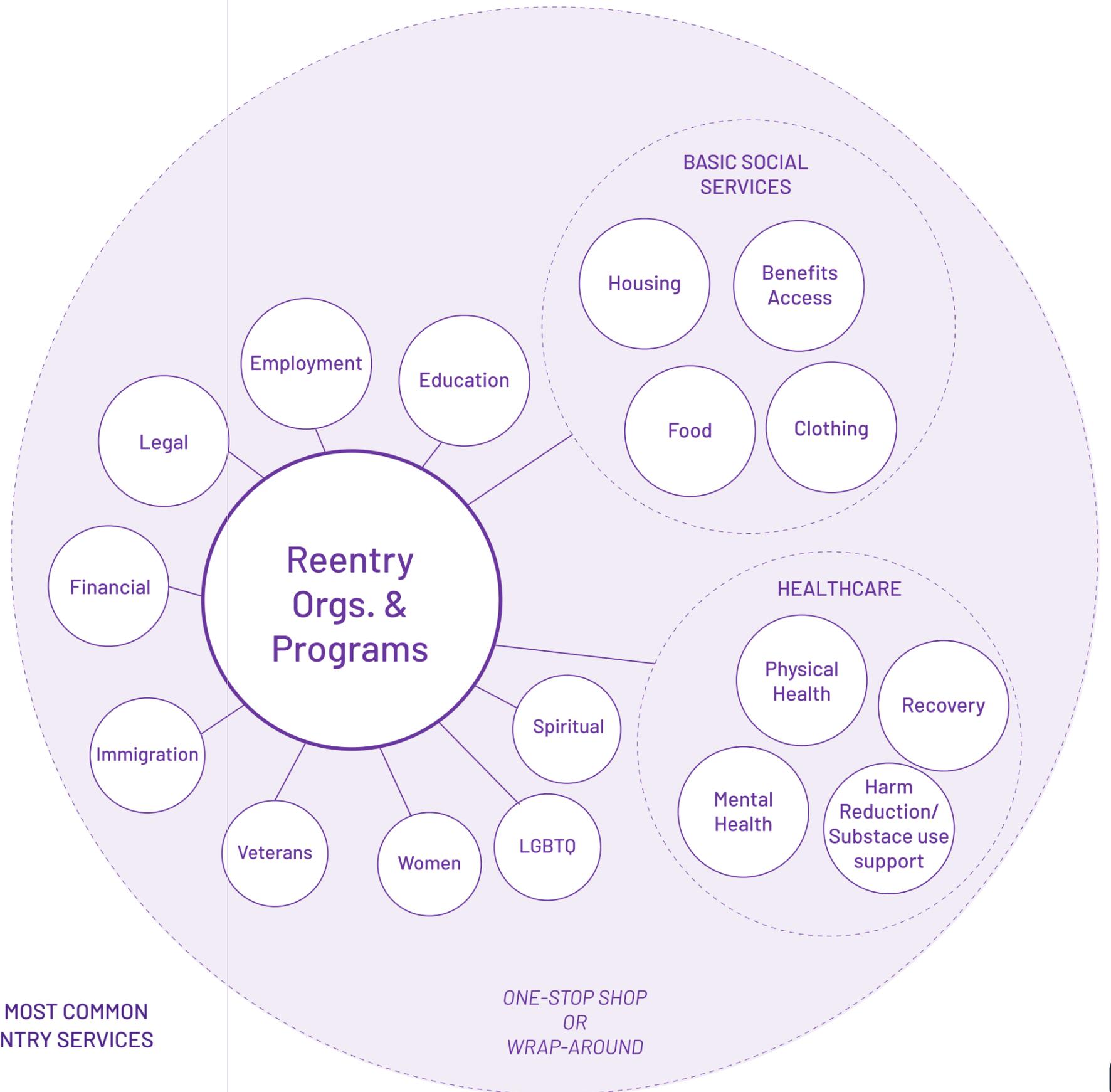
In theory, the reentry process starts the day an individual steps into a jail or prison. The protocol states that since the intake at the correctional center, a plan must be made with the incoming person detailing how will the person spend their time while incarcerated, which activities will they perform and which programs will they engage in to achieve the person's personal growth goals. This with the intention of setting individuals up for success once they go back into the community.

The protocol also states that a few months prior to release, staff at the correctional centers should work with the individuals due to leave to prepare them their return.

The reality, however, is that this reentry support is not the norm, and many people return to the community unprepared to face the challenges that come with that transition. The challenges come from the legal and practical aspects they should comply with, to the psychological shock of such a drastic change in life dynamics.

The good news is that there are reentry programs and entire organizations dedicated to supporting people who are coming back to the community! These are organizations that provide life-saving services like access to food, clothing, health services, and case management. Many also offer things like job training, education and other hard-skills development programs.

THE MOST COMMON REENTRY SERVICES



Frameworks

My design practice and the work I developed in building this project is based, informed, guided, and inspired on the knowledge of many people. As Aristotle says, "I'm standing on the shoulders of giants". Because, as Arturo Escobar, one of my main influences says in his book *Designs for the Pluriverse*, "all creation is collective, emergent, and relational."¹⁸

Below are some of the theoretical frameworks, ideas and practices that directly informed my process, the base on which this project stands on.

Abolition

"PIC abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment.

From where we are now, sometimes we can't really imagine what abolition is going to look like. Abolition isn't just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It's also about undoing the society we live in because the PIC both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives.

Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal."¹⁹

"My understanding of prison industrial complex abolition is that it's a vision of a restructured society where we have everything that we need to live dignified lives. What this pandemic shows is the limits of "personal responsibility" and the importance of a systemic response that enables people to take the actions that are needed to have community safety and wellness."²⁰
- Mariame Kaba

18: Escobar, Arturo. "Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds." Duke University Press, (2017).
19: Critical Resistance. "What Is The Pic? What Is Abolition?" Retrieved from: <http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/>
20: Rodrigues, E, "Abolition Is a Collective Vision: An Interview With Mariame Kaba" (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/culture/mariame-kaba-interview-til-we-free-us/>

Capability Approach

"The capability approach (also referred to as the capabilities approach) is a normative approach to human welfare that concentrates on the actual capability of persons to achieve their well-being rather than on their mere right or freedom to do so. It was conceived in the 1980s as an alternative approach to welfare economics. In this approach, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum bring together a range of ideas that were previously excluded from (or inadequately formulated in) traditional approaches to the economics of welfare. The core focus of the capability approach is on what individuals are able to do (i.e., capable of)."²¹

"Capabilities are about being and doing: being healthy; having self-respect; having and doing a good job. And they are contextual. It is not enough to be offered basic subsistence in a society of plenty: you cannot thrive.[...]

And capabilities are about continual development. That first job, or recovery from addiction for example, are celebrated as staging posts on a journey, not the destination."²²

Design Justice Network Principles²³

"Design justice rethinks design processes, centers people who are normally marginalized by design, and uses collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face.

Principle 1: We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.

Principle 2: We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.

Principle 3: We prioritize design's impact on the community over the intentions of the designer.

Principle 4: We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, rather than as a point at the end of a process.

Principle 5: We see the role of the designer as a facilitator rather than an expert.

Principle 6: We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, and

21: "Capability approach" retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capability_approach

22: Cottam, Hilary. "Radical Help: How we can remake the relationships between us and revolutionise the welfare state" Virago (2018) p. 203

23: Design Justice Network, "Design Justice Network Principles" (2018). Retrieved from: <https://designjustice.org/read-the-principles>

that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.

Principle 7: We share design knowledge and tools with our communities.

Principle 8: We work towards sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.

Principle 9: We work towards non-exploitative solutions that reconnect us to the earth and to each other.

Principle 10: Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices."

Equity-Centered Community Design

"created by Creative Reaction Lab, is a unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community. This design process focuses on a community's culture and needs so that they can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all. Creative Reaction Lab's goal is to share equity-centered community design to achieve sustained community health, economic opportunities, and social and cultural solidarity."²⁴

Healing-Centered approach

"A healing centered approach is holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing. A healing-centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively. The term healing-centered engagement expands how we think about responses to trauma and offers a more holistic approach to fostering well-being."²⁵

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

"Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a charted set of human requirements that are important for an individual to achieve complete development and self-actualization. The hierarchy of needs is a theory of psychologist Abraham Maslow.

24: Creative Reaction Lab, "Equity-Centered Community Design (ECCD)". Retrieved from: <https://www.creativereactionlab.com/our-approach>
25: Ginwright, Shawn "The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement" (2018) retrieved from: <https://ginwright.medium.com/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>

The hierarchy is diagramed as a pyramid starting at the bottom with basic needs that must be satisfied for an individual to be able to progress to addressing more secondary needs. It's understood that a person who has to struggle to survive doesn't think as much about or attain self-actualization as a person whose survival is relatively assured."²⁶

Restorative Justice

"Is profoundly relational and emphasizes bringing together everyone affected by wrongdoing to address needs and responsibilities and to heal the harm to relationships and community, to the degree possible. While often mistakenly considered only a reactive response to harm, restorative justice is also a proactive relational strategy to create a culture of connectivity where all members of a community thrive and feel valued."²⁷

Transformational Leadership

"transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them."²⁸

Transformative Justice

"is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of "making things right," getting in "right relation," or creating justice together. Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved."²⁹

26: "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" Retrieved from: <https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Maslows-hierarchy-of-needs>

27: Davis, Fania E. "The little book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation." Good Books (2019)

28: Northouse, Peter G. "Leadership: Theory and Practice". SAGE (2019)

29: Mingus, Mia. "Transformative Justice: A brief description". retrieved from <https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice-a-brief-description/>

Transition Design

“is a proposition for a new area of design practice, study, and research that advocates design-led societal transition toward more sustainable futures. This reconception of entire lifestyles will involve reimagining infrastructures including energy resources, the economy and food, healthcare, and education. Transition Design focuses on the need for “cosmopolitan localism,” a lifestyle that is place-based and regional, yet global in its awareness and exchange of information and technology. Transition Designers would apply a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and natural systems and the Transition Design framework proposes four key areas in which narratives, knowledge, skills, and action can be developed.”³⁰

Trauma Informed Practices And Design

“A trauma-informed program, organization or system “realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization,” according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).”³¹

“The CDC’s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA’s National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), developed and led a new training for OPHPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work. Participants learned SAMHSA’s six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:

Safety; Trustworthiness & transparency; Peer support; Collaboration & mutuality;
Empowerment & choice; Cultural, historical & gender issues”³²

30: Irwin, Terry. “Transition Design: A Proposal for a New Area of Design Practice, Study, and Research, Design and Culture” (2015) Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17547075.2015.1051829>

31: Gill, Neha. “The Importance Of Trauma-Informed Design” (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesnonprofitcouncil/2019/12/09/the-importance-of-trauma-informed-design/?sh=47d549df6785>

32: Center for Preparedness and Response, “Infographic: 6 Guiding Principles To A Trauma-Informed Approach” Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

Other people whose work have inspired and guided my life, practices and this project include: adrienne maree brown (books: Emergent Strategy and Pleasure Activism), Angela Davis (books: Are prisons obsolete, and Freedom is a Constant Struggle), bell hooks (books: Theory as liberatory practice, and All about Love), Paulo Freire (book: Pedagogy of the Oppressed), Donella Meadows (book: Thinking in Systems), Lesley Ann Noel, Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Gilbert, Karen Proctor, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Brené Brown. Also many spiritual practices and teachings by, among many, Lama Rod Owens, Tara Brach, Rev. angel Kyodo williams, Sharon Salzberg, Pema Chodron, and Renee Sills.

