



**Transformative Justice in Education (TJE) Center White Paper Series  
Imprisoned Curriculum: The ROOTs program and prisoner led healing  
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**Abstract:**

This paper offers an Asian American and “Other” prisoner-informed framework for the design and redesign of school curricula using Ethnic Studies pedagogy to facilitate student learning and healing for students who are incarcerated or have experienced trauma. Proposing that learning and healing require an approach that is both restorative and transformative, the author outlines a curriculum model that includes usable practitioner tools. Arguing that prisoners’ life experiences are valuable tools for learning, this paper advances Carceral Studies discourses with examples of the educational paradigm shifts, curriculum design process, and prisoner-produced writing and civic engagement that emerged through the Asian Prisoners Support Committee’s ROOTS program at San Quentin State Prison.

## Introduction

In October of 2015, I attended a conference entitled “Advancing Racial Justice” in New Orleans, Louisiana. In a panel session on race and incarceration, I listened to the executive director of Voice of the Ex-Offender (VOTE), Norris Henderson, say, “The people closest to the problem are closest to the solution.” This was not my first time hearing the phrase but, for many reasons, this iteration was and continues to be the most powerful in my mind. Part of the impact of that delivery relates to the perspective of the speaker. Norris Henderson was a wrongfully convicted life-term prisoner of Angola State Penitentiary who served 27 years before winning his freedom and exoneration, primarily through his own efforts. The power of his statement was also connected with where it was delivered. Department of Justice data suggests that Louisiana was incarcerating 777 people per 100,000 in 2015, the highest per capita rate in the nation (Carson, 2018). The state was, arguably, the prison capital of the world at that point in time. Henderson’s statement was also made more powerful because I was in the room due to my connection with Asian Prisoners Support Committee (APSC), an organization led by formerly incarcerated people, allies, and abolitionists. Since 2014 I have been responsible for curriculum design and instruction for the organization’s Restoring Our Original True Selves (ROOTS) program at San Quentin State Prison. Launched in 2013, the program provides culturally relevant education to Asian, Pacific Islander, and “Other” prisoners.

Though APSC began using an Ethnic Studies approach for in-prison programming in 2013, the idea emerged from a stint in solitary confinement over a decade earlier. In 2002, when San Quentin was in its early stages of developing a face-to-face traditional college program, then life-term prisoner Eddy Zheng was disciplined by prison administrators when he advocated for Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies college classes. Previous work has elucidated how and why Ethnic Studies has been imagined as a threat to traditional educational spaces. Curricula that intentionally and critically explore race, racism, and power have been met with state-sanctioned physical violence at postsecondary institutions (Umemoto, 1989) and racially-biased policy at secondary institutions (de los Ríos, 2013). Zheng’s advocacy was similarly met with the violence of the solitary cell and segregation policy responses. After eleven months in solitary confinement, Zheng was transferred to a different state prison and APSC was founded. Zheng won his freedom in 2005, only to be ordered deported and taken into custody until 2007 by U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement. Pardoned in 2015, Zheng now serves as co-director of APSC and continues to be a major driving force behind the ROOTS program, now in its fifth year of instruction.

The original ROOTS framework focused on restoring relationships between Asian, Pacific Islander, and “Other” prisoners with their communities outside prison. Recognizing that most prisoners were already privy to rehabilitation programs that focused on personal accountability, remorse, and substance abuse, ROOTS was co-designed by incarcerated Asian and Pacific Islanders and APSC to highlight a variety of resources likely to be culturally, politically, and racially relevant for these prisoners’ reentry into society. Programming ranged from academic themes under the Ethnic Studies umbrella to workshop-based presentations by community-based organizations around themes such as deportation and skill-building sessions

addressing topics such as intergenerational trauma. We hoped and believed that incarcerated people could leverage these skills and resources to advocate for their own healing and freedom within the terms set by prison administrators and the parole board. We soon realized that, beyond developing new solutions for themselves, incarcerated individuals could sometimes provide solutions to larger social problems – both related and unrelated to incarceration. We learned that incarcerated “others” hold unacknowledged trauma that is personal and collective. By 2015, the ROOTS framework had shifted focus to find meaningful ways to allow incarcerated people to participate in the society that 96 percent of California prisoners eventually return to, according to the California Department of Finance (2015).

