



Hope, Healing, And Transformation

Rehabilitation Through the Arts: Our Annual Report 2024-2025

Our Mission

RTA helps people in prison develop critical life skills through the arts, modeling an approach to the justice system based on human dignity rather than punishment.



Our Vision

RTA envisions a world where the arts serve as a powerful catalyst for personal transformation and societal change within the criminal legal system. We aspire to create a society where every incarcerated individual has the opportunity to unlock their potential, rebuild their lives, and make positive contributions to their communities.

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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of RTA,

With genuine enthusiasm, I am pleased to share our 2024-2025 Annual Report, my first as RTA's Executive Director. I am honored to take the helm of this organization. RTA has forged a path and shown the world that we can create a society where every incarcerated individual has the opportunity to unlock their potential, rebuild their lives, and contribute positively to their communities. As Executive Director, I can personally attest to that, and I'm grateful to the Board for entrusting me to lead RTA in its next chapter. This report highlights an incredible year of growth and opportunity for RTA.

- RTA hosted more than 70 workshops in eight facilities, engaging an average of 350 participants in finding their voices, processing trauma, and reconnecting with the humanity they are deprived of through incarceration.
- RTA's programs and alumni were featured in SING SING, a major feature film which has been screened across the country and uploaded to the digital tablets of 800,000 incarcerated individuals. The film received extensive coverage from media outlets and was nominated for three Academy Awards. Foremost, it has brought attention to the importance of the arts in rehabilitation and anti-recidivism.
- We have expanded our Reimagining Myself® (RM) re-entry program to reach new audiences. A successful partnership with Columbia College in California allowed us to graduate two cohorts of 22 and 15 participants.

The last several months have not gone without challenges. The New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision has experienced correctional officer strikes and severe staffing shortages, resulting in disruptions with some of our programming in the state. Despite periods of absence from the facilities, our impact continues as we expand and seek new opportunities for programmatic growth.

"RTA gave me a path forward. It has been a part of my life for over twenty years. Now it's time to lead the organization into its next chapter."

Looking ahead, 2026 will mark RTA's 30th anniversary, and there will be many exciting initiatives to share with you. Beyond these milestones, our daily work of bringing our arts enrichment programs to the men and women of our incarcerated community continues. The work they are doing to meet their potential is only possible with investment from our valued supporters. We are grateful for your commitment and partnership in our mission.

With deep gratitude,
Jermaine Archer

Jermaine Archer



From Punishment To Promise

TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM

Incarceration in the United States has reached crisis proportions, with **over 2 million people currently behind bars**. Over 95% will eventually be released. The human cost is incalculable: families torn apart, potential squandered, and the cycle of incarceration perpetuated.

This staggering figure represents not only a grave social and moral failure but also a colossal economic burden—**states collectively spent \$8 billion in 2022 alone to reincarcerate individuals who had already been released**.

Despite this enormous investment, the traditional punitive justice system remains ineffective, with recidivism rates stubbornly high and marginalized communities disproportionately affected.

Most of the American incarceration system is focused on punishment and ignores the profound need for personal growth, healing, and reintegration into society.

RTA's immersive and successful programs unlock potential and rebuild lives. When our participants return home, they reconnect with their families and strengthen their communities, breaking a generational cycle of incarceration.

OUR PROGRAMS

Arts Workshops: Our dynamic range of art disciplines, from theater to visual arts, to music, dance, and writing—create supportive environments where participants build new skills, boost empathy, accountability, self-esteem, and prepare for life after release. These workshops range from single-session master classes to year-long programs. Regardless of length, each fosters a strong commitment to a peer community, is guided by a steering committee of incarcerated members at each facility, and is facilitated by skilled and trained RTA teaching artists.

Reimagining Myself® (RM): A reentry program that directly addresses the social and emotional challenges of release. RM is designed to be taught to incarcerated people within two years of release to help them repair family relationships, build a support network, and adjust attitudes and behaviors that are necessary for survival inside prison but are counterproductive on the outside.