Other frameworks that guide my practices include: Intersectional Feminism, Intersectionality, Queer Theory, The Social Change Model of Leadership Development, Mutual Aid, Anti-Capitalism.

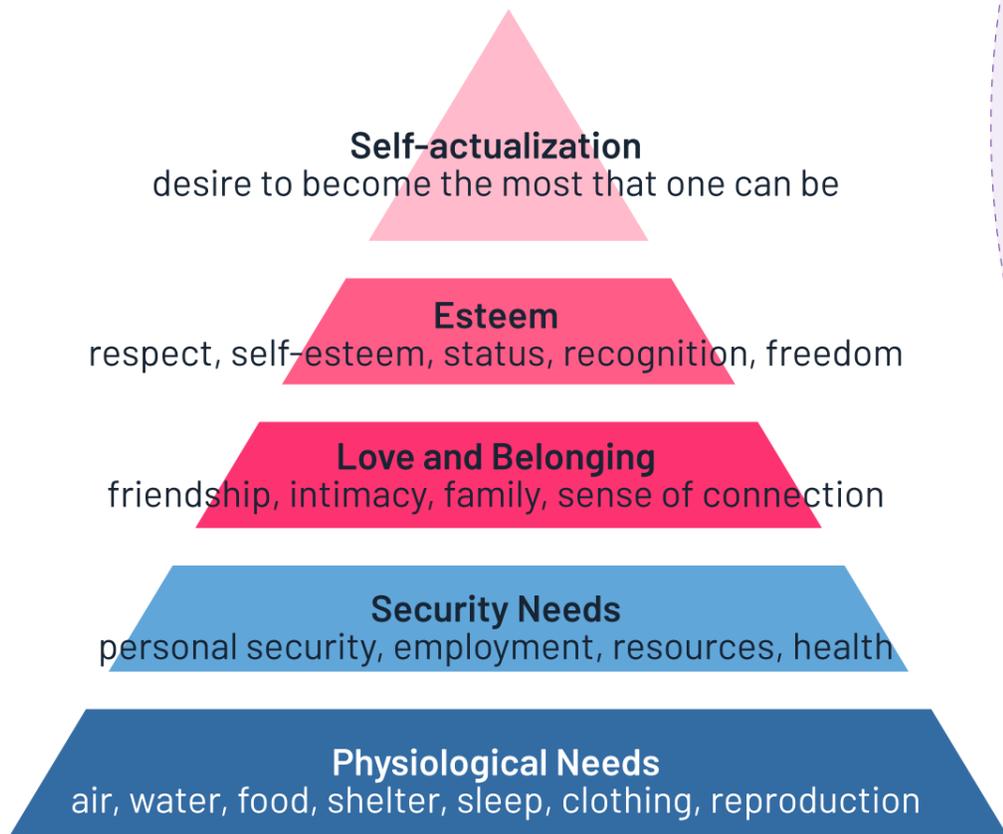
02 PRO- BLEM FRA- MING

- Reentry Help v.s. Human Needs
- The Gap in the System
- Self-expression + Community
- The Specific Problem

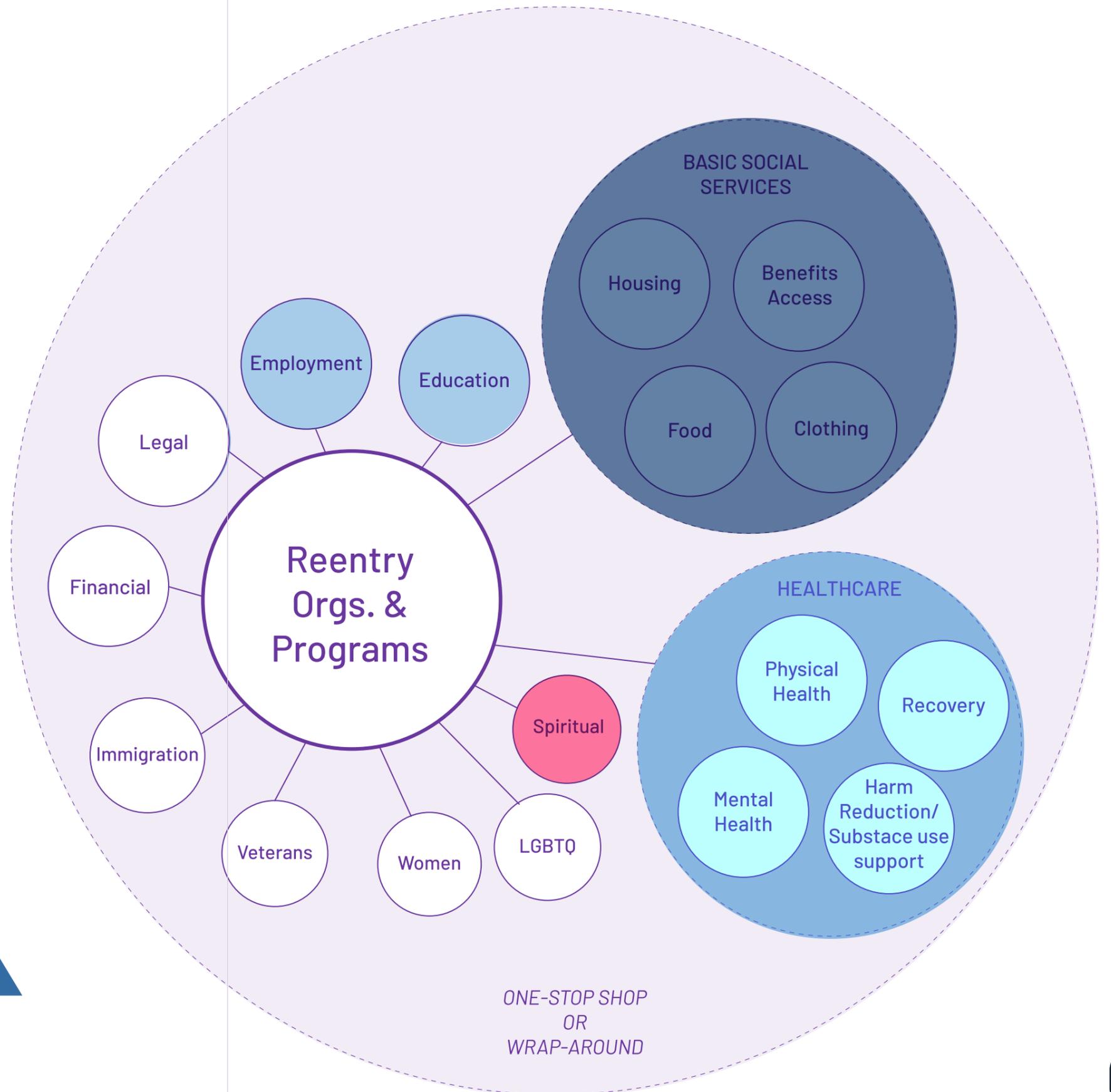
Reentry help v.s. the human needs

Looking at the breadth of reentry services provided I wondered how are these directly addressing or providing the conditions to satisfy humans needs. To do this, I juxtaposed the services it with the Hierarchy of Needs of Maslow.

I quickly realized that the majority of the reentry programs and services attend to the bottom two tiers of the pyramid, the Physiological and Safety needs. This makes sense as these tiers are the most basic and immediate things required for survival.



MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Basic needs covered, but...

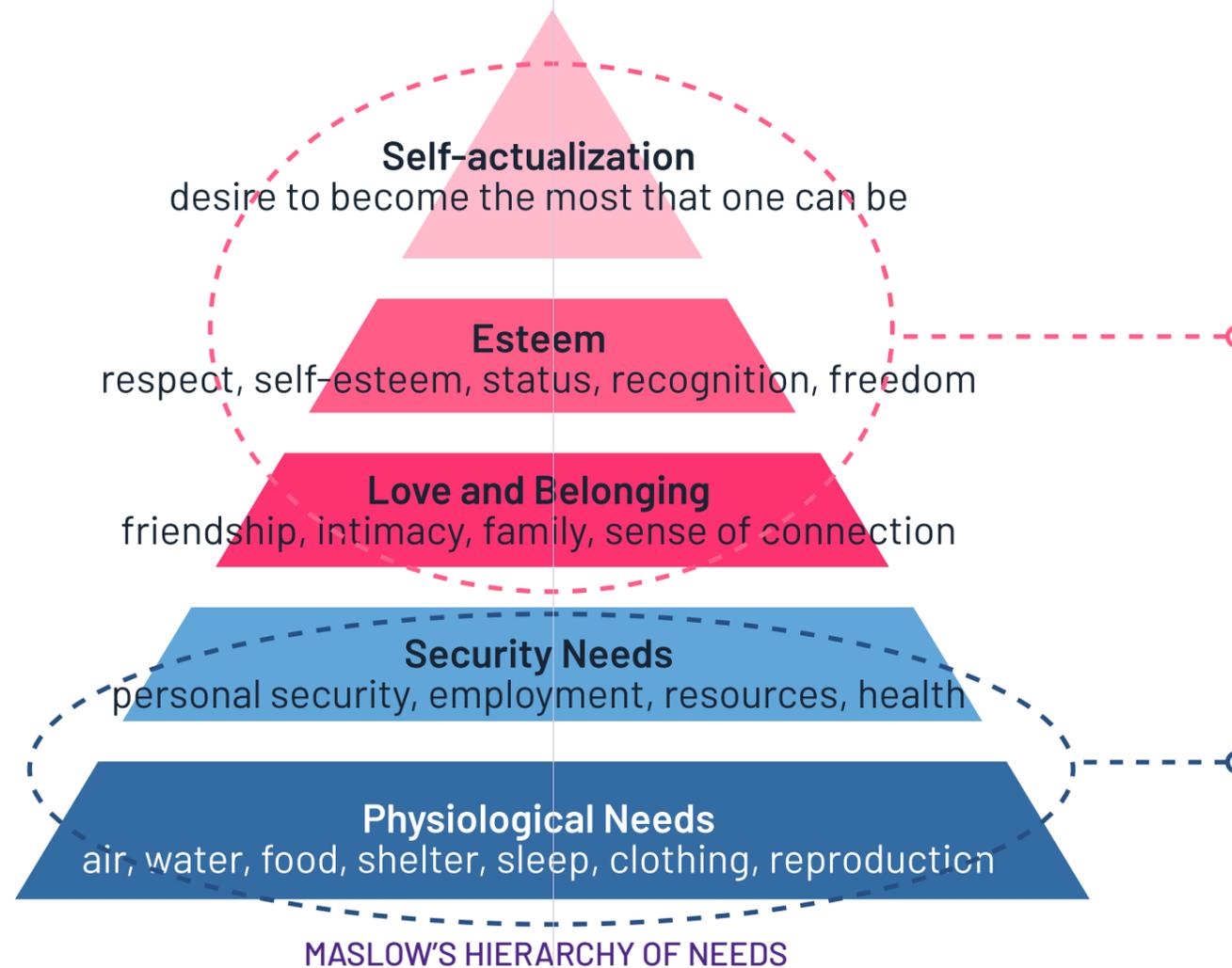
Combining my desk research and primary research, and comparing it to my previous insight, I found that the most common reentry services are, literally, life-lines for thousands of people returning to the community. Especially those who may have little or no support of friends or family to help them navigate this process. The kind of help that these services offer is indeed fundamental in keeping them alive.