Through writing, podcasts, and artwork that focused on their own healing, ROOTS members started engaging in social movements around education, LGBTQ issues, and criminal justice reform and resistance. Shared by APSC in workshops and professional development presentations with undergraduate and graduate students and professors, and secondary and postsecondary teachers, ROOTS students’ work also informed and came to be incorporated into subsequent cycles of ROOTS instruction. ROOTS thus evolved from a restorative justice framework that centered on restoring intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships to a dual restorative and transformative approach that allows prisoners to engage with the wider community and pursue systems-based change. Through the lenses and lived experiences of ROOTS students, this paper outlines a practitioner-based framework for developing a restorative and transformative curriculum for currently and formerly incarcerated students, as well as other student populations in need of healing.

### **The Landscape: Education–Prison Intersections**

Though still useful within specific educational and community settings, the school-to-prison-pipeline (STPP) trope’s utility has been both improved and challenged by a variety of scholars and community practitioners. Among many other theoretical and practical critiques, Meiners’ (2011) refashioning of STPP into “the school-prison-nexus” warns against viewing prison as a direct, discretely-defined landing place for youth pushed out of schools. Reminding us that the State has also shifted toward incarceration alternatives by expanding control and punishment outside prison, Meiners conceptualizes punishment as a carceral state “nexus” that schools are only one part of Shedd’s (2015) “universal carceral apparatus” concept, developed from a study of Chicago students and their relationships with police surveillance, also disrupts the linearity implied by STPP and demonstrates how other institutional actors and correctional agencies are drawn into a larger web of punishment.

While most policies that shape school and prison relations are understood largely through the lens of state-level legislation, critical and historical interrogation of foreign and federal policy reveal that other actors belong to the nexus framework, as well. The STPP model frames “school” and “prison” as beginning and end points, ignoring the state-sanctioned punishments that precede schooling and continue after incarceration. In the practice of surfacing the narratives of Asian, Pacific Islander, and “Other” prisoners, APSC and the ROOTS program have illuminated the impact of war-rooted displacement and the ways refugee and immigrant

movements can become pathways to criminalization and incarceration in the U.S. Moreover, “stateless” prisoners, like those born in refugee camps, added to discourses of punishment by showing that Immigration and Custom Enforcement detention and deportation to unfamiliar countries can be understood as a pattern that extends the domestic prison system. At the very least, “migration” and “deportation” need to be understood as components of the modern carceral system, and these layers further complicate school-centric models of understanding both imprisonment and abolition. Education has played, and continues to play, a meaningful role in the practice of decarceration, but education as a tool has limits, especially given the continued expansion of the carceral state. Meiners (2011) explains this condition as a “reform/abolition tension” that affirms the desperate need to deliver education and other services to currently incarcerated people, while similarly recognizing the urgent need for structural and paradigmatic change. A prime example of this tension is reflected in *Brown v. Plata* (2011), where the U.S. Supreme Court mandated the reduction of the California prison population to 137.5 percent of the state’s designed capacity. While the decision has resulted in the welcome expansion of in-custody rehabilitative services within correctional facilities, prisons’ goals shifting from “hyper-overcrowding” to “overcrowding” foreshadows limited tolerance regarding the type and amount of education the prison system will allow.

