

CALIFORNIA ARTS IN CORRECTIONS



STRENGTHENING REHABILITATION THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts in Corrections is a partnership between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Arts Council, designed to prepare incarcerated individuals for success upon release, enhance rehabilitative goals, and improve the safety and environment of state prisons through arts engagement. The program is deeply tied to the State's belief in the power of the arts to inspire change, transformation, and growth.

Through Arts in Corrections, arts learning opportunities are offered in all 36 of California's state adult correctional facilities, spanning the full spectrum of art disciplines, with instruction in visual, literary, performance, media and traditional and folk arts. The program is internationally recognized for its high-impact, innovative approach to addressing the state's critical public safety needs and rehabilitative priorities through the arts.

"It's really a public safety issue, what we're dealing with. Because wouldn't you want a person in prison to come out with better skills in dealing with disappointment, obstacles, unemployment, when they come out? It seems to me that it's in all of our interests to have vigorous rehabilitation programs—and arts is absolutely essential to that."

Academy Award Winner Tim Robbins
Artistic Director, Actors' Gang

"I believe in rehabilitation; it is crucial. Today's inmate may be tomorrow's neighbor."

Carmen Maroney
Community Resources Manager,
Valley State Prison

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“Character development is important to acting and adulthood. So as I continue to develop as an actor, and as a person of integrity, accountability, and responsibility—traits I’ll be defined by long after the show is over—it’s through drama therapy and Shakespeare that I find healing.”

Nythell “Nate” Collins
San Quentin State Prison Participant

“We’re talking about mental health impacts, about restorative and transformative processes. This provides a pathway towards healing, and this is what we have to do in these spaces. We have to facilitate healing in a very holistic way.”

Quetzal Flores
Arts Instructor, Alliance for California Traditional Arts

BENEFITS

- 1 Reduces inmate-staff conflict
- 2 Strengthens family relationships
- 3 Increases critical thinking
- 4 Develops real-world job skills
- 5 Builds positive relationships
- 6 Encourages healthy behaviors
- 7 Bridges cultural differences
- 8 Improves inmate relations

TIMELINE



1977

Prison Arts Project pilot begins



1980

California AIC program created



2010

Budget crisis eliminates AIC funding



2013

CAC and CDCR partner to pilot return of AIC program

2017

AIC grows to once again reach all state 36 adult correctional facilities

Photos by Peter Merts

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