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Communication

Annie Buckely

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The PAC breaks down elitist notions of who can study or make art and makes it equal for everyone. The fact that I can make art accessible and relatable to everyone regardless of who they are makes teaching feel like an activist effort.

—*Jessica Agustin, PAC Site Lead, California Institution for Women (CIW)*

Communication

Please aim to be professional, polite, friendly, and respectful in all communications with people relating to the Prison Arts Collective. This includes electronic, phone, in person, and other forms of communication and includes participants, fellow teaching artists, leadership team, supporters, and staff at the universities and institutions.

On site, we recommend that you be friendly and warm but also respectful and professional. Remember that you are in a prison and that our participants are people in vulnerable situations. Please avoid any and all personal discussions and remain focused on the art and what we can learn and do with and through art. That is the most valuable thing that we offer and that is what we want to do when we are on site.

A Note about Language...

We at the Prison Arts Collective are deeply aware of the impact that language has to both embody and transform our understandings of ourselves and one another. Simultaneously, we are ever cognizant of the idea that language, however flawed, is primarily a means for communication. In choosing and using language to describe our work, we keep both of these in mind. While we have our preferred language, we remain open and accepting of any means of communication that does not discriminate or cause hate. When we say 'participant', we are referring to those that are incarcerated that take part in our program. They are also, by definition, inmates. Many are also artists or writers. We refer to those that facilitate our classes as teaching artists. This term has a long history in community-based art and refers to artists coming into community sites to expand access to art. Like our participants, our teaching artists have other titles and identities. Some are students and some are faculty. All are also artists or writers. We believe in the capacity of language, like art, to community and, ultimately, to transform.

Representing the Unrepresented

Any information you learn in and about the institution and inmates is sensitive. We cannot share it online or in public. For any questions about sensitive information or whether or not something can be made public, please discuss with your Site Lead or anyone on the leadership team. We want to address any and all concerns immediately. But we also want to bear in mind that people in our society often hold stereotypes about prisons. We can alleviate or mitigate that through focusing on overwhelmingly positive experiences of our work in the institutions when discussing it in and out of the prison.