RTA Alumni Program: Former participants are empowered to continue driving change. Many alumni pursue careers in social services, academics, working with at-risk youth, carceral reform, the arts and more, paying it forward and furthering the role of arts in social justice and rehabilitation. Several have joined RTA's Board and provide strategic guidance.

"RTA should be mandated in every prison."

Omar Williams, RTA alum



WHO RTA SERVES

For 29 years, RTA has been offering our immersive and highly successful arts programming model in men's and women's prisons, with more workshops in additional facilities on the horizon.

RTA currently operates in the New York State counties of Dutchess, Erie, Greene, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester. In 2024, our Reimagining Myself® reentry program was implemented in California.

New York: Bedford Hills, Collins, Fishkill, Greene*, Green Haven, Otisville*, Sing Sing, Taconic, Wallkill*, Woodbourne*

California: Sierra Conservation Center*



*Facilities where Reimagining Myself® is operational.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

**"You develop strength.
You develop confidence.
It is strength to say, hey,
I'm gonna be different.
I'm gonna be who I
wanna be. Dance gave
me a chance to be seen."**

Tyrone Taylor, RTA alum

Building Essential Skills: Participants build critical skills for reintegration: discipline, teamwork, and communication.

Positive Behavioral Changes: Participants show improved conduct, fewer infractions, and smoother community transitions post-incarceration.

Empowering Personal Transformation: The arts foster self-expression, empathy, confidence, and a vision beyond incarceration.

Community and Family Impact: By encouraging changed behavior, RTA helps rebuild family connections, breaking cycles of incarceration.

Inclusive and Accessible: RTA unites people from different backgrounds, welcoming all those ready for change.

Less than 3% of RTA participants return to prison, compared to the national average of 60%.



The Power of Cinema Widens RTA's Impact

The 2024 theatrical release of the A24 film *SING SING* brought international attention to RTA and its vision of a world where the arts serve as a powerful catalyst for personal transformation and societal change within the criminal legal system.

Produced independently of RTA, the critically acclaimed, 2025 Oscar-nominated film is based on our theater program, a core component of RTA's comprehensive arts-in-prison programming.

The film follows the inspiring story of RTA alum John "Divine G" Whitfield, played by Oscar-nominated actor Colman Domingo, as he finds purpose by acting in RTA's Sing Sing Correctional Facility theater group alongside RTA alum Clarence Maclin, who plays himself.

One of the most remarkable aspects of *SING SING* is its authentic portrayal of people who have experienced the profound impact of RTA firsthand. The filmmakers were determined to cast as many actors with lived experience as possible—13 in all. It wasn't just a philosophical choice; it was a recognition of the immense talent and pathos of the alumni from RTA.

Moving beyond typical cinematic portrayals of prison life, the film showcases the RTA program, which honors the humanity behind prison walls and utilizes the arts as a vehicle for the exploration of redemption, resilience, and the potential for individual growth.



"I hope this movie inspires audiences to come to realize that all human beings have the potential to become better human beings when given a fair chance, proper resources, and a helping hand."
– John "Divine G" Whitfield, RTA Alum, *SING SING* Cameo, Executive Producer

"I have to say that after viewing the movie *SING SING* in the still operational facility itself, one word describes it: **authentic.** The subject matter and content really resonated with me. It made tears flow." – Paul D., Resident of Sing Sing Correctional Facility, after screening the film



"The chance to give those people that are still in the position I was in, in those cells, even a modicum of inspiration and hope and say, 'Listen, this doesn't have to be your life forever. Mine changed—maybe yours could change too.'" – Clarence Maclin, RTA Alum and *SING SING* Principal Cast, Executive Producer





"We are more than just numbers behind the wall. We are humans with hopes, dreams, insecurities, faults, and feelings. Like anyone else in the world."