However, the top three tiers of the pyramid, the social needs, are as important as the ones at the base. "Just as we may risk death by starvation if we stop eating, those whose social needs are not met may find themselves at risk of a form of extreme emotional pain³³ that may lead to harmful behaviors against themselves and others.

"Human beings have social needs that are just as important as our biological need for food."³⁴
 Steve Rose, Ph.D

Social needs refer to our need as human beings to have relationships with others. These are the needs required for a sense of wellbeing once the basic needs have been fulfilled. Social needs are directly associated with the psychological and emotional need for connection and for building interpersonal relationships.

The Social-emotional needs are what allow for a sense of meaning and fulfillment in life. They are the ones that enable healing and post-traumatic growth, what help us to build meaningful lives beyond survival for the long-term.

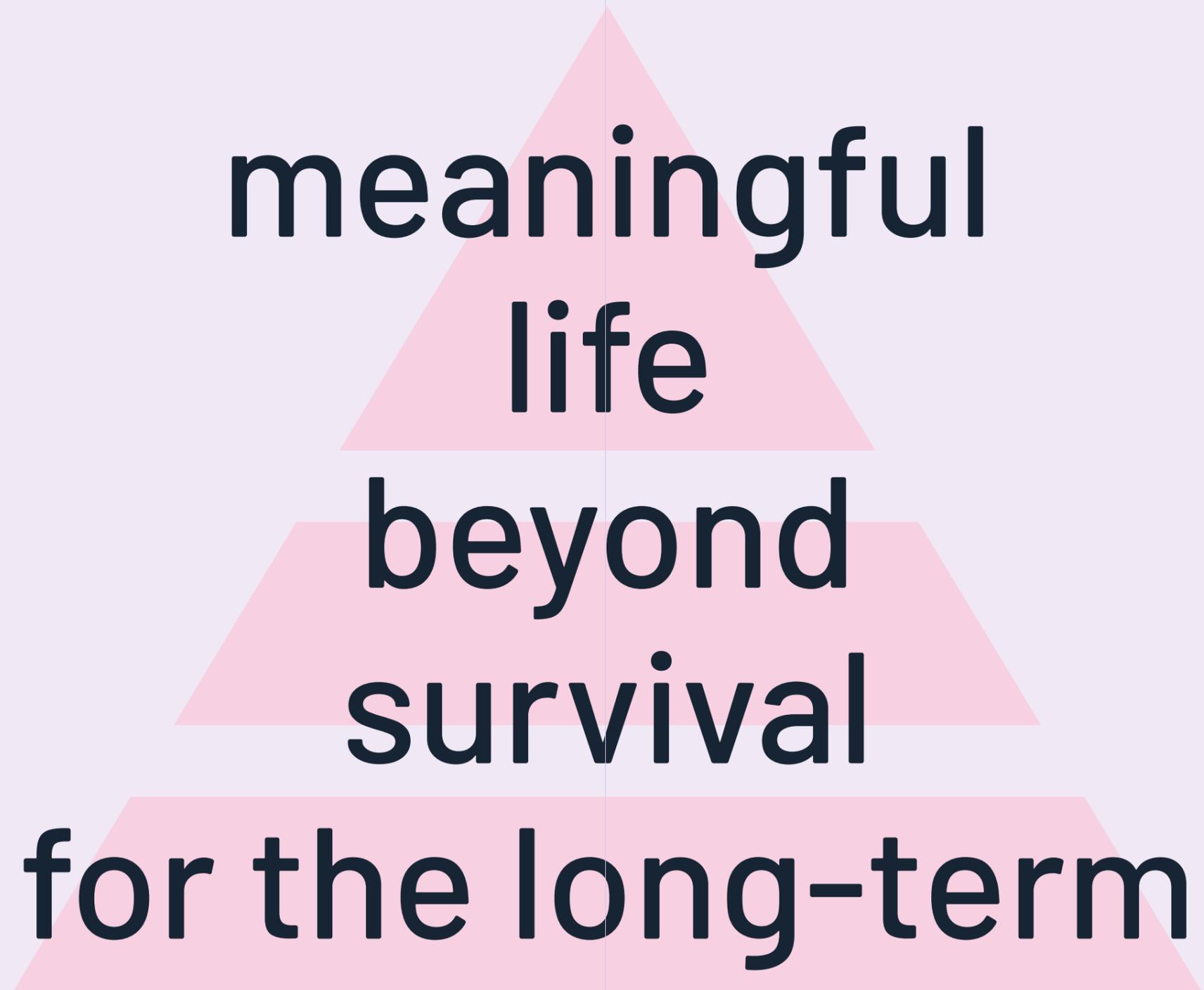


Social-emotional needs allow for a sense of wellbeing, healing, and post-traumatic growth

Fulfilling the basic needs enable survival, keep people alive

33, 34: Rose, S. "What Are Our Social Needs?". Retrieved from: <https://steverosephd.com/a-theory-of-social-needs/>

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS:
HEALING AND POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH



**meaningful
life
beyond
survival
for the long-term**

Basic Needs

The reentry system and the help it most often provides allow people to survive, but it falls short in providing opportunities to tend to the social-emotional needs of the individuals who are returning to the community.

The gap in the reentry system

Social-emotional Needs

Having no way to effectively tend to their social-emotional needs, most of these people can live with a sense of overwhelm, loneliness, anxiety, frustration, shame, isolation, and even a sense of lack of purpose.

Self-expression + community in the reentry system

My research also showed that self-expression through creativity and community-building are rarely included in the breadth of reentry services. I noticed that they are often seen as disposable and nice-to-haves.

However, what I have learned through the research and also through my lived experience is that given the tools for self expression in community, people can tend to those top tiers of healing and post-traumatic growth.

SEEN AS

- nice-to-haves
- supplemental
- disposable
- deprioritized & underutilized

IN THE REENTRY SYSTEM

TOOLS TO

- Reclaim identity (individual & social)
- Promote agency, confidence, leadership
- Process feelings, reflect, relax, heal
- More effective when done with others

IN PEOPLE'S LIVES

“Art is the space where folks can envision different lives for themselves, to dream of a different world. It can also be the space just to chill and take a break.”

Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario,
Executive Director, ARTE

The Specific Problem

SELF-EXPRESSION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH CREATIVITY ARE DEPRIORITIZED IN THE REENTRY SYSTEM, THUS INHIBITING PEOPLE WITH JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT FROM DEVELOPING PRACTICES THAT CAN SUPPORT THEM IN BUILDING STABLE LIVES FOR THE LONG TERM AND THRIVE.

03

WOR-
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- The Fortune Society and the Creative Writing Class
- Building Relationships
- Research
- Key Learnings

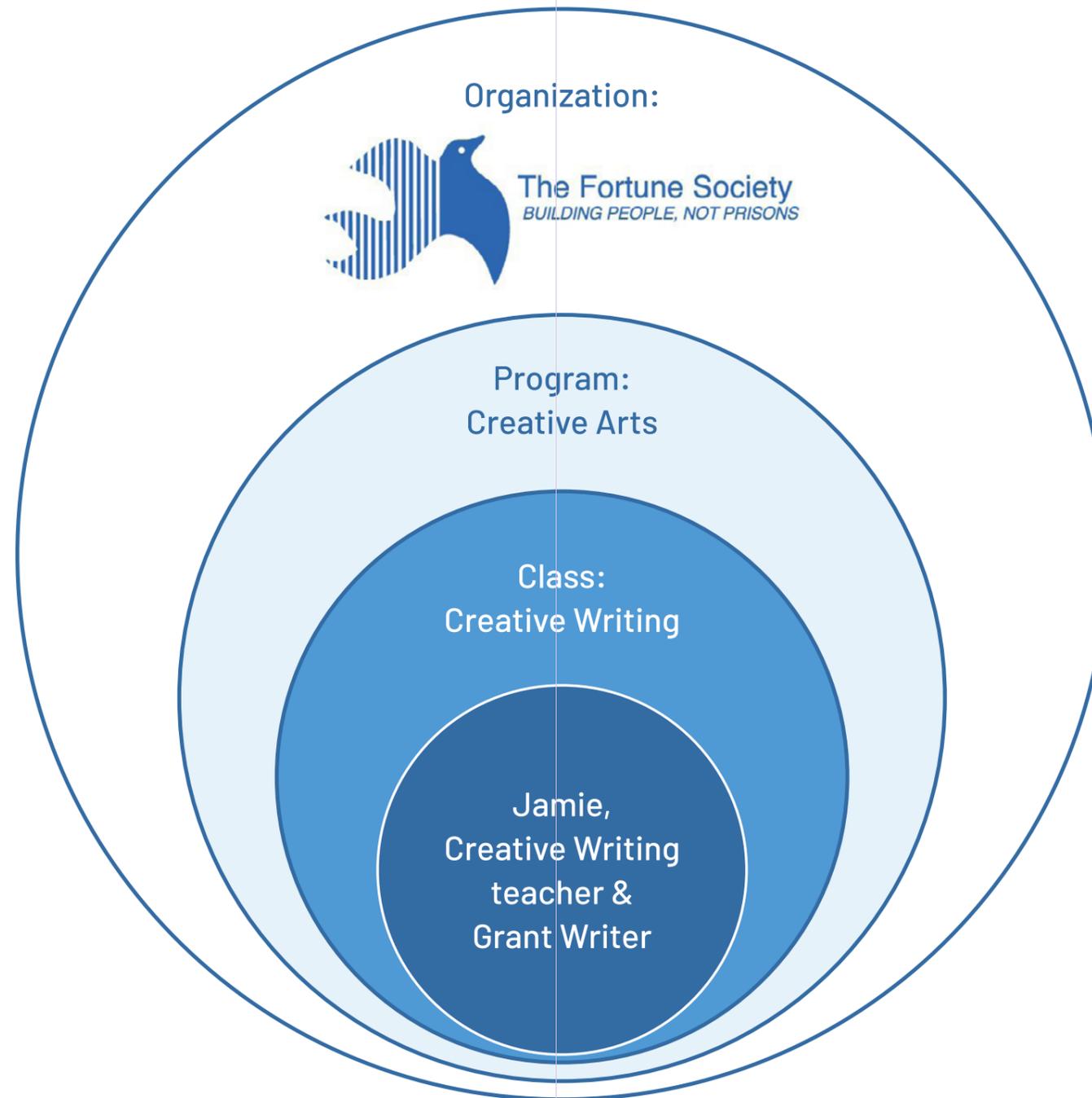
The Fortune Society and the creative writing class

Working with an unicorn!

I got the privilege and honor to work and develop this project alongside one of the unicorns in the field - the Fortune Society.

Fortune is "one of the nation's leading reentry service organizations, serving nearly 9,000 individuals annually". "The Fortune Society's mission is to support successful reentry from incarceration and promote alternatives to incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of our communities."³⁵ They are located in NYC and are one of those one-stop shop organizations providing 14 programs to currently and formerly incarcerated people.

The services they provide: Housing; Employment Services; Education; Family Services; Alternatives to Incarceration; Mental Health Treatment; Substance Use Treatment; Health Services; Benefits Access; Food and Nutrition; Creative Arts; Prepare for Release; Care Management; Recovery.



