BONDING BEHIND BARS: USING ART TO PROMOTE FAMILY HEALING

Student creates classes for mothers, children

A s a student in the Art & Social Justice class at Cal State Fullerton, Jasmine Solei had the opportunity to visit the California Institute for Women, where she and other students led art workshops for incarcerated women.

Taught by Mary Anna Ponomis, assistant professor in the Department of Visual Arts, the Art & Social Justice course tasks students with creating lesson plans centered around social justice and then teaching those courses in alternative venues to groups outside the university.

Solei was leaving the prison after the first workshop during the Spring 2023 semester and was struck by the sight of a children’s playground boxed in behind barbed-wire fences situated adjacent to the visitation area.

As a mother herself, Solei thought about her own son, Kayden, who was 2 years old at the time.

“I just thought to myself that I can’t even imagine what it would be like to have to go through that, not only as the parent but as the child to have to visit your parent behind bars,” Solei said.

That experience ignited a spark of inspiration in Solei, who went on to create a more expansive art program to bond with their children and family members.

Solei recently completed a series of monthly art workshops inside the women’s prison in Chino in which the parents and their children get to create artwork together.

“Every time, we’ve had a great turnout,” Solei said. “There’s always been lots of kids and families, so I’ve been able to bring arts and crafts to them.”

When the workshop was completed, Solei created an exhibition featuring the artwork titled “Caged Voices: Artistic Reflections on Mass Incarceration.”

The exhibition is currently on display on the fourth floor of the Pollak Library.

“The work itself is some of the most rewarding stuff I’ve ever done in my life,” Solei said. “I absolutely love it, and I would love to continue on with this work for as long as I can.”

Before moving forward with her project, Solei received a $15,000 project, Solei received a $15,000

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TECHNOLOGY
Cybersecurity students compete to back into vulnerable systems
Experience prepares them for jobs

Last fall, Cal State Fullerton cybersecurity students competed in the Collegiate Penetration Testing Competition where teams of students from the region met to determine how to hack the security systems of an airport and then presented a report of their findings to executives.

The Cal State Fullerton team of six students placed second in the high-pressure competition, which provided real-world experience that they will bring to the jobs that await them once they graduate. Business sponsors often recruit winners for employment during these events, said Mikhail Gofman, professor of computer science and director of the ECS Center for Cybersecurity in the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

Penetration testing means trying to break through the security systems of a business by using the same tools and techniques that hackers use. If a penetration tester can discover and exploit a vulnerability, Gofman said, then so can an attacker.

“This is often called the security government,” Gofman said. “The goal of which is to ensure the cybersecurity of the company. It is driven by risk management, and, of course, cyberattacks are a big part of the company risk management, because a cyberattack can have very devastating consequences.”

The regional competition focused on the security systems of an airport. “They weren’t actually real airport systems, but real networks which simulated what a network infrastructure of an airport would look like,” Gofman said. “The students had 12 hours, from morning to night, to conduct the penetration test to find and exploit as many security vulnerabilities as possible.”

Then they had to write a professional penetration testing report that the team at the 2023–24 Collegiate Penetration Testing Competition in Rochester, New York, in front, Katherine Chen, left, and Kyle Thorne.

PHOTO BY LOU PONSI, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

TITAN EMPOWERMENT
Combining her interests in true crime and photography, Cassandra Caldwell created six photographic installations on campus to encourage newcomers to think like detectives.

Empowered by Cal State Fullerton’s Daryl Curran Creative Photography Scholarship, Caldwell brought her senior thesis project to life through photographs, 3D sculptures and found materials.

Now an alumna of the art program, Caldwell is pursuing creative opportunities and aspires to teach photography at the university level.

PHOTO BY KEN PANZER
Studying how Black youths in foster care overcome educational challenges

By Nicole Gregory, contributing writer

The California Institution for Women (CIW), a state prison located in Costa Mesa, has a unique program that promotes the arts and helps incarcerated women develop essential life skills.

“Every interaction that they have with the system seems to make them more vulnerable and more likely to experience depression and anxiety in adulthood,” Harvey said. Racism and bias can also be a factor, She said, because as a result of their incarceration, they tend to receive less support in the community and are more likely to receive bias against Black youth, and they experience more stress.

Harvey’s goal in her new research project, “Challenging Anti-Blackness in Education: Amplifying the Voices of Black Foster Youth Students Through Counter-storytelling,” is to include interviews with Black foster youth who overcame obstacles and succeeded in the education system.

The youth that I’m going to specifically be talking to are all in college,” she said. “They will all have either graduated from college or be currently in college. They were able to find a way to overcome the challenges that we often see in these numbers. It’s really them telling a counter-story to the data that is around them.”