David Giraudy, SING SING Supporting Cast

RTA worked in careful and considered coordination with A24 in promotion of the film, uplifting the stories of the RTA alumni and the programmatic impact of RTA. Dozens of screening events were held nationwide, with RTA alumni and staff participating in panel discussions. Special screenings with the filmmakers and RTA alumni cast were held in front of influential audiences such as state and federal lawmakers, Department of Corrections administrations, and inside prison walls for the incarcerated populations.

SING SING, RTA, and alumni were featured in numerous international, national, and local press, opinion pieces, TV broadcasts, radio segments, podcasts, and promoted by activists, scholars, and entertainment personalities across social media platforms.



"RTA is beyond therapeutic; it's life-changing. The SING SING movie shines a light on the resilience of the human spirit and the possibility for change through RTA, without the stereotypes that often define prison life." – Sean Dino Johnson, RTA alum and board member, SING SING Supporting Cast

As a result, RTA has been propelled into the limelight, raising awareness of the organization on an unprecedented scale, moving us forward to expand our programmatic reach and impact significantly.

"We've worked on this movie for over seven years, and every time I meet a new RTA participant or alumnus, I grow more confident that this is one of the most unique and transformative programs that I've ever encountered." – Greg Kwedar, SING SING Director



Empowering Transformational Change



Meet Janice Mckie, Mental Health Specialist

I was incarcerated for two years. The first six months of those two years, I spent in a state of sadness and depression. I felt hopeless. Then I learned about the RTA program. Once I started taking workshops, it immediately lifted me out of that sadness.

I was taking the knitting workshop with teaching artist Lori. Knitting was a craft I had always wanted to learn, but I never had the chance in life to try it. Lori is an excellent teacher and a master knitter. She taught me how to make so many intricate items from blankets, scarves, and pillows to stuffed

animals and hats. Learning a skill like knitting got me through my darkest times. It was a gift. Not only did it help me mentally, but learning to knit allowed me to give back to my family.

I created gifts for them during the holidays, and that meant the absolute world to me; to give them something I made with my own hands. To show them love.

The RTA knitting workshop also gave me something less tangible: community. Lori and the RTA participants at Taconic Correctional Facility would attend the workshop on Friday nights. It was like going to Friday night bingo! We got together, exchanged ideas, and bonded over something as simple as knitting. And you know what? It was remarkable! I was starting to feel whole again, like my old self.

"RTA saved my life."

Today, I'm working as a mental health specialist at a hospital and applying to PhD programs in counseling and mental health at Hofstra University. As far as knitting, I'm currently making blankets for my sisters for their milestone birthdays. I am the success I am today because of RTA. RTA truly saved my life."



Meet Dayvon Underdue, Outreach Specialist with Real Dads Network

I first joined RTA at Sing Sing Correctional Facility because I thought it was a program to stay busy and be productive. I soon found out it was much more than that. Through theater exercises and acting, I gained the tools and confidence to be my best self for myself, my family, and my son.

"It means to raise my son not from a place of fear but from a place of love."

One of the theater exercises taught by teaching artist Meg was called The Expert. You had to sit in front of the class, be an expert in an occupation, and usually, you knew nothing about the area you were supposed to be the expert in. The other participants would ask you silly questions. No matter how silly the question was, you must answer it as if it were a valid question, and you had a valid answer. You must answer it as if you knew the answer and exude as much confidence as possible, regardless of

what the question was, and no matter how silly the question was. You were the expert!

Fast forward to when I was released from prison. The job I wanted was to be a trainer at a gym. I got the job, but I was immediately intimidated. I was really nervous about being out on the gym floor, training people. Then I thought back to The Expert exercise from RTA. I said to myself, I have this shirt on that says trainer, I'm the expert! I got this! At first, it felt like I was putting on the persona of a trainer, but then I gained that confidence and started believing in myself because I was a professional trainer. Three months in, I secured my first client, and since then, I have expanded my client base, helping individuals achieve their fitness goals and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Building that confidence also translates to raising my son. This confidence is a bit different. It means to raise my son not from a place of fear but from a place of love. It means teaching him confidence, not just through my words, but through my actions. It means instilling in him generosity, not just by telling him to be generous, but by extending my hand and being generous to myself. It allows you to move freely because you're covered in self-love.