At first glance, education for the incarcerated seems like a natural solution to the linear STPP model, perhaps even suggesting a potential concept reversal: “the prison-to-school-pipeline.” However, education-centered frameworks tend to ignore alternative forms of carceral punishment and control that fall under the umbrella of the school-to-prison-nexus and situate the responsibility for positive outcomes on each incarcerated student’s willingness and ability to participate and learn in classrooms that may not reflect her/his needs. While many students will succeed, others, who may still be burdened by harmed relationships from traditional schooling, will inevitably be left behind, a pattern explored by several scholars (Rodriguez, 2006; Vaught, 2017). As such, one consequence of in-prison education narratives and practices based on traditional models has been the creation and reinforcement of the idea that the incarcerated represent a spectrum of “good” and “bad” prisoners, a troubling notion that can complicate abolition advocacy.

Lauded for its breadth and policy impact, and often cited to show that education can reduce recidivism, a 2013 Rand Corporation meta-analysis found that inmates exposed to in-custody education programming were 43 percent less likely to return to prison and improved their chances of securing employment by 13 percent (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013). Interestingly, the Rand study included *all* forms of educational programming, including remedial, vocational, and postsecondary studies, acknowledging that the study did not isolate the impact of each form of education on rates of recidivism (Davis et al., 2013). A Minnesota statewide prison study compared outcomes between secondary and postsecondary education and affirmed the Rand conclusions – both forms of in-custody education reduced recidivism – but the study reported no difference in the hourly wages of former prisoners who attained a postsecondary degree and those who attained a secondary degree (Duwe & Clark, 2008). The average college graduate worked more total hours, leading to higher overall income, but these findings suggest that while earning a postsecondary degree in prison may equip inmates with

additional self-discipline and work ethic, these degrees are not valued in the same way postsecondary degrees awarded by traditional colleges.

Or, perhaps educational success is not a tool powerful enough to help former prisoners overcome other social and economic barriers that characterize the carceral State. In any case, the Rand study does validate the power of educational intervention and challenges the efficacy of the punitively-focused administrative models that have historically characterized U.S. prisons. The Rand study also fits tidily into California's goal of reducing the state's percentage of housed prisoners without elevating dialogue about the potential merits of prison system abolition. Considering the school-to-prison-nexus, though, how might we imagine and develop liberatory forms of education that focus on authentic community membership for the currently and formerly incarcerated, in keeping with and beyond a narrow goal of reducing recidivism? How can we move towards a restorative and transformative form of education that positions the practice of prisoner learning as a practice of system-based transformation and, perhaps, ultimately, abolition? How do we truly include incarcerated knowledge and narratives in the practice of disrupting relationships between prisons and schools, be they framed as a school-to-prison-pipeline or the more contemporary school-to-prison-nexus?

### **Paradigm Shifts: Brains and Bodies**

Reading the narratives and viewing the artwork compiled by Zheng (2007) in *Other: An Asian & Pacific Islander prisoners anthology* completely changed the way I approached my community college students and how I thought about incarcerated people. I wondered what would happen if all teachers were privy to these narratives, and what would happen if we more meaningfully minimized the distance between prison and pedagogy. I thought about the paradigm shifts needed in the practice of teaching to close this distance, and was reminded of an excerpt from *Forced passages*:

Contesting the repressive and punitive technologies of prison education and philanthropic ventures, as well as the production of prison writing as a domesticating and contained literary genre, imprisoned radical intellectuals exert pedagogical influences of their own, within and against these contrived material-discursive spaces. (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 104)

This passage begs the question: What values are ascribed to the bodies and brains of imprisoned people? While many have detailed the economic values ascribed to incarcerated bodies through "prison industrial complex" discourses (Davis, 2003), Rodríguez suggests that punitive technologies also shape the ways we understand incarcerated brains, even within the context of teaching and education, by limiting our understanding of the imprisoned. When we view these individuals *only* as prisoners, there is legitimate reason to constrain their pedagogical possibilities. Within the context of punitive and retributive justice, the bodies and brains of the condemned are examples of what not to become. In fact, associated bodies and brains become extensions of a punitive justice system, particularly with respect to the education of children. Take, for example, the numerous iterations of "scared straight" juvenile

deterrence programs that place young adolescents in prison cells to terrify them into “good” behavior. The prisoner teaches these youth a future of trauma, and thereby comes to be valued as an inflictor, perpetuator, and teacher of trauma. This spectacle is a form of punitive technology that has been consumed in popular culture since the late 1970s, despite the empirical studies that have challenged the efficacy of this type of programming in changing young people’s behavior (Klenowski, Bell, & Dodson, 2010).