I have been working specifically with The Creative Arts (CAP) at Fortune, which is "more than a program—we are a community. We believe in the healing and transformative powers of imagination, creativity, and radical hope.

CAP workshops are offered five days a week in Music, Creative Writing, Acting, Drawing and more. All levels of experience are embraced. We share opportunities to perform, publish and amplify year-round, and invite community members to events."³⁶

My entry point into the organization was Jamie, the creative writing teacher. She kindly invited me into her class.

I was welcomed into the virtual space of the creative writing class which meets twice a week for almost 2 hours. I have been attending the classes since mid-December, 2020, and plan to keep doing so in the future.

35: The Fortune Society. Retrieved from: <https://fortunesociety.org/about>

36: The Fortune Society. Retrieved from: <https://fortunesociety.org/services-that-build-lives/#Creative-Arts>

The people at the creative writing class

I came into the space to learn about the community, who are they? What's their dynamic? What I found when I entered the space was a group of around 15 participants from very diverse backgrounds and demographics, most of them impacted by the criminal legal system, and all of them now growing their writing skills.

Very diverse group, ~15 writers/participants.

- men and women, from young adults to seniors
- black, white, and brown
- have been impacted by the criminal legal system
- receive(d) services at Fortune, and are now in this program developing artistic practices

11 unforgettable truths 2020 taught me:

grow without rushing
 accept help from others
 embrace the ups and downs
 letting go is a long term project
 take your time with big decisions
 throw away the idea of perfection
 gratitude supports a balanced mind
 double down on what you are good at
 stay connected to those who lift you up
 embracing flexibility helps you reach goals
 say no often, this is how you stay focused
 yung pueblo

Following the frameworks and working models put forward by The Creative Reaction Lab and their "Equity-Centred Community Design"²², and the "Design Justice Principles"²³ by the Design Justice Network, I entered the space as a person first, an observant student, not a "know-it-all" designer. I sat in class, in sponge mode: observing, actively listening, noticing, learning from everyone, at an individual and at a group level.

Who are they?

What do they want/need?

What is working?

How can we build upon that?

How can my skills, position, privilege,
and experience support them?

How can I be of service?

One thing that I've made conscious about myself in this DSI journey, is that I am good, enjoy and I'm genuinely myself when I connect with people at an emotional/spiritual way, beyond the transactional and practical.

With time and I got more comfortable and familiar with each one of them, and they with me, and slowly but surely they got into my heart and they welcomed me into their community.

The dynamics and relationships in the class

After a few weeks of showing up to class with the intention of being present and open to participate and to be genuinely involved (and moved!), I got a better understanding of the dynamics of the group.

Jamie shares prompts and sprinkles in writing knowledge and advice. As the extraordinary relational worker and transformative leader she is, she gently pushes artists/participants to explore their craft and themselves beyond what they think is possible.

Encouraged and trusting, the artists do the explorations and come back to class to share their new writing with the group. Most of the writing takes form of poems. They are often reflections of the author's experiences, current musings, and journeys back to joyous or painful moments in their pasts.

In a regular creative writing workshop fashion, what follows the reading of the writing is feedback and critique. What is not regular is the kind of reflections, love and support that is shared in response to the writing.

Praise, words of encouragement, advice, offering of support, expressions of love and admiration is the usual response to the deeply personal, funny, angry, political, and incredible vulnerable writing that is shared.

Often times, deeply touched by a poem, the group spends a long time sharing life experiences and perspectives, pains, fears, aspirations, and hopes. The class becomes a space to *hold and see* each other, to witness each other.

Personally, it has been incredibly humbling, inspiring, healing, and life changing to being part of this community. I'm deeply grateful for this experience and for these relationships!



What I heard

"Fortune is my home, my family."

"Writing was my hobby, now is my ritual. **This is my sacred space.**"

"My mind blows around you all."

"The [zoom] call, I'm doing what I love."

"When I'm in class, COVID doesn't exist."

"[the program] allows me to **explore and create what I want** instead of telling me what to do."

"You guys are the **inspiration** and I'm just the vessel."

"The [zoom] call, I'm doing what I love."

"Now I look forward to Mondays. **This class gives me something to do.**"

"There is a lot of love here."

"This is where you come and you **share your voice.**"

"I thought I was just writing but then other **opportunities opened up.**"

"My mind blows around you all."

"You guys are the **inspiration** and I'm just the vessel."

"The [zoom] call is not just the call, I'm doing what I love."

"[the program] allows me to **explore and create at I want** instead of telling me what to do."

"Writing was my hobby, now is my ritual. **This is my red space.**"

MOTIVATION TO SHOW UP

"community. personal growth."

"[...] I practice attentive listening [...] it's Very therapeutic"

"the community"

"inspiration"

"The community and Jamie's infectious enthusiasm."

"I get inspired and in turn hope that I can offer some inspiration"

"It's a community of caring people"

"I feel safe and encouraged to explore new ways of expressing myself."

"I feel a sense of community and shared experiences"

"I love being part of this group"

"It's a helpful, kind, healing, and non-judgemental place."

"The community and the safe space created within allows me to go deeper into my writing"

Key learnings

"I feel safe and encouraged to explore new ways of expressing myself."

"I thought I was just writing but then other opportunities opened up."

"It's a helpful, kind, healing, and nonjudgemental place."

"The community and the safe space created within allows me to go deeper into myself and my writing"

"Writing was my hobby, now is my ritual. This is my sacred space."

**1. CLASS IS A HEALING AND BRAVE SPACE.
ART-MAKING IS LIFE AFFIRMING.**

"Suggest to those on Rikers Island that creative writing and self-nurturing might be a positive way to alleviate stress while also forming healthy connections to others."

"Show people we are more similar than we are different!"

"Change the perception from you are "just a fellow" to you're valuable"

"Connect with more people. Show them that art can save one life. That there's redemption in art."

*[I would like to]
"Change people's minds"*

**2. DESIRE TO REACH OUT: EXPAND COMMUNITY.
CREATE EMPATHY, REDUCE SOCIAL STIGMA.**

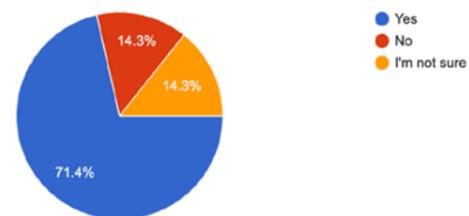
Key learnings

"being published is leaving a legacy behind"

"This is where you come and you share your voice."

"I get inspired and in turn hope that I can offer some inspiration"

Website or app to publish your work?



**3. SHARING WORK WITH OTHERS IS IMPORTANT.
MOST WANT TO BE PUBLISHED.**

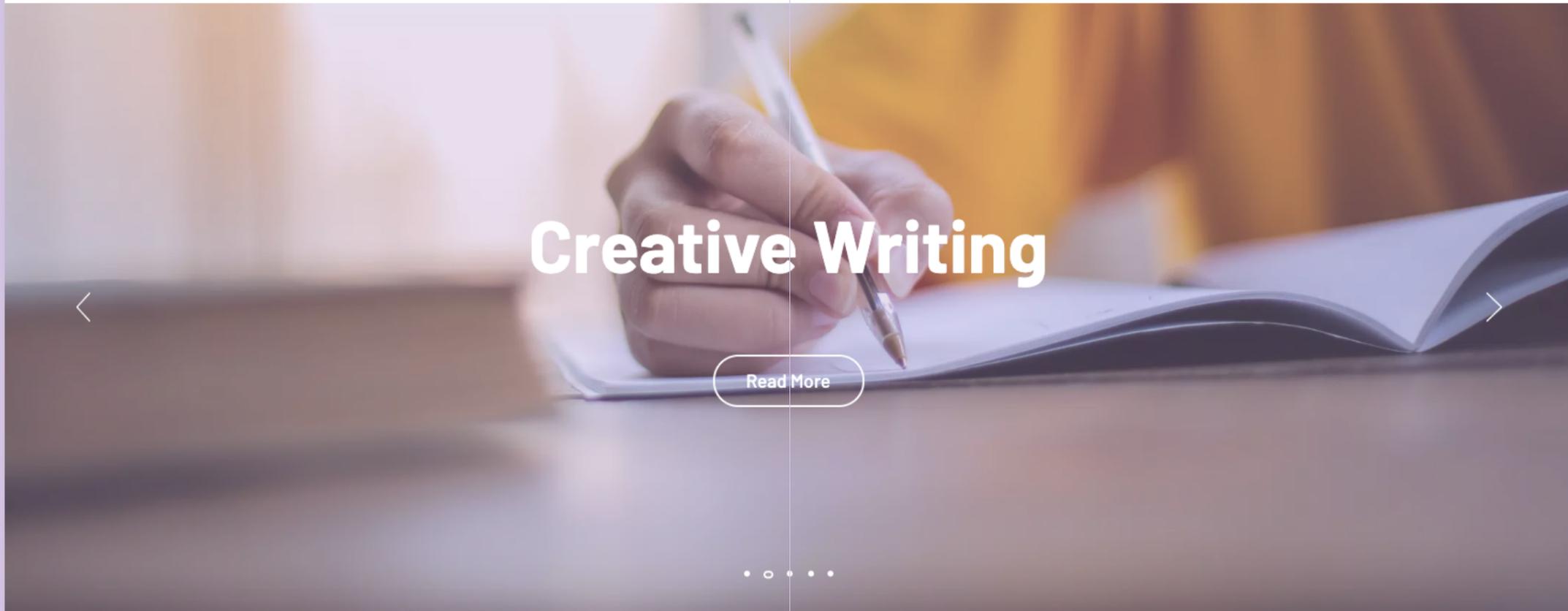
Based on these learnings and all the research I asked myself...

HOW CAN WE BUILD A STRUCTURE THAT PROVIDES INDIVIDUALS WITH JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT WITH ACCESS TO A COMMUNITY OF PEERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP ARTISTIC AND PERSONAL SKILLS THAT CAN HELP THEM IN BUILDING LONG-TERM STABLE AND MEANINGFUL LIVES?

04 ART POR- TAL

- What is Art Portal?
- How are we building it?

ART PORTAL IS AN ART-CENTERED PLATFORM CO-CREATED WITH AND FOR PEOPLE WITH JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT THAT SEEKS TO (A) ELEVATE THEIR VOICES AND ARTWORK (B) RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF ART AND COMMUNITY IN THE REENTRY AND CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEMS, AND (C) HELP REDUCE THE SOCIAL STIGMA AGAINST PEOPLE WITH JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT.



Creative Writing

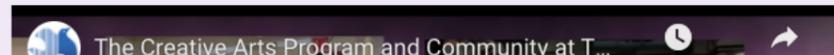
[Read More](#)

Welcome to Art Portal!

Art Portal is an art-centered platform co-created with and for people with justice system involvement that seeks to (a) elevate their voices and artwork (b) raise awareness about the important role of art and community in the reentry and criminal legal systems, and (c) help change the narrative about people with justice involvement.

We are a community of artists who participate in the Creative Arts Program at The Fortune Society, in NYC.

About the Creative Arts Program



Specific goals

CELEBRATE the artists and their art.
ELEVATE artists voices, and the critical role of art in the reentry and criminal justice systems.
INSPIRE other people with justice involvement.
WELCOME OTHERS into this artistic community.
INFORM the general public about the impacts of the Carceral State, and ways to **support** those impacted by it.
 Use art and this Portal to help **change** the narrative around people with justice system involvement.
 Last, we will co-create the Portal in a way that allows those involved to **DEVELOP CAPABILITIES**.

