

**GEORGIA ART AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE FORUM:
IGNITING THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
SEPTEMBER 28, 2018
EMORY UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL, ATLANTA, GA**

Final Report

California Lawyers for the Arts, in collaboration with Emory University, Georgia Council for the Arts, and Georgia Lawyers for the Arts presented the Georgia Art and Criminal Justice Forum at the Emory University Law School, Atlanta, Georgia. Of the 192 people who registered for this event, approximately 150 attended, including state legislators, arts organizations, artists, academics, students and returned citizens from across the state. Breakout sessions, a catered lunch and a final reception provided opportunities for participants to discuss a range of topics in depth.

Highlights

The Forum began at 9.30 AM, with welcoming remarks from Dean Rita Sheffey, Emory University Law School, Meredith Ragains, Georgia Lawyers for the Arts, Alma Robinson, California Lawyers for the Arts, Sheila T. Cavanagh, Emory University, and Karen Paty, Georgia Council for the Arts. A welcoming message from Governor Nathan Deal was presented via video.

The First Plenary, “Setting the Stage: Georgia Criminal Justice Reform and the Arts” was moderated by Doug Ammar, Georgia Justice Project, with panelists State Senator Brian Strickland; Dr. Heather Corbett, Georgia Department of Corrections; Marissa McCall Dodson, Southern Center for Human Rights; Beth Bienvenu, National Endowment for the Arts and Fred Eason, Artist and returned citizen.

A series of workshops held in Law School classrooms followed the plenary:

“Addressing Trauma Through the Arts” was facilitated by Sheila Cavanagh, with panelists Andrea Pack, Emory University Neuroscientist; Sarah Higinbotham, Common Good Atlanta, and Susan Bishop, Lee Arrendale State Prison Choir Director.

“The Arts and Juvenile Justice” was facilitated by Gina Moore, Crosswalk Ministries, with panelists Kate McLeod, High Museum of Art, Dare Dukes, Deep Center, and Chris Appleton, WonderRoot.

“Bringing Arts Programs to State Prisons” was facilitated by Gail Deschamps, Rome Shakespeare Festival, with panelists Lucy Fugate, HeartBound Ministries, Andrea Shelton, Heartbound Ministries, Deputy Warden Jeanie Kasper, Georgia Department of Corrections, and Wende Ballew, Reforming Arts.

Following these discussions, Sheila Cavanagh chaired a Keynote Reading and Conversation session featuring Tayari Jones, author of *An American Marriage*. Questions and answers followed the presentation.

A networking lunch was then provided to all registrants in the Hunter Atrium, adjacent to the Tull Auditorium.

After lunch, the Voices of Hope Choir from Lee Arrendale State Prison, with returned citizen Page Dukes, presented a well-received performance, under the direction of Chaplain Susan Bishop.

In the afternoon, there was another series of workshops:

“Arts as Access to Empowerment, Enrichment, and Employment, was facilitated by Beverly Iseghohi, BMI & Associates, with panelists Dantes Rameau, Atlanta Music Project, Fabian Williams, artist, Nancy Flake Johnson, Urban League of Greater Atlanta, and Cadeem Gibbs, Youth Organizer and Policy Advocate.

“Arts Programs and Reentry” was facilitated by Andrea Shelton, Heartbound Ministries, with panelists Rachel May, Synchronicity Theatre, Omar Howard, Freedom in a Choice, Inc., John Turner, Community Review Board, and Page Dukes, student, musician, and returned citizen.

The Plenary Panel “Catalyzing Opportunity” Art in Criminal Justice” took place in Tull Auditorium. Moderated by Bill Taft, Common Good, Atlanta, with panelists Deputy Warden Jeanie Kasper, Georgia Department of Corrections, Omar Howard, Freedom is a Choice, Inc. and John Turner.

At the conclusion of these events, the organizers offered closing remarks and discussed “next steps.” The audience was enthusiastic about the possibility of additional events.

The Stuart Rose Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Archive Library, Emory University, presented an exhibition of artwork from Phillips State Prison, Georgia that coincided with the concluding reception.

Evaluations

- We received a total of 37 completed evaluations from the Georgia Forum.
- 91% (30 out of 33 respondents) said their objectives for attending the Forum were met.

- 84% of respondents (27 out of 32) rated the keynote conversation with author Tayari Jones as excellent, while 13% of respondents (4 out of 32) rated it as very good.
- 97% (29 out of 30) rated their satisfaction with the plenary panel speakers as excellent or very good.
- 82% (51 out of 62 responses) ranked the discussion during the breakout sessions as excellent or very good.

A representative from the Georgia Council for the Arts wrote that the most valuable part of the Forum was “hearing the overlap / commonalities between the various panelists’ approaches to art ideology.” Many attendees said the performance by the Women’s Choir of Lee Arrendale Prison was a highlight, and one stated, “choir was a fabulous way to provide context, heart, and soul to and for the conversations – awesome!”

After the conference, Page Dukes, a returned citizen, worked with project consultant Jacqueline Trescott to complete an article describing the forum. Her piece, “Making Meaning: a Caged Bird Sings,” was posted as a blog on the website of the Justice Arts Coalition: <https://thejusticeartscoalition.org/2018/12/26/making-meaning-a-caged-bird-sings/>

Funding Sources

Funds supporting the forum were contributed by the Art for Justice Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Quentin Hancock Fund and the Georgia Council for the Arts. In addition, we received generous in-kind support from Emory University Law School.

This report was written by Sheila Cavanagh, Professor of English at Emory University with support from Ariel Heinicke of California Lawyers for the Arts.