Indeed, some studies suggest that these types of confrontational interventions may increase criminality, in which case “doing nothing would have been better than exposing juveniles to the program” (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, Hollis-Peel, & Lavenberg, 2013, p. 58). Such studies challenge local governments to engage in rigorous research before implementation (Petrosino et al., 2003). Considering the limitations and failures of valuing prisoners’ brains and bodies only as violent spectacles, and taking seriously Rodríguez’s (2006) call to imagine incarcerated people as “radical intellectuals,” what can we learn about learning from the imprisoned? Furthermore, what restorative and transformative pedagogical approaches are lost through the practice of incarceration? While the material conditions of incarceration can and do shape the critical consciousness of the imprisoned (Rodríguez, 2004), it is also the case that prisoners are intentionally alienated from many social movements in the outside, “free” world where consciousness can be applied.

Restorative justice approaches begin to answer questions about what can be learned from the imprisoned and what knowledge is being incarcerated. Zehr (2014) insists that restorative justice is “not a map,” but “a compass pointing the direction” to possible new paradigms related to the practice of justice (p. 9). Restorative justice offers a framework that centers victims’ needs, specifically in opposition to the State’s default of retributive punishment on an offender but can also offer a way to think about paradigms where “offenders” are unrestored victims themselves. If punitive technologies position the incarcerated as those who do harm, and not as people who have also been harmed, there is no or little space for those incarcerated to own and heal from trauma. If, on the other hand, we consider the individual prisoner’s entire life experience, not just their offense, the restorative justice “compass” points to non-punitive directions and destinations in the context of past and future experiences as a child, student, and neighbor, and other relational identities that may serve as the “map” that reconstructs that individual as a valuable member of society and/or a “radical intellectual.”

Legitimate critique of the restorative justice paradigm tends to question the limitations of interpersonal conflict resolution. I have attended many events where speakers have questioned the conditions a person is being or will be restored to, suggesting that restoration of a harmed person back into a context characterized by structural injustices such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and poverty is not likely to lead to much justice and healing. Coker (2002) warns against ignoring oppressive systems as sources of harm and has argued in favor of transformative approaches “that link a critical analysis of the racist, sexist and classist practices of the criminal justice system with offender accountability to victims and communities” (p. 129). Winn (2018) proposes looking at “justice on both sides,” using a framework that

recognizes how transformative outcomes for victims and their communities are connected with justice-seeking practices for those who have caused harmed, especially the incarcerated. Given how the ROOTS program at San Quentin State Prison has shown that restorative justice-seeking practices can unveil narratives that point toward solutions that might disrupt the school-to-prison-nexus, I make the case that restored relationships are a necessary precursor to the meaningful transformation of incarcerated brains and bodies.