Co-created values that ground our work

LOVE
RESPECT
SUPPORT
CREATIVITY
RECIPROCITY
ACCOUNTABILITY

The Art Portal ecosystem



Art Portal

About Artists Resources Programs Events

Join Us

Resources

A curated compilation of reentry and arts resources.

- Reentry services, at Fortune & other local and national orgs.
- Artistic development resources.

Advocacy

Links to news, events, educational material relevant to reentry and the criminal legal system.

Publishing

- Publish pieces by artists in all mediums.
- Every artist will have their own profile page > "portfolio."

About Creative Arts Prog

What the CAP is, it's mission, what it offers, how to participate.



Art Portal

Tech Help

- How-to guides.
- Video tutorials.

Documentation

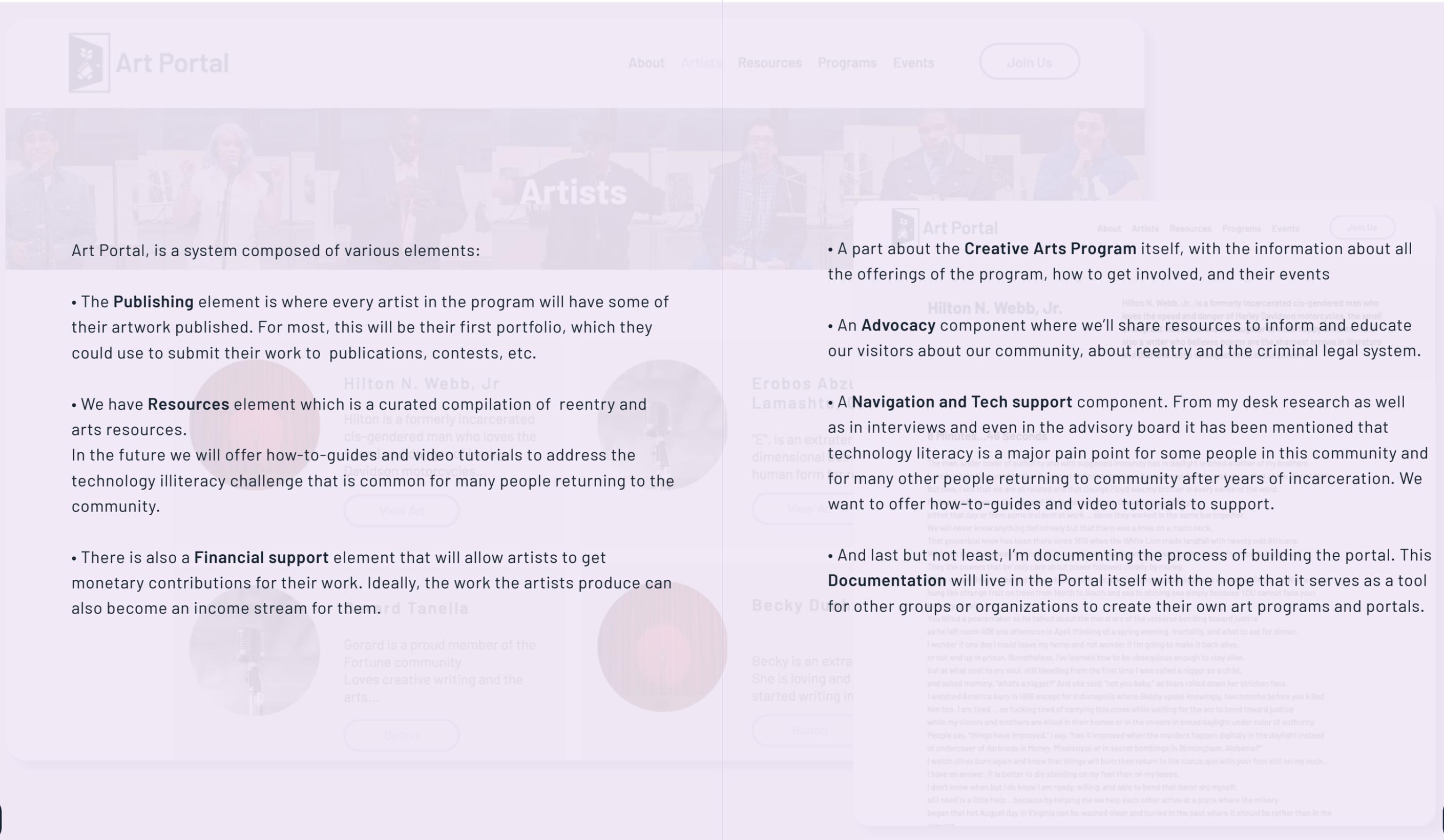
- How Art Portal was built.
- Tools, guides, etc.

Support

- Direct monetary support to artists (donations).
- Online store: zines, prints, other merch.

Welcome to the Art Portal
Creative Community

The Art Portal ecosystem



Art Portal, is a system composed of various elements:

- The **Publishing** element is where every artist in the program will have some of their artwork published. For most, this will be their first portfolio, which they could use to submit their work to publications, contests, etc.
- We have **Resources** element which is a curated compilation of reentry and arts resources. In the future we will offer how-to-guides and video tutorials to address the technology illiteracy challenge that is common for many people returning to the community.
- There is also a **Financial support** element that will allow artists to get monetary contributions for their work. Ideally, the work the artists produce can also become an income stream for them.

- A part about the **Creative Arts Program** itself, with the information about all the offerings of the program, how to get involved, and their events

- An **Advocacy** component where we'll share resources to inform and educate our visitors about our community, about reentry and the criminal legal system.

- A **Navigation and Tech support** component. From my desk research as well as in interviews and even in the advisory board it has been mentioned that technology literacy is a major pain point for some people in this community and for many other people returning to community after years of incarceration. We want to offer how-to-guides and video tutorials to support.

- And last but not least, I'm documenting the process of building the portal. This **Documentation** will live in the Portal itself with the hope that it serves as a tool for other groups or organizations to create their own art programs and portals.

How are we building it?

Co-creation!

The collage includes several key elements:

- Meeting Slides:** A slide titled "5. Your Vision" with a list of "Main users" including "People with justice involvement", "Public figures public sponsors Government officials", and "General Public". Another slide asks "What are your thoughts about the name, Art Portal?" and "Who should be the main audience?".
- UI/UX Design:** Wireframes for a "Welcome Message" and a "Creative Arts program" section. A navigation diagram shows the site structure with sections like "About" and "Artists".
- Brand Identity:** Logotype and color palette variations for "Art Portal".
- Goals and Values:** A list of goals such as "Celebrate", "Elevate", "Inspire", and "Advocate". A "Values" section lists "Love", "Reciprocity", "Creativity", "Accountability", "Support", and "Respect".
- Visuals:** A central video call window showing participants, a "VOTE" graphic, and various brand icons and text elements.

Advisory Board

We build Art Portal together. We co-create this output.

To make this happen we formed an Advisory Board consisting Jamie, myself, and 5 volunteer artists from the class, whom I compensated them for their time and energy. They are a diverse group of adults in their 40's to 70's, women and men, single, married, parents, they are black and white/caucasian. All are writers and some also participate in the music and the acting classes.

In one of my earliest interviews someone said this sentence that stuck with me ever since "Support the supporters". In the spirit of following with that maxim, I compensated all the board members for their time and creativity.