I attribute that level of confidence to The Expert because, when I didn't know what I was doing and lacked belief in myself, I had the tools RTA provided. This program changes lives, not just for the individuals in RTA, but also for those influenced by RTA participants, like my son.

Year in Review: Enacting Lasting Change

SUMMER & FALL 2024



1: In collaboration with A24 Films, RTA hosted a screening of **SING SING** for the community of individuals who are incarcerated in **Sing Sing Correctional Facility**. The story is based on the lives of real participants in the RTA program. The screening ended in a standing ovation.



4: RTA participants performed the Broadway play, **On The Waterfront**, at **Woodbourne Correctional Facility**. The first RTA production in the prison since 2020.



2: The RTA community celebrated the **NY Premiere of SING SING**. The film was released nationally later in the summer to critical acclaim.



5: **SING SING** film stayed in the news as the award season heated up. **Journalist Ted Koppel** interviewed RTA participants in **Sing Sing Correctional Facility** for a featured segment on **CBS Sunday Morning** to talk about the impact of the program.



3: At our 2024 gala, we honored **SING SING** co-star & RTA alum, **Clarence Maclin**, and filmmakers **Greg Kwedar**, **Clint Bentley**, and **Monique Walton** for creating a story that uniquely captures the potential of transformation behind prison walls, centered on human dignity.



6: Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, a curated exhibition entitled **Windows and Doors** was on view at the **Yonkers Public Library, NY**. The show featured the artwork of currently and formerly incarcerated RTA artists.

WINTER, SPRING & SUMMER 2025



7: **SING SING** was nominated for several awards, including three Oscar nominations. With the Best Adapted Screenplay nomination, **Clarence Maclin** and **John "Divine G" Whitfield** became the first RTA alums ever nominated for an Oscar. The film also became the first to be in theaters across the country and in prisons simultaneously via digital tablets of 800,000 incarcerated individuals.



10: RTA hosted a virtual event moderated by **Jermaine Archer** with RTA alums and actors of **SING SING**, **Clarence Maclin**, **Sean Dino Johnson** and **Dario Peña** on the panel. The event brought the RTA community together from far and wide to share the real stories behind the film.



8: **Jermaine Archer**, RTA alum and former board member, is appointed Executive Director, leading the organization into its next chapter. He became the first alum to be hired in this position in RTA's 29-year history. **"RTA isn't just an organization to me; it's a story I've lived."**



11: RTA's **Reimagining Myself®** re-entry program expanded to reach new audiences. A successful partnership with **Columbia College** in California allowed us to graduate two cohorts of 22 and 15 participants.

9: The RTA community came together for our annual **Homecoming** event, celebrating participants who recently returned home to their communities and families. It is always a joyous day filled with reunions, reflection, and excitement for what's ahead.



12: RTA participant, **Pedro Rosario**, at **Green Haven Correctional Facility**, debuted his original play, **The Hero U Took**, at the **STAGE LEFT Festival off-Broadway** at **Playwrights Horizons**. RTA partnered with **Broadway Advocacy Coalition** and **Working Theater** for the staged reading of the play, which included performances by RTA alums.

13: RTA expanded its community with strategic partnerships. RTA and **Pace Gallery**, a leading international art gallery, hosted a reception at Pace's NYC location. RTA and **Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison** kicked off their official partnership with a BBQ in Queens, NY.

Thank You For Being Our Partner

Our supporters are investing in a proven solution that transforms lives, reduces recidivism, and builds stronger communities. Thank you for your ardent support of this work.

RTA is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

RTA is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

RTA is proud to be a grantee of ArtsWestchester with funding made possible by Westchester County government with support of County Executive Kenneth W. Jenkins and the Board of Legislators.