### **Curricular Design: The Forbidden Trauma Project**

I remember the first time I was asked to present a workshop in a prison. I was nervous, but confident that I would be able to deliver critical content that would politicize and transform the prisoner audience. Instead I was politicized and transformed. I entered with what I believed were abolitionist ideals, but after just two hours, I was forced to rethink my role as an educator and my relationships to both schools and prisons. Shortly thereafter, I was invited to lead curriculum design and instruction for the ROOTS program, an experience that has completely transformed my stance, approach, teaching, and interactions with and care for students — both in and out of prison. The work eventually brought me to other educational spaces, and, in 2015, I was asked to lead a professional development workshop for an elementary school. At first, I declined, believing that elementary was neither my terrain nor part of my expertise, but later accepted, on the condition that my presentation include the narratives of prisoners. With prisoners in the ROOTS program, I then coordinated the design of the Forbidden Trauma Project, which aimed to connect the elementary schooling experiences of incarcerated people to the professional practices of elementary school teachers. The curriculum, intentionally designed to develop resources elementary school teachers could leverage, was later presented at several elementary school professional development and community events, as well as in community college and university contexts. Recovery of these formerly hidden and even “forbidden” narratives came with the “recovery” of pain and trauma for many incarcerated participants, and this pattern led us to (re)construct a healing-centered curriculum and pedagogy for the ROOTS program — a process that may reflect and inform the needs of other educators and curriculum developers, even outside prison contexts.

In class sessions, ROOTS program participants are often asked to imagine what justice and accountability would look like if the current punitive and retributive system was abolished. The question of what justice and accountability looked like *before* the rise of the modern carceral state is equally important. Zehr (2002) emphasizes that restorative justice is not a new, Western invention, pointing out that “the movement owes a great debt to earlier movements and to a variety of cultural and religious traditions. It owes a special debt to the Native people of North America and New Zealand” (p. 16). Much as the Maori of Aotearoa (known as New Zealand) informed Zehr’s worldview and work, Maori healing practices also inspired the ROOTS curriculum and the Forbidden Trauma Project. Practitioners such as Diana and Mark Kopua build from the Maori “narrative therapy” practice of *mahi-a-nga-atua* to address the harm of colonization by linking the stories of harmed people to cultural figures, traits, and narratives (McLachlan, Wirihana, & Huriwai, 2017). As we began the project, we found that many stories from Aotearoa and other places were already well understood by several of the “elders” in San

Quentin Prison, while other stories could be told by guest presenters. For numerous participants, these forms of knowledge provided the scaffolding for participants to think about, speak, and write their own stories.

The practice of sharing prison narratives outside the prison context is thought to offer a way to de-privatize a “deeply privatized criminal justice process” (Coker, 2002, p. 129) and thereby complement a transformative justice framework. However, before any external sharing could occur, the elementary narratives had to be produced, and opening the histories of trauma and shame proved difficult, especially because any symbol of weakness can invite multiple forms of violence in prison settings. Deep personal and interpersonal investigation required the development of a safe and trusting space that was deeply informed by restorative justice practices, particularly strategies that build and repair relationships between participants.

One life-term prisoner, Truong, joined ROOTS at its inception. He was always engaged and pensive, but rarely shared any personal history. Like many participants who complete a ROOTS cycle, Truong stayed on a facilitator for subsequent cycles. After two years of involvement with the program, Truong read a written narrative at a graduation event in front of program participants, other prisoners, prison staff, and outside volunteers. The following is an excerpt (names have been changed):

Before ROOTS started its program here, I met Mr. John Garcia from time to time and we had our little conversations here and there—you know, the regular hellos and goodbyes.... In ROOTS we share our life stories, and when I heard his life story, it completely changed me as a person. Mr. Garcia shared with us how he had to help his mom sell flowers at the age of 9 in order to put food on the table for his family. He had to endure all the verbal and physical abuse because he was a flower boy. It was so bad to the point where he lost his self-esteem. When I heard that, it touched me so much because it hit home.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Garcia’s willingness to share, and Truong’s willingness to write, represent the many examples that shaped the construction of a ROOTS restorative space wherein conversations are participant-led, hierarchies are reconstructed, and outcomes include the repair and refashioning of interpersonal relationships. Ethnic Studies pedagogical approaches meld individual stories into collective stories, a process highlighted in Truong’s narrative.