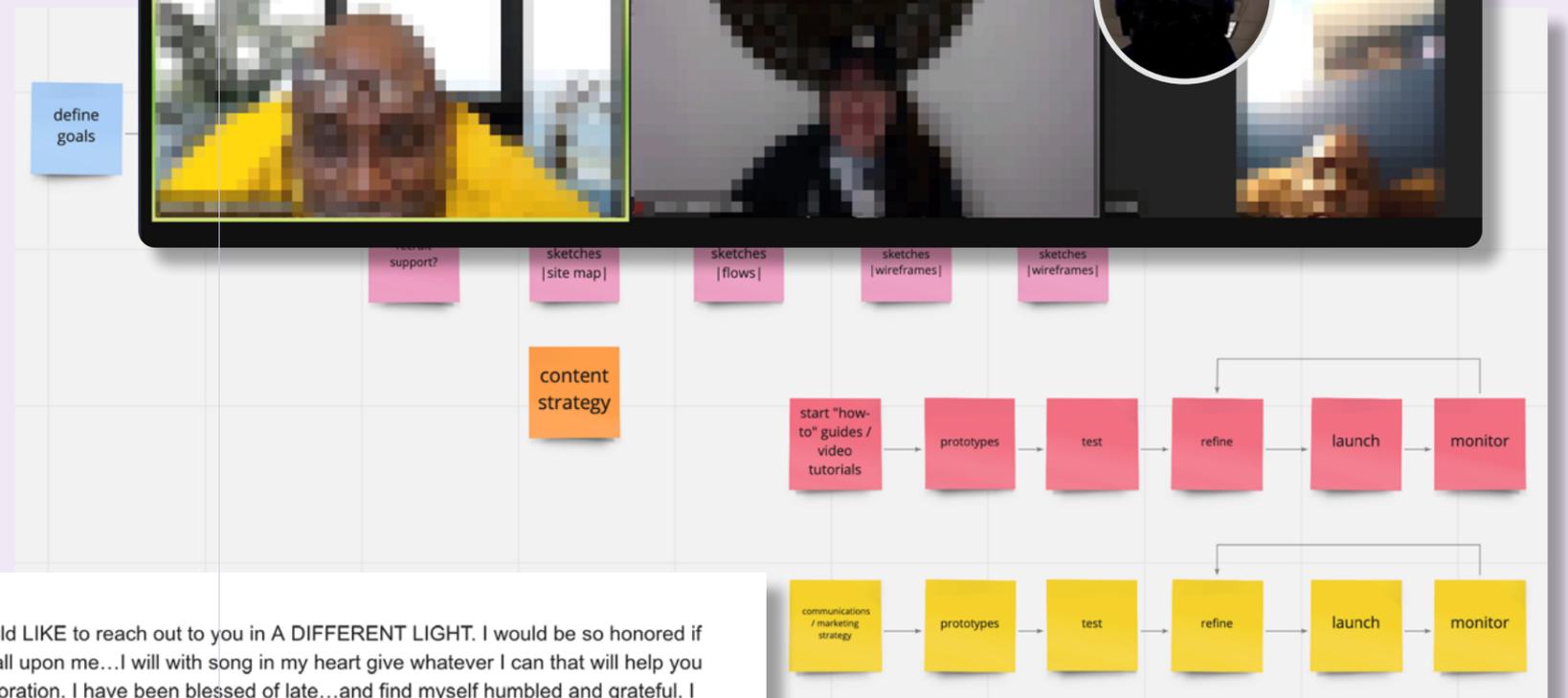
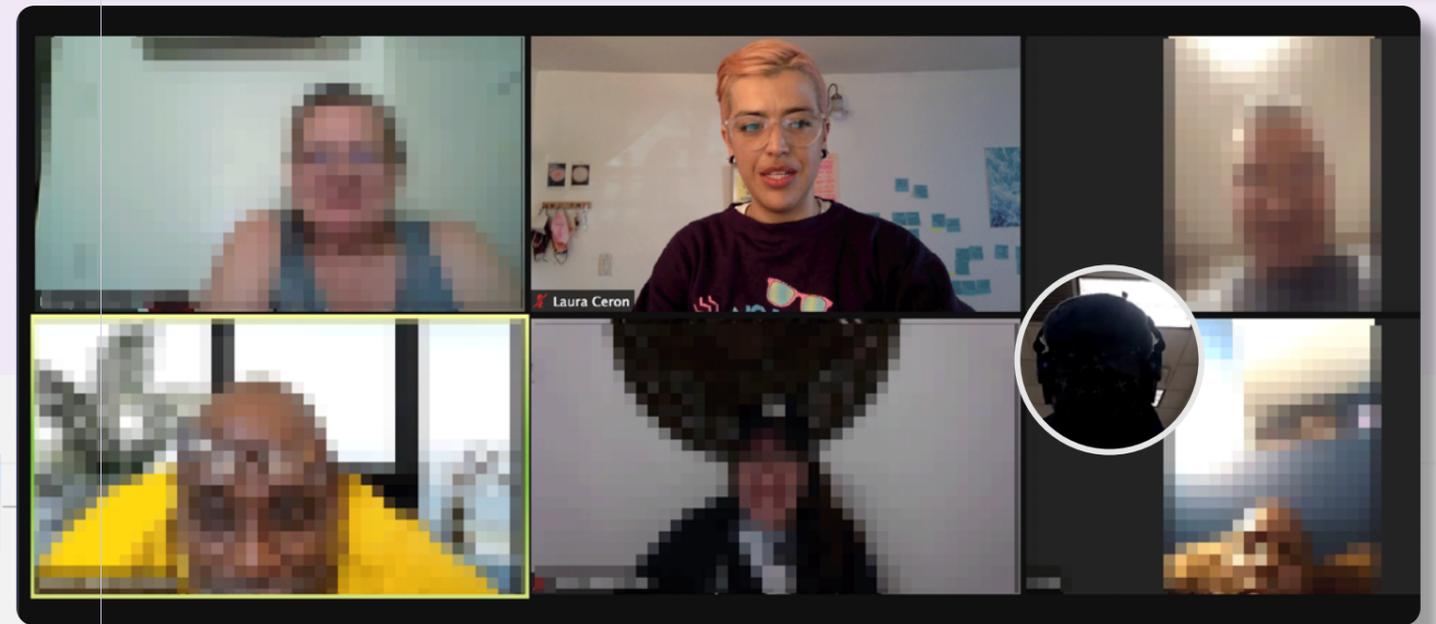
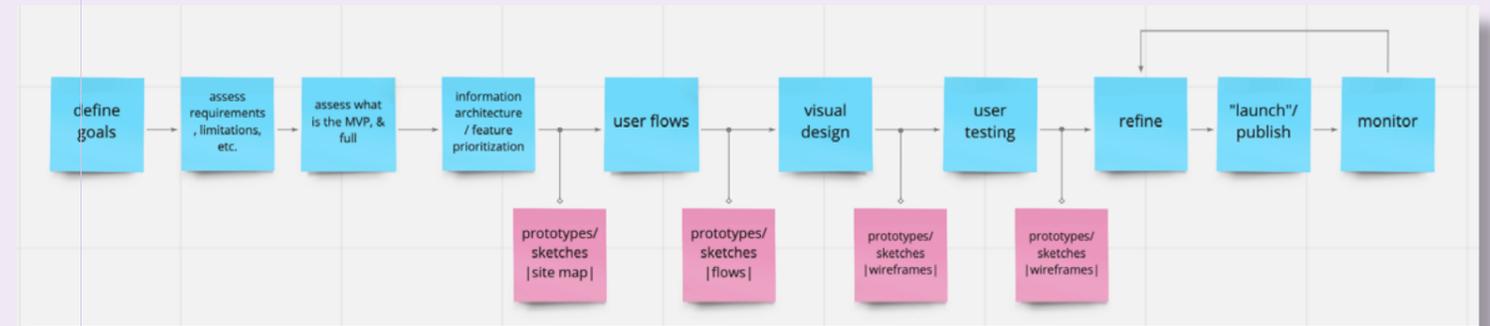
They are my sounding board and main testers. We meet individually and in group. We agreed on the values that ground our collaboration are: Love, reciprocity, accountability, support, creativity, and respect.

I have shared my ideas and vision, they have offered their critique and points of view, and together we have brainstormed the best ways to move forward.

In our sessions thus far, we have discussed things from the goals to the logotype, to the audience and calls to action to the color palette etc.

In creating the Board and working in this way, I also weaved in the intention to give these artists an insight into my world. Show them a bit of the design world, as well as guiding them into developing a sense of agency, confidence, responsibility, and leadership. All while I get to learn from their expertise and their lives.

I hope that they take pride and ownership of the platform, and become advocates for its rollout. And I dream that in the future, one of them can become the webmaster, another the communications intern, and another the recruiter for Art Portal and so on



Dearest
 I would LIKE to reach out to you in A DIFFERENT LIGHT. I would be so honored if you would call upon me...I will with song in my heart give whatever I can that will help you in this collaboration. I have been blessed of late...and find myself humbled and grateful. I offer whatever service that will provide...I do not want compensation ...just your continued success and diligence in your passions and life pursuits. I am available...please pass the \$'s where it will make the greatest impact.
 Just an evening prayer...yours

Co-created values

Values

- Love
- Reciprocity
- Creativity
- Accountability
- Support
- Respect

Add or edit?

voting + brainstorming

5. Your Vision

Main users:

- People with justice involvement & out; Fortune told & others) Fortune itself
- Public figures public sponsors Government officials
- General Public
- People working in the reentry & justice fields
- Stakeholders in the "field"
- Cast a broad net

Next phases:
How could we get to people v
- safety concerns {
- human/time resources

5. Your Vision

- What are your thoughts about the **name, Art Portal**?
- Who should be the main **audience**?
- What should be **published first**?

Live-voting

Feedback

Notes // Feedback

- Accessibility!
- computer skills

Inviting via Facebook

Share/invite option

- twit
- facebook
- email

Community. is FAMILY.
Other people like me.
That is when we start to heal.

Advocacy

- making the transition easier
- humanizing folks who have been impacted by the system!
- open conversations
- produce an advocate become an advocate
- getting rid of the stigma, labels, tags
- understanding hurdles, barriers, struggles

A warm welcome

Scales of justice balanced

"we are more similar than we are different!" [becky]

Healing! transition from "just a felon" to "I'm still valuable"

I AM HERE. I EXIST.

Creation Session 3

session planning

week 3 group session 4/1 2pm

wireframing

OBJECTIVES	KEY QUESTIONS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach design concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> human centered design landscape/competitor analysis visual design ui/ux design branding get input on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new logo. color palette layout of homepage nav bar 	<p>Review of design process last session was landscape analysis brainstorming session</p> <p>before we talked about the site map which assesses what are the pages and the hierarchies and order between pages.</p> <p>This session is about wireframing which is about planning the layout of the content in the pages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live content sketching/ wireframing presentation of design concepts voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> visual design direction ui/ux, color palette ideas for basic user flows Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> agency self-advocacy critical thinking collaboration Hard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Centered design Web design UI/UX design Visual Design (color theory, typography, layout) Landscape/competitor analysis branding

**what knowledge can I offer?
which capabilities can we develop?**

WELCOME
Adisory Board # 3

Roadmap for today

- Review of work done thus far
- Let's talk design!
 - visual design
 - branding
 - ux/ui design
 - wireframing

Community Agreements

- be present
- listen to understand
- make space, take space
- be mindful of our time

Values to our world

- Love
- Reciprocity
- Creativity
- Accountability
- Support
- Respect

teaching design

Art Portal

story of opportunity and solidarity

more hands? stronger hands reaching to each other

Art Portal Homepage

somebody reading / drawing / singing / painting canvas / artist palette / 4 arts

Voting + Feedback

art portal

creative arts program

The Fortune Society

mantras on each page "discovering your hidden talent"

be the change you want to see

ask folks about what arts do the want the org to provide. they want to explore ask people in the program about their interests

Co-design

Weaved into our collaboration is the intention of making this process one of mutual learning and capability development. While I learn from their expertises and their lives, I also get to share an insight into the design universe, as well as guiding them into developing a sense of agency, confidence, responsibility, and leadership.

I hope that they take pride and ownership of the platform, and become advocates for its rollout.

Mutual learning & capability development



LAURA, DESIGNER



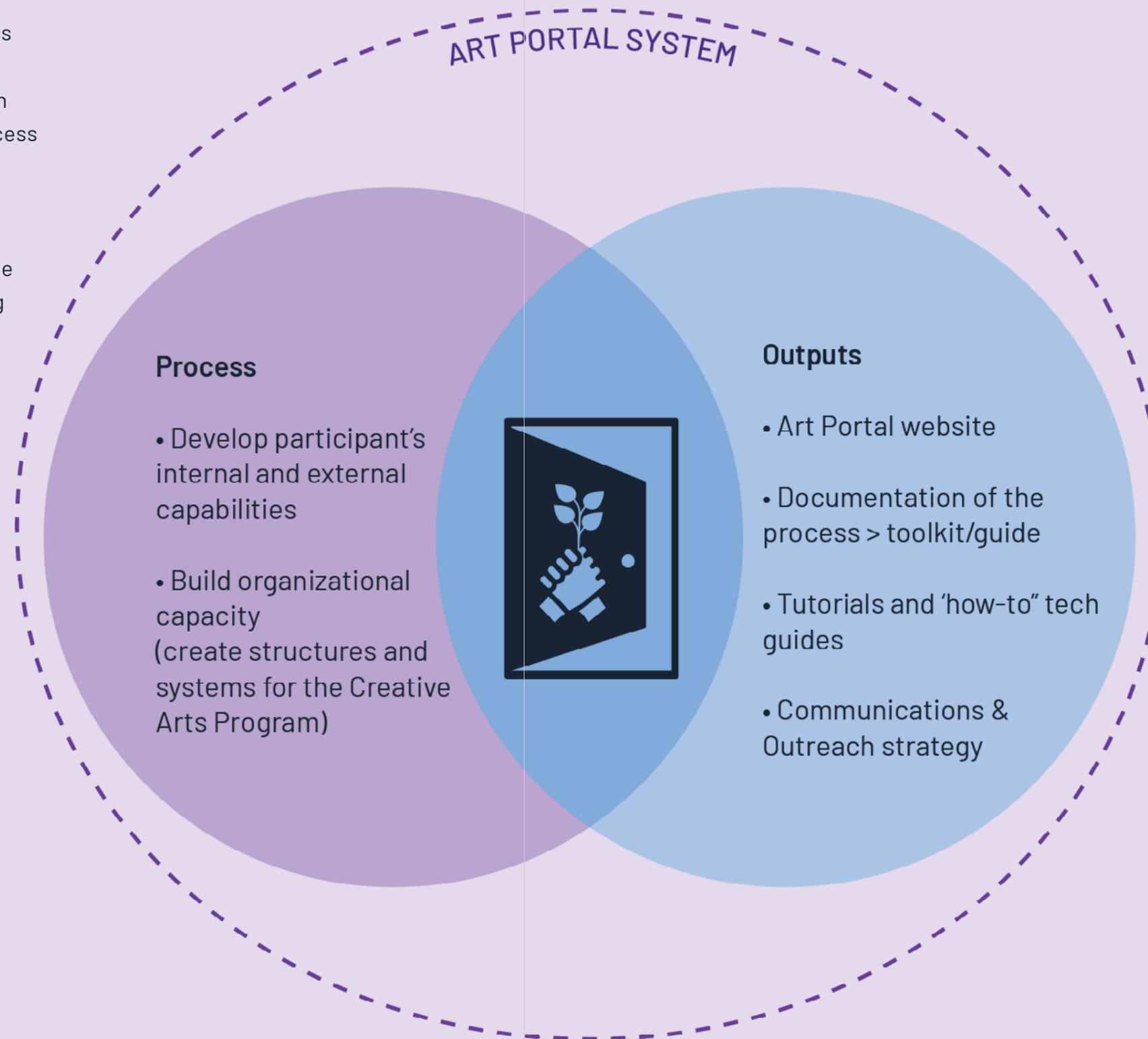
more hands?
stronger
hands reaching to each other

story of opportunity and



In working in this way, the process becomes an output itself. The totality of the intervention is both the tangible outputs and the process of creating them.