In her previous research, Harvey discovered that Black foster youth who did well in school had a stronger inner drive to make the most of their education.

“One of the things that was a challenge for me was to make sure that they were able to be successful,” she said. “They said that school was a way out. Now see school as an opportunity for them to make a better life for themselves and for their family. It gave them this ability to almost this self-directed motivation. It’s a different level of importance on education than I think any other community.”

She plans to interview and organize focus groups with Black teenagers and mothers of Black children to learn more about their experiences. “What I want to get from these interviews is Black youth is to better understand what they experienced, but also how they overcame it.”

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Art

Artwork created by a woman incarcerated in the California Institution for Women, signed “To Aiden, From your Tia,” is part of the “Caged Voices: Artistic Reflections on Incarceration” project.

According to the National Institute of Justice, an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice, family members of incarcerated individuals are often thought of as “hidden victims” who receive little personal support and do not benefit from the extensive victim services mechanisms generally available to direct crime victims, despite their prevalence and their similarities to direct crime victims.

Pomoni and Solei also formed a campus group titled Just Arts, which enables them to partner with other campus and community groups in bringing art workshops into prisons.

CSUF is among several Cal State campuses with a Project Rebound chapter. Solei, incidentally, also earned a degree from the city of Santa Ana, enabling her to reach incarcerated populations in the city.

The workshops aim to help incarcerated women develop essential life skills.

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After serving in the military for four years, Faran returned to higher education with a newfound interest in international affairs. While pursuing his graduate degree in political science at Cal State Fullerton, Faran turned that interest into academic research that examines China’s impact on the Middle East. He worked alongside Alexei Shevchenko, professor of political science, who specializes in American foreign policy and Russian and Chinese foreign policy.

“What really motivated me to conduct research was my time in the army,” said Faran.

His study looks at how the Belt and Road Initiative — a Chinese-led global infrastructure project that launched in 2012 — has impacted human development in seven countries, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, South Arabia, Turkey and Qatar.

“I was fascinated by this project,” said Faran. “You use public information on the internet for us to exploit,” said Royce, who was a member of the winning team. “I think it’s important to think about the old adage going back to early history, ‘from the ends of the earth to the ends of the world.’”

Royce, who represents the United States, the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the importance of supporting democratic governments around the world.

The Cal State Fullerton team participated in a global competition for their Triangular Alliance with Iran. “My students worked very hard on the report is what makes you win in CPTC,” said Gofman.

“Here at CSUF, a lot of our students are from underrepresented backgrounds and are first-generation students. I think it’s important to have people who need to benefit from this demand.”

“We are helping the nation by providing professional expertise while helping people who need to benefit from this demand.”

Many former students have lined up jobs in cybersecurity, and some of Gofman’s former students have accepted jobs at cybersecurity companies.

“Cyber is a field of being patient and understanding, especially those in the Cybersecurity Center, who added hands-on experience to cybersecurity classes.”

“From an academic perspective, it’s important to think about the old adage going back to early history, the struggle between democratic states like Athens and totalitarian ones like Sparta,” said Royce, who earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration-accounting, finance, in 1977.

The event also featured foreign policy and political science experts from universities, the U.S. Marine Corps and Washington DC-based organizations, who shared their knowledge on the challenges surrounding China, Russia, and their relationship with Africa and the United States, the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the importance of supporting democratic governments around the world.

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As a part of a Cal State Fullerton course called "The International Economy," students were able to apply their knowledge and research skills to understanding the impact of inflation on society. The course focused on the economic impact of inflation and its effects on businesses and consumers. The students were able to engage in real-world experience by working with businesses and organizations to understand the economic challenges they face. The course was taught by Professor Marc Stanley, who has extensive experience in the field of economics. The students were able to gain valuable insights into the causes and effects of inflation, as well as the strategies that businesses and governments use to mitigate its impact. The course also included a study-abroad component, where students were able to apply their knowledge in a real-world setting. The students were able to see firsthand the impact of inflation on businesses and consumers, and to understand the challenges that businesses face in a global economy. The course was highly successful, and the students were able to gain valuable skills and knowledge that they can apply in their future careers.
Three Orange County civic leaders were recently honored: Bill Campbell, Lucy Dunn and Tom Daly. These honorees were selected for their long-term service to Orange County and the state of California, as both elected and appointed officials.