Ethnic Studies curricular strategies also provide participants with critical perspective and the language to name their experiences, to begin to be or continue to be accountable for harm they have caused, and to also see harm and trauma in ways that extend past the individual. The development of workshops that challenge mainstream understandings of acculturation and assimilation allowed students to develop a new lens through which many came to better understand their relationships with themselves, their families, their culture, and their

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<sup>1</sup> This narrative from 2015 is used with permission by the author.

communities. Workshops on immigration policy shaped their understanding how history has impacted their own trajectories, and workshops on intergenerational trauma and healing offered participants tools to heal relationships with themselves and with others. These deep explorations offered participants opportunities to raise new and critical questions. As an example, the following is an excerpt from a letter Pran wrote (but did not send) to his mother:

My intention is not to hurt you. First, I need to know why you did not express much emotional and physical affection towards me. I don't remember hugging you as a child. I know you expressed your love by being a nurturer but I never understood why you never said you love me. Is this because that's how you were raised? It is so strange that I was raised in the same household, yet I do not know you. I do not know much about your upbringing, and perhaps you could tell me more about your side of the family. What were your parents like?<sup>2</sup>

These practices, which can be framed as restorative in that they work to heal relationships on an individual level, also begin pushing into transformative terrain if shared with people in power, such as teachers, education leaders, and policy makers. This was, originally, the heart of the Forbidden Trauma Project – rejecting the mainstream framework that situates prisoners and marginalized students and those in power in mutual opposition – and informing teacher practice by sharing the hidden life experiences of life-term prisoners. The more ROOTS participants spoke, wrote, and created art, the more Asian Prisoner Support Committee realized this valuable work could explicitly inform transformative justice practices and healing processes across systems and communities, and contribute to movements for policy change. Although most ROOTS participants identify as Asian or Pacific Islander, many come from Latinx and Black communities and may have meaningful opportunities to initiate healing across ethnic and racial lines. Ethnic Studies-informed workshops that explored comparative community nexuses, such as Asian-Latinx Dynamics and Anti-Blackness in Asian/Pacific Islander communities, shaped participants' consciousnesses and challenged the logic of in-prison racial segregation. In these workshops, one prisoner admitted that even before immigrating from his very racially homogenous country, or ever meeting a Black person in the U.S., he held biases against the Black community. Asian and Pacific Islander prisoners used these dialogue opportunities to interrogate their own biases and to trace their own trajectories toward incarceration as a by-product and extension of anti-Blackness, thereby linking their own liberation as non-Black people to the Black American experience. After a workshop on Anti-Blackness, one mixed-raced participant who identifies as Filipino and Black wrote a rap entitled "How Did We Get Here?" The following is an excerpt:

This place built by mixed-race,  
Once welcomed the world's unwanted masses,  
Now it incarcerates its lower classes,

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<sup>2</sup> This narrative from 2016 is used with permission from the author.

while giving invisible lashes on the backs of those uprooted from utopias turned war  
 torn,  
 It's tragic,  
 The sheer diversity of slaves passed round by masters,  
 Same establishment enslaved our race,  
 Now doing it with taxes,  
 Asian, Islanders, some call them Others,  
 But I choose to call them Brother,  
 Cuz i feel and know their struggle<sup>3</sup>

The growing presence of non-Black people inside prisons and immigration detention centers can be dangerously appropriated to promote post-racial or colorblind ideologies, overshadowing or erasing the historic anti-Blackness in which the system remains rooted and from which it proliferates. Far from post-racial poetry, Lamar's stanza ties together a variety of themes, including class, but intentionally centers Anti-Blackness by connecting slave references to the foundation of the prison system that now consumes "Others." While Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and "Others" have yearned for culturally and historically relevant programming, restorative and transformative justice strategies promote broader solidarity-building by extending racial- or ethnic-specific consciousness toward others facing oppression, including other people of color, women, and LGBTQ communities. While the work of incarcerated people often stems from personal dreams of change and freedom, program participants also yearn to transform the world their families live in, and the communities most will ultimately return to. While contributing to society when still incarcerated can be a conceptual and personal transformation, transformative practice at the systemic level depends on teachers, educational leaders, and policy makers finding space to hear and feel these stories and to support the learning and healing that will be needed to shift understandings, goals, policies, and practices in prisons and in mainstream educational institutions.