In the coming months, We will keep working together to build the portal and all its other supporting materials



05 VIS- ION

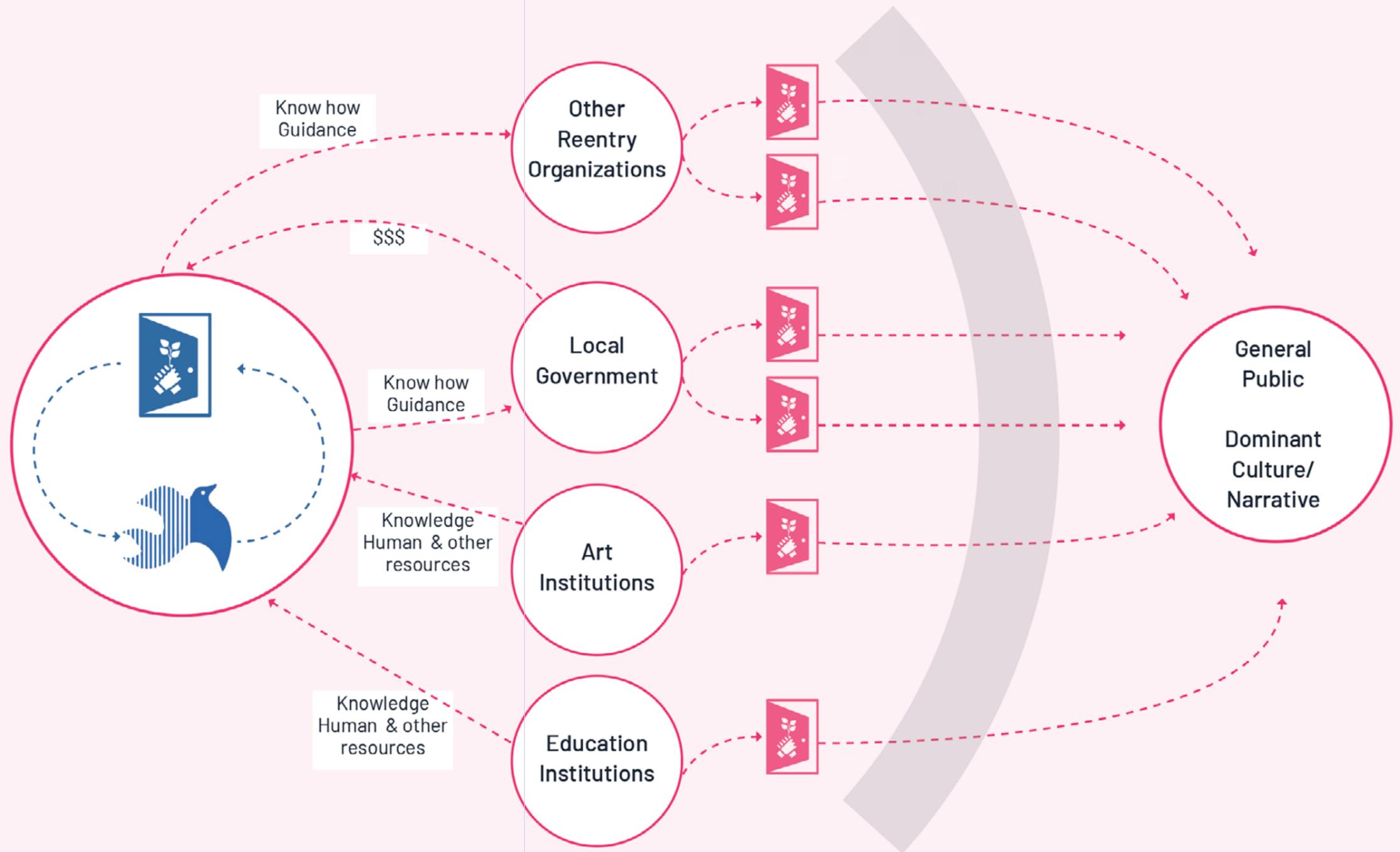
The long-term vision / dream /
agenda / aspirations

The vision

The rollout of Art Portal at Fortune is a low hanging fruit since they already have the program and foundational structures in place. They just need to invest a few hundred dollars per year to upkeep the website, and perhaps, hire someone part-time to keep the website updated. Ideally, this would be one of the artists from the Arts program!

Having a tangible structure like the website, Art Portal will serve almost as a business card to introduce and help raise awareness of the program and its benefits, within and with-out the organization.

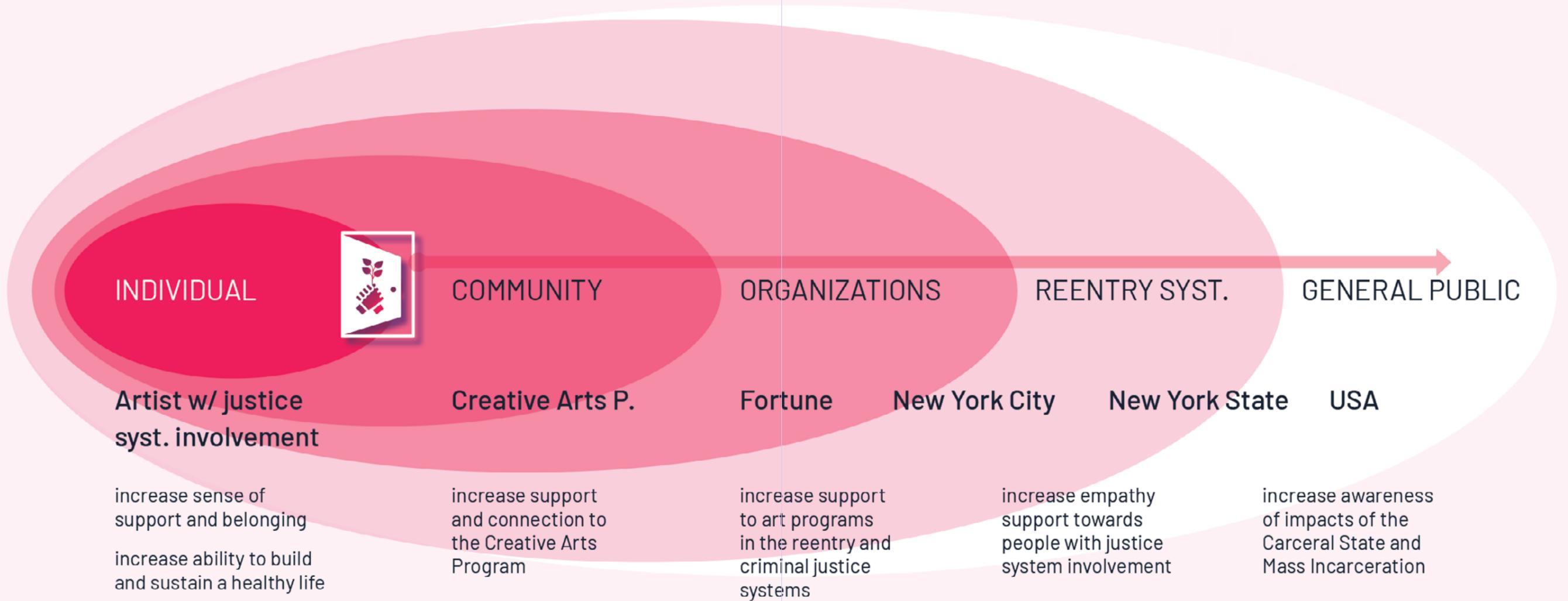
The vision is that, as a main player in the Reentry system, Fortune has the opportunity to influence and inspire other organizations and even local government to support and expand the program.



The vision

My vision is that Art Portal will be a drop in the sea of the reentry system that makes big ripples.

We start small and niche in the Creative Arts Program at Fortune and work hard to make waves that touch other organizations, and then hits the whole reentry system at large; and at last, that reaches to the general public.

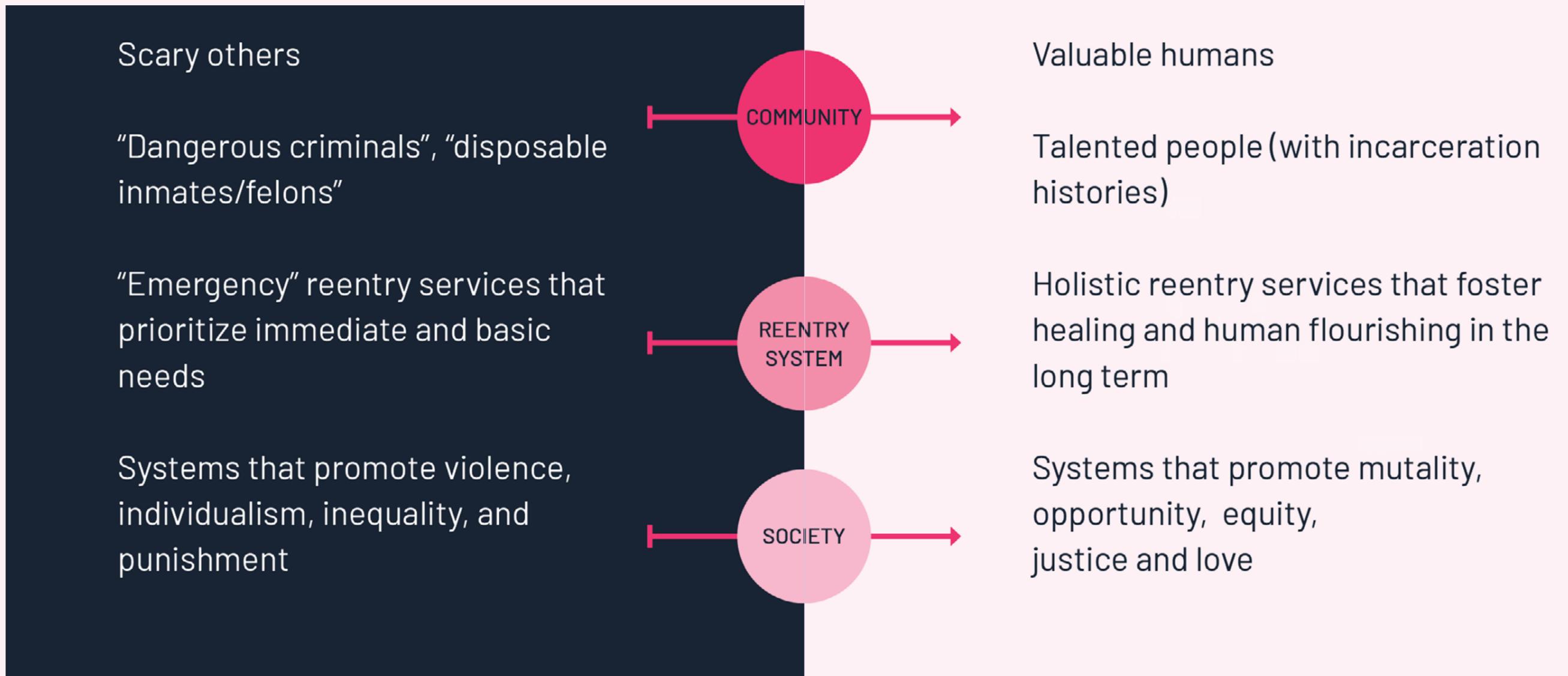


The vision

The change I/we want to create starts by humanizing and valuing the individuals who have been and are impacted by the system.