Bill Campbell

Bill Campbell, a successful businessman in the fast-food, aerospace and microelectronics industries, and recently retired from the Providence St. Joseph Hospital of Orange Community Board. He earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Loyola Marymount University and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

Lucy Dunn

Lucy Dunn led the Orange County Board of Supervisors and served as the Assembly member from the 2001 - 2003, 2006 and 2011. Before becoming and elected official, Dunn was with a cutting-edge business in the fast-food, aerospace and microelectronics industries and recently retired from the Providence St. Joseph Hospital of Orange Community Board. He earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Loyola Marymount University and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

Tom Daly

Tom Daly, the mayor of Anaheim and led significant economic development projects around Disneyland. Daly also served on the Orange County Transportation Authority board of directors, where he helped pass over a $20 billion improvement program for road and transit projects. Most recently, he has served as the Assembly member representing Anaheim, Santa Ana, Orange and Garden Grove since 2001, Dunn was elected the first woman president of the Building Industry Association of Southern California in 2014 and appointed in 2004 to serve as the director of the California Department of Housing and Community Development and, in 2008, to the California Transportation Commission. Dunn serves as director or advisor for numerous nonprofit boards, including the Orange County Leadership Foundation, Pacific Symphony, Orange County Human Relations and Jamboree Housing Corp.

Niyyah Jackson

Niyyah Jackson’s love for Black women’s literature took root when she was a child. As a young girl, she realized she could read more books by Black female authors that featured Black characters. She wanted to know that Black women’s voices were present in literature because women scholars served to educate, support and provide safety for me, she said. Jackson, a Class of 2024 English major with a minor in African American studies, Jackson’s research project focuses on Black American writers. She offers them a supportive, collaborative, and inclusive academic environment that encourages the development of critical thinking, written and oral communication skills, and strong research abilities. Jackson is being mentored by Bonnie Farrier, provided me with support, leadership and guidance that has allowed me to further my research, present at national conferences and ultimately prepare for me to lead and researcher to ultimately lead me in the right direction toward my future,
Tory San Antonio is the name in the history books. He was able to accomplish something that no other player before him has accomplished. San Antonio left last season with an award that he had been working for all season. The Big West Defensive Player of the Year award. "We got back to the (Big West) tournament, and we won it," San Antonio said. "I was surprised when they came out with that award. It was one of my most memorable accomplishments. I was able to accomplish something. I put my name in the history books." Yes, he did. San Antonio left last season knowing that he was going to be drafted and get to play professionally for Gigantes De Mexico. But he also knew that he would have to step back and do things other than just playing basketball. He had to step back and be a leader, a role model for other players. He had to embrace his role as a defensive stopper, a player who doesn't need the ball and needs to make plays on the defensive end of the floor. San Antonio averaged that career-best 6.0 ppg. His best rebounding season was in 2020-21 when he averaged 5.2 rpg and he averaged 1.7 assists per game. He averaged 1.3 assists and shot 39.2% on his career, 34.4% from the 3-point arc, although he cracked 40% from long distance twice in his five seasons.

And unless you dig deeper and see what San Antonio meant to a CSUF program, you won't understand one understated aspect the Titans went back to back-to-back Big West Tournament title games in 2022 and 2023. You need someone to clarify, so why not ask the expert, CSUF Coach Dedrique Taylor, to help you grasp San Antonio’s impact. "Tory has been everything in our program," he said about San Antonio. "As a junior, it was the first time that I could say I accomplished something. I put my name in the history books." Yes, he did. San Antonio left last season knowing that he was going to be drafted and get to play professionally for Gigantes De Mexico. But he also knew that he had to step back and do things other than just playing basketball. He had to step back and be a leader, a role model for other players. He had to embrace his role as a defensive stopper, a player who doesn't need the ball and needs to make plays on the defensive end of the floor. San Antonio had to step back and do other things. It had to be about being the best player. That role solidified itself that year. "He embraced his role as a defensive stopper and his effort is undeniable. He's the best player. That role solidified itself that year. "He embraced his role as a defensive stopper and his effort is undeniable. He's the best player on the team," San Antonio said. "The reason San Antonio found himself guarding several future pros in that tournament game was because Taylor insistently got him on the opposition's best player. That role solidified itself that 2022-23 season when Taylor brought in an arsenal of offensive players, led by eventual Big West Tournament MVP E.J. Ansah. A shooting guard/forward who was an offensive option to that point, San Antonio got another revelation.

"We had three or four great players coming off the bench who were great scorers," he said. "I knew my role had to change, and if I wanted to play, I had to do something different if I wanted to stay on the floor. That was the year our role changed permanently." It led to the following: When you look at the Titans' first-round loss to the NBA Draft's No. 1 overall pick three years later, that same Paolo Banchero who would be the first pick in the 2022 NBA Draft, it was San Antonio who guarded him with being the Big West Defensive Player of the Year award. "That role had to change, and if I wanted to play, I had to do something different if I wanted to stay on the floor. That was the year our role changed permanently."