## Discussion

Shawn Ginwright (2018) explains healing as not just a clinical process, but a political one, where practices of civic engagement and community organizing are also practices that address harm. The emphasis on healing as a political act is particularly significant for the students of color with whom Ginwright engages, and also for incarcerated people of color whose traumas are continuous, intergenerational, historical, and almost always unattended to.

Other bodies of research also support the de-clinicalization of the trauma concept and non-clinical responses to trauma. Krieger's (2012) ecosocial theory describes "embodiment" as "how we literally incorporate, biologically, in societal and ecological context, the material and social world in which we live" (p. 937), arguing that embodiment can and should be "linked to alienation of indigenous people from their land" (p. 937). Indigenous scholars Waters et al.

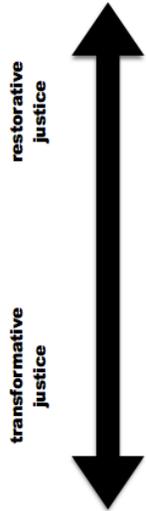
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<sup>3</sup> this song "How Did We Get Here?" was produced and performed in 2017 and used with permission

(2011) ground such experiences through the concept of “historical trauma,” which they define as “an event or set of events perpetrated on a group of people (including their environment) who share a specific group identity (e.g., nationality, tribal affiliation, ethnicity, religious affiliation) with genocidal or ethnocidal intent (i.e., annihilation or disruption to traditional lifeways, culture, and identity)” (p. 181). Ginwright (2018) adds to this discourse in his call for a practice that extends beyond “trauma-informed care” to center healing through recovery of identity, culture, and power. Winn (2018) has asked if a pedagogy and curriculum can be created that not only heals, but also prevents harm. Like these authors, the ROOTS program’s prisoner-informed curriculum seeks to add to a growing body of scholarship, non-clinical research, and practice that promotes innovative and transformative approaches to education.

The ROOTS program now conceptualizes the development of curriculum that heals and transforms as a series of stages that may or may not progress linearly. These stages are best understood as dialectical and dynamic; they shift based on the starting points and needs of participants. Though many favor transformative models over restorative theoretical approaches, the ROOTS program incorporates both, recognizing that, at least for prisoners, intrapersonal and interpersonal forms of healing can be crucial precursors to transformative

## ROOTS Curricular Healing Model



healing goals	concepts and themes	examples of pedagogical strategies and workshops
<b>intrapersonal healing</b>	<b>healing relationships with oneself; addressing traumas of self-hatred</b>	<b>problematizing acculturation and assimilation</b>
<b>interpersonal healing</b>	<b>healing relationships, resolving conflict with other individuals</b>	<b>intergenerational trauma</b>
<b>community-based healing</b>	<b>healing relationships with social groups; within and across ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality</b>	<b>indigeniety, immigration and anti-blackness</b>
<b>structural healing</b>	<b>transforming structures to enable healing; ex. participating in policy changes to facilitate rehumanization of prison impacted individuals</b>	<b>production of content (written narratives, podcasts, artwork) to contribute to movement building beyond prison</b>

justice. Indeed, participating in transformative change while building community amongst themselves has also helped numerous participants work to reconcile conflict within and outside the group.

Though the conceptual model above outlines the healing goals, thematic foci, and pedagogical strategies used by the ROOTS program for education in prison settings, these healing-focused education strategies might be useful for any practitioner working with a population that has experienced personal and/or historical trauma. It is our experience that this framework honors Norris Henderson's reminder that "the people closest to the problem are closest to the solution," because we have seen that the experience of co-creating and co-delivering curricula to restore and legitimize participant voices through narrative-based healing can shift marginalized stories from hidden and personal thoughts to solidarity-building, transformative tools and experiences.

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