Art Portal is a tool that advocates for holistic reentry services that foster growth and healing, not just survival.

It Advocates for programs, organizations and systems that promote mutuality, opportunity, justice and love.



Scary others

“Dangerous criminals”, “disposable inmates/felons”

“Emergency” reentry services that prioritize immediate and basic needs

Systems that promote violence, individualism, inequality, and punishment

COMMUNITY

REENTRY SYSTEM

SOCIETY

Valuable humans

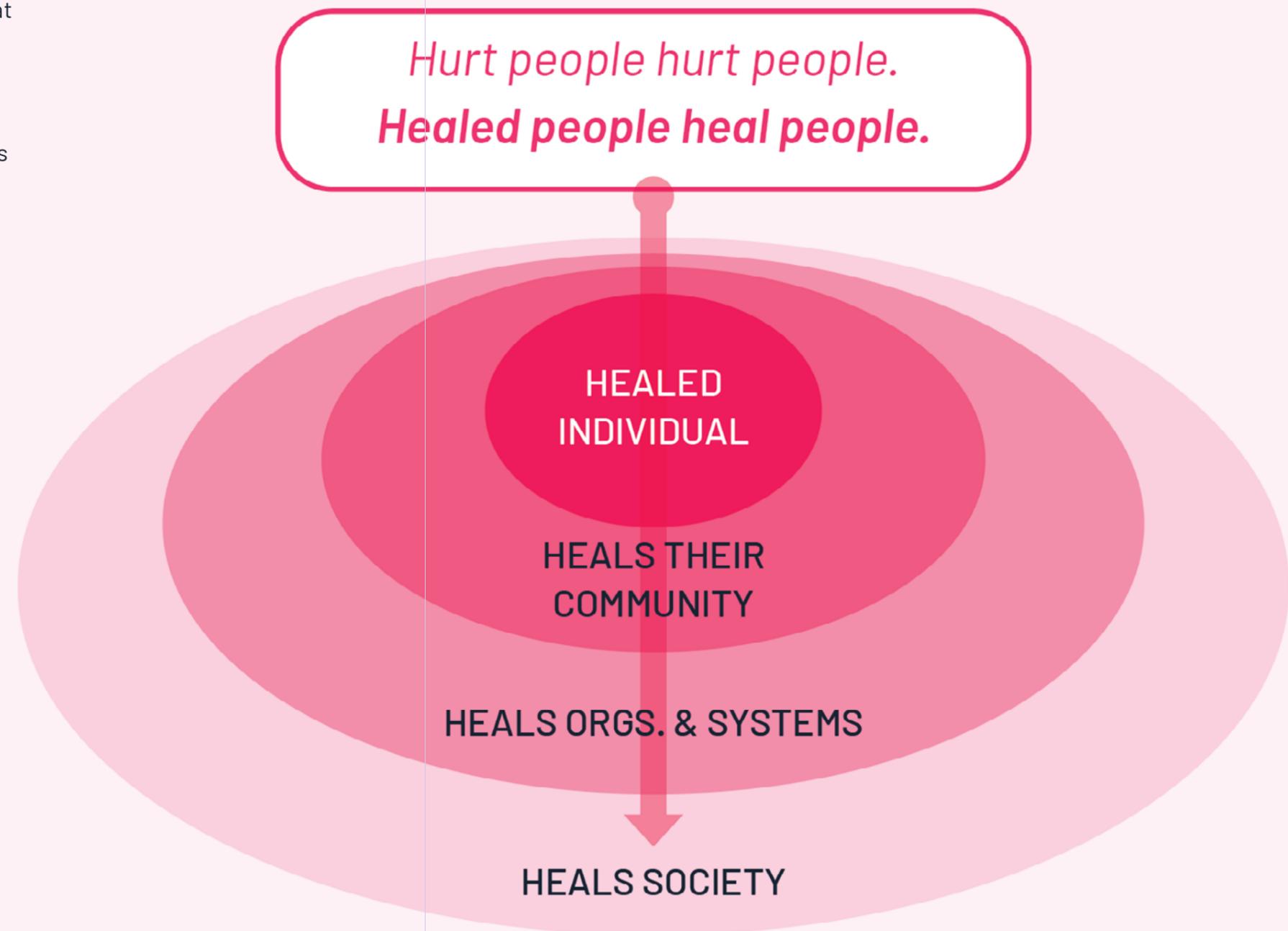
Talented people (with incarceration histories)

Holistic reentry services that foster healing and human flourishing in the long term

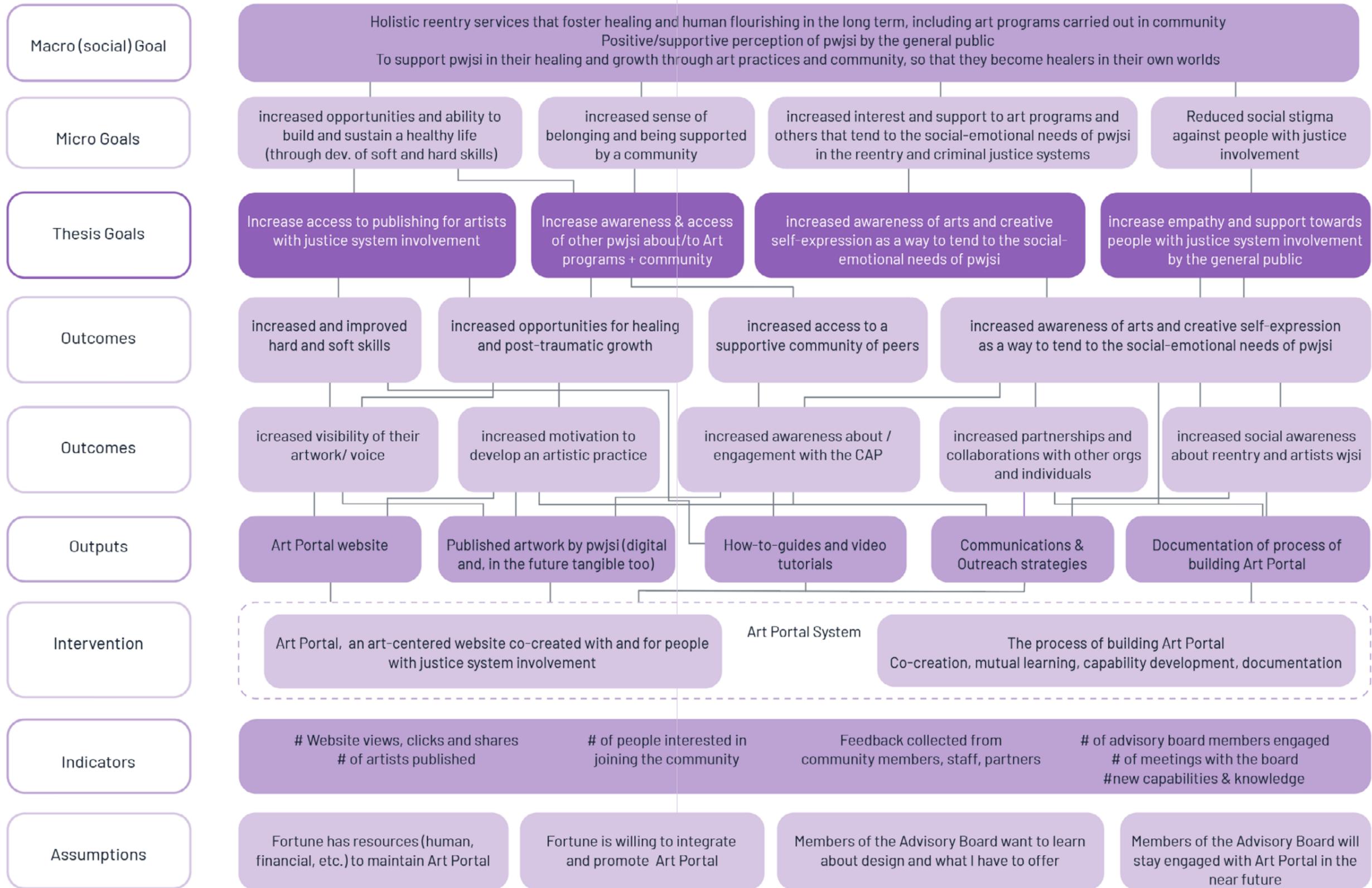
Systems that promote mutuality, opportunity, equity, justice and love

The vision

Above all, my Long-term aspiration is that this platform becomes a vehicle for individual and collective healing. I said at the beginning that I believe in something we say in the creative writing class all the time "hurt people hurt people, and healed people heal people". I hope that we can extend the healing powers of art + community to many more people impacted by the system, and that those who are more healed, like my friends in the class, can become healers in their worlds.



Theory of change



*pwjsi = people/person with justice system involvement

06 SPE- CIAL THA- NKS

My community at the Creative Writing class at Fortune

Thank you for warmly welcoming me since the beginning. You have been a constant source of joy and inspiration, and I look forward to keep weaving our relationships. I'm excited to see us all grow!

Special thanks to those in the Advisory board. It's been a pleasure to work with you, to get to know you in a deeper level and show you more of me as well. Thank you for your enthusiasm, dedication and ongoing support.

DSI Class of 2021

What a trip was this MFA experience with you all. I'm humbled, inspired, grateful for having walked this path alongside each one of you. Thank you for growing with me! I love you.

Andrea Miranda Salas

Girl! Thank you so much for reaching out to offer support, and then giving it so diligently. I cannot thank you enough!

DSI Thesis Advisors (Sloan Leo, Kara Meyer, Sahar Ghaheri)

Your guidance and advice were fundamental in building this project. Thank you for your thoughtful feedback and your willingness to help us.

Miya Osaki

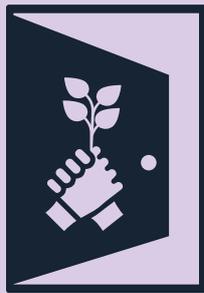
You have always been a promoter and a sort of "cheerleader" of my work. I am grateful beyond words for your care, for the ways you held us in such extraordinary and difficult moment (pandemic), while also pushing me/us to expand and grow.

DSI Staff

Chessa, Christian, and Gale, thank you all so much for your hard work in making the program run smoothly. Thank you for your unconditional support and adaptability.

Karen Proctor

You have no idea how much you, your class and your leadership forever changed my life. Thank you.



Art Portal

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