RTA is indebted to the many generous foundations and individual donors whose support is so inspiring to our community, including those who wish to remain anonymous. Contributions listed were made between June 2024 and August 2025. If your name has been listed incorrectly or omitted, please contact Eh-den Perlove: eh-den.perlove@rta-arts.org.



\$100,000+

Jon and Linda Halbert Family Foundation
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WRITEABILITY

*The contributions made by Sustaining Monthly Donors enable us to plan our programs with confidence.

Please contact us if there are omissions or corrections.

Financial Statement & Program Impact

2024 was an incredible year of growth for RTA. The recent success and acclaim of the SING SING film, which highlights the profound impact of RTA's theater program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, has brought our mission into the national spotlight.

To maximize this unprecedented exposure and ensure organizational sustainability, RTA increased fundraising and general operational expenses by 24% in 2024.

This investment included strengthening our marketing and communications department, as well as increasing staff and personnel costs, resulting in a 153% increase in new donors. While these efforts led to higher costs, they also resulted in a 138% increase in overall donations in 2024.

Our increased expenses represent a strategic investment in RTA's future, ensuring the long-term sustainability of RTA and our ability to provide vital programming to more individuals in the carceral system. We are committed to transparency and accountability in our fundraising practices and will continue to monitor and evaluate our efforts to maximize our impact.

PROGRAM IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

375

Number of program participants enrolled*

1,000+

Incarcerated individuals have participated in RTA's programs

94

Total number of workshops conducted*

97%

Of RTA participants do not return to prison

1,540

Number of Facility visits by teaching artists or facilitators*

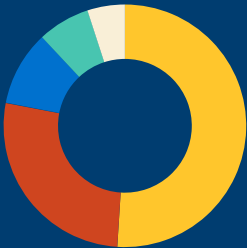
\$1.5 billion

In NY State savings when recidivism is reduced by 10%—RTA's proven impact saves taxpayers' dollars

*Includes Arts workshops and Reimagining Myself® reentry program.

TOTAL REVENUE

- Individuals: 51%
- Foundations: 27%
- Earned Income: 10%
- Government: 7%
- Interest & Other Income: 5%



TOTAL EXPENSES

- Programs: 51%
- Fundraising: 30%
- Management & General: 19%



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Accrual basis as of 12/31/24

Revenue & Support By Type		Expenses	
Individual	\$ 826,792	Program Services	\$ 726,944
Foundations & Grants	\$ 436,433	Fundraising	\$ 420,571
Earned Income	\$ 166,440	Management & General	\$ 265,465
Government	\$ 107,076	Total Expenses	\$ 1,412,980
Interest & Other Income	\$ 77,038		
Total Revenue	\$ 1,613,779		

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets		Liabilities	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,097,020	Payables & Accrued Expenses	\$ 36,864
Short-term Investments	\$ 732,311	Deferred Restricted Revenue	\$ 260,031
Contributions Receivable	\$ 191,059	Total Liabilities	\$ 296,895
Other Assets	\$ 9,935		
Total Assets	\$ 2,030,326		
Net assets			
Total net assets	\$ 1,733,431	Total liabilities & net assets	\$ 2,030,326

Visit our website for our 2024 annual audit and IRS 990 form.



"Through RTA, I was able to discover my voice and potential. I was able to better myself while incarcerated, become a leader, and give back to my incarcerated community while in Sing Sing. Due to the work I completed in 2018, I was granted Executive Clemency, and my efforts at RTA were cited by the Governor as a contributing factor in my release. I then went on to be a respected and highly regarded pillar of my community."

Dennis Woodbine, RTA Alum

RTA is not just an organization; it is a movement toward a more humane, effective, and just approach to corrections.

Join us in our mission of providing hope, healing, and transformation through the power of the arts.



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Cover artwork by RTA Alum, Hector "Bori" Rodriguez, *Mirame Volar*, 2025.



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